

Relaxation Techniques for Teens



Socialization and maintaining a sense of connectedness to others, is an important component of stress reduction. Socialization increases a hormone that decreases anxiety levels and make us feel more confident in our ability to cope with stressors. Among other realities, the new suggested restrictions on social contact is having a particularly big impact on teens. Teens thrive on peer contact and connections. Fortunately, technology is helping them, and all of us, to stay in touch. In addition to digital connections, teens can also gain great benefits from incorporating relaxations techniques into their daily schedule.

The Power of Yoga for Anxiety

How does yoga relieve anxiety? Researchers theorize that the mindful movement and breathing done in yoga activates the relaxation response. Yoga moves us out of the sympathetic nervous system (“fight or flight”) and into the parasympathetic nervous system (“rest and digest”) system.

A Yoga Relaxation Exercise

Child’s pose is a simple yoga posture that is known for its ability to encourage relaxation. It is an ideal relaxation skill for teens. Here’s how to practice Child’s pose.

1. From hands and knees, lower your hips toward your heels.

2. Spread your knees wide apart while keeping your big toes touching. Soften the belly onto the tops of the thighs.
3. Rest your forehead on the floor and rest your torso on your thighs. Knees can be together or apart.
4. Extend your arms forward, with palms facing down, or bring them back to rest alongside your thighs, with palms facing up.
5. Breathe in for a slow count of five, then breathe out for a slow count of five.
6. Stay in the pose for as long as you wish.

The Breath: One of the Most Powerful Relaxation Skills for Teens

Conscious, controlled breathing is one of the easiest and most immediate ways to relax the nervous system. Slowing the breath moves us into a state of relaxation.

Square Breathing Exercise for Relaxation

Square Breathing is also known as four-square breathing or box breathing. This deep breathing exercise can serve as a go-to relaxation skill for teens.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair, with your feet on the floor and hands in your lap.
2. Inhale slowly through the nose for a count of four, allowing the air to fill your belly.
3. Hold the breath in for a count of four.
4. Exhale slowly through the mouth for a count of four.
5. As you breathe, visualize a healing blue or white light washing over your body. Finally, hold the breath for a count of four.
6. Repeat the sequence for four minutes.
7. Ideally, repeat the exercise for four minutes, four times a day.

Relaxation Skills for Teens: Meditation

Research shows that mindfulness-based exercises can help decrease anxiety, depression, and stress.

Basic Mindfulness Meditation

Here are directions for a basic meditation that can be added to a teen's toolkit of relaxation techniques.

1. Sit quietly with eyes closed and breathe normally.
2. Bring your attention to your breath. Repeat the phrases "breathing in, breathing out" to help keep the mind focused on inhaling and exhaling.
3. When a thought comes into your mind, simply label it as "a thought" and allow it to float out of your mind like a cloud moving across the sky.
4. Then gently bring your attention back to your breath. Practice for as long or as short a time as you wish. Even a few minutes of meditation can make a huge difference in your day and in your mindset.

Relaxation Skills for Teens: Music

Scientists have found that rhythm has a significant impact on the nervous system. Specifically, simply listening to music has a measurable positive effect on the psychobiological stress system.

Time in Nature Enhances Relaxation

A growing body of research validates that time spent outdoors in nature can serve as a powerful relaxation technique for teens. This could be a nice family activity that would be of benefit to all.

Positive Visualization Builds Relaxation Skills for Teens

Mental imagery and visualization are also powerful tools for dissolving physical and mental tension. When teenagers practice positive visualization, they can learn how to regulate their emotions and relieve stress.

Body Scan Visualization for Relaxation

1. Find a private, calm space and get settled in a comfortable position, seated or lying on your back.
2. Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths.
3. Imagine yourself in a beautiful location, one of your favorite places to be. It might be a beach, the woods, or a cozy spot in your home or a loved one's home.
4. Visualize the environment around you. Imagine the sound of the waves, or the rustling of the wind in the trees. Feel the warmth of the sun on your face, or the coolness of the ocean spray.
5. Stay in the scene, visualizing every aspect of it.
6. Remember that you can return to this place whenever you want or need to relax. This visualization is especially helpful when teens are feeling tense, unfocused, or upset. It empowers them to practice self-awareness. As a result, they can focus on consciously relaxing the body to calm the mind.

Teens can draw from a wide range of relaxation exercises. It takes practice and maybe some encouragement, but by incorporating these techniques into their daily life, they can develop a set of coping skills to reach for during times of stress that can have a long-lasting positive impact.

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