

# Stay Relaxed

*Tips for dealing with anxiety*

Worry (thoughts) + Anxiety (feelings) = Body & Behavior Response (stress)

Anxiety is a trick - it is a **FALSE ALARM** that everything is serious!

Strategy	Use at home or school	Notes about how to use
Deep, slow breaths		<u>Example:</u> in class, trace your hand; as you move up each finger breathe <b>in</b> , as you move down each finger breathe <b>out</b>
Progressive muscle relaxation (change muscle from <i>uncooked</i> to <i>cooked</i> spaghetti)		<u>Example:</u> in class this may look like clenching and unclenching fists. At home, start by tensing and un-tensing at the top (shoulders/neck) and move down to your feet.
Name things to distance yourself from distracting thoughts: <u>What can I:</u> <i>See</i> <i>Touch</i> <i>Hear</i> <i>Smell</i> <i>Taste</i>		This will help re-focus your attention on the "here and now" instead of focusing on what may/may not happen later.
Place a calming item or picture in your backpack		<u>Example:</u> have a small smooth rock or small stress ball to touch when needed. Have a picture in your binder that is calming or brings up about a good memory.
Think about and describe or draw a calming image		
"Don't believe everything you think"		
Make a brief note of worry (postpone to talk with a trusted adult about at a later time)		<u>Example:</u> at school plan a time to talk with counselor, teacher or coach. At home plan a time to talk with parent, older sibling or relative.

## For Parents

### Strategies to help your child manage anxiety at home:

- Respect and validate your child's feelings - anxiety is a real emotion and not pleasant.
- "Tell me about it." Give your child room to talk about their fears/worries without interrupting
- Ask your child, "How likely is (the thing you're afraid of) going to happen?" You'll be teaching them to *challenge* their anxious thinking.
- Prompt your child with, "Tell me some things you can do to handle these thoughts/feelings."
- Move into having them suggest strategies (see list above) or others that can be done at home:
  - spend time with a pet
  - exercise: a "cleansing" walk, run, or swim
  - repetitive activity: ex: throwing a basketball in a hoop, coloring
  - listen to calming music
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Model coping skills and avoid passing anxiety to your child.
- Give praise when your child uses positive coping skills!

#### Sources:

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Kidlutions.com

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)