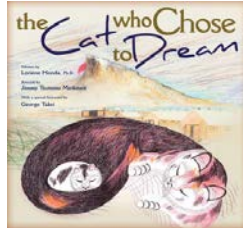


The Cat Who Chose To Dream:
Relaxation Tools for Young Readers
Created by Loriene Honda, Ph.D., 2014



Deep Breathing Exercise:

Step One: Make sure you're sitting in a comfortable seat with your feet planted firmly on the ground or sitting criss-crossed on the floor.

Step Two: Rest your hands on your knees.

Step Three: Close your eyes and imagine seeing the most relaxing, calming color you've ever seen. For some people, bluish purple makes them feel more relaxed than any other color. For others, it could be red. There is no right or wrong – only what feels like the perfect calming color for you.

Step Four: Keep your eyes closed and imagine the air around you being that relaxing, calming color. As you breathe in deeply, imagine your breath being a long ribbon of that calming air. Breathe the ribbon of breath in deeply as you imagine that ribbon of your chosen color filling the inside of your entire body. While holding this breath, breathe in one more quick deep breath of that calming air.

Step Five: Hold your calm breath for 5 seconds.

Step Six: Breathe out the ribbon of calm color very slowly through your mouth, as if letting all the air out of your body – little by little – like a slowly deflating balloon.

Step Seven: Slowly open up your eyes again.

Visualizing a Safe Place:

Step One: Make sure you're sitting criss-crossed on the floor or in a comfortable seat with your feet planted firmly on the ground.

Step Two: Rest your hands on your knees.

Step Three: Close your eyes and imagine being in a place that makes you feel calm, safe and relaxed. It can be a real place you've visited like the beach, a make-believe location from your imagination, a scene from a book or movie, etc.

Step Four: Keep your eyes closed and imagine the calming sounds you hear around you. Imagine the pleasant smells around you. Allow your mind to wander and feel the sensations around you – it could be the warmth of the sun on your skin, the coolness of the water on your toes, or maybe a breeze in your hair. There's no right or wrong – just whatever you'd like to have as sights, sounds, smells and feelings of your safe place. Go through and focus on each of your senses one by one: what do you smell, feel, hear, taste, and see? Remain here in this relaxed state as long as needed.

Step Five: Take a deep breath in and out...and then slowly open your eyes again.

Self-Empowerment Visualization: Embodying a symbol of a desirable emotional state, i.e. one that is calm, powerful, hopeful, positive, etc.

Step One: Make sure you're sitting in a comfortable seat with your feet planted firmly on the ground, sitting criss-crossed on the floor, or lying on a bed/couch.

Step Two: Decide what emotional positive state on which you'd like to focus. An example might be a feeling of tranquility.

Step Three: Close your eyes and allow your mind to imagine all the symbols that you believe represent this feeling and settle on one. For our tranquility example, for instance, you might think of a beautiful, long mixed-green seaweed firmly planted in the sandy ocean floor near the shoreline.

Step Four: Breathe in and out calmly as you keep your eyes closed but fully visualize in your mind that symbol as vividly as possible for 2 minutes. For example, visualize the seaweed swaying gently back and forth with each sweep of an ocean's wave. It sways to one side, then the next, and rolls gently with each wave but never becomes unearthed, showing its strong grounding.

Step Five: Take a deep breath in and out...and then slowly open your eyes again.

***Disclaimer:** This guide was written for informal use with The Cat Who Chose to Dream only and was not created by an expert specifically trained in meditation, physiology or a related field. The suggested techniques reviewed in this informal guide have not undergone any medical evaluation procedures. It is advised that adults using this guide, especially with children, rule out any potential medical contraindications and safety concerns, as well as consult with a trained professional certified by a nationally recognized organization prior to use. Refer to the following additional resources for extensive didactic information on the therapeutic use of relaxation and mindfulness techniques:*

*Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, The Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society:
<http://www.umassmed.edu/content.aspx?id=43102>*

Belleruth Naperstek, Health Journeys – Resources for Mind, Body and Spirit: <http://belleruthnaperstek.com/>

The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation, Dr. Stephen Porges (2011)

Created by Lorie Honda, Ph.D., 2014