

Breath Awareness Practices

Flower Hands Breath

With this practice, breath and movement are connected as attention is focused on the breath.

We are going to turn our hands into flowers. Sit in a comfortable position and place your hands palm up on your knees. Close your fingertips together. Your fingers are like the petals of a flower. As you breathe in, spread your fingers apart and your flowers bloom. Breathe out and gently close your fingers. Feel your flower bloom with your breath. Inhale, flower blooms. Exhale, flower closes. Imagine what color your flower is. Close your eyes if you like, and maybe even smell your flower.

Continue for several rounds.

Elevator Breath

Elevator breath is a great way to practice breath awareness and controlling the breath. It's also easy and fun to do, especially the visualization part. We're going to put our breath on an elevator!

To begin, sit comfortably and place one hand palm down in your lap. This is the ground floor. Inhale, and as you do, raise your hand to the first "floor" (about belly button high). Pause, then inhale a little more, raising the elevator to the second floor (about chest high). Pause, and then one more inhale to the third floor, (nose high). Pause, and it's time for the elevator to go all the way down as you exhale back to the ground floor. Let's ride the elevator again!

Repeat 3 to 5 times

Balloon Breath

Balloon Breath by Mira Binzen of Global Family Yoga

Squat on the floor. You are a balloon! Hug your knees and breathe out to squeeze all the air out of your balloon.

Inhale to inflate. Breathe in as you stand up and stretch up, bringing your hands all the way up over your head, filling your balloon with air.

Let all the air out. Breathe out (you can even make a hissing sound which will encourage children to exhale slowly) as you flutter to the ground like a balloon losing air, until you are lying on the floor.

Let's do it again! What color balloon are you? Imagine this color as you squeeze all the air out, then inhale to inflate, and then exhale fluttering to the ground. You likely will want to repeat several times. After the last round, lie on the ground and rest quietly.

Reach for the Sun

Reach for the Sun breath awareness is a fun and easy breathing practice that warms the body and children love it.

Begin in a standing position. Plant your feet firmly on the ground. As you inhale, reach up with your right hand and grab a piece of the sun. Place it in your belly with a “huh” sound as you exhale. Reach up with your left hand and, as you inhale, grab another piece of the sun. Place it in your belly with a “huh!” Keep alternating one hand up then the other, each time inhaling as you reach and exhaling with a huh! as you place it in your belly. Do you feel the heat you are capturing? Do you feel the warmth in your belly?

Belly Breathing

Place your hands on your belly and inhale through your nose. Breathe out through the nose. Interlace your fingers. You may notice your fingers spread out as you breathe in and come together (contract) as you breathe out.

The Hoberman Sphere is a great visual tool that helps us focus on our breath. The sphere shows us exactly how our body breathes. When we breathe in, our chest and ribs expand like the sphere. When we breathe out, our ribs and chest contract, coming back down and in. If you have a Hoberman Sphere, it is a wonderful visual for children. They can carefully hold it, expanding and contracting it along with their own breath.

You can do belly breathing with a lovey at nap time. While lying down, place your lovey or a small pillow on your belly. Take a nice breath in and exhale slowly. Notice how your lovey rises and falls with each inhale and exhale. We want our loveys to have a safe smooth ride, so every-so-gently-and-slowly breathe in and breathe out.

Count the Breath

Count each breath backwards from 10 to 1.
Inhale 10, exhale 10
Inhale 9, exhale 9
Inhale 8, exhale 8 and so on down to one.

For very young children you can start at 5 or even 3. Alternatively, use the same method but count forward. Have children check in with themselves afterwards. How do you feel? How does it feel in your body?

Milkshake (Kati Chakrasana)

Stand with your feet about hip distance apart. Let your arms swing loose as you twist side to side, turning to look behind you. Your arms swing like they are blending a giant milkshake. Everyone makes a suggestion for what they would put in their milkshake. When everyone has made their suggestion, we tip the imaginary blender up, raising both arms up, drink it all down, glug, glug, glug, and fold forward with a great sigh of satisfaction. Yum!