

TANTRUMS AND MORE: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY EMOTION REGULATION DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early Childhood Educator Series: Basics 1

Helping children get the best start in life

funded by

Daniel and Monica Gold Centre for Early Childhood Development

Strategy Guide for Educators

EDUCATION
FOR
MENTAL
HEALTH
RESILIENCE

Classroom Strategies

1. Breathing:

- Prompt students to place a teddy bear or book on their belly when lying down; they can then watch the teddy bear or book move up and down as they breathe.



2. Calming Breath:

- Use a **visual aid** (e.g., a video of a balloon inflating and deflating) that students can watch, and try to follow along with the breathing pace in the video. You can also raise and lower arms to signal the pace of breathing.



3. Using the Senses for Grounding:



Hearing:

- Use a loud bell, prompt students to roar, or encourage them to slap their thighs/stomp their feet to create a “thunder” sound to then listen to.



Sight:

- Handout a crayon to each student and ask them to find items in the room or surrounding environment that match the colour of their crayon. Then, prompt them to make a mark on a paper for each item that matches their crayon colour.



Touch:

- Ask students to feel their teeth with their tongue and notice how this feels.

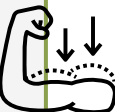


Body scan:

- Younger students can be guided through adapted body scan meditations that focus on larger areas of the body for simplicity (e.g., head, shoulders, arms, hands, back, belly, legs, and feet).
- Prompt students to touch or squeeze the different areas of their body as they are guided through the meditation.

4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

- The focus can be on larger muscle groups for simplicity (e.g., arms, belly, legs, and feet). Prompts can include, “pretend you are pushing the heaviest rock in the world”, where you ask them to push or tense their muscles for 5 seconds, then stop, and guide them to notice how this feels.



5. Visualization:

- Start by using short videos of nature scenes with relaxing, instrumental music. These videos can be shared with students as “taking a mini-vacation” or “going for a nature walk”.
- Example of mini-vacation and nature walk videos are linked below:
 - [The aquarium](#)
 - [Puppies](#)
 - [The beach](#)
 - [Nature walk in the forest](#)



Strategies For Educators' Own Well-Being

For Day-to-Day Emotions

STRATEGY #1: Mindfulness



[Listen to a brief guided mindfulness audio](#)



[Browse Cambridge Health Alliance - Centre for Mindfulness - Guided Audio Library](#)



1. It can only take a few seconds!

When short on time, mindfulness can be as brief as just a few seconds; a pause where you pay attention to present moment sensations, on purpose, and with acceptance.



2. Incorporate it into your daily routine

This can be built into your daily schedule by paying attention to your present moment experiences.

For example, when:

- Brushing your teeth
- Washing hands
- Drinking water



3. Use a sticky note

Place a sticky note next to something you see every day, like your bathroom mirror.



Every time you see the sticky note, take a few seconds to be mindful as you are going about your day.

STRATEGY #2: Enhancing Positive Awarenesses

1. Gratitude Journal



[Gratitude Journal](#)



2. Three Good Things






[Three Good Things](#)



- **Write down (in detail)** events or experiences for which you are grateful.
- **Reflect on and relive** those experiences.

Make it as **easy as possible for yourself!** Journal on your smartphone, or turn it into a habit every other evening before bed!

- **Identify three actions, moments or feelings** you recently encountered. 
- **Savour the nice feelings.** 
- **Write them down!** 

STRATEGY #3: Self-Compassion



Self-compassion entails being **kind** and **understanding** towards ourselves when we fail or suffer, as opposed to being critical towards ourselves or ignoring our pain.



Take a pause and remain kind and compassionate towards yourself by remembering the following:

Being an early childhood educator is challenging.

Experiencing difficulties with young children in the classroom is very common.

You are not alone.

[Self-Compassion Resource and Guided Audio](#)








[Centre for Mindful Self-Compassion Guided Audio Library](#)





For Extreme Emotions

STRATEGY #1: Grounding 5-4-3-2-1

- Working backward from 5, **use your senses** to list things you notice around you.
- Make an effort to notice the **little things** you might not always pay attention to.



-  Identify 5 things you can see.
-  4 things you can touch.
-  3 things you can hear.
-  2 things you can smell.
-  1 thing you can taste.



 [Grounding 5,4,3,2,1](#) 


STRATEGY #2: Calming Breath


Overview of the steps for the calming breath:


Try repeating this cycle for at least 3 full breaths!

 [Guided audio](#) 

 [Guided video](#) 

1 
Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds.

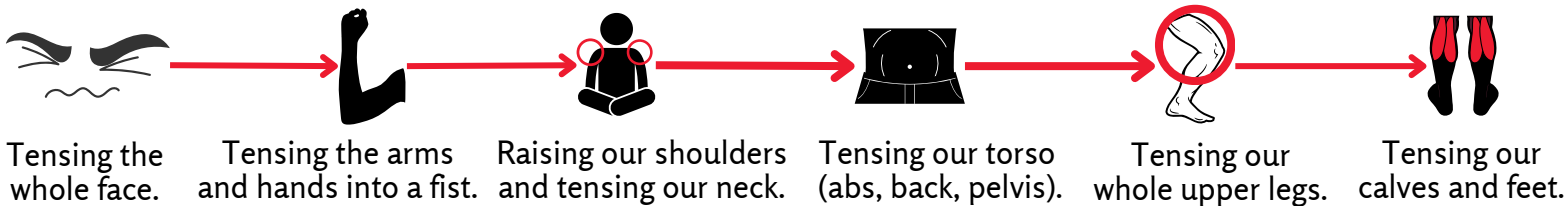
2 
Hold for 2 seconds.



3 
Exhale through the mouth for 6 seconds.


4 
Hold for 2 seconds.

STRATEGY #3: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- 1** Tense each muscle group in the body **one after the other**.
- 2** Hold for about 5-10 seconds.
- 3** Quickly **release** the tension and notice how your muscles feel.
- 4** Repeat for each muscle group.



 [Listen to an audio guide to practice PMR](#) 

- Remember to inhale as you **tense** your muscles and exhale as you **release the tension**.
- As you breathe out, notice the sensations in your body. 

FEEDBACK & CONTACT INFORMATION

