



Breathing Activities for Wellbeing

This video gives 4 separate sets of activities designed to show pupils simple breathing techniques.

Why practice breathing?

We've all been breathing all our lives, so why learn to breathe? These are simple breathing exercises which can help with focus and calm. If you spend time practicing them, they will be there when you need them as part of your Wellbeing toolkit. These are calming, focusing activities to help your pupils learn to observe their breath. They can be done anytime and anywhere, and don't need anything except your breath and your hands.

Video timings are noted next to the activity title.

1. 5 Finger breathing - Star Tracing [video 0:06]

This breathing technique offers children a few minutes of calm and quiet, before they move on to whatever is happening next for them. Get your pupils to sit or stand comfortably with their feet on the ground and back straight. Explain that you are going to show them a way to breathe. We're all really good at breathing! This is a very simply breathing technique that you can use as part of your wellbeing toolkit. You can do this anywhere and anytime. You don't need anything special to do it, just your breath and your hands. Hold one hand up with your fingers spread out like a star. Use a finger of your other hand as a pointer. Start at the base of your thumb. Use your finger to trace up to the tip of your thumb, then down the other side. Trace up to the tip of your next finger, and down the other side. Continue tracing up and down each finger until you have traced all 5 fingers. Try it again, this time add in your breathing .Start tracing at the base of your thumb, breathe in as you trace up, and breathe out as you go down. Trace up the next finger, breathe in as you go up, and breathe out as you go down. Keep going until you have traced all your fingers. If you want to, when you've reached your little finger, you can go the other way back to your thumb. Now you're ready to go on to whatever you are doing next.

2. Lift Breathing [video 2.32]

This short, focused activity offers children a space to pause, helping them relax, slowing down the heartbeat, enabling deeper breathing and calming the mind. Sit or stand quietly with your feet on the ground and your head going up to the sky. Take one hand facing upwards in front of you near your belly button. This is the bottom of the lift, and it stays still. Take your other hand above it, palm facing down .This hand will move slowly up and down like a lift. Move your top hand slowly up like a lift. When you've gone as high as you want to, slowly move your hand down again. Keep your bottom hand still; slowly move the top hand up and down like a lift. Breathe in as the lift goes slowly up, breath out as it comes slowly down. If you want to, try this with your eyes closed and see if you can pause the lift just before your hands touch. You can do this anytime, and anywhere. All you need is your breath and your body. Now you're ready to go on to whatever you are doing next.

3. Unfolding Finger Breathing [4.44]

This is a lovely activity, allowing children a few minutes to breathe quietly and slow down whenever they need to. Sit or stand quietly. Take your hand, with your fingers gently open. Breathe in; as you breathe out let one finger close. Breathe in; as you breathe out let your next finger close. Keep going until all your fingers are closed to make a gentle fist. You can stop there if you want, or keep going by opening your fingers one by one as you breathe in and out, until you have a gently open hand. Don't worry if you lose count- you can always go back to the beginning. Your hand will always be there and your breath will always be there.

4. Fingertip Breathing [video 6.28]

This is my favourite. It reminds you that whatever you're thinking now is ok, and whatever you're feeling now is ok. All you need is your breath and your body. You can do it anytime and anywhere Gently open one hand. Touch your fingertips one by one with your thumb as you gently breathe in and out. Touch the tip of your index finger with your thumb. Breathe in and breathe out. Gently touch your middle fingertip with your thumb. Breathe in and breathe out. Keep going until you've breathed with all 4 fingers. You can stop there, or go back through your fingers again, breathing in and out as you touch each fingertip. That's all there is to it -just gently touching your fingertips as you breathe in and out. You can even do it in your pocket, under a table, at a bus stop or in a queue. All you need is your body and your breath.

Tips for teaching children new ways to breathe

You might use these activities in different ways at different times. See what works best for you.

Practice breathing on your own first so you are comfortable to show other people.

Explain simply what you are going to do, and what you expect of the children - e.g. quiet, respectful of other people, you can't get this wrong- we all have been breathing for years!

Give the children time to practice- the first tries might be a bit giggly, or some children might be reluctant to try at first.

Talk about how you are feeling, and model language the children can use to talk about their own feelings.

Think about how you will start and end the breathing activity, and the sorts of questions you might ask.

Questions for moving on:

- How am I feeling?
- What am I thinking?
- What do I want to do now?