

## HIGH SCHOOL

# RELAXATION SKILLS

## Skill Sheet for Caregivers

High schoolers manage a lot. Many days they juggle schoolwork, extracurricular activities, jobs and relationships with friends and family. They also grapple with larger issues like forming their identity, gaining independence, and preparing for the future.

In this video, teens learn that the stress, anxiety and frustration that often come with these experiences produce uncomfortable physical sensations due to our fight, flight, or freeze response. Effective relaxation skills, like paced belly breathing, help to calm the body and turn down the intensity of these unpleasant feelings.

### Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Paced belly breathing is breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. By slowing their inhales and extending their exhales, your child can use their breath to harness control of their emotions.
- Paced belly breathing balances out the carbon dioxide and oxygen in kids' bodies, cutting off their fight, flight, or freeze response. It returns their mind and body to a calmer state.

### Practice skills

- When you notice that your teen is feeling anxious, frustrated, or worried, encourage them to stop what they are doing and take a few minutes to practice taking paced belly breaths.
- Belly breathing for relaxation is different than breathing teens do without thinking about it. If your teen says "I've tried that," encourage them to give it another try. Providing some information about why belly breathing helps may increase their willingness to try.
- Encourage your teen to practice belly breathing when they are calm. They will be more prepared to use the skill in the moment they need it if they have practiced it beforehand.

**Start with this →**

- Breathe together! Take five minutes right after dinner or before bed to take some relaxing breaths together.
- You can post the visual below somewhere in the house, like the kitchen or bathroom. That way it can be used as a cue to practice some paced belly breaths throughout the day.
- You can also suggest your teen utilize apps like Calm or Headspace that help guide paced belly breathing and recommend scheduling moments in the day to practice.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your teen or post in the home to reinforce and practice paced belly breathing.

## Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Paced Belly Breathing

Breathing deeply into your belly helps to tell your body that you are safe and calm. Follow the instructions below and practice paced belly breathing when you are feeling calm and when you are feeling stressed or anxious.



- 1 Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor either cross-legged or on your shins.



- 2 Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.



- 3 Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds and feel your belly expand.



- 4 Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



- 5 Repeat 3-5 times, or for as long as you want.

Keep a log to plan when you will use relaxation skills.  
Plan self-care activities, too.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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