



Play-based Somatics Skill Building

Games that teach kids how their body responds to big emotions.



Important Statements:

These are the key educational points per program segment.

Move:

- Shaking or tremors is the way the body release stress hormones, calms itself down or readjusts to a normal state. You can help it along when you feel stress.
- When you balance or focus on coordination you have to pay close attention to what is going on internally, while also giving your body info about where you are physically in your environment. This focus is a quick and easy way to force your brain back to a logical state (the prefrontal cortex) using proprioception/interception.
- Slow movements like the pendulum swing help you connect your mind and body. Doing it fast is a quick way to release stress from anger and anxiety.

Stretch:

- When we practice consistent active movement, we encourage our brain to regularly release endorphins which helps improve our mood, keep us motivated and happy.
- Active movement activities also helps your body lower stress by promoting the release of hormones like cortisol.
- Most injuries happen in areas where there is a lack of movement so there is built up tension built also from tension that is stored from pent up unprocessed emotions.

Breathe:

- When we are stressed it's normal for us to inhale and hold in air. Unfortunately, by doing this we raise our heart rate and start the release of stress hormones. It's how our body reacts to danger but it also starts a circle of agitation inside you might not notice.
- Every time we inhale we raise our heart rate and increase the force of the heart. When we exhale, we achieve the opposite effect and cause our body to relax. Pursing your lips increases the strength of the calming effect over 30% so we calm our body faster.

Anger:

- When you use your opposite hand you have to pay close attention to what your hand is doing because it doesn't come naturally. This focus is a quick and easy way to force your brain back to a logical state (the prefrontal cortex).
- When you use your opposite hand you have to pay close attention to what your hand is doing because it doesn't come naturally. This focus is a quick and easy way to force your brain back to a logical state (the prefrontal cortex).

Emotion: Fear, Anxiety, Sadness

Skill: Breathe

Our body doesn't talk so it sends us signs about how it is feeling instead. When we are stress it is normal for us to inhale and hold in air. Unfortunately, doing makes us raise our heart rate and trigger the release of stress hormones. It hurts our body because it's constantly on alert. Controlling our breathing is the first step of managing stress and we can learn the 2 most important things to focus on for strong breathing! Let's play a game that will teach us how to get the stress out of our lungs:

Skill: Breathe deeply through your nose while watching for your belly to push outward. Push your lips like you are blowing out a candle and really push the air out. Repeat 3 times or keep going if needed.

What's happening: Taking deep breathes helps get the stress chemicals out of our blood and that helps us feel better.

Let's Play: My Basketball Buddy

Duration: 10 Minutes

Recommended Ages: 6+ yrs

Group Size: Any

Materials: Basketball, Mini Basketballs, Straws, Course Materials

1. Instructors start by explaining that breathing buddies can help us make sure we are using our belly to breath correctly. Our basketball is the best breathing buddy!
2. Have kids hold the basketball in front of them so the ball is touching their belly then have them breathe deeply and notice how the basketball moves.
3. Remind them that they can use the natural way we hold our basketball to correct stress based breathing patterns.
4. Create a mini obstacle course using the cones, hoops or bean bags provided.
5. Give each child a straw and mini basketball while they are lined up at the obstacle course's start line.
6. Students will have to use the deep breathing and pursed lips skills to best navigate the obstical course. Making it to the finish line means kids have practiced engaging their lungs and controlling their breathe's pacing to move about!



Teacher's Guide: **The Breath Skill**

In the middle of breathing difficulty the most important skill a child can use to regulate their breathe is to focus on belly generated movement and a strong exhale. That's because stressed breathing from strong emotions begin from the chest, instead of the belly. Also, strong exhales bring more oxygen into the system which clears the blood from stress related chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol. Teaching a child to focus on their stomach and pushing air out of their system is what helps us feel better faster and even assist in controlling asthma attacks!

Start by reading the top game paragraph. Explain each skill using the description below before beginning the game instructions found on the game page. While playing the games remind children that the two most important things to remember in a healthy breathe is belly movement and strong exhales that push the air out because it helps them balance their body inside and feel better quickly.

Skill:

Breathe deeply through your nose while watching for your belly to push outward. Push your lips like you are blowing out a candle and really push the air out. Repeat 3 times or keep going if needed.

What's happening:

Belly breathes break our body out of stress based chest breathing. Pushing air out actually helps get more oxygen in so the stress chemicals work their way out of our blood and we feel better.

The Science

Belly derived breathing:

Breathing is the internal dialogue of our nervous system. Inhaling makes us alert and ready for action, while exhaling calms us down, stimulates digestion and relaxes the muscles. When faced with stress, it is perfectly normal for us to inhale and hold in air. Unfortunately, by doing so we raise our heart rate and trigger the release of stress hormones, which puts the body in a vicious circle of agitation. Conscious control over breathing is therefore the first step towards managing stress and work-related burdens. Shallow breathing forces the heart into an abnormal rhythm and stimulates the sympathetic tone of the nervous system, which is known to occur in a number of cardiovascular conditions.

Strong Exhaling:

Every time we inhale we raise our heart rate and increase the contractile force of the heart. When we exhale, we achieve the opposite effect and cause our body to relax. Pursed lip breathing means exhaling through pursed lips which forces out 2 or 3 decilitres more air than exhaling through nose. A more efficient exhalation leads to deeper breathing, also referred to as belly breathing or diaphragmatic breathing.

Citations:

Move:

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3. Bushman, Barbara A. Ph.D., FACSM, ACSM-CEP, ACSM-EP, ACSM-CPT; Robinett, Ally B.S., ACSM-EP- *Neuromotor Training- Background and Benefits* - ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal 26(4):p 5-9, 7/8 2022. | DOI: 10.1249/FIT.0000000000000772

Stretch:

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2. DeSimone, Grace T. B.A., ACSM-CPT, ACSM-GEI; *Functional Fitness- Strong for life-* ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal 26(4):p 4, 7/8 2022. | DOI: 10.1249/FIT.0000000000000785

Squeeze:

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Non-Dominant Hand

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2. Alex Picot-Annand, PN2, Holistic Nutritionist. *How to eat until 80% full It builds mindfulness and improves digestion, too.* <https://www.precisionnutrition.com/eat-to-80-percent-full-infographic>.

Breathe:

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2. Xiao Ma, et al *The Effect of Diaphragmatic Breathing on Attention, Negative Affect and Stress in Healthy Adults*. Front Psychol. 2017; 8: 874.

