



Awareness of Breath

These exercises were all created by Susan Kaiser Greenland, the author of *The Mindful Child*.

The Snowglobe

For kids who feel nervous about taking a test, performing in a recital or on the soccer field, learning to take a few deep breaths and “center” themselves can help them remain calm and focus on what they need to do.

Snowglobes are a great tool. When kids look at the glitter falling, their breathing naturally slows. At home, kids can use an actual snowglobe. But, when they’re at school or backstage, it’s not always practical to bring one out. Try encouraging your child to find a quiet place for just a few moments. Ask your child to close his eyes, take a few deep breaths and picture a snowglobe in his mind. Think about shaking it up. Imagine the flakes floating and swirling through the water. Watch them float to the ground.

“Rocking” a Stuffed Animal

For little kids, calming down at bedtime can be tricky. The excitement from the day can leave them squirmy and restless. Try having your child “rock” a stuffed animal to sleep.

Once she is in bed, place a small stuffed animal on her belly. Ask your child to take a deep breath and watch as the animal goes up and down. Ask her to keep taking deep breaths to “rock” the animal to sleep. This will likely rock her to sleep.

Starfish Stretch

Another exercise to help younger kids calm down is the Starfish Stretch. This can be a transition exercise between playtime and quiet time, or before going to sleep.

Ask your child to lay on the floor with arms and legs outstretched and eyes closed. Ask him to think about a starfish. Everything the starfish does is from its center.

Ask him to take a deep breath, and guide him slowly through these movements.

Start by stretching one arm by reaching as far as you can. Hold the stretch for a moment, then relax and take a deep breath.

Stretch the other arm. Hold. Then relax. Take a deep breath.

Next one leg. Hold. Then relax and take a deep breath. Finally the other leg. Relax and take a deep breath.

Guide your child through a few cycles of stretching and then relaxing. At the end have him lay quiet on the ground for a few moments, taking a few deep breaths.