



# BREATHE. MORE SLOWLY. FROM YOUR NOSE AND YOUR TUMMY.

As stated in the earlier section, physical changes in our body are one way our alarm gets triggered with anxiety. Our body does this by breathing faster, and taking in more oxygen more quickly. This often means breathing fast, and results in a rapid heart rate, but also other physical problems, like nausea, dizziness, or chest pains. Younger children may have difficulty describing these problems specifically and so will often describe these feelings as just “feeling sick” or having a “tummy ache”. They may have them alone, but often in response to something that makes them feel anxious.

Breathing more slowly from your tummy and your nose (sometimes called Belly Breathing), is a good way to slow the intake of oxygen into our bodies, and also slowly turn off the physical anxiety alarm.

Below are steps to one of our favourite breathing activities for kids, however, there are many different types of mindfulness and relaxation strategies that can be helpful. A quick internet search yields several fun ways to engage in these types of activities with your little one. So have fun experimenting with a variety of these types of activities and discover which ones your youngster likes best!

Remember, when learning a new coping strategy, it is helpful to first practice it regularly when somewhat calm. A regular practice of relaxation or mindfulness, will help to reduce stress and anxiety levels overall, even if they are not anxious while they practice. Once the strategy becomes more natural, children can also use the skill to help settle specific moments of high anxiety.

## **Mindfulness For Kids – Teddy Bear Belly Breathing aka Breathing Buddies**

What you need: Comfortable clothes, ample floor space (or another place to lie down), a favourite stuffed toy.

1. To practice belly-breathing, ask your child to lie comfortably and place his hands on their belly (if they use a stuffed animal, it can be placed on the belly at or slightly above the belly button).
2. As you count to three, ask them to inhale deeply through their nose. Tell them to fill their belly with air as they inhale; they should feel it get bigger and bigger and bigger throughout the count to three. If their stuffed toy sits atop their belly, they might see it rise as their belly “fills with air”. Many children like the example filling a balloon with air, or waves on the ocean and taking their stuffed toy for a ride up and down.
3. Ask them to exhale to a slow count to four. Tell them they might see their stuffed toy fall as they feel their belly shrinking and shrinking throughout the count to four.
4. Do five to ten rounds of belly (“buddy”)-breathing to get started or more if they are enjoying it.
5. Afterward, ask your child how it felt. Is there a difference in how you feel now? What did you notice about your stuffed toy as you inhaled and exhaled? How did it feel when you let your breath out? Could you help them try this the next time they feel anxious or could they try it themselves?