

Calming Strategies for Adults and Children

Calming strategies help people be fully aware of the present moment, including their thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and surroundings. These strategies are powerful ways to create calmness and improve well-being. When stress is overwhelming, they can offer ways to pause, reset, and get back control. They support healthier relationships, greater self-control, and a more balanced life.

Below are calming strategies for adults and young children.

Adults

Strategy:

Deep breathing

1. **Inhale:** Breathe deeply through the nose for a count of four.
2. **Hold:** Hold your breath for a count of four.
3. **Exhale:** Exhale slowly and fully through the mouth for a count of four.
4. **Hold:** Hold your breath again for a count of four.
5. **Repeat.**

Strategy:

Muscle relaxation

1. Get comfortable.
2. Focus on one specific muscle group, like your hands or fingers, and tighten the muscles.
3. Hold the tightness for five to 10 seconds.
4. Slowly release the tightness and notice the relaxed feeling.
5. Focus on another muscle group and repeat until your whole body feels relaxed.

Strategy:

Being present — the “5-4-3-2-1” exercise

1. Name five things you can see. Pay attention to colors, shapes, textures, and details.
2. Name four things you can touch.
3. Name three things you can hear.
4. Name two things you can smell (or like the smell of).
5. Name one thing you can taste (or like the taste of).

Strategy:

Body awareness

1. Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Bring attention to your feet. Imagine roots growing from your feet, deep into the earth. Your feet are strong and steady, grounding you like the roots of a tree.
2. Stay here for 30 seconds to one minute. Do you feel connected to the ground under you?
3. Each time you exhale, imagine releasing stress or tension down into the ground.

Inhale ...
Exhale ...



Children



Strategy:

Deep breathing

To encourage deep breathing:

- Ask the children to “smell the flowers” or “blow out the candles.”
- Or ask the children to lie down and place a small toy on their bellies. Tell the children to watch the toy go up and down as they fill their bellies with air.



Strategy:

Muscle relaxation — the “Raw Spaghetti, Cooked Spaghetti” game

This game has two simple parts:

- When you say “raw spaghetti,” tell the children to make their bodies tall and stiff.
- When you say “cooked spaghetti,” tell the children to relax their muscles.



Strategy:

Being present

To help children pause and focus on their surroundings:

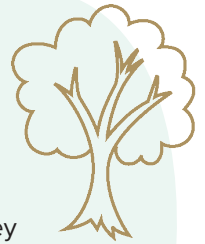
- Ask children to name three to five objects that they see around the room.

Strategy:

Body awareness

To help children learn about their bodies and how they move:

- Ask the children to pretend they are elephants and to slowly stomp around the room.
- Ask the children to pretend they are trees with roots going deep into the ground. Ask them to imagine that a strong wind comes, but it can't knock them down!



Infants

Infants rely on other people to feel calm. Some strategies that help infants feel safe and calm are:

- Rocking with the infant
- Dimming the lights
- Playing calming music or white noise
- Gently patting or rubbing the infant's back
- Holding the infant close to you

