



SELF CARE FOR FAMILIES PACKET

Being a parent or caregiver can be challenging, especially right now. While directly experiencing the event, our survival brain, whose sole purpose is to keep us alive, takes over. Our thinking brain takes a back seat. We may run on pure adrenaline looking for a way out or we may feel so overwhelmed by what's happening, we just freeze, unable to move any direction—or somewhere in between.

Self-care is key:

- Pay attention to how you are feeling
- Limit your news intake
- Practice tolerating uncertainty
- Be forgiving, embrace do-overs
- Be generous with yourself and others
- Remember to breath
- Get adequate sleep
- Move and exercise daily
- Seek out nature, fresh air, and sunlight
- Increase healthy foods
- Stay connected
- Develop your own self-care plan

Practice Breathing:

Quick Calm:

1. Take a deep breath in
2. Hold for 5 sec and think *I am warm*
3. Exhale, think *I am calm*

Repeat 3 times, breathing normally for 5-10 seconds between each deep-breathing set.

4-7-8 Breathing:

Inhale quietly through your nose to the count of 4.

Hold your breath for the count of 7.

Exhale through your mouth to the count of 8, while making an audible 'whoosh' sound.

Repeat this cycle a total of 4 times.

Breathing video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5f5N6YFjvVc>

Breathing technique for kids:

Breathing Techniques: <https://www.cosmickids.com/five-fun-breathing-practices-for-kids/>

1. Hot Air Balloon

Sitting in a comfortable cross-legged position, start by cupping your hands round your mouth. Take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly start to blow out through your mouth, growing your hands outwards in time with your exhale as if you are blowing up an enormous hot air balloon. Once your balloon is as big as it can be (and you've finished your exhale), breathe normally as you sway gently from side to side admiring your big beautiful hot air balloon as it soars through the sky. This long deep exhalation as you blow up your hot air balloon has a relaxing effect and the image is incredibly vivid for kids' imaginations. If you want to see the hot air balloon in action check out [Squish the Fish!](#)

2. Dragon Fire Breaths

Interlace the fingers underneath the chin. Inhale and lift the elbows up to frame the face. Exhale, lifting the head up making a whispered 'hah' sound towards the sky, like a dragon breathing fire. At the same time, lower the elbows back down to meet at the bottom again by the end of the 'hah' exhale. This breath technique builds strength and heat within so is a good energizer. It helps us feel brave when we might be nervous or pepped up when we're a bit tired. I use Dragon Fire Breaths in [Parsnip](#) and [Pedro the Penguin](#), and in our upcoming episode Enzo the Bee!

3. Tumble Dryer

Sitting in cross-legged position, point your index fingers towards each other and position them so your left finger is pointing to the right and your right finger is pointing to the left overlapping a bit in front of your mouth and blow as you spin your fingers round each other, making a lovely long exhalation and a satisfying swishy sound. This works well after washing machine, which involves sitting in a cross-legged position, interlacing your fingers behind your head and twisting from your core side to side going "wishy washy wishy washy" as you twist each way.



4. Tongue Tube

Some people can curl the sides of their tongue up, others can't... it's a genetic thing! If you can, curl up the sides and make your tongue into a tube or straw. Then with your tube-like tongue sticking out a little bit, inhale and suck the air in over your tongue. Exhale slowly through your nose. This has a wonderful cooling effect and refreshes the throat. Very cleansing! If you can't do the curling thing with the sides of your tongue, you can instead get all the same benefits of the refreshing breath by doing a big toothy grin and sucking in the air sharply.

5. Bumble Bee Breaths

Known as Bhramari in Pranayama practice. Pranayama being the control of the breath in Yoga. Sitting comfortably with your legs crossed, breath in through your nose, then with fingers in your ears hum out your exhalation. The lovely comforting resonance of this has a calming effect and done with eyes closed can make it even more peaceful.

Practice Mindfulness:

Self-Compassion Activity:

Take a moment in your day to practice self-compassion. This activity is especially useful in a moment of stress, or when you notice self-criticism coming to the surface.

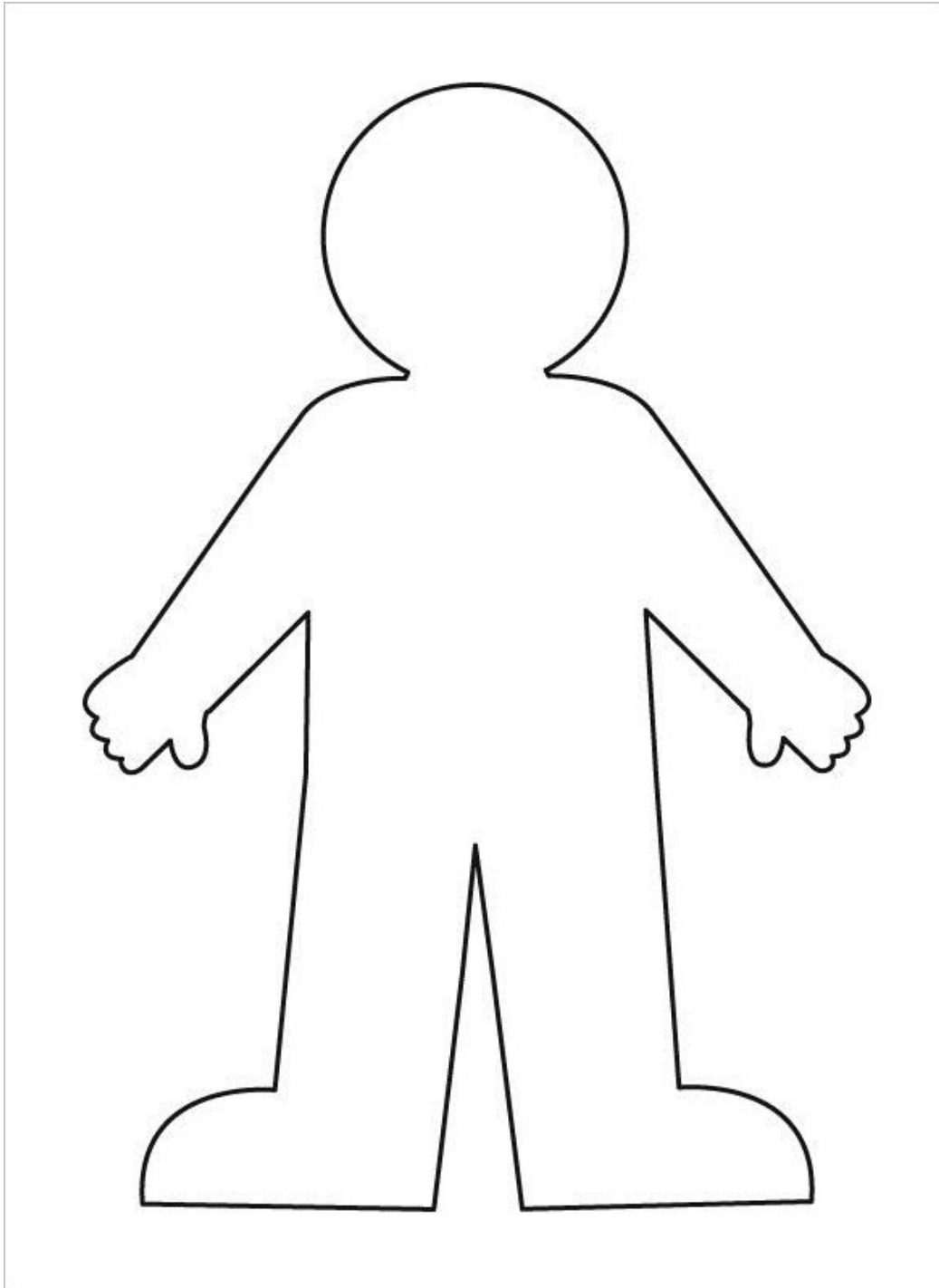
1. Take a deep breath and a long slow exhale
2. Acknowledge and name the emotion you are feeling
3. Notice how your body feels—is there any tightness or discomfort? Where?
4. Now, place one or both hands on your heart
5. Take a deep breath and a long slow exhale
6. Intentionally bring kindness to yourself.
7. If it helps, imagine this kindness as a soft golden light that fills your chest. If this is difficult, imagine how you might comfort a dear friend who is suffering and turn that nurturing support toward yourself.
8. Take a few deep breaths with your hand on your heart
9. Relax and open your eyes

Mindfulness Apps:

- Calm
- Headspace
- Insight Timer
- Smiling Mind

Where do I feel activity:

Think about where in your body you feel different emotions. Where do you feel happiness, joy, love, sadness, frustration, anger, fear, etc. Think about colors that are associated with each emotion. Express it:



Mindfulness technique for kids

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc>

Moana Yoga: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y3gCrL_XIM

Relaxation Script for Younger Children

Hands & Arms Pretend you are squeezing a whole lemon in your left hand. Squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Repeat with other hand.

Arms and Shoulders Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay kitten, stretch again. Repeat.

Shoulder and Neck Now pretend you are a turtle. You're sitting out on a rock by a nice, peaceful pond, just relaxing in the warm sun. It feels nice and warm and safe here. Oh-Oh! You sense danger. Pull your head into your house. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears and push your head down into your shoulders. Hold in tight. It isn't easy to be a turtle in a shell. The danger is past now. You can come out into the warm sunshine and once again you can relax and feel the warm sunshine. Watch out now. More danger. Hurry pull your head back into your house and hold it tight. Repeat.

Jaw You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Repeat.

Face and Nose Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops here he comes back again. Repeat.

Stomach Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying there in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get ready. Repeat.

Legs and Feet Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep in to the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. Push down, spread your toes apart, and feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that is. It feels good to be relaxed. Repeat...

Monica Fitzgerald, Ph.D. TF-CBT Training

Promote SEL: <https://gozen.com/>

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Vast majority of children are “dandelions” - pretty resilient and able to deal with stress as it comes. About 20 percent of children are “orchids” - “the orchid child is

the child who shows great sensitivity and susceptibility to both bad and good environments.”

Dr. Boyce (2019) NPR’s Fresh Air

Help label what is happening:

Just acknowledging the recent changes to the children’s lives can feel validating, said Becky Kennedy, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in New York City. “With young kids, you can keep an ongoing list of things that have changed and things that have stayed the same,” Dr. Kennedy said. Brainstorm this list verbally with the kids — for example, “You used to go to a school building, that has changed, but you still have Mommy tucking you in every night, that’s the same.” By doing so, it will make them feel less alone in their feelings, because they’ll know they’re not the only one noticing that things aren’t the way they used to be.

Help identify feelings:



ABOUT FEELINGS

Listening, being present, and normalizing student feelings can help them process and move through and past their feelings.

Normalize	Help	Name	Don't try
Normalize other person's feelings: We all feel sad or lonely sometimes. I hear you when you say that you are feeling angry and frustrated	Help name feelings: it sounds/ appears that you may be feeling anxious, scared, lonely, etc	Name feelings, don't label the person: I feel frustrated vs. I am frustrated	Don't try to "save" the person or minimize their feelings: It's ok, don't be sad. It's not so bad. We are all feeling this.

Remember, when it comes to remote learning:

- Distance learning is a challenge for all age groups
- Spare time is probably going to involve a lot more screens
- To establish a routine they can stick with
- To have realistic expectations
- To let their kids be
- To work in bursts
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
- To do it their way
- To look for Bright Spots

Just for Fun:

Virtual Field Trips:

<https://www.parents.com/fun/activities/indoor/virtual-field-trips-kids-can-take-from-your-living-room/>

Free Printable Coloring Pages:

<https://www.parents.com/fun/printables/coloring-pages/free-coloring-pages-to-do-during-quarantine/>

On Line Jigsaw Puzzles:

- [click here](#) for young children;
- [click here](#) for elementary school age; and
- [click here](#) for youth version.

Family Activities to Try:

Make a movie night: Families can make their own movie tickets and create a movie list to enjoy movies together

The Mailbox: Parents and Kid can create in home mailboxes where family members can write letters or notes to one another; this can help build communication at home and allow the family to be vulnerable with another and share their feelings

Cooking with me: Parents and kids can create menu list together and make an in-home restaurant

Affirmation Jar: Families can color and design a jar to place positive notes to one another or read aloud daily

Additional Free Stuff:

The Arts:

The Met Opera – Free daily shows <https://www.metopera.org/>

Free streaming Broadway shows <https://www.playbill.com/article/15-broadway-plays-and-musicals-you-can-watch-on-stage-from-home>

Seattle Symphony – Free performances streaming <https://seattlesymphony.org/live>

Google Art – online art shows <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>

Free College-Level Courses:

Free online classes <https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/>

Exercise Classes:

Bread and Yoga – Free livestream class 1pm – 1:30pm Monday – Friday <https://www.breadandyoga.com/yoga/live-streamed-classes>

SLO Yoga – selected classes free online <https://www.sloyogacenter.com/online>

CorePower Yoga on Demand – free classes <https://www.corepoweryogaondemand.com/keep-up-your-practice>

Downdog Yoga

<https://www.downdogapp.com/schools> - free until July 1st for students

<https://www.downdogapp.com/healthcare> - free until July 1st for healthcare workers

Where to get help:

Crisis Help:

NYC WELL:

1.888.NYC.WELL (1.888.692.9355)

Text WELL to 65173

Chat at <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>

Crisis Text Line:

Text "Got5" to 741-741

<https://www.crisistextline.org/>

Domestic Violence:

NYS 24-hour DV Text Line: 844-997-2121

NYC 24-hour DV Hotline: 800-621-HOPE (4673)

Mental Tele-Health Services:

Astor:

1.866.ASTOR01

(1.866.278.6701)

NYPCC Child and Family Mental Health Services:

718.485.2100

CMBronx@nypcc.org

Jewish Board Family and Children Services:

844.663.2255