

# **Help Kids Cope**

## **with Stress & Trauma**



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**Inspired**  **Living**  
**INTERNATIONAL, LLC**

# Help Kids Cope with Stress & Trauma

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*This book is dedicated to the children of the world ...  
may their lives be peaceful and harmonious.*



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# Introduction



Thank you for having the wisdom to read this book. You probably recognize that a global stress epidemic threatens to engulf our children. It appears in places that once were safe havens: schools, churches, sports activities, and playgrounds. It comes from our toys and tools: televisions, computers, video games, cars, and music. Its toxicity permeates the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the ground on which we walk. Even the noise of living is stressful.

*Stress makes children feel unsafe. Children who feel safe are naturally resilient and are more likely to look for positive ways to resolve problems. They are particularly less prone to look to violence as a solution. This has immediate local as well as worldwide implications.*

It is up to us to help our children most lovingly and effectively grow into healthy, whole adults. *Help Kids Cope* provides answers for parents, caregivers, teachers, and therapists by suggesting simple, easily used techniques that will have an immediate and long-term impact in reducing the effects of stress and trauma.

*Help Kids Cope* teaches that the best way to overcome stress is with a natural and healthy lifestyle that includes caring for the whole child—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Our intention is that children strengthen their internal resources with your assistance and guidance. To withstand modern-day stressors, children must learn to regulate their emotional responses, and develop resilient attitudes. We

have written *Help Kids Cope* with the understanding that the mind and body are one dynamic energy system.

Around the world, traditional medicines have always perceived this interconnection of the mind, body and soul, thus treating mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual sickness as symptoms of the same system. Western medical science also supports the concept of wholeness as evidenced by discoveries in cellular biology, immunology, neuropsychology, and other fields, which now acknowledge how energy systems coordinate thoughts, feelings, and biochemistry.

How does this concept of wholeness translate into parenting? What does it mean for rearing happy, successful children? This book tells you. For example, we now know how to use touching and bonding to provide relief for the hurt, stressed, or sick child. We know what emotions to nurture for positive mental and physical health. We know what *negative* emotions and limiting beliefs correlate to poor health and depression. Better yet, we know how to change them.

Thoughts, feelings, and sensations are functions of natural processes. From this fact, research tells us it is now possible to teach our children and ourselves how to thrive instead of merely survive in the world.

Observing and cooperating with the feelings and energies of our mind and body can produce health and flexibility, and make it possible for us to enjoy the optimal conditions for growth.

The fundamental characteristic of stress is the body and mind's inability to integrate what it is exposed to. There are various levels of stress symptoms organized on a stress continuum. The stress continuum indicates the state of arousal one is at in a given point of time and looks like this:

## The Stress Continuum

**Tension → Stress → Anxiety → Angst → Panic → Trauma**

The key point in everything you will read in *Help Kids Cope* is that stress is the underlying cause of all major illness and disease. It isn't just the fact that we are under stress. It is the fact that stress slowly erodes the energy of the body and mind over time unless we can contain the stress and renew the vitality of the mind and body on a daily basis.

By the time you see stress symptoms in a child at home, school, day care center, camp, or at a sports event, you are really observing the signs of an internal struggle that has been going on for quite some time. Treating the behavioral symptoms alone is ineffective; you must direct your attention to the *cause* if there is to be a permanent resolution.

Examples of the major stressors that have an impact on us in this modern age tend to be the toxins produced by three things: our **environment**, our **relationships**, and the **choices we make**. You have control, by choice, over some of these factors in your child's life, and others you have limited or no control over. That is where your personal coping resources come into play in dealing with stress factors that include your physical home environment as well as issues involving tension, stress, anxiety, angst, panic, and trauma.

For example, Caron Goode's father was a heavy smoker when she was young. She experienced asthma and allergies, which doctors concluded was due to environmental causes like dust, night air, allergens, pets, and so on. When her father quit smoking, she "miraculously" outgrew the asthma and allergies. Only years later did medical researchers correlate the link between second-hand cigarette smoke and respiratory problems. This illustrates environmental toxicity. Other examples of

environmental toxicity are chemicals and poisons used in the home, or the effects of war- and weather-related disasters.

Emotional toxicity occurs in relationships involving alcoholism, psychological or physical abuse, or a lack of emotional communication and expression. Jenny tells her mom that she doesn't remember much about her childhood. Her mom reminds her of the good times and is thankful that her daughter does not remember her father's angry temper, or his physical assaults and verbal abuse.

Toxicity that stems from our personal choices is reflected in our lifestyles. You can be addicted to substances, work, time, food choices, spending money, driving fast, sex, worry, television or any other habit that seems to affect your choices. Addiction is anything that dominates or compromises your ability to choose freely how best to respond. That is how you know you are addicted—when you don't feel like you have freedom to choose. Something else has taken over! Toxicity creates stress and tension—meaning that your lifestyle choices have become the source of the stress.

*Help Kids Cope* leads you to empower children to *consistently and effectively* deal with life by strengthening their internal resources. We also desire to empower parents and other adults to help make our world a safer and saner place for our children and ourselves. Empowerment through commitment and knowledge allows parents to meet with life on their own terms rather than becoming mere bystanders or “victims” of life's circumstances. Our empowerment enables us to fulfill our responsibility in preparing our children for the opportunities and challenges of the future.

When we talk with parents at seminars, on radio shows and through email, we constantly hear, “I just don't have time” or, “I don't know how.” We understand because we've been there. We've said the same thing at different times in our lives. We would like to make it eas-

ier for everyone by helping you gain a better understanding of the issues at hand and how to apply the information in this book.

When you begin each day, you have the opportunity to make choices for your health, communication, and relationships, which your children do not have. You often make their choices for them, instilling your values and beliefs and being the role model for their coping skills. As a result of reading this book, you will have more choices from which to choose and more tools to apply to your specific needs.

Let us remind you of that which you already know—this is crucial to successfully implement a program to truly help kids cope. It takes courage and commitment to care so much about your children that you'll stop making excuses about having no time, too much work, or the pressure of other responsibilities. Read this book thoroughly and reorient your thinking. Really understand that you have the power to make choices. Your children's mental health, as well as their physical well-being, depends upon you and how you respond, learning how not to be helpless, depressed, or hopeless in the face of everyday adversity.

We feel privileged and blessed to be able to share this information with you. Your ability to use this information and share it with your children will provide new, more effective choices, helping both you and your children embrace the present and thrive in the future.

You *can* develop your natural resilience and strong inner resources. You *can* choose positive coping responses. You *can* be in charge, and you need to choose to do so in order to help your children take control of their lives in a creative and balanced way.

This book provides a model for creating a healthy lifestyle by explaining to you precisely how the body and mind interact with a stressful world. It then suggests activities you can do to manage your energy and help your children regulate theirs.

We wrote this book to help you teach coping skills to your children. It is really much more than learning to cope. It is our intention that you teach children to make appropriate choices for their health, lifestyle, and happiness.

*Help Kids Cope with Stress & Trauma* is the second trade paperback in the Inspired Parenting series. The first book, *Nurture Your Child's Gift, Inspired Parenting* discusses the three building blocks for success: self-esteem, empowerment, and wholeness. All research indicates that a child who copes well with stressors also has good emotional skills and self-confidence. You'll want to read the first book in the Inspired Parenting series to deal with development of these traits.

As in the previous book, *Help Kids Cope* addresses the needs of the whole child, which includes physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Since the body, mind, and spirit are one dynamic system of energy, you cannot ignore any aspect. One part of the system both affects and interacts with the others. So, when addressing stress as the inability of the mind-body system to integrate whatever it is exposed to, you will find both the philosophy and the appropriate approaches for stress management that direct the whole parent as well as the whole child.

To take the best advantage of this book, we offer the following suggestions:

1. **Digest the new concepts of health, stress, and coping.** You'll find that the definitions and the guidelines we offer will make your life easier. You'll also find that they may require a re-evaluation of your values and priorities.
2. **Take nothing on our word alone.** Of all the suggestion in this book, you'll be drawn to some because you are familiar with them or they feel safe to you. Feeling safe and secure in what you're doing is an important point of reference. When you are



ready, stretch your boundaries a little more. You might think that you are not very good at storytelling; yet, try it on for size and have some fun. It may be the one technique that most favorably shapes your child's coping ability.

3. **Make notes and write in the book** as you read along about how the information and techniques can be applied to your specific situation, your children, and your family. Then as new situations arise, the inspiration you've gleaned from the pages will be there.
4. **Be consistent in your reading and practice** some of these new attitudes, thoughts, and actions. Read some, digest, and then come back for more inspiration. Set up a practice of reading this book a little at a time for a specific time period over a month or even two.
5. **Good information is useless unless you apply it.** Involve yourself in helping children develop healthy lifestyles and resilient coping skills. Like any good action plan, you need the desire, the approach, the timeline, and the steps to complete it. Don't wait. Start now.

*Bon vivre!*

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# 1



## Coping is the Means, Resilience is the Outcome

*There cannot be a stressful crisis next week.  
My schedule is already full.*

Henry Kissinger

Jill and her seven-year-old daughter are crossing six lanes of traffic when a speeding car hits them broadside. Their car spins wildly in circles, and Jill enters a state of heightened awareness. She watches in slow motion as her daughter bounces forward and strikes her head on the dashboard. Then she watches the rag-doll effect as her daughter's neck wrenches against the seat back. Then her daughter slumps down and Jill's insides turn to jelly.

Leonard considers himself very lucky to be a stay-at-home dad. He walks several blocks each day to drop off and pick up his son from fourth grade at the neighborhood school. One Tuesday afternoon, he arrives about two minutes late to observe a schoolyard bullying session. His sensitive son is the target. Some kids are teasing his son, kicking his books around and emptying out his backpack. Leonard grows fierce inside at the thought of bullies hurting his son.

Smiling Nathan is six years old and had surgery for the removal of a malignant tumor. He is going home today. His parents wait with him until the nurse brings the wheel chair to roll him down to their car. His parents feel his courage. They marvel at his ability to smile and cheer up

those around him. Yet, they fear for their future, his happiness and health, and their ability to remain stable and support him through his illness.

Like many of you, these are parents of children who have experienced trauma in their lives. Their common bond is the fierce love they have for one another, as well as intermittent feelings of helplessness when they want to make life easier for their children and realize they can't. At times, such feelings leave us parents tied up in knots, angry, worried, or bewildered.

Everyday events that may not be as traumatic or intense can also leave us with these feelings. Doc Lew Childre, author of *The Heartmath Solution* says, "The irony is this: Our bodies react to stress in exactly the same way whether or not we have a good reason for being stressed. The body doesn't care if we're right or wrong. Even in those times when we feel perfectly justified in getting angry—when we tell ourselves it's the *healthy* response—we pay for it just the same."<sup>1</sup> That is, until we learn to manage the energy of our mind and body for relaxation and resilience.

Stress and tension are so pervasive that they have leaked into our communities as toxic emotional wastes in the form of angry drivers, school shootings and in less dramatic ways as depressed, anxious, and over-scheduled family members. *Help Kids Cope* will show you how to transform and liberate stress, turning it into a creative challenge to regain a healthful and positive lifestyle.

We have the ability and can make the choices to create optimistic attitudes, compassionate hearts, and a free flow of communication in ourselves, our children, and our communities. It all boils down to what professionals call self-regulation—the ability to choose our responses, control negative thoughts and emotions, and interact effectively with the world for our personal happiness and success. The problem is that life

keeps happening, traumas occur, and the negative news is broadcast across the globe all day, every day.

The authors propose that you can achieve “self-regulation” by establishing a system that manages your energy through healthful choices for the body, emotions, mind, and spirit. All of the approaches that we suggest in this book deal with different aspects of your wholeness. Developing one aspect of your wholeness will affect all aspects of yourself and, in fact, your entire lifestyle.

For example, walking, as physical exercise, expends tension and makes us feel better. The act of praying or extending a kindness opens our hearts to another and we stop feeling so self-centered, worried, and depressed. Eating organic foods and breathing deeply and effectively gives our bodies appropriate fuel, and also balances our emotions. Talking positively to ourselves improves our moods and outlooks by engaging the subconscious mind to create positive biochemical responses. These positive affirmations have a strong effect on both the body and the mind.

Building resilience and coping with adversity—whether chronic or acute—resonates in our choice of lifestyle and has specific perspectives that we’ll discuss in the following chapters. You have the ability to make lifestyle choices that will promote self-confidence and result in greater resilience. This involves developing a system for yourself and your children that deals with healthy and affirming responses to life. **The first step to coping with stress is to nourish your body, mind and spirit with enhancing, positive, and supportive information, oxygen, energy, and food.**

## Coping Is a Learned Skill

In the last fifteen years, scientists have studied how children cope, and have concluded that there are two major points to consider: (1) observ-

ing how children cope under stress in the present tells us how children will compensate and make adjustments to deal with stress later in life; (2) the development of a characteristic or habitual pattern in a child can be a precursor to the patterns that are established in adult life.<sup>2</sup> We can help children develop coping skills **now** that will affect their entire lives and help them become more secure adults.

**Coping is the child's ability to consciously respond to the stress of trauma, anxiety, or the impact of emotional events.** But what do the words “consciously respond” imply? Do children always have to keep their wits about them? If disaster strikes, do they have to be on top of it? If stress is part of life, then do they have to walk around with eyes wide open trying to avoid it? What about events beyond their control? Are they always expected to handle things?

No, they are not. Coping, or consciously taking action, is an *ongoing process of learning to respond emotionally to stressors*. Think of coping as the continual process of the mind and body learning to integrate and stabilize all of its responses within its environment. The emotional mechanisms of the mind and body continue to develop through early adolescence, meaning that we have time and resources before us for achieving our goals for our children and ourselves. In addition, the body/mind system is a continually growing and changing organism, offering us life-long opportunities to develop and transform, never needing to feel trapped or like a victim of time or genetics.

Viewing coping as an ongoing process makes our job easier. As parents and caregivers, teachers or therapists, our task is to help children manage their emotions and regulate their responses. This includes establishing a lifestyle that enables flexibility, acceptance, and adaptability.

Research shows that certain emotional responses like optimism, empathy, confidence, and the ability to observe a situation help us deal more effectively with stressful events. Flexibility is an excellent coping

skill because we do not always have control of the event that causes stress or trauma. In addition, being able to accept a situation is a better coping skill than helplessness or depression. Adaptability is being able to choose or change a course of action as the stress-producing situation alters.

Coping skills tend to fall into two categories and depend upon whether a person can actively engage in the situation or not. (1) Actively engaging an adverse circumstance can include facing the situation, observing it, gathering information, seeking answers, generating possibilities, or seeking support. (2) If one cannot actively engage, then coping includes escapism, avoidance, wishing things were different, denial, or the use of distractions to remove one's self from the situation.

Depending upon the circumstances, a person may deal with stress in different ways, rising to the occasion to the best of his ability. When a mother told her daughter, Hannah, that she had cancer, Hannah wanted to respond with compassion, but she burst into tears instead. The thought of her mother suffering sent Hannah to bed for several days in lethargy while she pondered it all. In reality, the stress sent her into shock, and the mind and body retreated for healing and integration. After three days, she got up, composed herself, and arranged to care for her mother during her surgery.

No one coping skill is better than another, as we have to consider the context of the situation as well as the temperament of the person involved. The context defines the framework within which we can help our children choose the most effective responses.

For example, we asked five sets of parents with elementary-aged sons to respond to this scenario as if their sons were part of it: Their son goes to class, and notices that five of his classmates hang around together, act tough, and tease other male students. These boys "act like a club." The son is afraid of these guys, so he wants to dress like they do,

“camouflaging” himself. He doesn’t want to answer in class or show his intelligence in fear that they will tease or attack him on the playground.

The mothers and fathers had different responses. The five mothers made suggestions to let the boy dress like his peers, show his intelligence, or find an extracurricular activity at which he could excel. On the other hand, four of the five fathers suggested that the boy needed to learn to handle himself in case a fight was inevitable.

Observe that the context of the situation dictated how the fathers would help their sons learn to defend themselves, while the mothers wanted to provide less direct and more self-affirming coping skills. In the end, the son will have to face this situation on his own, and will be responsible for the final outcome. How will he learn to cope if each parent has a different approach? In addition, these differences of opinion add to the child’s conflict.

We hope that this example emphasizes (1) how important clear communication among family members must be, and (2) how the child who must ultimately face the situation, learns that he can control his options and choices. Our task as adults is to help him make effective choices. Variables like gender, age, values, beliefs, and a child’s unique temperament all influence the boy’s choices.

Family planning and strategy sessions are a good way to deal with the specific issues. When Ray and Liz moved into a two-story colonial home in Virginia, they marveled at the expanse of green provided by the national forest that surrounded them. However, the current drought caused them to worry about forest fires, and they decided to have a family meeting to plan what to do in case one broke out near them.

Their coping technique was to create strategies that included what each person would take, who would be responsible for the pets, and how they could develop alternate exit routes if the stairs or the front door was blocked by flames or smoke. Planning ahead for what to do with a



potential problem like this is excellent for children. They will feel safer and more secure knowing three things: what to do, where to go, and that they are part of a family whose members are striving for the same goal. Having a plan gives a sense of cohesion and preparation that supports the whole family. Plans also decrease the tendency to feel anxiety that may arise when contemplating possible hardship. In times of adversity, families can strengthen their resources to maintain accord and communication. In the book, *Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation*, the authors identified eight categories of these personal resources for families:

- ∞ The innate intelligence of family members
- ∞ Knowledge and skills
- ∞ Personality traits
- ∞ Physical, spiritual, and emotional stamina
- ∞ A sense of mastery – as in a belief that one has control in life circumstances
- ∞ Self-esteem
- ∞ Sense of coherence
- ∞ Ethnic identity and cultural background of the family<sup>3</sup>

If your family faces crises, use the above checklist to identify your personal resources as a group, then determine if you need assistance or help from outside your family group. Next, develop your strategies, involving each person as you can. The sense of camaraderie and caring builds the family strength.

**The second step to coping with adversity is to help children manage their emotions and regulate their responses. This includes establishing a lifestyle that promotes flexible and adaptable attitudes.**

## What Is Effective Coping?

We have defined coping as an ongoing process of learning to adjust and integrate what is presented to the mind and body. A child's ability to integrate and cope effectively leads to the proficient development and competent use of self-resources.

Children acquire competencies and self-assurance within a specific context. For example, a child who moves every two years because the army reassigns his military family becomes competent at interpersonal skills by making new friends.

Children who have experienced the death of a family member might cope with grief through faith or by finding the support of a mentor. We are aware of one young woman who confronted the neighborhood bullies by using her martial arts skills. Competence, then, is a learned skill that accesses personal resources gained by coping with stress, and by the body and mind's increasing ability to integrate stressors.

It is good to know that the integration process helps our children deal effectively with adversity. Yet, how do you as a parent, teacher, therapist, or caregiver know that a child's current coping skills are effective? What do you look for?

Researchers believe that the result of consistent successful integration of stressors creates emotional resilience. In addition, "children who cope well were also found to rate higher in peer-related social status, engaged in more socially appropriate behavior, had capacity for empathy, had fewer behavioral problems, and exhibited less negative emotionality."<sup>4</sup>

As children mature and develop their coping skills, you will notice their increased ability to solve problems, engage in new activities, and use positive self-talk for personal affirmation. They'll also develop greater flexibility in responding to life, and increase their cognitive skills.

Children may feel ineffective when they have no control over the situation causing stress, such as natural disasters, school shootings, bully-

ing, and abuse. Our challenge in these situations is to rally round the children so they do not feel helpless. When situations like trauma or illness are beyond our children's control, good coping skills involve your support, your communication, and positive self-talk that will provide security in situations over which you have no control. If the child feels like a failure in dealing with the situation, help her glean what she can from the process she is experiencing. Blame is not an option here.

An effort to manage one's emotions is highly correlated to success in future endeavors. A child's inability or lack of desire or motivation to regulate her emotional responses correlates with more significant emotional or psychological problems and the dysfunctional patterns they create. This may require a therapeutic intervention.

We believe that normal children have the ability to determine which of their thoughts and behaviors are beyond their control and which they can control. This factor becomes important when you are helping children develop skills like deeper breathing, positive self-talk, and other self-regulatory responses to break the stress cycle.

For example, an eight-year-old child saw the waters of the nearby creek encroach upon her house. She ran to her parents, who were inside their home, and started to scream that the water was coming. However when she opened her mouth, nothing came out. She internally felt that she was screaming, "Hurry. Come see!" When no sound came, she ran to her father, grabbed him by the hand, and pulled him up from his chair and out the front door to see the event.

She had no voluntary control over her body's frozen voice as a response to her fear. However, she was able to recognize that, and compensate by choosing to physically pull her father outside.

**The third step to coping with stress is helping children understand their body signals, and determine which of them they can control. If they cannot control these symptoms and signals, we can help them**

**learn to compensate and find a different way to integrate and use the information.**

## **The Stress Continuum**

We use the term continuum to describe a model of symptoms that occur when the mind and body have difficulty with or cannot integrate what it encounters in the environment. Lack of integration is the first step towards discomfort and disease.

Imagine a straight line, with tension at one end, followed by stress, anxiety, angst, panic, and finally trauma. Thinking about stress as being on a continuum illustrates the accumulating intensity of each level. When our mind and body cannot integrate stressors, we become continually stimulated. Stress is a form of arousal and arousal exists on a continuum.

### **The Stress Continuum**

**Tension → Stress → Anxiety → Angst → Panic → Trauma**

This continuum implies that as tension builds, stress becomes more apparent. As stress increases, it can lead to anxiety. Heightened anxiety turns into angst or develops into panic behavior. When the mind and body energies are totally worn down or depleted, trauma may be the result.

“A certain degree of arousal is necessary as it serves as a motivator, but if there is too much it inhibits performance.” Rodney Miller, mental health services administrator for Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, explained, “The stress continuum indicates the state of arousal one is at in a given point of time.”

A state of arousal occurs when anything acts to stimulate the body and mind. That can include everything from the reaction of our senses to sensory enticements, to the nutrients in our food, emotional events, or toxins and traumas that impact the body. To correctly assess stress factors, it is important to understand how the mind and body function in their normal state (refer to Chapter Three for this information).

Knowing where the different levels of stress fall on the continuum helps to determine how effective a specific type of intervention will be. For instance, when a caregiver learns that a child is suffering trauma symptoms, the intervention will be different than that used if a child is merely experiencing tension.

In the next chapter, you will learn more about the impact of each level of the stress continuum. To conclude this section, here is the next step for coping: **The fourth step to coping with stress is to educate or inform yourself of all your alternatives and then make the best choice for your circumstances.**

## Summary of Chapter 1

- ∞ How we view children coping with stress gives us good clues as to how children can adjust later in life.
- ∞ The development of a characteristic pattern of a child can be a precursor of patterns in adulthood.
- ∞ Coping is the child's ability to intentionally respond to stress, trauma, anxiety, or another external impactful event.
- ∞ It is easier to think of coping as an ongoing process of learning to respond emotionally to the stressors of life.
- ∞ Coping skills tend to fall into two categories and depend upon whether or not a person can actively engage the situation.
- ∞ Actively engaging the situation can include facing the situation, observing the situation, gathering information, seeking answers, generating possibilities, or seeking support and solace.
- ∞ Not being able to actively engage the situation includes going away, avoiding, wishing it were different, denying it is happening, distracting self from the situation.
- ∞ A child's effective coping integration leads to the development of a competence, which is an ability, a trait, or resources at which the child is now proficient.
- ∞ Researchers believe that the result of continual successful integration is resilience, the ability to effectively respond to stress and adversity.
- ∞ We believe that normal children have the ability to determine which of their thoughts and behaviors are beyond their control and which are under their personal control.

## 2



### Holding Tension and Gaining Strength

*The difficulties, hardships and trials of life, the obstacles... are positive blessings. They knit the muscles more firmly, and teach self-reliance.*

William Matthews

Resilient people are optimistic and action-oriented. When confronted with adversity, they look for the chance to learn from it and start to think of ways to improve the situation. Children who are confident in their coping skills can “hold the tension.” We use this expression to describe life situations that cause minimal mind and body arousal, and motivate us to take positive action. Like the delicate balance that a tightrope walker achieves in her art, we can learn during adversity to hold the tension or find a middle road—the delicate balance between being motivated and seeing opportunity or being in fear and seeing difficulties.

We cannot overstate the detrimental effects of continued pressure and stress upon children. Paradoxically, the act of coping and learning to hold the tension of various states of arousal leads to competence in handling our emotions and choosing appropriate responses.

In this chapter, you will learn about the six components of the stress continuum as well as the symptoms of each one. You’ll also understand about normal tension and stress for each age group of children. This way, you’ll recognize any symptoms along the stress continuum within your children and know how to help them cultivate appropriate coping responses. The first step on the stress continuum is tension.



## **Two Different Biological Systems**

"The brain chemicals that generate enthusiasm for a challenge are different from those that respond to stress and threat. They are at work when our energy is high, our effort maximal, and our mood positive. The biochemistry of these productive states revolves around activating the sympathetic nervous system and the adrenals to secrete chemicals called catecholamines.

"There are two distinct biological systems at work for good stress and bad stress. The catecholamines, adrenalin, and noradrenaline arouse us to action in a more productive way than the frantic urgency of cortisol"<sup>1</sup>, dubbed the stress hormone.



## **Tension**

Tension is first on the continuum because it has the lowest risk for ongoing complications. We need a certain degree of tension for all movement, as in talking or walking. To illustrate how people need some tension in their lives, consider how Kathy reacted when she was a finalist in her school's spelling bee.

Kathy wanted her parents to be as proud of her as they were of her little sister who excelled in sports. Kathy reasoned that if she could bring home a trophy from the spelling bee, her parents would brag about her as much as they did about her sister. As the event progressed, Kathy developed a headache, making concentration harder for her. Nevertheless, Kathy was determined to win, so she pushed herself despite her headache and won the contest. Kathy's headache was a reaction to a mildly stressful situation. She reacted to this situation with a headache



because of her drive to achieve. On the other hand, the tension kept her going even though she felt uncomfortable.

## Stress

We define stress as the mind and body's difficulty or inability to integrate stressors. When a person perceives a situation as stressful, a series of physical reactions called the "fight, freeze, or flight response" take effect. This results in a flurry of activity within all bodily systems. There are different types and degrees of stress, some of which we think of as normal.

### *Normal stress*

Normal stress is that which any child can expect to experience on a daily basis in meeting life's difficulties. All children encounter minor discomforts and upsets that afflict everyone in the course of living. Such mild experiences are "developmental stressors" and carry a low risk of interfering with the child's overall development. The table below presents examples of developmental stressors<sup>2</sup> and the age groups they affect:

**Examples of Normal Stressors for Different Age Groups**

<b>Infants &amp; Toddlers</b>	<b>Young Children</b>	<b>Tweens</b>
Unfamiliar faces or surroundings	Arrival of a new sibling	Peer acceptance
Sudden movement or loud noises	Starting school	Adjusting to puberty
Separation from parent	Being punished or disciplined	
	Trying to achieve	

What one child may perceive as a negative stressor, called distress, another child may perceive as positive. Stress that is welcomed by a person who experiences it is called *eustress*, literally meaning “good stress.”<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in the previous sidebar, there are brain chemicals that generate enthusiasm for a challenge, which are dissimilar from the debilitating stress chemicals.

To illustrate this principle, look at how Neal, age 8, and Kyle, age 7, reacted to trying out for a baseball team. After the boys had demonstrated their skills, the coach did not select either of them to play. Neal was devastated because he had attached high importance to achieving this goal. He was afraid his failure to make the team foreshadowed failure at anything he attempted to do in the future. Kyle, on the other hand, was happy to be relieved of the burden of having to play on the team. His father had insisted he attend the tryouts. Since the coach did not choose him, he didn’t have to deal with the pressure to perform each time the team played a game.

Eustress, paradoxically, can also create reactions in the body similar to negative stress patterns. Because people are engaged in a positive activity, they may overlook the fact that they are placing severe loads on their health. Chronic workaholics, for example, often feel stimulated and fulfilled through their constant activity, not realizing the toll that it takes on their bodies.

The point they are missing is that life is a constant pulsating rhythm of rest and tension, reflected by the two major functions of the nervous system. The Sympathetic system contracts and tenses our bodies and minds for work and action. Conversely, the Parasympathetic system relaxes our bodies and brings quiet and rest. If we are always in the pulse of the Sympathetic nervous system, it is like being a machine that runs until the batteries die. We have to give the Parasympathetic system a chance to restore and revive the body and mind system.

We can see this pulsation of tension and then rest, arousal and then recovery, continually at work in our bodies. Our heart beats because the heart muscle can both contract with tension to pump out the blood, and relax the tension to allow in new blood. We divide the 24-hour day between times of action, stimulation and tension, with times of sleep and rest. A child who plays too hard and too long will react with just as much stress regardless of the fact that she is having fun.

The key is finding balance, *a middle way* that stabilizes our eustress with rest to maintain health. Chapters Three and Four describe how the mind and body work and provide suggestions for a healthy natural lifestyle that minimizes stress.

**The fifth step to coping with adversity is to find a middle path of balance.**

### *Negative stress, or distress*

Negative stress, also called distress, makes demands upon children that are beyond their coping abilities. Children may sometimes feel overwhelmed and develop physical and psychological symptoms, including stomach problems, skin rashes, or insomnia, and exhibit behavioral shifts or appetite changes. Such children may also frequently act anxious, hyperactive, and insecure.

In the case of a quiet child, it is easy to overlook the turmoil they might be experiencing. A child who lacks self-expression or refuses to acknowledge disturbing feelings and circumstances is under acute stress that can develop into psychosomatic symptoms later on.

Reactions among children to stress, both physically and behaviorally, vary depending on their ages.

*Preschoolers* react to stress differently from older children because they lack self-control, have little sense of time, act independently, and cannot express to adults how they feel. They might react to stress with

bedwetting, eating problems, or sleep disturbances. They might become irritable, anxious, or aggressive. They might even cry uncontrollably, tremble, withdraw, bite, grow sensitive to loud noises, or cling excessively to their parents. They may exhibit sudden behavioral changes.

*Elementary school-age children* are more vocal and can voice their problems to adults. They might react to stress by developing irrational fears, having nightmares, or experiencing poor concentration. They sometimes withdraw, distrust others, avoid friends and school functions, or worry about the future. Physical symptoms can include headaches, stomachaches, low appetite, or frequent urination.

The table below lists children’s common reactions to stress by age groups.<sup>4</sup>

**Common Symptoms of Stress in Children**

Infants & Toddlers	Preschoolers	School-agers	Teens
Uncontrollable crying	Bedwetting after training	Whining	Aggression
Rocking back & forth	Thumb sucking	Fearfulness	Withdrawal
Excessive sleep	Clinging to parents	Bedwetting	Sadness
Head banging	Exaggerated fears	Nightmares	Excessive sleep
	Temper tantrums	Not eating or overeating	Insomnia
	Uncontrollable crying	Daydreaming	Destructive actions
			Depression

Children may feel helpless or defenseless when stressors are acute or chronic. *Acute stress* is caused by events outside the realm of common, everyday experience, having a short duration but a profound impact. Examples of these kinds of stressors include emotional, physical or sexual abuse; devastating accidents; or sudden divorce or death in the family. Such traumatic events may result in a feeling of being out of control.<sup>5</sup>

*Chronic stress* occurs when acute stressors become the *norm* in a child's life. Peer pressure, sports-performance pressure, or ongoing abuse at home are possible causes. A child experiencing chronic strain, trauma, or prolonged illness or abuse becomes overly sensitive. Then, even small, minor events add more weight to the burden the child already carries.

A somewhat new chronic stressor, rarely recognized as such, is the result of our culture's fast moving, ever-changing technology and information overload: future shock. Now more than ever, parents wonder whether prolonged television viewing or hours in front of a computer cause either aggressive behavior or withdrawal in their children. As many parents know, a toddler can become overexcited while watching even the most innocent, age-appropriate cartoons or similar programs on TV. Parents' concerns are valid according to a report from Dartmouth Medical Center. A new paper in the January/February 2002 issue of *Effective Clinical Practice* states, "children who are not restricted from watching R-rated movies are three times more likely to smoke or drink alcohol compared to those who are never allowed to watch them."

## Anxiety

Defined as arousal, fear, or apprehension to a perceived or an actual threat, anxiety can have serious effects upon the body and mind, especially if profoundly felt. Sometimes a person cannot readily identify the source of the threat, sensing it only dimly. Thus, a child may have difficulty understanding or describing his feelings.

The degree to which a person experiences anxiety exists upon a continuum, from the normal, everyday anxiety that motivates a person towards decency and responsibility to abnormal anxiety that can cripple his ability to contain and master the threat.

Normal anxiety is a mild reaction, the unavoidable discomfort a child undergoes as part of growing up. For example, from eight months through preschool, a child may experience intense anxiety over separation from parents or other significant caretakers.<sup>6</sup> Although intense for a time, such distressing episodes are usually short-lived. Most children soon discard anxieties. The following table lists ordinary fears often exhibited by children in specific age groups:<sup>7</sup>

**Anxieties Associated with Children**

Infant	Toddler	School Age
Fear of loud noises and other intense stimuli	Fear of tangible objects like dogs or bodily injury	Fear of evaluation such as test or oral presentation
Fear of falling	Fear of vague objects like dark and monsters	Fear or aspects of peer relationships

In contrast to these everyday problems, consider fears abnormal if they remain with a child over a long period and interfere with normal daily functioning.

## Angst

Angst is a chronic form of anxiety in which it is difficult to isolate a particular cause. Whereas anxiety has identifiable causes, angst reflects a general, non-specific feeling of insecurity, nervousness, lack of positive feelings, and apprehension. The causes of angst are twofold. First, a

child's psyche contains pressures of unresolved conflicts or traumas from the past. These pressures are no longer acute and lose their immediate focus. A child cannot identify them specifically any more. Yet, the lingering and profound memory or imprint in the body/mind system becomes part of an emotional un-easiness. Secondly, toxins and physical trauma compromise areas of the brain and the sensitive organ systems. This causes disorientation on a subtle level, creating a general sense of insecurity and lack of being able to respond successfully to everyday events.

As an example, consider Mary, age 7, who refuses to go outside and play. She tells her mother she feels unsafe outdoors because there might be people waiting to kidnap or otherwise harm her hiding in the bushes. Mary's father patiently helps her examine the shrubs surrounding the house to show her no one is there, but she remains unconvinced. She still believes the imaginary culprits might have heard them coming and will return as soon as her father goes inside. When she isn't inspecting her surroundings with her father, she shadows her mother and throws a tantrum if anyone suggests she go outside. Her fears severely limit her world and disrupt her family by restricting their activities.

## Panic

"Panic is the extreme of anxiety, a sense of serious and imminent danger, often literally a fear of death or a sense of terror," explained Miller. "It is generally accompanied by intense physiological arousal and generally highly disruptive of ability to function."<sup>8</sup> Sometimes parents, caregivers, and teachers overlook panic attacks although the symptoms would warrant attention. When an individual is experiencing a panic attack, a barrage of terrifying symptoms take over the body. The experience may last anywhere from several minutes up to ten minutes. Within the drama of

panic symptoms, a child may be too afraid to report it to parents or teachers.

Symptoms can include difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; pounding heart; discomfort in the chest; smothering sensations; feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint; hot or cold flushes; sweating or chills; trembling or shaking; and feelings of hopelessness, impending doom, or loss of control.

These symptoms gradually fade over the course of an hour or so, but the individual may feel disoriented. One of the primary coping skills for this is the deep breathing methods taught in Chapters 8 through 11.

Prolonged distress or acute stress can lead to panic attacks. Sometimes an illness or stimulant medications alter the biochemistry to the extent of triggering a panic attack. A child may assume that the symptoms of panic he is experiencing are the same kind of feelings everyone else experiences when they are worried. He learns to outwardly mask his panic attacks and may show no overt signs of discomfort.

“The most common age of onset is the late teens, but much younger children can also be affected. More than half of the people suffering from panic disorder developed the condition before age twenty-four.”<sup>9</sup>

## Trauma

The apex of the stress continuum is trauma. “Trauma is the result of an event that is out of the ordinary realm of experience, one that often produces fear, anxiety, panic,” explained Miller. “A trauma creates a lasting impression and will often impact functioning for an extended period of time.”<sup>10</sup>

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), defined as a psychiatric disorder that can occur after witnessing or experiencing life-threatening events like a physical assault, homicide or suicide, terrorist incidents, natural disasters, serious accidents, and more, has devastating effects on



the individual experiencing it. The incidence of PTSD gets higher the closer one is to the geographic location of the event. Children who may witness the event through media are much less likely to experience the severe trauma of one who personally experienced an event. If you feel that your child may be experiencing a posttraumatic stress disorder, contact a mental health specialist for consultation and diagnosis.

## Physical Consequences of Stress

The medical community has long suspected the connection between the onset of physical illnesses and a person's mental state, especially if that state persists over a long period of time. Several diseases and pathological conditions directly relate to stress, while the connection of other diseases to a child's emotional condition presents itself on the more subtle level of energetic dysfunctions.

*Disease and other ailments.* When functioning properly, the immune system helps the body integrate disease-producing bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. Throughout the normal course of living, children are frequently exposed to pathogens, but exposure doesn't always mean a child will develop an illness, especially if he possesses an effective immune response. Unfortunately, stress tends to weaken the body's immune system. With immunity thus compromised, a child may not be able to ward off disease. Additionally, when immunity is depleted, pre-existing diseases or malfunctions within the body may worsen. Therefore, stress—especially prolonged stress—is very damaging to anyone's health, especially that of children. Some of the diseases and conditions that can develop in children under stress include:

- ~ Ulcerative colitis
- ~ Peptic ulcers
- ~ Irritable bowel syndrome
- ~ Hyperventilation

- ∞ Asthma
- ∞ Rheumatoid arthritis
- ∞ Allergies
- ∞ Skin disorders

*The effects of stress on growth.* Prolonged stress may inhibit a child's growth process. When a child's body is functioning normally, the pituitary gland produces the hormones necessary for growth and sends them into the bloodstream. When a child encounters a stressful situation, however, the "fight-freeze-or-flight" response takes over, preparing the body to assault the threat. This stimulates a series of physiological reactions. One reaction is to divert the pituitary gland from its normal function of producing growth hormones to producing adrenaline instead. Adrenaline enables the body to meet an emergency because it stimulates the muscles for immediate action. The necessity of producing adrenaline can slow the body's growth. If a child's usual state is the stress response, as under conditions of chronic stress, she can receive significantly less benefit from growth hormones than if the stress factors were under control.

## Five Steps to Reduce Stress

The following five steps will assist you and your children with coping and integrating the stressors in your life:

1. Nourish your and your children's bodies, minds and spirits with enhancing, positive, and supportive information, oxygen, energy, and food.
2. Help children manage their emotions and regulate their responses. This includes establishing a lifestyle that creates attitudes such as flexibility or adaptability.

3. Help children understand their body signals, and determine which ones they can control. If they cannot control it, help them to learn how they can compensate and find a way to integrate and use the information.
4. Inform yourself of all your alternatives and then make the best choice for your and your children's health.
5. Find a middle path of balance.

These will help you see coping as an ongoing process of integration, helping your child develop flexibility and adaptation, leading to resilience and a positive lifestyle.

## Summary of Chapter 2

- ∞ Coping is the child's ability to consciously respond to stress, trauma, anxiety, or emotional impact.
- ∞ Children who are confident in their coping skills can "hold the tension."
- ∞ To hold the tension is to find the middle ground: the delicate balance between being motivated and finding opportunity and being in fear and finding challenges.
- ∞ Tension is first on the continuum because it has the lowest risk for ongoing complications. We need a certain degree of tension for all movement, as in talking or walking.
- ∞ Stress is defined as a mind and body's inability or difficulty integrating the stressors.
- ∞ Normal stress is that which any child can be expected to experience on a daily basis in meeting the difficulties of life.
- ∞ Negative stress, also called distress, makes excessive demands upon children that are beyond their coping abilities.
- ∞ Stress can be acute or chronic, either sudden or long-term.
- ∞ Anxiety is arousal, fear, or apprehension to a perceived or an actual threat. Angst is a chronic form of anxiety in which it is difficult to define a particular cause. While anxiety has identifiable causes, angst reflects only as a general, non-specific feeling of insecurity, nervousness, lack of positive feelings, and apprehension.
- ∞ Panic is the extreme of anxiety, a sense of serious and imminent danger, often literally a fear of death or a sense of terror.
- ∞ Trauma is the result of an event that is out of the ordinary realm of experience, one that often produces fear, anxiety, and panic.

# 3



## What Is Health? Tapping Our Ancient Wisdom

*We must free ourselves of the hope that the sea will ever rest.  
We must learn to sail in high winds.*

Hanmer Parsons Grant

### Ancient Wisdom and the Modern World

Understanding a wholistic concept of health is recognizing that we are part of the natural world. Our bodies are composed of elements of the physical world, and we are dependent on nature for our continued existence. Our psychology and physiology are natural functions and outcomes of the mental, emotional, and physical energies working as one, integrated unit. This chapter explains how this integration takes place for optimal performance. Because we advocate developing a healthful lifestyle for coping with stress, we show you ways to be responsible for your own health and help your children become aware of and participate in theirs.

This ancient view of the wholistic health, now supported by modern science, comes from traditional philosophies and medicines around the world. The classical medical traditions have an unbroken line of research and application that is more than 2500 years old and is both the forerunner of and the complement to the modern medical sciences. These traditional classical medicines include Islamic, Tibetan, Ayurvedic, and

Chinese medicine, as well as Naturopathy, Herbology, and Homeopathy, among others. These are energy- and metabolically-based medicines that all work on the same fundamental principles expressed in myriad ways. The Eastern and Middle Eastern traditions describe the flow of energy through the organ systems, and identify this vital energy as being the same life force that flows throughout the universe. It is the biological principle in all living organisms. These subtle energy fields are considered the forces that allow us to function and are the basis for understanding both disease and health.

The theory underlying classical medicine is that health is the natural state of the body and mind. It is the basis of all of our functions and allows us to integrate the activities and goals of our lives.

- ∞ Health cannot be obtained, but must be practiced.
- ∞ Health is the very foundation of our being.
- ∞ Health is always a part of who we are.

When we do not support the natural functions and needs of our bodies and minds, the distress and anxiety erode our vitality and our ability to integrate what is happening to us. This eventually causes disease. In the deepest sense, we know that we are “partners” with life. Being healthy is our responsibility as well as our privilege to facilitate. Healing, then, is the process by which we cooperate with the principles of nature to return to our natural state of functioning.

Some of us aren’t aware of the profound discovery that stress is the basic cause of most disease. We are ignorant of how nature works in us and what we need to do to remain healthy. Without a basic knowledge of health and the nature of the body and mind, we often make uninformed decisions that compromise our physical and emotional integrity, thus creating the very things we want to avoid.

We have intelligence, free will, sensitivity, and the skills to live passionately, making our lives a masterpiece of great beauty. We can do this by remembering that life, even with all of its complexities and challenges, is not a series of threats waiting to happen. Rather, living is a gift that calls upon our greatest capacity for love, understanding, and patience.

Becoming fully mature is realizing that we don't really control life. Rather, we are creatively participating in its constantly changing rhythms, challenges, and potentials. Our sense of security comes from our confidence in learning how to respond to life. By creatively participating in the way we live our lives, we reduce the hidden sense of insecurity that underlies virtually all patterns of stress.

**The first step in developing a healthy lifestyle is to understand that health is our natural state, and we creatively participate in our health by the choices that we make.**

## Definitions of Health and Disease

Health is the ability of the body and mind to integrate the various factors that it is continuously exposed to mentally, physically and emotionally. Likewise, disease is defined as a reaction of the body and mind to any factor that it cannot integrate. We do not have to consider therapy, treatment, or healing as a fight against disease. Instead, we can consider healing as the means by which the body and mind can return to their natural state of being.

In this book, we suggest healing, caring, and remedial approaches for you to help your child. They facilitate the return of the mind and body to its natural balance. These methods are simple and effective means for reducing stress and improving life quality on a daily basis.

The word "health" in English comes from the Old German word *Hilda*, which means "whole and sacred." In this sense, health is not

something we have; it is what we do—like eating healthy food, exercising, and developing our sense of humor. Health is our way of cooperating on a daily basis with the nature of the body and mind, and respecting the laws of nature at work within us.

If health is our natural state, then disease is an attempt by the body to heal and re-integrate itself. Disease is not a mistake or failure. When our mind and body develop symptoms of stress or disease, we are attempting to become more “whole” and skillful in dealing with the many aspects of life. Disease, in its deepest sense, is one of the ways nature helps us to develop and mature. A disease is a pattern of symptoms or signs that reveals the reactions of the body’s immune system and how its organ systems are working to reestablish a healthy balance in its functions.

This is also true of our emotions and psychological functions. The mind and emotions connect directly to the body. Both are dependent on the proper functioning of organ systems and tissues to maintain their ability to integrate and orient themselves. In this sense, the mind has “immune” reactions and healing processes that work in the same way as those of the body. The mind, the body, and the emotions are one integrated system.

Here is a demonstration of how it works. A drunk driver killed Greg’s brother in an auto accident by driving him off the road and into a ditch. The suddenness of the event startled Greg, leaving him incapable of completing the final semester of his senior year in high school. He was too shocked to grieve.

Greg’s family started calling him the man of the house. Taking on the role, he finished his schoolwork during summer school. He enrolled in a Junior College near his home so he could work. He pushed his body and fatigued his energy. He put his brother’s death out of his mind and forged ahead. Then he got a part time job. He became busier.



The grief not dealt with was like a lump of iron in his heart. Being busy became an excuse to skip meals. His usual sense of humor was gone from his life, and sadness settled in like a cloud over his shoulders. His friends could feel it, but Greg was too busy to notice.

Finally, Greg could no longer push his mind and body, and he developed an ulcer, the first stress symptom. Luckily, Greg paid attention, got help for his emotional pain, and gave himself space to grieve.

**The second step in developing a healthy lifestyle is to honor the signals from our mind and body that are showing us what we need to do to find greater health and balance.**

When you feel discomfort, pain, intuitive signals or stress, try asking yourself these questions:

- ∞ What am I learning from this feeling?
- ∞ What do I need to find balance?
- ∞ What actions can I take to restore balance?
- ∞ What is the message of this bodily signal?
- ∞ What is the thought connected to the bodily signal?
- ∞ What emotion is connected to the signal?

## Where Does Stress Fit in the Classical Health Model?

The nature of stress and disease patterns does have a place in the classical health model, but not as a cluster of symptoms to treat with a pill. Stress, by definition, is the main cause of all disease. A stress reaction or a state of stress is a sign of the body's inability to integrate what it is exposed to.

The underlying biological activity of both our mind and body is the ability to metabolize. Metabolism is a Greek word that literally means integrative transformation. It is the ongoing process by which our body builds and maintains itself, as well as the way in which our mind thinks and processes our thoughts. We are constantly taking in things from the

outside world, like food and impressions that impact the senses. Everything we take into us must be metabolized, transformed, and integrated into our own systems in order for them to nourish and sustain us. Metabolism accomplishes this.

Every life form has its own metabolic processes that are natural to its species. Metabolic systems that are overwhelmed become stressed, traumatized, and display disease patterns. Our metabolic systems can be overwhelmed by toxins, harsh stimulation of our senses, emotional experiences that we are not prepared to deal with, or a lack of rest, peace, and quiet to allow ourselves time to integrate and rebuild.

The presence of stress itself reveals our inability to metabolize our experiences. Stress is not only a word used to define emotional states but also refers to any factor that harms or inhibits the body's physical functions on the levels of the tissues, organs, and body chemistry. The body and mind are by nature strong and resilient. Yet, they are very sensitive, reacting to energies and influences from the celestial and ecological environment and its climate, as well as to the close and intimate influences of school, work, family relationships, and nutrition.

All living organisms deal with and integrate the natural environment that surrounds them, including the emotional environment. Our mind and body systems are not programmed to deal with the artificial effects of the chemicals found in food and many substances used in the home and medicines, nor the artificially produced psychological stresses found in many families, schools, and workplaces.

In this model, it is important to understand that the immune system is not really a defense system, but an integration system that governs the mind and body's ability to create a proper balance in all of its functions and responses. That is why the immune system plays a major role in the physical and psychological health of the individual. In summary, when our mind and body cannot integrate environmental factors or emotional

and mental stimulation, the first structure affected is the immune system.

To truly cure the causes of stress and disease, it is important to understand how the body and mind function and how to support its natural healing and integration mechanisms. This takes into account the:

- ∞ History of your body's reactions to its health issues
- ∞ Identification of the factors that have contributed to disease
- ∞ Your constitutional makeup

**The third step in developing a healthy lifestyle, then, is learning how to integrate everything we take in.** We can do this by not overwhelming ourselves with food, addictions, thoughts, sensory stimuli and the like. The key to metabolism is balance.

## Embryological Tissue: The Key to the Mind and Body

Both modern researchers and the classical medical sciences agree that how the embryo develops gives us an important key to understanding that the body and mind are integrated. The embryo produces three tissue systems from which all of the body's organs and cells are developed. They are the extoderm, the mesoderm, and the endoderm.

1. The extoderm develops all of our nerves and brain, the hair, skin, and nails, sensory functions, and motor functions.
2. The mesoderm develops the heart, reproductive organs, lymph system, bones, connective tissue, muscles, and kidneys.
3. The endoderm produces and governs all of our digestive organs and our glands and the processes associated with them.

The organs and tissues of these three embryological tissues continue to function as systems within our bodies throughout our entire life. For example, when toxins or stress compromise the extoderm, there will

often be signs of nervous behavior or skin problems related to the extoderm tissue system.

Problems related to the mesoderm are linked to the kidneys, osteoporosis, heart diseases, and diseases of the reproductive organs. The endodermic system can reveal problems between the stomach and the thyroid, creating metabolic problems, or chronic problems relating to digestion.

It is important to understand that the body and the mind are combined and unified in their functions—the body and mind are a single integrated system. These same embryological tissues control the emotional functions of the psyche.

- ∞ The extoderm governs stress issues involving territory. This occurs when we feel that our “space” is being invaded or that we are being inhibited or constrained from being who we really are by others around us, in school, the workplace, or at home.
- ∞ The mesoderm governs stresses from our emotional environment that challenge our feelings of self-worth, leaving us with a poor self-image of who we are and who we want to become.
- ∞ The endoderm relates to stress issues involving nutrition. This includes emotional and spiritual nourishment, as well as food. When we are either getting too much, too little, or the wrong thing for us, we react with stress. This is why, for example, when we are experiencing emotional problems, we will either lose our appetite or have a tendency to over-eat. This is also why we associate weight and eating problems with the thyroid gland, a gland that is developed by the nutritionally controlled endoderm embryological tissue system that forms both our glands and our digestive organs.

Using the above examples, you can see not only what symptoms your child may have, but you can also determine which part of his body and mind connect to these symptoms. You can decide which approaches will help soothe stress symptoms while seeking to alter the cause of the stress factors.

The fourth step in developing a healthy lifestyle is to use the chart of the Relationships and Influence of Embryological Tissues (see page 39) to identify those areas that have the most impact on you and your children. (1) In which area do you think you have physical problems? (2) In which area do you think you have emotional/mental problems? (3) Where would you start to make changes for less stress and better balance in your life?



## **The Body's Development and Constitution**

A person's constitution refers to the basic patterns that make up our genetic heritage that we receive at the moment of conception. These genetic energy codes govern the way we will tend to respond physically and emotionally to life.

We are each unique, and are made up of different combinations that show a predominance of one or more of the activities of the three embryological tissue systems. Hair color, body weight and build, and our temperament, are all indications of these differences in our basic, inborn constitution.

For example, some children respond well to a lot of stimulation where others need a calmer atmosphere to function optimally. Some deal well with direct challenges for the body and mind, others need more time and gentle challenges to grow and remain secure.

We are not all the same and we each have "inborn" needs that reflect our individuality. Our constitution deter-

mines how we generally respond to life situations. Becoming aware of our own and our children's unique needs based upon our constitutions is an important part of managing stress.



## Three Phases of Life Correlate to the Embryological Tissues

There are three main phases of development in the human being:

1. The first phase occurs between birth and the start of puberty and relates primarily to the mesoderm system.
2. The second phase occurs between the last stage of puberty and the age of 50, and is especially connected to the endoderm system.
3. The last phase starts at 50, continues throughout the remaining life span, and reflects the activity of the extoderm system.

Each one of these phases has its own special features of development, life goals, and ways of achieving health and well-being.

### *The First Phase of Life*

In the phase between birth and puberty, we focus on building and developing the body and mind and its psychological response mechanisms. The immune system is very active during this phase. Immune activities are most active in the mucus membranes, and show the activation of the body's self-healing abilities. For example, colds, flus, sore throats and their accompanying fevers are the body's way of dealing with stresses that impact the child. This is also the way that the immune system cleanses hereditary disease patterns and any toxins or traumas that occurred in the womb or during the birth process.

In the classical medical model, children are treated using natural therapies that support the immune system. This allows the immune system to fulfill its task appropriately, rather than using antibiotics or other chemically-based medicines that compromise the body's sensitive systems and functions. The Center for Disease Control estimates that of the 235 million doses of antibiotics given each year, between 20 and 50 percent are unnecessary. Tragically, this overuse of antibiotics can cause devastating health consequences to children.<sup>1</sup>

Classical medicine views childhood diseases like mumps, measles, and chickenpox as a form of self-vaccination that builds antibodies and immune “programs” that help the body to avoid potential diseases such as heart disease, arthritis, and cancer later. Allowing the immune system to operate normally, without using antibiotics and vaccinations, will build a full and natural immunity.

For those children whose immune system has been compromised from any cause, using the principles in this book to create a healthier lifestyle and reduce stress will assist the body to function optimally.

### *The Second Phase of Life*

The second phase of life, between puberty and the age of 50, is a time of creating. We are reproducing—creating children, homes and families, jobs, and careers. Physiologically, our hormone systems and digestive metabolism are strong, and the mind is developing its intellectual powers and its understanding of personal life strategies and perspectives.

In this phase, it is very important to support our reproductive and creative impulses by providing quality time to expand our inspired interests beyond the demands of jobs and careers. It is good to avoid harmful influences like hormones in birth control pills and the effects of IUDs that will cause serious problems for the functional response mechanisms of the mind and body.

By compromising the functions of the reproductive organs, we compromise our primary biological energy system, our cellular metabolism, and our immune system. The reproductive organs control all of these functions.

### *The Third Phase of Life*

The third phase of life, from age 50 on, is a period of mental growth and the transformation of life experiences into wisdom and insight. The period for forming careers and establishing families is at an end, and we need time to integrate the previous phases of life into a wholeness that creates peace and fulfillment. Physiologically, our body supports this through the “change of life” that clearly initiates a change of life goals and lifestyle. It is important to make these lifestyle changes by moving away from the more assertive demands of the previous phase and taking the time to discover how to respond with wisdom and clarity, setting new goals that will enhance a creative peacefulness and wholeness of attitude and response.



## Relationships and Influence of Embryological Tissues

Constitution	Physical	Emotional/Mental	Spiritual	Governs Stresses Involving
EXTODERM Emotional Energy	Nerves, brain, hair, skin, nails, motor functions, sensory functions, secretions/excretions	<b>Positive Expressions:</b> Quick to respond Mental abilities <b>Challenges:</b> Fear, anxiety, lack of security, constrict breathing, nervous behavior	Gives perspective Mental sharpness Acuity	<b>Territory</b> Occurs when we feel our space is being invaded or that we are being inhibited or constrained from being who we really are by others around us.
MESODERM Mental Energy	Heart, reproductive organs, lymph system, bones, connective tissue, muscles, kidneys	<b>Positive Expressions:</b> Stability, feelings of security Feelings of being nourished, cared for, and satisfied <b>Challenges:</b> Possessiveness, greed, attachment, depression	Love Forgiveness Faith	<b>Emotional Environment</b> The challenges are the feelings of self-worth, leaving us with a poor self-image of who we are and who we want to become.
ENDODERM Etheric/Physical Energy	Digestion process, digestive organs, maintenance of body heat, endocrine glands, exocrine glands	<b>Positive Expressions:</b> Perceptive, wisdom, understanding, creativity <b>Challenges:</b> Jealousy, hate, anger	Wisdom Consciousness Creativity	<b>Nutrition</b> Includes emotional and spiritual "nutrition" as well as food. May be either too much, too little, or not the right thing for us.

## Summary of Chapter 3

- ∞ Health is the ability of the body/mind to integrate the various factors of life that it is continuously exposed to mentally, physically, and emotionally.
- ∞ Disease is a reaction of the body/mind to any factor that it cannot integrate.
- ∞ Therapy, treatment, or healing is the means by which the body and mind return to their natural state of being, not as a fight against disease.
- ∞ Health is not something one has; it is something one does. It is the way we relate to, and act towards the sacred gift of life and body.
- ∞ Disease is a pattern of symptoms or signs that reveals the reactions of the body's immune system and how its organ systems are working to reestablish a healthy balance in its functions.
- ∞ The mind and its emotions connect directly to the body.
- ∞ Stress, by definition, is the main cause of all disease. A stress reaction or a state of stress is a sign of the body's inability to integrate what it is being exposed to. The presence of stress itself reveals this inability.
- ∞ The immune system is not really a "defense" system, but an integration system that governs the mind and body's ability to create a proper balance in all of its functions and responses.
- ∞ The embryo has three tissue systems from which all of the body's organs and cells develop.
  - The ectoderm develops all of our nerves and brain, the hair, skin, and nails. The ectoderm governs stress issues involving

territory. This occurs when we feel that our space is being invaded or that we are being inhibited or constrained from being who we really are by others around us, in school, the workplace, or at home.

- The mesoderm develops the heart, our reproductive organs, lymph system, bones, connective tissue, muscles, and kidneys. The mesoderm governs stresses from our emotional environment that challenge our feelings of self-worth, leaving us with a poor self-image of who we are and who we want to become.
  - The endoderm produces all of our digestive organs and our glands. The endoderm relates to stress issues involving nutrition. Emotional and spiritual factors as well as food nourish. When we are either getting too much, too little, or the wrong thing for us, we will react with stress.
- ∞ There are three main phases of development in the human being.
- The first phase occurs between birth and the start of puberty and relates to the mesoderm system. In this phase, the body and mind build and develop the body and its psychological response mechanisms. The immune system is very active during this phase.
  - The second phase is between the last stage of puberty and the age of 50, and is especially connected to the endodermic system. This phase is a time of creating.
  - The last phase starts at 50, continues throughout the remaining life span, and reflects the activity of the extoderm system. This phase is a period of mental growth and the transformation of life experiences into the areas of wisdom and insight.



# 4



## Body and Mind – A Single System

*What happens is not as important as how you react to what happens.*

Thaddeus Golas

### The Functional Energies of the Body and Mind

As the science of physics demonstrates, all life processes from the atom up to living tissues and organs are an energy phenomenon. Energy creates matter and matter both produces and transforms into energy. The body and mind's growth, maintenance, and activities depend on energy to function. In this chapter, you'll see how to help children manage their energies and what some of their energy requirements are.

The classical medical sciences describe the body as having not only physical energies but also mental and emotional energies. These three structures of energy work together synergistically to ensure that our mind and body function optimally. They are etheric, mental, and emotional energy. Each one has a distinct connection to each of the embryological tissues we discussed earlier.

Etheric energy is associated with the endodermic embryological tissues. It is comprised of all the energies that determine the physical functioning of the body. The body's cells, tissues, and organs all function and work together based on the etheric energy. We breathe, our hearts beat, and we build our cells and digest our food using etheric energies, which become compromised through traumas, toxins, or too much activity in the emotional energies.

Mental energy is associated with the mesodermic embryological tissues and reflects the spiritual attitudes and perspectives by which we identify our place within life as a whole. The mental energies help us orient ourselves and balance all other activities in the body and mind. This energy can help children cope with excessive stress when they can imagine or position themselves in the “big picture” of life. It serves as a foundation of faith when children find answers to their cosmic questions about their existence:

- ~ What is life and its purpose?
- ~ What is death?
- ~ Who am I?
- ~ What am I doing here?
- ~ What is important for me to live well and happily?

The mental energy creates our experience of security and well-being, giving us insights into the mysteries of life and our role as an individual person. When we do not expose children to the important role of spirituality in life, they can become habitually insecure and uncertain as to the positive values that support life. They have difficulty in their ability to make decisions and may feel ambivalence about their life experiences.

Emotional energies are associated with the extodermic embryological tissues, and concern the areas of our lives pertaining to thought processes, the intellect, and our emotional responses. These energies are highly subjective and are the basis for our emotions as well as our thoughts.

Most of us identify with emotional energies as the basis for our personal character and definitions of pain and pleasure. Emotional energies function as the foundation for:

- ~ Thought processes
- ~ How we gain knowledge
- ~ Emotional relationships

In our society, the emotional energy patterns are usually overburdened and under considerable stress in relationship to the mental and etheric energies. This is because children are in compromised situations (e.g., abuse). They are also over-challenged in the emotional sphere of the home (e.g., pressure for achievement), through the media (e.g., buy now!), or through unrealistic demands of schooling that pressures them to mature their intellectual and adult social skills too rapidly.

The emotional energies and the etheric energies are polarities, or opposites. The result is that the physical body suffers due to inhibited functions of the etheric energies when the emotions are too active.

When we are constantly over-stimulated emotionally, we know that our physical body and its energies are unable to function well. We become erratic, and our appetite goes up or down. We don't sleep well, leaving our bodies feeling tense and unrested. Likewise, when there are too many toxins in the body affecting the etheric energy, we feel unwell and lack the energy resources to live active and fulfilling lives.

The fifth step in developing a healthy lifestyle is being thoughtful about the basics of health by choosing proper food, creating a nontoxic physical environment, and choosing appropriate natural health practices that strengthen etheric energy and support our physical health.

The sixth step in developing a healthy lifestyle is finding your own spiritual perspectives and sharing the “big” questions in life with your children. This provides a secure point of balance and integration and promotes the healthy functioning of the mental, emotional, and etheric energies and their relationship to one another.

## The Connection Between the Body and the Mind

In the human organism, there is a direct connection and cooperation between the body's organ systems and the mind. They function together and reflect one another. The organ system is a physical manifestation of

the mind, and the mind is an emotional and mental reflection of specific organ systems. Classical traditional medicine has always recognized this in treating mental and emotional symptoms by working on the organ systems, and caring for physical symptoms by including the appropriate treatments for resolving emotional and mental issues.

Many cases of mental illness are symptoms of chronic dysfunctions in one or more organ systems. Improper nutrition, toxins, medicines, and vaccines could damage the organ systems.

***We need to better understand how important the body's physical health is with regards to our emotional and mental responses.***

The classical medical sciences describe:

- ~ The kidney system as controlling emotions related to fear and anxiety.
- ~ The lung system relates to feelings of sorrow and loss.
- ~ The spleen governs our feelings of worry and obsession.
- ~ The liver relates to feelings of anger, jealousy, irritation, and depression.
- ~ The heart, being the “center” of Man and the core of our authentic self, integrates all the other organ system functions and brings them into the spiritual focus of our lives.

The connections between the emotions and the organ systems show us that we can cure anxiety by using acupuncture on the kidney system or strengthening the kidney system through herbs or homeopathy, rather than through the use of psychotherapy alone.

Our mental and emotional health depends upon the proper and harmonious function of our organ systems. At the same time, the organ system functions depend upon a harmonious emotional environment and a proper spiritual foundation that provides us with a sense of security, well-being, inspiration, and hopefulness in our daily contact with life.



## Stress Factors and Children

The period from birth through puberty is the most formative period in a person's life. This period shapes the body and the mind and programs its basic response mechanisms. Thus, it is critical to identify factors that affect the child's growth and well-being in these three areas.

### *Three areas to consider*

One is the environment relating to proper nutrition, toxin-free surroundings, and using natural remedies when necessary rather than prescription medicines. The next chapter offers specific suggestions in this regard.

A second area to consider is the role that the mind and emotions have in the development of the child. Play and the use of the imagination, creativity, and fantasy are all vital in forming a healthy individual. The word "*imag*-ination" shows what this means—creativity and fantasy create the "image" of what we are to become.

Today, it seems our children's lives consist of spending time at school, participating in adult play such as organized sports or other activities, or passively watching television. What is missing is unstructured time. Children need this to mature and develop their unique modes of expression and understanding. When children can interact with the world on their own terms, rather than experiencing everything through the goals and attitudes of parents and educators, will they discover who they are in an intimate, personal way.

The third area to consider is the spiritual aspect of life. Classical traditions assert that Man is comprised of spirit, soul, and body. It is easy for us to understand the concept of a soul having functions of feeling, thought, and creativity; our bodies carry the soul's physiological counterparts as tissues, organs, and metabolism. The spirit is what all cultures

and all religions have termed “the sacred” and is as much a part of us as our blood, flesh, and feelings.

Spirituality reflects the simplicity of the heart. Our desires for our lives—our careers, friends, and family—are all symbols that represent very uncomplicated desires and needs of the spirit. What we really want out of life is the experience of being loved unconditionally, feeling secure about our unique visions, a sense of being affirmed, being forgiven and accepted in spite of our mistakes, and being personally worthy without having to prove anything to anybody, even when we feel overwhelmed and powerless. We want this and our children want this.

These three basic factors—a healthy environment, creative expression, and spiritual understanding—help our children integrate distress and develop the emotional and spiritual qualities for a successful and happy life. Our spirituality will have a greater effect on our children than any material goods we may give them. It underlies all of their emotional responses and their sense of well-being.

## The Element of “Space” as it Relates to Stress

How often have you heard, “I’m bored. There’s nothing to do.” How often have you replied, “Go outside and play. Go watch television. Find something to do.” Next time you hear that boredom complaint, say this, “Great. Wonderful. Take some space.” “Space” is one of the best ways to allow the mind and body to integrate and find peace.

We can provide a space for our children to relax, contemplate, or empty their mind completely. You may call it “take a breather,” “time out,” “peace and quiet,” “doing nothing,” or be-ing.

We use the term “space” to describe a state that is empty of expectations, conditions, and outcomes. Having space is having unstructured time. Children and adults often have difficulty with this. Unstructured time and space are challenging because we are used to the responsibili-

ties of a skillful job or homework where the rules of how to use time are spelled out.

If we can teach children and ourselves to use unstructured time and space creatively, we can discover our beauty and unconditional worthiness. Do your children know how to do nothing? Can they discover the precious instants of revelation hidden in moments of stillness and silence?

We need to provide this space for our children if they are ever to manage wholeness and integration along the stress continuum. It is a space where they are in charge and not stimulated by anything external to themselves. The space of their inner worlds inspires music and poetry. A child can learn confidence as a co-creator with life.

We often forget that life is a process of creation unfolding. We create cells and tissues out of the energies found in the chemistry of the plant, animal, and mineral kingdoms. We create thoughts, words, and concepts from the limitless field of our experiences. We grasp life through the creative action of our senses and the ceaseless searching of our hearts. Children need time to explore creation and the space to create.

Children create a dynamic world of events and experiences out of a space that unfolds as it continues to reveal itself, rather than beginning from a set of predetermined goals. Creativity is the world of the child—the child that we are responsible for raising, and the child we are responsible for preserving and nurturing in ourselves.

## Putting the Pieces Together

By observing and identifying different types of energies, we'll see that they have specific qualities that affect the body and mind. For example, we know that one of the qualities of emotional energy is dispersing and irregular, and our goal is to manage our emotional energy. Therefore, we change our activities by building up opposite qualities that will diminish

stress patterns like irregularity in our emotions. If we make sure to put our activities into a regular schedule, then regularity, being the opposite quality of irregularity, will reduce the emotional stress patterns. (See the chart on page 39 for a summary.)

This is why it is important that children have regular schedules. Specific times for meals, going to bed, play, homework, and family chores can occur in specific and regular time frames to avoid stress. These activities, if done at the same time everyday, will create a secure framework for the child.

The stressful effects of irregularity in the activities of our lives are noticeable. How stressed do you feel when your activities pile up and you are forced to concentrate on more than one thing at a time? When you have to buy groceries, walk the dog, watch the children, and catch up on your work all at the same time, you are creating chronic stress patterns. By putting our activities in a regular schedule, we have the capacity to deal with all the things that are necessary and have the time and focus that they require. We manage time in order to regulate our energy.

Stress energies are dispersing and fragmenting. A child doing her homework while the TV is on or while she's listening to music fragments and disperses her attention. Provide "spaces" around activities so that children will be free from interruptions that interfere with focus and attention. This is what we might call peace and quite.

These things we're discussing are so obvious that we often overlook them and do not credit them with the impact they actually have on our lives. We look at the activity itself rather than on the energy that it is producing and how it affects the body and mind. The body and mind function on energies. Every activity produces some form of energy ripple.

Our activities should generate productive, creative, and nonstressful relationships that contribute to our continual integration and wholeness.

This is the meaning of *heilida*, health—the wholeness and sacredness of life.

To summarize, six steps to living a healthy lifestyle are:

1. Understand that health is your natural state, and you can choose to creatively participate in your health by the choices that you make.
2. Honor the signals from your mind and body about how you can create balance in your life. If you do experience stress or disease, nothing is wrong, and you are not the mistake. It is part of the process of learning balance.
3. Learn how to metabolize and integrate everything you take in. Don't overwhelm yourself with food, addictions, thoughts, sensory stimuli, and the like. The key to metabolism is in balance.
4. Use the Relationships and Influence of Embryological Tissues chart to outline three things for yourself: (1) In which area do you think you have physical problems? (2) In which area do you think you have emotional/mental problems? (3) Where would you start to make changes for reducing stress and creating a better balance in your life?
5. Be thoughtful about the basics of health with proper food, a nontoxic physical environment, and appropriate natural care of health processes that strengthen etheric energy and support your physical health.
6. Find your own spiritual perspective and share the “big” questions in life with your child. This provides a secure point of balance and integration and promotes the healthy functioning of the mental, emotional and etheric energies and their relationship to one another.

## Summary of Chapter 4

- ∞ Energy creates matter and matter both produces and transforms into energy.
- ∞ All natural functions of the mind and body are energy events and responses to energy.
  - The mental energies are associated with the mesodermic embryological tissues and reflect the spiritual attitudes and perspectives that help us understand our identity and our place within life as a whole.
  - The emotional energies are associated with the ectodermic embryological tissues, and concern the areas of our lives pertaining to thought processes, the intellect, and our emotional responses.
  - The etheric energies are associated with the endodermic embryological tissues, and are comprised of all the energies that determine the physical functioning of the body.
- ∞ Stress is mostly connected to the emotional energies. Emotional energies have dispersing, fragmenting, and irregular qualities and effects. That means that any activity that has these qualities will create high levels of emotional energy, and in turn will cause problems that will have the same dispersing, irregular, and fragmenting qualities.
- ∞ Stress stimulates us because it is so demanding. Eventually our systems fatigue by the over-stimulation of stress and we become depressed energetically and emotionally.
- ∞ In the human organism, there is a direct connection and cooperation between the body's organ systems and the mind. They function together and reflect one another. The organ

system is a physical manifestation of the mind, and the mind is an emotional and mental reflection of specific organ systems.

∞ The classical medical sciences describe:

- The kidney system as controlling emotions related to fear and anxiety
- The lung system relates to feelings of sorrow and loss.
- The spleen governs our feelings of worry and obsession.
- The liver relates to feelings of anger, jealousy, irritation, and depression.
- The heart, being the “center” of Man and the core of our authentic self, integrates all the other organ system functions and brings them into the spiritual focus of our lives.

∞ There are three elements to consider for a child’s healthy response to stress. First is the environment; second is the way in which the child’s mind and emotions work together; third is the child’s spiritual foundation.

∞ We need to provide “space” for our children if they are ever to manage wholeness and integration along the stress continuum. It is a space where they are in charge and not stimulated by anything external to themselves. The space of their inner worlds inspires music and poetry. A child can learn confidence as a co-creator with life.





# 5



## The Power of Your Bonding & Touch

*As important as social support is to health, perhaps one of its most powerful components is also one of the simplest: People who touch others and are touched themselves seem to enjoy the best of health.<sup>1</sup>*

A healthy environment supports growth and a child's aptitude to bond with significant adults through touching and powerful feelings like empathy and acceptance. This bonding provides a foundation for how the child will "connect" to life, through the mind and body's ability to integrate all environmental stimuli. Excessive stress inhibits the child's physical growth and capacity of the body and mind to "connect" to life.

"Connecting" and "integrating" are words that describe children's ability to regulate their feelings, which is the foundation of coping skills. This chapter is about how connecting takes place and how it facilitates children's coping skills through the incredible resources of the body/mind and its senses.

In this chapter you will:

- ~ Learn the significant influence that the senses, stimulated through touch and movement, have on our children's health and resilience.
- ~ Deepen your understanding of how the body and its intelligence serve as a resource for you and your child in stressful times.

- ☞ Read the most intriguing research about how stress affects the body and mind, and then, how the body and mind calm and learn from the experience.

Throughout our discussion, we illustrate how touch and physical bonding, emotional connection, and empathy help children to access their body resources in ways that enable vitality and confidence. We look at ways of being together with our children that incorporate what we know intuitively, and lead us back to expressing what we feel in our hearts.

## Touch Soothes and Enhances Children's Nervous Systems

By touching your child in a way that is comforting, you stimulate the growth of the brain and its ability to coordinate and integrate nerve impulses. You literally help your children to create the neurological, chemical, emotional, and cognitive patterns that reduce the harmful effects of stress.

Through touch, you teach children to trust their feelings and their body's messages. By pairing touch with empathy, that is, receiving the child without attempts to impose your perspective, you teach the child to accept himself and calm his nervous system. This chapter discusses three primary ways, all associated and used in conjunction with each other, in helping children to adapt with resilience:

1. The amazing power of empathy
2. The comforting qualities of physical touch
3. The nourishing effects of a loving, emotional connection

These are the extraordinary ways in which children “connect” to their caregivers, while creating “intelligence” for navigating life's challenges. The simple, yet profound power of sensory input is paired with

your empathy to calm and integrate your child's mind and body. Touch and movement, accompanied by a loving emotional connection, resolve the disorganizing impact of stress and support an experience of balance and self-awareness.

The techniques and stories in this chapter are successful approaches to help children and adolescents distinguish their stress signals in the body and establish boundaries for that tension. When children recognize and experience their bodies' signals, they can discern their personal signs of stress and then set boundaries regarding their stressors

## The Power of Your Touch with Empathy

Those who have cared for a child or an adolescent are aware of the calming impact of touch and emotional connection. Consider these scenarios:

- ∞ While Leila held and rocked her frightened three year old in her lap, she caressed her gently while she cried. Finally, her daughter calmed down and could tell Leila the story of what frightened her.
- ∞ The father nurtures change in how a nine year old feels about himself when he notices his son slumped at the kitchen table. The father invites his son to shoot a few hoops, and then listens as his son suddenly shares his hurt over not being invited to a baseball game with friends.
- ∞ Marissa engaged the anger of her adolescent daughter, and let it run its course without reacting. Then she sat down next to her, hand resting on her knee, and offered to help her sort out her angry feelings.

Perhaps you have carried out similar actions involving touch, physical engagement, and an empathic connection without even thinking

about it. You just followed your instinct about how best to support the child's fluctuating emotional responses to life.

We often lose touch with our instincts or with the ability to follow through with our intuitions because of our own stress. If this has happened to you, we encourage you to bring forward your wisdom of your “gut” feeling to help your child.

## When We Are “Out of Touch”

We lose touch with our feelings in our busyness, our striving, and our producing. A common view of success states that it comes from an ability to deny the needs of our bodies, to be able to turn off awareness of our body's messages. We override its sensations in favor of achieving an objective, however important, altruistic, or necessary it may be.

Being able to override our body's feelings is desirable when it is necessary to ignore the pain of an injury. For many of us—and increasingly for our children—we also largely ignore our body's signals when it needs attention, rest, exercise, or pleasure. In so doing, we actually create, establish, and perpetuate a pattern of toxic stress.

Stress is an inevitable part of our lives and our children's lives. In fact, research with animals and people shows that without tension and the opportunities it brings to learn how to integrate it, living organisms do not develop fully their physical, intellectual, and emotional potential. Rather, the organism is stunted.<sup>2,3</sup>

Herein lies the crux of the idea of “good” stress and “bad” stress. **Whether or not stress is good depends upon our response to it and recovery from it, and our ability to meet the next stressor or challenge with vitality, and a little more wisdom and skill.**

How is it that stress can become a potential threat to the life and vitality of the organism? Deane Juhan, in his book *Job's Body, A Handbook for Bodywork*, observes that with the evolution of the cerebral cor-

tex—the thinking brain—human beings have reached heights of stunning creative and intellectual achievements. These achievements, however, have come with a price.



### **Do You Ignore Your Body's Needs?**

The greater the complexity we've developed in our higher brain centers, the more we are able to suppress or ignore the signals of our lower brain centers that process and carry the information about our emotional and physical needs. The continual dominance of the cerebral cortex overrides the information processed by the lower brain centers. This override becomes a habitual way of responding—a chemical, neurological pattern that leads us to ignore our body's signals and messages.<sup>4</sup>

We know we are heading in this direction when we experience our body's needs and natural urges as a nuisance. Do these situations sound like habits of you or your child?

- You are rushing out the door in the morning, skipping breakfast.
- Lunch is always on the run or does not happen at all.
- Exercise is permanently on your to-do list.
- You consider unstructured playtime a waste of time.
- Humor happens at the movies.
- "Programmed" entertainment replaces spontaneity.
- There's no time for tears.
- Sleep is fitful and sporadic.
- You think you are happy when you are numb.
- You have forgotten what deep relaxation feels like.



When we (or our children) don't acknowledge and respond to our body's feelings, we cut off the experience of pleasure and the feeling of relaxation. We may substitute intellectual or extracurricular activities in our work or at school for periods of true rest and quiet. In disconnecting from our bodies, we cut off our ability to organize and develop our nervous systems and regulate our physiological and emotional functions.<sup>5,6</sup>

We need to allow ourselves and our children the pleasures of being a body—"drinking" in the feeling of a cool lake on a hot day, the feel of fur between our fingers while petting our big black lab, the wonderful release of a full belly laugh and its way of connecting us to our kids. Consciously resist your tendencies to remain in a pre-occupied state of worrying, planning, and strategizing.

## The Biology of Resilience

While *Help Kids Cope* addresses the developmental stages from toddlers to adolescents, it is instructive also to look at where some of these coping patterns start—in infancy. It is during this stage of development that the capacity of our children's bodies for integrating and coping with stress initializes. At this stage, children can teach us the most important lessons in how to bond with them. You may recognize someone you know in Annie's story.

When Annie was born, she went immediately into her mother's arms. Skin makes contact with skin. Mom and dad's voices and facial expressions are soft and full of elated, exhausted love. Weeks go by and each day the newborn is carried, rocked, and nursed at the breast. Eyes meet, and faces and voices continue to coo and communicate their joy in her very existence.

At about eight weeks, baby Annie is able to lock onto her mother's gaze. Moments pass and are held together by an almost visible cord of love. Annie is the first to break the spell with a slight turn of her head

and kick of her feet. Mom, holding Annie, returns to a conversation with a friend. The sequence repeats several times over the next hour.

Annie comes to enjoy bath time as though she were at a baby spa. A couple of times a week, Mom or Dad use a light oil and massage Annie's little body in long, gentle strokes before immersing her in the warm, soapy water. A few rounds of patty-cake and name-the-body-part follow. No matter how cranky Annie may have been beforehand, she emerges from the water full of bliss, ready for bed.

From time to time during any given day, Mom or Dad get busy, and do not recognize Annie's needs. The immediate feedback, the wail from Annie about her distress, brings Mom or Dad back to baby Annie, and her parents repair and re-establish their connection.<sup>7</sup>

Each day millions of these ordinary, yet miraculous interactions are virtual explosions of learning and growth for baby Annie and all of her similarly fortunate peers. Their growth is possible by the synergy of parental touch, movement, and emotional responsiveness.

This synergy illustrates the key components of what researchers and professionals in the field of infant health call the process of "creating a secure attachment and the capacity for self-regulation."<sup>8</sup> In other words, through your loving touch and response, you teach your child to feel secure, helping her to experience the body as a "safe place" to be. In this way, you provide a foundation for her emotional ability to respond. These interactions of touch and responsiveness help the maturing child to develop a sense of safety and security when she later experiences the challenges of adversity.

The key elements of successful bonding interactions with infants are:

- ∞ Touch
- ∞ Movement that is coupled with
- ∞ Empathy and
- ∞ Expressions of positive emotion

- ~ Episodes of intense emotional engagement (Mom and Annie gazing into each other's eyes, bath/play time) followed by
- ~ Periods for reducing emotional arousal (baby Annie disengaging and looking away, bedtime)
- ~ Renegotiation and repair of emotional distress (Mom or Dad's inability to always respond in the best way, and then reconnecting)

These components of touch, movement, and empathic interactions have their most profound impact on the infant's right brain as well as the limbic system, cerebellum, and the autonomic nerve system. These areas in particular experience an enormous growth spurt during the first two years of life.<sup>9</sup> The right brain is primarily involved in processing social and emotional interactions, facilitating an infant's attachment to caregivers, and regulating emotional and physiological states. These parts of the brain also play a key role in controlling vital survival functions and the ability of the child to cope actively and passively with stress.<sup>10,11</sup>

## Touch and Bonding Facilitation Continues through Adolescence

These parts of the brain continue to mature as the child grows. Teaching children and adolescents new ways to cope and integrate aspects of the stress continuum involves the same emotional circuitry from infancy. Yet, one profound difference is that older children and adolescents may have already formed a response pattern that does not work. "Changing such habits...is a more challenging task than simply adding new facts to old. Emotional learning demands a profound change at the neurological level: both weakening the existing habit and replacing it with a better one."<sup>12</sup>

How does this work? When helping children learn new ways to integrate emotionally, we would teach them a positive behavior to



replace a negative behavior. Adolescents use deeper breathing instead of puffing a cigarette. Instead of avoiding a stressful situation, we would help children safely approach. Rather than acting out, we would model managing angry reactions, one step at a time.

Within this complex network of a child's growing brain structures, with its flow of neurochemicals and hormones, the child organizes responses to people and events. The child responds to bodily changes that act as signals for his emotions. The caregiver, in turn, responds.

This mutual communication between the child's body sensations and emotions, and the caregiver's responses, contributes to the developing "intelligence" of the child's mind and body. The essential ingredient in this process is the caregivers' support and the ability to regulate their own emotions, creating empathic, congruent interactions with children.

Loving interactions with a mature primary caregiver provide both a model and support for the developing physical and emotional nature of the infant, the child, and the adolescent. By being aware of and providing for children's needs, and by repairing the emotional bond when we fail to connect, we help our child's brain and central nervous system develop. We are also helping the body's neurochemicals and stress hormones to ebb and flow in healthy, life-enhancing patterns.

*In this sense, parenting is an act of body and mind education.*

*It is the very real gift of helping a child's body and mind to grow and develop, and acquire an emotionally stable and harmonious life.*

Although the most critical time for creating harmonious physical and emotional stability is in infancy and the toddler stage, these interactions are also the foundations of the developing adolescent. Physiological and emotional elements continue to mature and develop up through the age of puberty.

Your pubescent and adolescent still need the foundation of touch and emotional congruence from you, despite any protestation you may

hear. At this stage of development, the life task requires emotional regulation and balance. Once again, children learn it from their significant role models.

## The Central Role of Touch in Responding to Adversity

In *Job's Body*, Juhan provides additional insight as to why the components of a secure attachment with our children, whether in infancy or adolescence, have a profound impact on the child's health and resilience. Juhan refers to the skin as the "surface of the brain,"<sup>13</sup> and to "touch as food."<sup>14</sup> In fact, so critical is touch to the maturing nervous system and functions of the body that infants and small children will literally die without it—a form of malnutrition called marasmus, or "failure to thrive."<sup>15</sup>

The importance of touch continues throughout one's entire life. Researchers have noted that when the elderly are deprived of touch and the associated positive interactions, they begin to show signs of a failure to thrive just as small children do.<sup>16</sup>

Why is this true? In the developing embryo, a primitive layer of cells called the ectoderm produces both the skin and the nervous system. In this very concrete anatomical and physiological connection, the experience of touch and of moving our bodies through space provides "food" to the nervous system that literally allows the human being to experience that it exists.

Touch and movement, therefore, provides the stimulus that regulates and supports physiological processes. If a body experiences prolonged sensory deprivation, and specifically a lack of tactile stimulation and movement, symptoms of "retarded bone growth, failure to gain weight, poor muscular coordination, immunological weakness, and general apathy" develop.<sup>17,18</sup> The body may be able to take in nutrients from

food, but it is incapable of using that nutrition without the additional nourishment of touch.



## **Infant and Child Massage**

Research in the field of infant and child massage sheds light on how our interactions with children influence their brain development. The Touch Research Institute of the University of Miami Medical School has conducted studies using touch, which conclude that touch:

- Facilitates weight gain in pre-term infants
- Reduces levels of stress hormones (lowered anxiety and irritability, improved sleep patterns and behavior)
- Alleviates symptoms of depression
- Improves the immune function
- Improves cognitive functions and heightened awareness.<sup>19,20</sup>

The studies we reviewed describe massage sessions with children that range in length from 8 to 15 minutes,<sup>21</sup> a period that might include story time, bed or bath time. If your child has a health challenge, developmental delays, or stressful life circumstances, the added focus and intention of massage can be a source of tremendous help and healing. See the Resource section at the end of this book for web site addresses and books that provide further information about how-to, and the benefits of massage to both the child and the caregiver.



## What We Know in Our Hearts

If we take time to reflect, we would acknowledge the importance of touch. Touch is:

- ~ Essential to the physical survival and the emotional health of all living creatures.
- ~ A fundamental nutrient that makes possible the manifestation of our potential.
- ~ About skin, physical contact, and emotional interaction.
- ~ About making contact with the whole person.
- ~ Expressing empathy and establishing a bond between individuals.

Why is it that we humans, with such vast potential at hand, so frequently feel overwhelmed or helpless in dealing with the stresses of our daily lives?

Part of the answer, as Juhan suggests, is that we don't give our minds a rest and let our bodies find relief from the intensity of our goal-oriented actions. Doing this one thing would change the damaging habits of stress and open us to moments of peace and tranquility.

Each small step we take in responding to what we know in our hearts will enhance our children's resilience and confidence. Each small act that affirms the worth and value of another person, each moment we can make another feel loved, changes each of us for the better.

## Summary of Chapter 6

- ~ Empathy and a touch of love express comforting physical connections to your child. They help children learn resilience to stress.
- ~ The profound power of sensory input calms and organizes a child's psyches and physiologies.
- ~ Touch and movement accompanied by a loving emotional connection move children away from the fragmenting impact of stress towards an experience of balance and self-awareness.
- ~ By helping our children experience and express their bodies' signals, we give them an internal resource and enhanced capacity for working with the necessary and inevitable stresses of life.
- ~ Think of good stress as a function of our response to stress and our recovery from it, emerging with a greater ability to meet the next challenge with vitality, a mature wisdom, and creative skill.
- ~ Chronic forms of stress are linked to depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and personality disorders in both children and adults.
- ~ Chronic stress is a habit that becomes deeply ingrained in our unconscious responses.
- ~ The greater the complexity that we have developed in our higher brain centers, through mental rather than emotion work, the more we are able to suppress or ignore the signals of our lower brain centers. Our lower brain centers process and communicate the body's needs. This mechanism actually becomes a habitual way of responding—a chemical, neurological, structural, and emotional pattern that leads to an increasing capacity to ignore and override the body's signals and messages.

- ~ Breaking down the components of the relationship between parents and babies shows us the enormous impact that interactive relationships have on the life and health of a child. The key elements are:
  - Touch
  - Movement that is coupled with
  - Empathy and
  - Expressions of positive emotion
  - Episodes of intense emotional engagement, followed by
  - Periods for the lowering of emotional arousal
  - Re-negotiation and repair of interactions that cause emotional distress
- ~ These components of touch, movement, and empathic interactions have a major impact on the infant's right brain. The right brain is primarily involved in processing social and emotional interactions, facilitating an infant's attachment to caregivers, and regulating emotional and physiological states. This part of the brain also plays the key role in controlling vital survival mechanisms and the ability of the child to cope with stress.

# 6



## Caring for the Whole Child

*We are all here for a spell, get all the good laughs you can.*

Will Rogers

Caring for the whole child considers the physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and mental needs of our children when determining how to help them cope with stress in the best way for their temperament. In this chapter, you'll learn how to establish care for each of your children's needs. Human beings of any age have several basic needs in common. When we meet these requirements, children can cope with adversity from an inner strength and develop the ability for quick thinking and action. Children's needs fall into five categories: Physical, Emotional, Mental, Social, and Spiritual.

We take a wholistic approach when we care for a child in all of these areas at one time. Providing healthy support becomes a foundation for a child's healing. All care is healing when given with love and attention.

### Physical/Etheric Energy Needs

The basic physical needs of our children are oxygen, water, and food. In addition, children need alternating periods of activity and rest. The quality of the environment that meets these needs is crucial and determines whether it will nurture the child and reduce his stress, or add to the body's stress. Pure air, water, and food, a peaceful space for rest, and

stimulating activity free children's energy to cope with everyday stressors. When they must contend with polluted air, and food and water contaminated by toxins or pathogens, there is less energy available to meet daily stressors.

In order to fulfill a child's requirements for oxygen, exercise, and movement, Chapters 7-10 provide the single most important exercise children need. It involves deeper, effective breathing and satisfies more than just the need for oxygen. It teaches a self-management and coping tool a child can use anytime when dealing with any level of stress. It is also an effective daily exercise for integrating stressors.



## **Your pH Balance**

Your pH range is the amount of oxygen in your system. The pH balance of your body means that the blood and tissues are alkaline and you have acid in the stomach for digestion. Bodies need a pH balance between 6.4 and 6.8 in order to maintain health and vitality. You can test your pH range through a urine sample with litmus paper strips found at your local drugstore. According to Kat King, holistic teacher, ([katking.com](http://katking.com)), "Through a complex chemical process of carbonic acid (by the lungs) and a base of bicarbonate (by the kidneys), the body maintains the hydrogen ion concentration (pH) which keeps the pH between 6.4 and 6.8."

Why is it important to test your pH range? According to King, research shows that people with chronic degenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease or cancer, have high pH levels, meaning the body is acidic. When the body is too acidic, it becomes a breeding ground for degenerative disorders, which cannot survive in an oxygen-rich, alkaline environment.



While the stomach requires acid for digestion, the small intestines require an alkaline environment to digest carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. When the small intestines are not sufficiently alkaline, they only assimilate the simple sugars, leaving the remaining food to acidify.

This fermented food can cause yeast, like *Candida*, to grow. When this happens, the body gains calories from foods but not nutrients, and then a hunger trigger signals the brain that the body needs nutrients.

When the body maintains an alkaline balance, it keeps yeast and fungus in balance. If your body becomes too acidic, causing an overabundance of yeast and fungus, you might experience symptoms such as exhaustion, chronic fatigue, or even degenerative disorders.



More than 75,000 chemicals, found in our homes, autos, air, and food are permeating our environment. “Chemical exposures can damage the immune system, decreasing the ability to fight off common infections and serious diseases such as cancer. Poor indoor and outdoor air quality, contaminated food and water, and constant, cumulative pesticide exposure all contribute to decreased immunity in children. Environmental toxins are everywhere, but there is much you can do to avoid unnecessary exposures and reduce the overall amount of chemicals your children take in to their bodies.”<sup>1</sup>

Simple dietary changes can actually help a child cope better with the stress he encounters. Eating a healthy diet (high in fiber, sufficient protein, low in fat, with lots of fruits and vegetables) will make him stronger and more resilient. Be sure to choose foods free from additives, preservatives, and food coloring. Minimizing or eliminating junk food helps as well. Also, consider eliminating caffeine (found in products like Mountain Dew®, Coke®, chocolate) from children’s diets. Caffeine is a stimu-

lant and can actually cause sensitivity to stress. Caffeine consumption contributes to panic attacks in some people.

External physical stressors can create ill health and disease by compromising the body's ability to maintain itself and to function properly. These external stressors include Amalgam (mercury) fillings or root canals<sup>2,3</sup>, vaccinations, and medicines with side effects (see resources at the end of the book for books and web sites for more information on these topics). These stressors can also be non-organic foods with pesticides or additives, use of microwave ovens, some vitamins and supplements, the presence of toxins found in household materials and cleansers, poor sleeping, lack of exercise, and poor eating habits.

Whenever we encounter these unnatural stressors, our mind and body will develop symptoms that show a lack of integration. Allergies, asthma, immune disorders, chronic fatigue, arthritis, and Attention Deficit Syndrome are typical symptoms that stem from unnatural causes and show the body's inability to integrate the artificial conditions.

By correcting these simple factors, the body will be able to respond better with its natural integration and healing abilities. Dealing with these factors is the first basic principle in creating health. Once this is accomplished, any remaining support that the body needs can be achieved through mild, natural therapies. (See the resources at the end of this book for more information.) There are many ways to restore lifestyle balance. Keep track of your progress and that of your children's when you make healthy lifestyle choices like exercising together, forgoing the candy bar for a piece of fruit, or cleaning out the garage of any toxic substances. Saakvitne and Pearlman, authors of *Transforming the Pain: a workbook on vicarious traumatization*,<sup>4</sup> offer simple, natural, and fun activities for you and your children, including:

- ~ Eat regularly and healthily
- ~ Get massages or foot rubs

- ∞ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
- ∞ Write in a journal
- ∞ Read literature that is unrelated to work
- ∞ Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- ∞ Let others know different aspects of yourself
- ∞ Engage your intelligence in a new area (e.g., go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, or theater performance)
- ∞ Get enough sleep
- ∞ Wear clothes you like

## Emotional/Feeling Energy Needs

As mentioned in Chapter 4, it is important for children to have a balance between the three different energies of the mind and body system; that is, the mental/thinking, emotional/feeling, and etheric/physical. Creating a peaceful and secure emotional environment for the child, taking care not to over-challenge the child's ability to integrate emotional or intellectual stimuli, ensures the proper functioning of the emotional energy.

Our emotions are like psychological antennas that connect us to, and make us aware of, the surrounding environment. The emotions relate directly to the physiological functioning of the organ systems and our digestion processes, as well as help our bodies and minds to orient and integrate their various functions.

Emotions become a problem when we use them as the sole means of understanding a particular situation or take them as being an absolute form of reality. How often have we become angry or fearful, for example, only to discover that we totally misread the situation and that we really wanted to respond in a different way?

Emotions are intensely personal. At times, we mistakenly think that our feelings and responses are always correct and justifiable. We can help our children find emotional balance by remembering the greater truths of forgiveness, compassion, and understanding.

One of the best spheres of development in the child, moving from childhood into puberty, is transforming the emotional realm that is centered on self into a social reality that can integrate others' emotional needs and expressions. From childhood where all things focus on immediate personal gratification, children emotionally mature into adolescence and acquire a broader understanding of self as being both a receiver and a giver. Adolescents grow into a progressing awareness that others' needs and perspectives are to be respected and dealt with equitably and peacefully. Emotions are great gifts to our creative processes, and they can become tyrants when allowed to have the last word.

The key to assisting children emotionally is to remember that emotional energy tends to be dispersing, stimulating, and chaotic. Bring order, structure, familiarity, a clear framework, and boundaries to children who need emotional restructuring or reframing.

When feeling stressed or traumatized, fearful or anxious, a child's emotional needs center foremost on feeling safe and secure. Children need to *feel* and *be* safe, both physically and emotionally. Physically, children benefit most from structure and order—benevolently imposed on both their time and surroundings, including their belongings. Emotionally, children need a stable environment and a special person they can always count on for help. Every child needs a champion or mentor in his life.

Younger children may need something concrete and physical in order to feel safe—a blanket, a stuffed toy, or a gentle touch. Emotionally, they may also need the presence, encouragement, and bonding provided by a significant adult.

## Mental/Thinking Energy Needs

Our experience in dealing with stressed, anxious, or traumatized children is that their minds tend to polarize to two major behavioral patterns: (1) the mind blanks out, like withdrawing or dissociating (this can be as simple as daydreaming or as earnest as finding a safe place in the mind); (2) the second pattern, as one adolescent described it, is that the mind starts “kicking ass.” When you are hurt, distressed, not balanced, or emotionally fragmented, the mind wants to protect you and nags you to “do something.”

We are using the term “blank out” to describe what happens to children under varying degrees of stress. For those under pressure in school, they may stare out the window and daydream, like when your mind wanders while driving long distances. The more a child becomes anxious or the longer or more intense the stressors are, he may dissociate, that is, “go somewhere else.” When a child hears fighting, lives with a consistently alcoholic parent, or is physically or psychologically abused, he finds a safe space for his survival and restoration within his own psyche.

A child’s space can be safe and filled with angels, extraterrestrials, God, invisible friends, or others who help him cope with his reality. That space can also be unsafe if it feels dark, evil, or filled with monsters and other nebulous and angst-producing creatures.

These “spaces” in the psyche are normal under stressful conditions, and most children recover, which means they can tell the difference between their “safe space” and reality. Those that do not may experience mental health problems, and we urge you to consider consultation with a health practitioner if this is the case.

Children’s minds try to protect them from hurt, pain, or trauma. The mind’s stress response may also be to start unconscious psychobabble such as worry, self-blame, and negative self-talk. Some children keep these intense cycles of thoughts to themselves. Under stress, others can-

not hold it in and start to talk it through, sometimes coherently, and sometimes not.

Your attentive and empathic listening has tremendous healing potential. The activity of listening gives support. Listening to a child's silence, or tone of voice and words gives you clues as to whether a touch on the shoulder or a calming neck massage would calm their minds and bodies. When children talk things through, they often can find their own solutions without you fixing things for them.

If worry and angst are prevalent in their thoughts, remind them, "You are here, now, and you are safe. Tell me about *now* – how you feel and what you think." In other words, keep them focused on the present moment by letting them describe feelings, thoughts, sensations, and perceptions. Storytelling helps here.

If the mind needs to focus on the present, then ask questions in the present tense that spotlight the here-and-now. Asking questions this way generates solutions and draws out the child's strengths: *What is real? What is happening? What is priority? What can I do? How many different ways can I do it? What help do I need? Who can help me?*

If the mind talks too much and needs quieting, move to a physical focus. Laugh, smile, take a walk, dance, and breathe deeply to relax. When the body changes focus, the mind will follow.

When Dr. Caron Goode worked with youth with emotional problems, they would speak so intensely about their feelings that their hands might tremble or their bodies shake. Smiling, laughing, and bringing the movement to their attention eased the tension immediately when she said, "Look, your hand is trying to talk to me. What is it saying?" Or "Wow, you are really shaking. Let's take a minute to breathe that body and let it calm down." Or "Move your body around while you talk to me and find a rhythm. Maybe you want to sway or swing."

If the mind needs logic and a plan of action, then help children take an inventory of their resources to cope with the situation. An inventory can include:

- ∞ The child's inner resources
- ∞ The child's positive self-talk that can support the healing or action to take
- ∞ The child's outer resources
- ∞ A plan of action
- ∞ A progress chart
- ∞ Just like feeding the physical body healthy foods, oxygen and water to produce energy, so the mind needs inspiration, positive self-talk, and humor.

**Inspiration and self-reflection:** Writing in a journal, dramatizing and acting out a story, or building a storyboard are ways to inspire the mind and learn about one's inner thoughts. Meditation and breathing calm the mind and body. Reading inspirational material focuses the mind on creative outlets. Biographies and stories of heroes and heroines who have faced adversity encourage our children to persist.

**Humor:** There are so many ways to laugh, from funny movies, books and plays to humor workshops. What interests you and your child? Laughter boosts the immune system, and we leave it to your creativity to find the ways that heal you and your children humorously.

**Positive self-talk:** Self-talk is internal dialogue—how you speak to yourself, what you say, the words you use. Because the mind and body are one energy system and the subconscious does not differentiate the source of what you feed the mind, self-talk reflects and creates our emotional states. Each thought has a corresponding biochemical reaction. You can talk yourself into depression or joy, worry or calm. Positive self-talk can influence your confidence, energy level, performance, and rela-

tionships with others. It can even affect your health, determining, for example, how you handle stressful events, or how easily you replace unhealthy behaviors with healthy ones.<sup>5</sup>

Children using positive self-talk have the ability to affirm themselves, and it is an absolute necessity to weather adversity. Your subconscious mind does not discriminate. It perceives everything. If that negative mind is running, your mental immune system is depressing itself and the body, emotions, and spirit too. Positive self-talk is the child's coping skill to:

- ~ Translate negative voices in the head into ones that are useful and supportive.
- ~ Boost the immune system when tense, stressed, anxious, or panicked.
- ~ Provide a reality check for the part of us that freezes.

Once we attended a riding camp where young children with disabilities learned to ride horses. They learned about moving their body and finding balance. One eight-year-old blind girl was as frightened as she was thrilled to be near a horse, let alone ride one. She had anticipated this day and visualized how it would be. When her trainers put her astride the pony, she froze. At least she was in the appropriate riding position. While she was immobilized, the horse started to walk with the trainer. Grinning and crying, the young girl spoke to herself throughout the whole ten minutes: "I am doing it. I am riding. Oh, help me. I'm doing it. It's okay. Good horsey..." When her ride was finished, she jumped (with assistance) off the horse and yelled in glee. Such was her exhilaration in her accomplishment.

Teach your children how to talk to themselves in an affirming tone with supportive words. Children speak aloud when they read, write, create stories, and give oral presentations. Virtually all learning experiences,



except the subject of life, require children to think and speak about the subject. What about learning how to speak appropriately to our bodies, our feelings, and ourselves? Inspiring audiocassettes on self-esteem are very helpful here. (See the Resources section.)

If we are what we think, and if we believe we can achieve, then positive self-talk is the anchor for the mind and an excellent coping skill. It can help children and adults regulate what they think and provide a medium for generating answers and probabilities.

Guided imagery (see Chapters 14 and 15) is another approach that can help children and adults in three ways:

1. Enhance relaxation
2. Reframe a fear or negative self-talk into esteem and confidence
3. Focus the mind on solutions and options

Helping children train their minds for mental fitness is one of the best options for continued resilience, so much more than a coping skill for stress.

## **Social/Self-Esteem Needs**

Children who experienced trauma, who are recovering from surgery, who are bullied at school, or are just scared of failing grades, turn to their primary community for support. This is usually the family. It could be a religious or spiritual group, or, for adolescents, perhaps a peer group. In order for a child's primary community to be supportive, a bond is established that fulfills the child's basic needs for safety, support, and bonding as described in Chapter 6.

The needs of growing children change dramatically as their worlds expand into their communities, and as they develop the desire to belong as well as to achieve. As children mature, they experience a growing

desire for friends, for social acceptance, and eventually for active participation in a group or larger community.

If this need remains unfulfilled, a child may become more susceptible to loneliness, develop loner-type qualities, or suffer from anxiety and depression. Social support during times of adversity offers strength and a sense of stability.

Yet, to take advantage of support groups, and to be willing to reach out, ask for help, or to receive help in return, requires healthy esteem. Emerging self-esteem is a delicate but crucial stage of development for children, and it is discussed at length in the book *Nurture Your Child's Gift, Inspired Parenting*. It is from the self-confidence gleaned from peers and significant others that a child develops competence in interpersonal skills and empathy for effective coping responses.

Why is this stage so important? A child's perceptions of herself as being worthy of love can make a difference in her ability to cope with stress. If she perceives that respect comes only from the outside world, she is susceptible to peer pressure. In times of crisis or when under stress, she may conform to behaviors that run counter to her true feelings. On the other hand, children who have developed inner strengths and a sound set of values are more likely to rise to mastery and competence, using the coping skills learned under your guidance.

Self-esteem is the cornerstone for success. Self-esteem has been examined as an indicator of social functioning because of its role in creating resiliency and positive social adaptation. Children with good self-esteem seem to do well in school and go on in life to achieve their goals. Likewise, children with healthy confidence cope better with adversity.

Parents who have a healthy sense of who they are model good self-esteem. Much more than modeling behavior is happening beneath the surface also. Our child's reality, his world, begins with instant photos of many segments of life as he has experienced it.

**Toddlers:** Imagine an infant's mind as a camera, snapping pictures of his reality of you all through childhood. What momentary snapshots does the child remember of you? Are you smiling, pained, frowning? Are you yelling, speaking softly? Are you rushing, tense and angry in your demeanor? Are you always working? Sitting at the computer or in front of the television? Exercising? Gossiping on the telephone with friends or being curt with a telemarketer? Children internalize these images, which become the basis for their esteem repertoire.

Toddlers need praise. If a toddler does not hear encouraging and positive phrases from the very beginning, then what snapshots will he retain of himself? Caron Goode often said the following phrases to her daughter as well as to the students in her early childhood classes:

- ~ You're great.
- ~ I'm so glad you are here.
- ~ Welcome to my life.
- ~ I am glad that you are my child.
- ~ You can handle it. You are resilient.
- ~ Try it. Go for it.
- ~ Your eyes shine today. You must be happy.
- ~ We are having a good time, aren't we?
- ~ Go ahead and ask questions. Your mind wants an answer.
- ~ Speak up. Your opinion is important here.
- ~ You matter. You make a difference.

**Children and Adolescents:** By the time children are in school, they have translated their esteem into a set of values that they've internalized. A child filters every decision he makes through his value system. If a child values herself, she may have a strong sense of who she is, and tend to possess leadership skills. If a child does not value herself, the others' opinions, actions, and requests of her can easily influence her.

As parents, we can continue to help children clarify their values and strengthen their esteem through clear communication. Here are principles to help children think and clarify what is important to them when faced with a challenge:

- ~ Help them identify the problem.
- ~ Let them think through options.
- ~ Ask them to identify consequences.
- ~ Listen in silence without trying to fix.
- ~ Teach them how to assert themselves if they need to do this.
- ~ Appreciate their interests and efforts.

As children grow older, they gain esteem through accomplishment, just as adults do. They learn to value their effort and time invested in a project or an act of kindness. We can help them by employing these suggestions:

- ~ Be the coach. Encourage them to move through a project that seems boring, hard, or intense for them.
- ~ Be the cheerleader. If we know they can do it and they are stuck, ask them to try another way, take a break and come back with fresh eyes. Or, ask questions to help them think through the situation.
- ~ Be the leader. Experience new adventures with them.
- ~ Be the inviter. Challenge them and stretch their abilities within safety limits.
- ~ Be the optimist. Help them cope with defeat.
- ~ Be the realist. Help them deal with situations realistically.
- ~ Be a parent with heart. Teach them empathy.
- ~ Be an example of service. Involve them in projects that make their hearts feel good.

Here is a simple method to help comprehend self-esteem. How would you feel if you were your child? The words you use, the actions you take, the faces you make—are these things you would say and do to yourself? Remember that your child's esteem and values are snapshots of you in action!

## Spiritual Energy Needs

In assisting the whole child, we cannot forget the spiritual nature of children. Children, from infancy through adolescence, desire a connection to something greater than themselves. The close-knit family often serves the younger child. As the child matures, the circle of kinship is enriched with friends from school, sports, religious communities, and others.

In order to cope with adversity, children must feel a connection to something greater than themselves. This perception provides a foundation of faith and personal empowerment, both of which are strong and mature coping qualities.

Yet, how does one care for a child's spirit? How do we encourage the passion and joy for living, that sense of a child's inner fire? When children connect to their inner self, it becomes the intrinsic motivation for their productivity and relationships. Children connected to their inner spirits are curious and exploratory, motivate themselves, and have minds of their own. Though such children may need boundaries and structures, they may resist restrictions until you help them understand why they need such boundaries.

Parenting coach and trainer, Rebecca Woulfe, has these suggestions:

"1. Using terminology and images that are in-line with your family values. Give children the understanding that they are loved and supported by something bigger than they are. For some families it may be God, or angels, or spirit animals. Whatever is appropriate for you and

your family, let them know that they are loved and supported just the way they are. Let them know that they are deserving and worthy of this love and support.

2. Model your own spiritual practices. If you were to hide your own spiritual beliefs in order to give your children free choice as an adult, you are asking a seed to grow without water or light. Share your beliefs—when you do, you give your child the rain, the sunlight and the rich soil necessary for them to blossom into a beautiful flower.”<sup>6</sup>

The call of the spirit cuts through the complexities of all our strategies and reveals the true nature of life and living. The spirit within us refocuses us and affirms that which is essential and eternal in nature. The spirit does not directly produce emotions or feelings, but relates to the attitudes and perspectives that we have concerning ourselves, the very fact of our being a person. We must ultimately learn to live in harmony with the world that surrounds and sustains us.

In this sense, true spirituality must deal consciously with the fact of life in itself, its ultimate meaning, and affirm its sanctity and unconditional worthiness. The terms compassion, love, hope, forgiveness, and faith are concepts of the spirit and are the very foundation of our physical and emotional life. These concepts pervade us so completely and are so universal in nature, that they are as much an essential part of the child's life as they are an adult's, to be conscientiously nourished.

Hope, a fundamental spiritual quality, is necessary for a healthy emotional life. Hope is not “wishful thinking” nor is it based on unrealistic goals. Hope, like faith, is part of the foundation of true spirituality that reflects the deepest desires and motivations of life itself. Hope is the positive response to crisis and challenge, creating realistic and positive expectations even in the midst of our problems. Instilling hope in your child is not the same as saying that their problems don't matter, but that you together, have the natural ability to overcome any problem as it might occur. Trusting in this inborn spiritual capacity for resolution and change is the first major step in any problem solution.

## Summary of Chapter 5

- ~ The five basic needs of our children are physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual.
- ~ The basic physical needs of our children are oxygen, water, and food. To maintain the symmetry of the mind and body, the pH levels must be balanced. In our culture, mostly external stressors create ill health and disease by compromising the body's ability to maintain itself and to function properly.
- ~ Allergies, asthma, immune disorders, chronic fatigue, arthritis, and Attention Deficit Syndrome are typical ailments that stem from unnatural causes and show the body's inability to integrate the artificial conditions that created the ailment.
- ~ The key to a healthy child is a strong immune system.
- ~ Creating a peaceful and secure emotional environment for the child, taking care not to over-challenge the child's ability to integrate emotional or intellectual stimuli, will ensure the proper functioning of the emotional energy.
- ~ The emotions directly relate to the physiological functioning of the organ systems and our digestion processes, as well as help our bodies and minds to orient and integrate their various functions.
- ~ The key to assisting children emotionally is to remember that emotional energy tends to be dispersing, stimulating, and chaotic. Bring order, structure, familiarity, a clear framework, and boundaries to children who need emotional restructuring or reframing.
- ~ Our experience in dealing with stressed, anxious, or traumatized children is that their minds tend to polarize to two major behavioral patterns: the mind blanks out, or starts telling one to

take care of the matter. As children mature, they experience a growing desire for friends, for social acceptance, and eventually for active participation in a group or larger community.

- ☞ It is from the self-confidence gleaned from peers and significant others that a child develops the competence in interpersonal skills and empathy for effective coping responses.
- ☞ In order to cope with adversity, children must feel a connection to something greater than themselves. This perception provides a foundation of faith and personal empowerment, both of which are strong and mature coping skills.



# 7



## Back in Touch

*People who enjoy regular, satisfying touch—a pat on the back, a hug—enjoy health benefits as a result. Their hearts are stronger, their blood pressure is lower, their stress levels are decreased, and their overall tension is reduced.<sup>1</sup>*

Positively enriching a child's life through touch and compassionate bonding is a healthy act of caring. Through this approach, you can teach children to regulate their emotional responses and develop an awareness of how best to respond to people and to situations. In this chapter, you will see how getting back in touch with children heals their distress and guides their coping skills.

An active child in a classroom stands half way out of his desk and leans far over to watch the teacher. His right leg pumps up and down with his nervous energy. The teacher walks around the classroom, and each time she passes this child, she calmly touches his shoulder. This is the way she has agreed to help him remember to breathe deeply and sit back in his desk. He has agreed to remember and re-postures himself. They spoke no words, and they communicated clearly.

When Jillian takes her eight-year-old daughter to the mall to shop for school clothes, she holds her hand. The lights and glitter distract her daughter. Jillian assures her daughter with her touch that she will not get lost. Her daughter promises that she will stay close by instead of rushing straightforwardly toward whatever catches her attention.

The information in the previous chapter highlighted the quality of our relationships and interactions with our children. We affect children's physiological systems and lay the foundation for attributes essential to success. By getting in touch with our child, we nurture the child's:

- ~ Sense of identity and self-awareness
- ~ Capacity to experience the body's messages as important signals
- ~ Ability to understand, express, and regulate his emotions
- ~ Ability to calm himself, and meet the next stressor with strength and confidence
- ~ Ability to experience empathy for others, and relate in emotionally integrated ways<sup>2</sup>

We can help our children develop these attributes by interacting in ways that are the most essential to their nervous system and emotions. These include:

- ~ Touch and movement, engaging children physically as both their age and the situation suggests.
- ~ Empathic emotional connection and congruence.
- ~ Negotiation and repair of disruptions in our connection.

We have the opportunity to enhance our child's strength and resilience through the power of our relationship to them and our daily interactions with them.

## Get Back In Touch

Sadly, we are living in a culture that is increasingly "out of touch." All too often, we sacrifice time for intimate contact with friends and family for less personal activities. Yet, what remarkable genius is there in an organism's ability, through simple physical contact, to be able to create a

network of chemical, neurological and automatic responses that ensure its capacity to learn, to grow, and to heal?

Take time now to offer gentle massage to yourself, significant partner, and children to ease muscle tension and increase relaxation. In the illustrations below, arrows point to the portions of the body where most of us hold tension. You can use a gentle, circular motion on the abdomen or palm of the hands. In the case of tense muscles in the arm, neck and shoulders, or hands, a downward motion or gentle, light pressure promotes relaxation. Apply feather strokes on the back, shoulders, and arms. Squeeze the arms, stretch the hands, and flex the wrists and fingers. Teach your children and adolescents to do this for themselves as well.

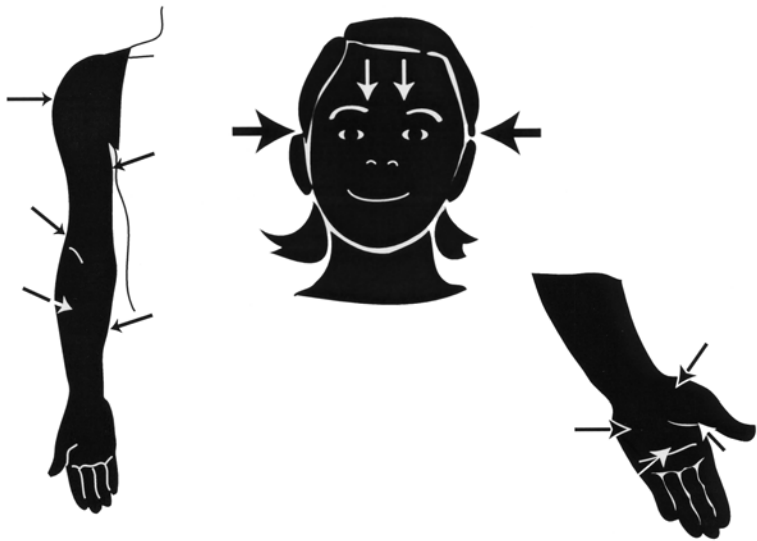


Figure 1. Massage Points that Release Tension



### **Quick-Touch**

1. Earlobes are areas of tension. Stretch them lightly to relieve stress.
2. Massage the curvature of the jaw, another place where tension accumulates.
3. Press into the center point at the curve of the foot arch to ease tension.



### **Actions That Help Restore Calm**

We help our child build resilience through our loving touch and empathic emotional connection. By engaging their bodies, minds and emotions, we restore their ability to feel pleasure and peace, thus helping them meet the world again with strength and resolution.

Adam is three years old and he was having a bad afternoon. His Grandma had taken him, his older brother, and a friend to a ballgame. During the game, Adam fell asleep, and didn't wake from his nap until the game was over and the older boys were intent on a Dairy Queen snack. Adam, however, really needed time to become aware of his surroundings and process the fact that he missed much of the excitement. Without this opportunity, Adam cries loudly and angrily as they exit from the stadium, have their treats at Dairy Queen, and drive home.

Adam cannot find his way back to being able to enjoy or participate in the outing. A dark cloud hangs over little Adam that shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon. Getting the older boys settled with a video, Grandma takes Adam into the adjoining bathroom, runs some warm water, adds suds, toys, a big bucket and finally, Adam. Grandma pours the warm water over Adam's head, and begins a story about the rubber duck family floating around him. Within moments, he is smiling, giggling, and completely enthralled. Both Grandma and Adam

connect in a way that changes the energy and emotion between them, resolving the previous conflicts. In answer to his questions, Grandma begins to tell Adam, in detail, about all the innings he missed at the game.

Water has been this Grandmother's friend through the years of raising her own children as it is now, during her weekly time with her grandchildren. She has not read the latest research but is acting on time-honored experience—water always seems to soothe the rough edges.

Incorporating what we know about the skin as the “surface of the brain,” and the regulating power of an empathic caregiver's interactions, we can see that Adam's developing brain, nervous system, and emotions are learning to restore a sense of equilibrium after the disorganizing experience of waking up in a strange and noisy place from a deep sleep. Adam was able to connect to the pleasure his body felt under the warm streams of water. His grandmother's loving engagement helped him organize his thoughts and relate again with curiosity to the world outside.



## **The Butterfly Hug**

The Butterfly Hug is a simple technique that has been used successfully to treat groups of traumatized children in Mexico, Nicaragua, and Kosovar refugee camps. It is used as an anchor to remind children to use their bodies as a place to feel safe. The hug is used as a device to instill the feeling of a “safe place.”

“The Butterfly Hug was originated and developed by Lucina Artigas, M.A., during work performed with the survivors of Hurricane Paulina in Acapulco, Mexico (1997). The butterfly consists of crossing your arms over your chest, so that with the tip of your fingers from each hand, you can

touch the area that is located under the connection between the clavicle and the shoulder.



"The eyes can be closed or partially closed looking toward the tip of the nose. Next, you alternate the movement of your hands, simulating the flapping wings of a butterfly. You breathe slowly and deeply (abdominal breathing), while you observe what is going through your mind and body (cognitions, images, sounds, odors, affect, and physical sensations) without changing, repressing or judging. You can pretend as though what you are observing is like clouds passing by. This exercise should be done for as long as the person wishes to continue."<sup>3</sup>



Marian is seven years old. She wakes up in the morning with her head pounding, feeling sick to her stomach. Marian wakes up this way most mornings now that school has started. She groans and she struggles to get out of bed. "I don't want to go to school." Like hundreds of other children each September, Marian is experiencing the stress of changing schedules, meeting new classmates, being challenged by new subjects, and not caring to let go of her carefree time of summer.

Mom understands this, as she knows Marian's stress patterns. Mom sits down on the side of Marian's bed, and holds Marian's hand in hers for several moments in silence, establishing an empathic connection. Mom places the palm of Marian's hand on her child's abdomen, and says, "Now close your eyes. See the very little girl inside that belly. Will she speak to me?"

"Sure," squeaks Marian.

"I'd like that little tiny girl inside there to tell me what is wrong with Marian. Will she do that now?"

"She's sad," whispers Marian. "She doesn't like school. She wants to stay home with you."

"I understand," Mom consoles. "But I won't be home because I have to go to work, and you'll be all by yourself. I love you too much to leave you alone."

"Oh," was all Marian could muster. Mom spent the next several silent moments rubbing Marian's abdomen to help her relax. As she did, she continued to talk to Marian's resistance.

"You know, little Marian, every year when school starts, you don't feel very good. And I remember last year that big Marian learned to take deep breaths, and close her eyes and think of beautiful things when her tummy felt upset."

"Yeah," grinned Marian. "She always thinks of the ocean where you and Dad took her and Kevin once. Remember?"

"Yes," said Mom as she placed her warm hand on her daughter's heart. "I am going to teach you another trick to help you feel better. Do you want to try it?"

"Okay."

"Then here it is. See how warm my hand feels on your heart. That warm feeling is my energy saying, 'I love you.' It will stay with you all

day long until I get home this evening. When you want to remember that feeling of love, you place your hand there. Try it now.”

Marian placed her hand on her heart and kept in there for a short time. She opened her eyes, laughing and hugged her Mom.

As this example illustrates, a reminder of how to relax can move a child through a stressful time. The act of loving touch works so much better than logic and conveys empathy for a child’s feelings.

Tweens and teens may prefer to massage their own shoulders. They may prefer music and storytelling rather than a relaxing hand massage for stress relief. What your adolescent is willing to accept from you depends strictly upon the relationship you have developed.

The important points you are helping your child to master are:

- ∞ Learning to recognize and distinguish stress signs in their body, mind, and energy.
- ∞ Once the stress is recognized, immediately take action steps to balance their energy.

For example, Kristin was working painstakingly on a term paper. She was concentrating, writing, and reading into the long hours of the night. The next morning she rose early to catch the first bus to school. During her first two classes, she began experiencing a headache. Her eyes glazed over with the head pain. Then something strange happened. She felt as if the energy around her was closing.

She went to the school nurse and described her problem: “It’s weird. I felt like the surroundings were closing in on me although I looked around at my friends and everything was fine. It was like a sixth sense. Then I kind of panicked. My heart started beating faster, and I felt like storm clouds were coming in to rain on me.”

Kristin was sensitive enough to her body’s signals to get help. She was definitely under stress, had a tension headache, and was breathing



shallowly. When her heartbeat seemed loud and fast, and things seemed oppressive, she sensed something was wrong.

Kristin and the school nurse worked out a stress prescription so that she can set “stress boundaries” when she recognizes that she is frazzled. When she notices that stress encroaches on her personal boundaries, she is to immediately breathe into the abdomen. She can use acupressure points at the temples and above her brows to relieve tension. If possible, she is to walk outside for ten minutes. Kristin shared this with her parents and teachers. If they notice her eyes glazing over in head pain, they are to remind her to “take a breath and touch break.”

In this chapter, we have shown how touch, empathy, and a loving connection can help infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents learn to respond to life with resilience. By using these modalities, we assist children’s nervous systems and brains to grow with the ability to regulate themselves in an orderly way so that emotional responses at a later age are not erratic and inappropriate. We encourage you to use touch to connect with children and apply empathy to support them.

**Important note:** *This chapter with suggestions for touch and emotional bonding are discussed only in the context of developing coping skills, as well as a strong emotional connection to your children, whether as parents, teacher, mentor, or caregiver. We are aware that it is not ethical or legal in some states for teachers or therapists to use touch with those in their charge. We suggest in such circumstances that you demonstrate these approaches to relaxation on yourself and then ask children to repeat them on their own. We do not advocate using touch inappropriately with minors, and this material is not to be construed as doing so.*

## A Circle of Trauma, A Circle of Grace <sup>4</sup>

*Despite our differences, we're all alike. Beyond identities and desires, there is a common core of self—an essential humanity whose nature is peace and whose expression is thought and whose action is unconditional love. When we identify with that inner core, respecting and honoring it in others as well as ourselves, we experience healing in every area of life.*

Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.<sup>5</sup>

Peter Levine, Ph.D., is a neurophysiologist and psychologist who pioneered a way of working with adults and children who have experienced trauma. In an article entitled “We Are All Neighbors,” Dr. Levine shares a story that demonstrates an extension of this work with colleagues in Scandinavia. In this story, we learn about a simple and profound way that mothers and children from war-torn countries are accessing their bodies’ capacity for pleasure and love. By creating these opportunities, Dr. Levine and his colleagues believe these parents, and indeed any parents who have experienced violent or traumatic situations, will be empowered through their own experiences to reduce the generational violence erupting in our world today. Here is an excerpt from that article, reprinted here with the generous permission of Dr. Levine.

“Just as the effects of individual trauma can be transformed, the aftereffects of war on a societal level can also be resolved. Different peoples can and must come together with a willingness to share rather than to fight, to transform trauma rather than to propagate it. In addition, there is a place to begin. The innocence of our children can provide the bridge that enables all of us to experience closeness and bonding with those we may formerly have regarded with animosity.

“Several years ago, Dr. James Prescott, then at the National Institute of Mental Health, engaged in some important anthropological research on the effect of infant and child rearing practices on the prevalence (or

absence) of violence in aboriginal societies. He found that the societies, in which close physical bonding and stimulation through rhythmical movement characterized child rearing, had a low incidence of violence. Conversely, the societies with diminished or punitive physical contact with their children showed clear tendencies towards violence in the forms of war, rape, and torture.

“As we know from the studies of Dr. Prescott and others, the time from birth through infancy is a critical period. It is here that the infant assimilates the states of its parents with regard to issues of basic security and the ability to regulate arousal. When parents are traumatized, they have difficulty imprinting their young with this sense of basic trust and security. And without this sense of trust, children are more vulnerable to traumatic situations. One solution to breaking the cycle of cultural trauma is to involve infants and their mothers in an experience that generates trust and bonding before the child has assimilated the parents’ state of anxiety.

“In Scandinavia, I am involved in some exciting work inspired by my Norwegian colleagues. This project uses what we know about this critical period around infancy to allow not just one individual, but an entire group of people to begin transforming the trauma their past encounters have brought about. This method of bringing people together requires is a room, a few simple musical instruments, and some blankets strong enough to hold a baby’s weight, all of which are readily available nearly anywhere at little or no cost. Once a group of people has participated in the experience, they can easily be trained to replicate it for others. The impact of this experience is so powerful that participants want to spread it throughout their communities, and many of them do.

“The process works as follows: A group composed of mothers and infants from opposing factions are brought together at a home or a community center. The encounter begins with this heterogeneous group of

mothers and their infants taking turns teaching one another simple folk songs of their respective cultures. Holding their babies, the mothers dance while they sing the songs to their children. A facilitator uses simple instruments to enhance the rhythm in the songs. The movement, rhythm, and use of the voice in song strengthen the neurological patterns, which produce peaceful alertness and receptivity. As a result, the fixation that generations of strife have produced begins to soften.

“At first the children are perplexed by these goings on, but soon they become more interested and involved. They are enthusiastic about the rattles, drums and tambourines that the facilitator passes to them. Characteristically without rhythmical stimulation, children of this age will do little more than try to fit objects such as these into their mouths. Here, however, the children will join in generating the rhythm with great delight, squealing and cooing as well.

“Because these infants are not blank slates, but highly developed organisms, even at birth, they send signals which activate their mothers’ deepest sense of serenity, responsiveness and biological competence. In this healthy exchange, the mothers and their young feed off each other in mutually gratifying physiological responses, which in turn generate feelings of security and pleasure. It is here that the cycle of traumatic damage begins its transformation.

“The transformation continues as the mothers place their babies on the floor and allow them to explore. Like luminous magnets the babies gleefully move toward each other, overcoming barriers of shyness as the mothers quietly support their exploration from a circle around them. The joy and mutual connection that is generated by their small adventure is difficult to describe or imagine—it must be witnessed.

“The group then continues with smaller groups of a mother and infant from each culture working together. The two mothers swing their infants gently in a blanket. These babies are not just happy; they are

completely blissed out. They generate a roomful of love that is so contagious that soon the mothers are smiling at each other and enjoying an experience of deep bonding with members of a community that earlier they feared and distrusted. The mothers leave with renewed hearts and spirits that they are eager to share with others. The process is almost self-replicating.

“The beauty of this approach to community healing lies in its simplicity and its effectiveness. An outside facilitator begins the process by leading the first group. After that, certain of the mothers who have participated can be trained as facilitators for other groups. The primary attributes required by a facilitator are an acute sensitivity to timing and to interpersonal boundaries. It is our experience that for certain individuals, these are skills that can be easily learned through a combination of participatory experience and didactic explanation. Once trained, the mothers become ambassadors of peace within their own communities.

“Experiences such as the one just described can bring people together so that they can again live in harmony, even if the experience itself does not completely heal all the aftereffects of trauma. Trauma’s impact is different for each individual. In addition, each individual must at some point accept the responsibility for their own healing, healing which will never happen if we must continually wage war on our neighbors.

“Nationalities, which live in close proximity, can break the generational cycle of destruction, violence and trauma that holds them hostage. By utilizing human organism’s capacity to register peaceful aliveness, even in the web of traumatic defensiveness, we can all begin to make our communities safe for our children and ourselves. Once in safe community we can begin the process of healing that the traumatized psyche so desperately needs.”

## Summary of Chapter 7

- ~ In “disconnecting” from our bodies, we cut off our ability to organize and develop our nervous systems and regulate our physiological and emotional functions.
- ~ Connecting with our child through touch and empathy nurtures the child’s:
  - Capacity to experience the body’s messages as important signals
  - Ability to regulate their emotions
  - Ability to calm self
  - Ability to experience empathy for others
  - Ability to relate to others in emotionally integrated ways
- ~ We use the following approaches to help children develop competence within their nervous system and emotions:
  - Touch, movement, and physical engagement as appropriate for age and gender
  - Empathy and emotional connection
  - Repairing or negotiating any disruption of the “connection”
- ~ The parts of the body and mind system that hold tension and stress and respond well to massage are: down the arm, points along the brow, the temples, back of neck, and shoulders.
- ~ Release points for stress are found in the palm of the hand. Massaging these points helps you relax.
- ~ Touching the heart is healing. Combining touch with an image of calm enhances the association.
- ~ Older children and adolescents need to know how to recognize their stress and set boundaries around the stressors.



## The Power of Breath

*There is increasing medical evidence that deep breathing can relax the mind, relieve stress, and reduce muscular tension. According to Dr. Dean Ornish, the director of the Lifestyle Heart Trial, a study that showed that heart disease could be reversed using diet, exercise, and stress reduction (including daily deep-breathing exercises), the breath is the bridge between your mind and body.<sup>1</sup>*

Mastering emotional responses to stress—strengthening your vitality and resilience—has a fundamental cornerstone: conscious, effective *breathing*. Many people are mindful about what they drink and eat, and how often they exercise, but few people think about how they breathe and its effect on their health.

Breathing is such a part of life that we are rarely conscious of it except during times of exertion or fear. Yet this simple act has profound effects upon us. Emotions and corresponding physical changes can significantly alter your breathing. Conversely, by shifting your breathing and noticing how your body responds, you can choose to breathe differently and gain control over your emotional responses. For example, we breathe shallowly when stressed, and when anxious, we tend to hold our breath. A heaving breath is associated with anger, rage, or trauma. Finally, a deep sadness or chronic depression can stifle breathing completely.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the power of breathing effectively and explore the relationship of breathing to stress. You will see how deeper, effective breathing can positively influence your physical and mental health, especially against environmental stressors.

Because children learn as much by your example as they do by what you say, we encourage you to take time to master the breathing exercises that we present in the next few chapters. For parents, make this a special family activity. You will be encouraging solid, practical skills that contribute to a healthful lifestyle, and you'll be giving your children tools that empower them to take control of their own experiences. For teachers or caregivers, using these techniques on a regular basis will improve the quality of your interaction with the children in your care.

## **We Forgot How to Breathe!**

Our society is experiencing an epidemic of poor, ineffective breathing. Children are the ultimate victims because they have little or no control over their environment—the polluted air they breathe, the water they drink, and the foods they eat. As adults, we have the option to alter our lifestyles to both treat and prevent disease symptoms. There is little that children can do until we show them how.

Some common symptoms that are tied to poor breathing include:

- ~ Cardiac, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems
- ~ Anxiety, panic, and depression
- ~ Headaches
- ~ Sleep disturbance
- ~ Poor focus
- ~ Poor memory
- ~ Fatigue



If we don't take action to improve our respiration, we can expect that our children and we will experience at least some of these symptoms. Because breathing is the foundation for all human activity and health, breath retraining can help us cope with stress, reduce the psychosomatic symptoms, and dramatically improve our health.

Breathing should be the first place a parent looks when a child experiences symptoms—not the last place, according to Dr. Sheldon Hendler, author of *The Oxygen Breakthrough*.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, few, if any, traditional physicians ever consider a patient's breathing style as a cause behind a symptom. Dr. Hendler believes that although stress is to blame for many illnesses, poor breathing makes the situation worse. The reason is that without sufficient oxygen, the body simply cannot integrate daily stress. This weakens the immune system and the body's ability to resist viruses and other diseases, leaving the body even less able to cope with daily stressors.

## Billy's Story

Billy was in junior high school and lived a busy life. He went to school all day, came home to an empty house for a few hours while his parents worked, completed his household chores, practiced soccer, talked to his friends on the phone or via email, and somehow managed to get his homework done before bedtime. Billy's schedule was full, but certainly not unusual for a child these days.

Stress showed up in Billy's life in small ways that most parents wouldn't notice. He told his mom that he lay awake at night "thinking about things" several times a week. He occasionally felt overwhelmed and tired at school, but he kept going. Sometimes, when the stress became especially heavy, his breath would become rapid and shallow although he was not consciously aware of it. His poor breathing, in turn, made him more vulnerable to the next round of stress, which, in turn,

caused shallow breathing once more! This is a vicious cycle that inflicts itself upon many children. The constant stress can cause physical and emotional problems, even in children much younger than Billy.

This ineffective breathing/stress cycle is rampant in adults as well as children, undermining health and emotional balance. To counter this trend, we can teach children to change the way they react to daily stress by using deeper, more effective breathing.



### **First Grade Students and Breath**

Research from the International Breath Institute shows that first grade children who sat for long periods of time in their seats, breathed shallower and shallower as the day progressed. Eventually, their postures slumped and their eyes glazed. Obviously, learning cannot take place under such conditions. However, when their teacher led them through deep breathing exercises for ten minutes each day after lunch, something amazing happened. They felt better! They learned and concentrated more easily and were able to relax and shift attention without difficulty after recess. The first graders reminded each other to use their breath before each assignment, and they practiced breathing while walking in the hallway, which helped them not chatter and disturb others.



It is almost unbelievable that an estimated ninety percent of our population does not breathe properly. In fact, most of us barely breathe. In general, after birth, our breathing style changes from full abdominal breathing as an infant and toddler, to shallow “chest” breathing as a child and adult.

## A Simple Answer to Stress

One single exercise that counteracts this tense trend of restricted breathing is the Full Wave Breath™ (explained more fully in the following chapters), taught through the International Breath Institute. The approach teaches you and your children to start the inhale breath more deeply, into the abdomen, and then move the breath into the solar plexus, and into the chest. This breathing feels like a wave moving through your body.

The Full Wave Breath was designed for the modern lifestyle for three reasons:

1. Most of us are shallow or chest breathers. Full Wave Breathing corrects this and retrains people to breathe from lower in their body.
2. Most people live a stressful lifestyle. Full Wave Breathing triggers the relaxation response, brings in more oxygen to remove toxins from the body. It can maintain lung health when used as a daily practice.
3. Shallow breathers have limited lung capacity. Full Wave Breathing is a simple exercise that you and your children now can do several times a day to increase vital capacity. You'll be exercising your abdomen, diaphragm and the intercostal muscles, which located between the ribs, surrounding the lungs. The diaphragm and intercostals move the rib cage and the lungs, allowing expansion and constriction as you inhale and exhale.

We invite you to make Full Wave Breathing a part of your and your child's daily exercise routine. In the following chapters, we will lead you, step-by-step, through the process.

## Breathing More Effectively Is Mandatory for Your Health

Contemporary living conflicts—head on—with the natural, rhythmic, deep breathing that the human body requires. Pressures and stressors are higher than at any time in history, and the first thing to suffer is our respiration. Stress and pollution constantly deplete our precious oxygen supply, and increase the frequency of respiratory illness, especially in children. A look at the most recent statistics on the impact of air pollution on health is astounding. The statistics imply an urgent need to teach children effective breathing, develop vital lung capacity, and improve immune function as soon as possible.

- ~ New studies of hospital admissions and emergency department visits have linked exposure to particulate air pollution with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. As few as two hours after being inhaled, tiny, invisible air pollutants can penetrate the lungs' natural defenses and may trigger a heart attack, according to a report in today's *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*.<sup>3</sup>
- ~ Common air pollutants slow children's lung development over time, according to results from the University of Southern California-led Children's Health Study. The 10-year-long study is considered one of the nation's most comprehensive studies to date of the long-term effects of smog on children.<sup>4</sup>
- ~ Exposure to two common air pollutants may increase the chance that a pregnant woman will give birth to a child with certain heart defects, according to a UCLA study that provides the first compelling evidence that air pollution may play a role in causing some birth defects.<sup>5</sup>
- ~ When children living under polluted, hazy skies move away to communities with cleaner air, their lungs begin to grow more

quickly, according to a study by researchers at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.<sup>6</sup>

- ☞ Diabetes prevalence has risen substantially over the past 10 years... a 49 percent increase in the disease reported in the 2000 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System published by the Centers for Disease Control. In addition...‘environmental toxins, notably dioxins, also have been suggested as contributing factors.’<sup>7</sup>

Today, one in every twenty children develops asthma. This represents about 3.8 million children.<sup>8</sup> Air pollution has grown, decreasing the oxygen supply. Evidence, particularly from developed countries, suggests “that the increase in the prevalence of allergic diseases such as asthma may be associated with air pollution, particularly that the resulting form increased use of liquid petroleum and gas in the transport and manufacturing industries and characterized by high concentrations of atmospheric hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen and respirable particulate matter.”<sup>9</sup>

It is vitally important that you and your children learn effective breathing skills in order to build health and protect the immune system. The environmental facts speak clearly for need and urgency, and we do not expect these environmental factors to improve, but rather worsen as our children and grandchildren grow up.

There is a strong relationship among the body’s need for oxygen, vitality, and health. Nobel prize-winning biochemist, Dr. Otto Warburg, discovered that cancer cells couldn’t multiply when exposed to an oxygen-rich environment. Without appropriate oxygen supply, the cells of our body do not have ample energy or fuel to cleanse and maintain health. Toxic cells become the basis of diseases.

At the International Breath Institute, we have discovered that how people breathe reflects their attitude toward life. Deep breathers are usu-

ally more relaxed and balanced, while shallow breathers are more anxious and impulsive. When a person holds stress inside it will show outwardly in symptoms of tension and anxiety. Using breathing to assist in letting go of stress and negative emotions opens both the body and the mind. Deep breathers are “in their bodies” and tend to be more grounded and dependable people.

In teaching your children to value their breath, you will show them how to value their bodies. Learning Full Wave Breathing offers you an opportunity to assist your children in developing not only their health, but also self-esteem by educating them in the how and why of regulating their emotions and controlling their responses to stress.

## Breathing Makes You Giggle

Learning effective breathing is fun for children, especially when incorporated with activities that motivate them to want to feel better and have more energy. At the International Breath Institute, we train parents, family members, teachers, and other caregivers how to coach children in breathing exercises. For children, Full Wave Breathing is really just a matter of relearning what came naturally in infancy and toddlerhood: to breathe deeply and fully and at an even, comfortable pace. That’s it: breathe deeply at an even, comfortable pace. As several first graders shared after their breathing experience, “This breathing makes us giggle!”

Full Wave Breathing is a powerful, yet amazingly simple exercise that quickly dissolves stress and anxiety, enhances physical health and balances emotions. Full Wave Breathing sessions are designed to motivate children to want to breathe better as they gain self-awareness and discover they have the power to control their own bodies and emotions.

When presenting Full Wave Breathing exercises for a child, you have to model the end result—be a product of the breathing process

yourself. Children are quickly successful breath students because they are generally less inhibited and more open-minded about new ideas and change than are adults. Most children experience immediate increased physical and emotional vitality after only a few minutes of Full Wave Breathing. However, since they will follow your lead, it is vitally important that you add breathing to your daily activities.

You will note a child's attitude quickly shift and brighten as their oxygen level increases. Even more exciting, with the continued practice of the Full Wave Breathing exercise, the positive behavioral changes that result last over longer periods of time.

Make the Full Wave Breathing exercises a normal part of a child's daily routine, like doing homework or brushing teeth. Set aside a regular time with your child and practice together. Make it special and magical for younger children, special and practical for the older ones. Including the entire family can lead to greater cooperation and closeness. Add music to your breathing sessions to create variety and an even more powerful bond of mutual understanding.



## **Routine for Optimal Health**

Here's how to make a the Full Wave Breathing exercise a part of your child's daily routine:

- Learn and practice the techniques, as taught in Chapter 10, yourself.
- Start breath retraining step by step, using suggestions in Chapter 9.
- Practice brief breath breaks several times a day.
- Include conversations with your children, helping them to recognize their own stress by being aware of their breathing.<sup>10</sup>



## Gregory's Story

A few years ago, a mother approached us, hoping we could help her eight-year-old son, Gregory, who was going through a difficult time. While getting to know Gregory and his mother, we soon discovered that his life was very stressful. His parents were busy medical professionals who held high expectations for him. And recently, the family had lost a baby from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. After the baby's death, Gregory's mother reacted by becoming extremely protective of Gregory. Given the family's tragic loss, as well as Gregory's parents' high expectations for his future, it was no wonder that he was an anxious child.

After a time, Gregory, who usually worked hard to contain and hide his emotions, began experiencing terrifying nightmares, awakening in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, panicky and fearful. The overwhelming emotions he fought to contain in his waking hours were manifesting into these frightening experiences every night. Soon he was afraid to go to sleep at all.

These episodes started when he was seven years old and occurred about once a week. Over the next year, the panic episodes increased to several times a week. By the time Gregory's mother inquired about Full Wave Breathing, she and Gregory had grown accustomed to spending long hours awake together in the early morning, because his sleep nearly always was disrupted.

Gregory's mother learned our breathing exercises and taught them to him. At first, he was reluctant to try a new way to breathe, but he and his mother soon connected through sharing stories and playing games. They continued this routine during the first half-hour of their sessions together. During the second half of the sessions, Gregory practiced breathing deeply into his abdomen. He learned breath awareness and control by changing and manipulating his breath in different ways.



By the fourth session, the full hour was devoted to coaching Gregory in breathing. Also, creative thinking exercises were practiced through shared stories related to breath, and by replacing the words in well-known nursery rhymes with breath-related, humorous words.

During their work together, Gregory and his mother acknowledged and recognized his anxiety symptoms, which was a very important step. Gregory learned to be aware of his breathing patterns, and compared them to his physical symptoms when both in and out of anxious states. He learned to communicate with his body when he felt anxiety emerging. By using conscious, deeper breathing, Gregory was able to dissolve his anxiety and reach a calm, quiet state. He also learned ways to move and stretch his body to release tension and fear.

By the final session, Gregory had learned to breathe the Full Wave Breath and how to use it in his life. Then, whenever he awoke in fear and anxiety, he would do the following: He turned on his light and, staying in bed, he scanned his room to make sure there was nothing to fear. He then checked his breathing pattern, which was typically shallow and rapid during these episodes. Next, he lay back down, placed his hand on his belly, and breathed deeply into his abdomen until his hand noticeably rose up and down. By doing this, he observed his breath while waiting for his anxiety to dissolve into calmness. Once his body calmed, if he still could not get back to sleep, he read a book until he could. As a last resort, he would wake his parents, but only if his anxiety and fears were overwhelming or uncontrollable.

By practicing this nightly plan, Gregory changed from a fretful, nervous child to a more relaxed, laughing child. He had taken a major step in learning to manage his emotions and his life. Full Wave Breathing allowed Gregory to release fear and uncertainty, while gaining confidence that he could do something about his fear and anxiety instead of being helpless because of it.



## **A Simple Breathing Exercise**

Here's a simple technique that you can use to calm a stressed child. Stand behind the child and rest your hands on his shoulders. Then begin breathing deeply, slowly and rhythmically. Ask the child to begin breathing in unison with you. Before you know it, you'll both be feeling calmer and relaxed, ready to engage the opportunities facing you.



## **We Need the Oxygen**

Oxygen is the one element we must have to live. We can live for days without food but only minutes without oxygen. Without adequate oxygen, our bodies cannot function effectively. In fact, every bodily function requires oxygen. How does our body use oxygen?

The first step in the breathing process is to inhale. As we breathe oxygen into our lungs, it is picked up by hemoglobin in the blood and then sent to all the cells. Once in the cells, the process of oxidation begins. Oxidation is the method of combining the nutrients from food with oxygen to create energy. The following equations make the relationship clear:

**Low Oxygen = Low Energy = Fuzzy Mental Focus and Unbalanced Emotions**

**High Oxygen = High Energy = Clear Mental Focus and Balanced Emotions**

Oxygen maintains cells, keeping them clean and healthy. At the same time, oxygen helps remove waste from the body. Breathing that is more effective can increase oxygen in the body. It is the greatest health and energy boost we can give the body, especially if used as a daily exercise program by the entire family.

## Alice's Story

One mother who practiced Full Wave Breathing for her own health called her practice time her “personal work.” Unfortunately, during these supposedly quiet times, her younger children often interrupted her to find out what mommy was up to. They were curious about the breathing exercises and simply wouldn't leave her alone, constantly barraging her with questions about breathing. They were genuinely intrigued.

Instead of trying to keep her children away during her breath time, this mother decided to take advantage of this rare opportunity and teach her children about her breathing exercises. Over time, the rest of the family got into the “breathing time” act and they all enjoyed it together. Full Wave Breathing became their weekly ritual and soon included creative expressions through drawing and writing, as well as taking nature walks. Breathing brought this family together!

## Breathing for Health

Retraining breathing patterns takes time. As you go through the exercises in the following chapters, practice them at a comfortable pace, neither fast nor slow. Incorporate the exercises in your and your child's life throughout your day as you play, drive, cook, shave, watch television or answer email. Incorporate Full Wave Breathing with various types of movement and daily exercise routines.

Several Full Wave Breath facilitators have tracked their coaching success with children. They reported that children are eager to learn new ways of breathing, and are successful because they are open-minded about new ideas and change. Besides dissolving stress and anxiety, children and adults have successfully used the Full Wave Breath to relieve a variety of symptoms and conditions such as asthma, poor concentration, depression, premenstrual pain, and nicotine, anger and alcohol addiction.<sup>11</sup>

Encourage breathing at the very moment when intense emotions or worries arise. Unlike anything else, breathing is accessible immediately and can become a great comfort to a fretful child. In addition, children gain confidence as they learn to regulate their emotions.

## Ways to Cope

Even removing one stressor can allow a child to feel stronger and more emotionally capable. Overall, children are more sensitive than adults because their bodies and emotions are still developing. Their brain reacts differently to stress than a mature brain. Stress can cause increased heart rate, high blood pressure, muscle tension, irritability, shallow rapid breathing, and even depression.<sup>12</sup> A child's body is not designed to endure a stressful existence. There simply isn't enough energy available. **This is why we recommend deeper, more effective breathing every day to supply vital energy and also to give children a daily exercise to help transform their tension into health.**

If stress continues for too long, the symptoms can become psychosomatic, involving both mind and body. Symptoms such as chronic headaches, fatigue, depression, inability to concentrate, irritability, anxiety, restlessness and insomnia, aches and pains, and impaired memory can occur.

To treat the symptoms of stress and change the way a child reacts to stress, the body and brain both need oxygen. Deeper, more effective breathing stops and can reverse the symptoms. The next time children are faced with a difficult situation, they can breathe their way through it. Full Wave Breathing:

- ∞ Is readily available whenever needed by you or your child.
- ∞ Can be done anywhere, at any time. By periodically taking a few Full Wave Breaths, whether at school or alone, your child can experience immediate relief.

- ~ Is simple to practice several times throughout the day.
- ~ Can be kept a secret. Since no one knows your child is doing anything in particular, this breathing technique can be your child's best-kept personal secret for stress relief and emotional management.



### **Check Your Breathing**

You and your child can both watch for these clues to poor breathing:

- Constant yawning
- Sighing
- Barely breathing
- Fast breathing
- Shallow breathing (clavicles and shoulders move during breath)
- Panting

When either of you observe these symptoms, remind one another to breathe deeply and fully.



## Summary of Chapter 8

- ~ Breathing affects our psychological and physiological states, while our psychological states affect the pattern of our breathing.
- ~ Children who are tense, stressed, or anxious tend to hold their breath, breathe in shallow chest patterns, or pant.
- ~ This chapter focuses on effective breathing to cultivate a child's health habits in an easy way, gradually developing solid practical skills for a healthy lifestyle. Exposure and practice of self-care health at an early age is now a necessity in child rearing.
- ~ Some of the common symptoms of poor breathing include: cardiac, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems, anxiety, panic, depression, headaches, sleep disturbance, poor focus, poor memory, and fatigue.
- ~ With insufficient oxygen the body simply cannot handle daily stress. Daily stress weakens the immune system and then compromises the body's ability to resist virus and disease.
- ~ Shallow breathers have limited lung capacity. They never exercise their diaphragm. Full Wave Breathing is one, simple exercise that you and your children can do several times a day for highly beneficial results. Full Wave Breathing exercises the abdomen, diaphragm, and intercostal muscles.
- ~ Deep breathers are usually more relaxed and balanced, while shallow breathers are more anxious and impulsive.
- ~ In teaching your child to value the breath of their life, you also show them how to value their body.
- ~ It is estimated that 1 in every 20 children develop respiratory problems. Air pollution has grown, decreasing the oxygen supply.

- ~ You and your children can learn effective breathing skills in order to improve oxygen intake and utilization, overall health, and well-being.
- ~ Full Wave Breathing sessions are designed to motivate children to want to breathe better as they gain self-awareness and discover they have the power to control their own bodies and emotions—rather than feeling out of control.
- ~ Most children experience immediate increased physical energy and emotional vitality after only a few minutes of Full Wave Breathing.
- ~ Positive behavioral changes have long-term effects with continued practice of Full Wave Breathing.
- ~ Increasing oxygen improves cell function and increases energy.
- ~ In addition to dissolving stress and anxiety, children and adults have successfully used the Full Wave Breath to relieve a variety of symptoms and conditions including asthma, poor concentration, depression, premenstrual pain, and nicotine and alcohol addiction.
- ~ When your child experiences stress, ask yourself, is she breathing deeply and fully? The likely answer is no.







## Getting Started with Breath

*The purpose of conscious breathing is not primarily the movement of air, but the movement of energy. If you do a relaxed, connected breathing cycle for a few minutes, you will begin to experience dynamic energy flows within your body.*

Michael Sky<sup>1</sup>

To breathe deeply and more effectively, you first become aware of how you currently breathe. Then you take steps to enhance your breathing ability and capacity. In this chapter, we introduce three steps for a breathing awareness program that will help you understand more about breathing so you can retrain your children's shallow breathing habits. The three steps in this program are:

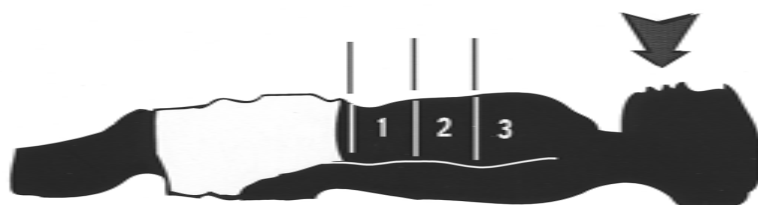
1. Becoming aware of current breathing patterns
2. Enhancing breathing capacity
3. Breathing for stress reduction

### Step One: Teach Breathing Awareness

Children learn breath awareness through fun, concrete exercises that involve the five senses. It helps for children to observe others when they are learning about breathing, making it easier for them to gain awareness of their own breath. Here are some fun questions to get the ball rolling to help you and your children become aware of breathing postures and habits.

- ∞ Where in your body do you breathe?
- ∞ How do other people breathe?
- ∞ Why would people want to breathe better?
- ∞ How can people breathe better?

Answering these questions is easier if your children can actually watch several people lying on their backs while breathing. As each person inhales, ask your child to identify which part of the body is rising and falling with each breath. Have them notice whether the inhale is through the mouth or nose. Show your children how to identify the following parts of the body by using the numbers.



1 = Abdomen, 2 = Diaphragm or solar plexus, 3 = Chest

Figure 1. Identifying body sections used in breathing

It may be easier for a child to remember A, B, C as opposed to the numbers. If so, label the body parts: **A** = Abdomen, **B** = Belly, and **C** = Chest. Then when children learn the Full Wave Breath, they can easily recall the sequence of

1 = Abdomen, 2 = Belly, 3 = Chest

One parent kept her six-year-old daughter, Elsabet, amused by playing games like “Breath Doctor.” They recruited other family members into the “breath clinic” as well. Elsabet used her toy stethoscope to listen

to every person's lungs as they breathed. She asked them to cough. She asked them to lie down and breathe so she could see where their bodies moved with each breath. She even informed two chest-breathing relatives that they should breathe "lower!" She carried a clipboard and drew pictures for the family members of what their breath "looked like."

As children learn where people breathe, they also learn how people breathe. Here are some questions children can ask others as well as themselves to become more aware of breathing:

- ~ Do you hold your breath?
- ~ Is breathing difficult or easy?
- ~ How do you inhale? Is it smooth, jerky, or flowing, deep or shallow?
- ~ What words would you use to describe your inhale?
- ~ Do you inhale through your nose or mouth?
- ~ How do you exhale? Long, short, deep, shallow, catching, smoothly?
- ~ What words would you use to describe your exhale?
- ~ Do you exhale through your nose or mouth?
- ~ Does it feel good to breathe? If not, what word would describe how it feels?
- ~ How do you breathe when you sit?
- ~ How do you breathe when you stand?
- ~ How do you breathe when you lie down?
- ~ How is breathing in those positions similar or different?
- ~ How do you breathe when you walk?
- ~ How do breathe when you run?
- ~ How is breathing different when you move as opposed to sitting still?

Once children become aware of breathing in others, they become more knowledgeable and conscious of their own breath. Using a mirror, have them observe their breath while lying or standing. For those children who have difficulty feeling their breath when standing or lying on their back, have them choose another position. Kneeling on their hands and knees allows the child's abdomen to move easily when inhaling and exhaling, helping the child to be aware of the breathing process.

Emphasize how to breathe more *deeply* into the abdomen. Deeper breathing does not mean gulping larger amounts of air into the lungs. Rather, as your child inhales, have her place one hand on the abdomen and attempt to make it rise. After your child exhales, ask her to describe the process to you, using as concrete words as possible. Here are some example statements you can use to encourage deeper breathing and emphasize the abdomen through reference or touch:

- ~ Good, we know where your breath is. Eventually we'll get it all the way down to *here* (point to your child's lower abdomen).
- ~ That's a wonderful breath. I'll bet you can go even deeper.
- ~ Show me where you think the breath is.
- ~ What would make you more comfortable during breathing?
- ~ How do you think you could get your breath to your belly?

The first step in learning to breathe effectively is to help children understand that their bodies breathe, that there is an efficient way to do it, and that they can control it. Once your child has grasped the basics of breath awareness presented in this section, you can introduce the concrete skills listed next to increase the child's ability and capacity to breathe through inhaling and exhaling exercises.

Remind your child, "We *feed* the body when it's hungry, *exercise* to make it strong, and *breathe* to relieve stress and feel our best."

## Step Two: Increasing Breathing Capacity

Increasing your child's breathing capacity and control is the next step in learning to breathe effectively. In this section, we introduce a very important lesson: inhaling and exhaling exercises. The child should be physically capable of expanding the chest while filling the lungs with air. Keep in mind that some children may have weak lungs or poor respiration due to many of the stress factors discussed previously in the book. If this is the case, practice the exercises slowly, gradually building strength. Good breath capacity is important not only for health and well-being, but also for speech and language development, mental focus, and attention.

### *The inhale*

A full, open, comfortable inhale is a powerful relaxant that quickly balances the body and emotions, releasing stress and increasing energy. When your child practices the inhale, he is also toning and stretching the breathing muscles in preparation to take in more oxygen.

To practice inhaling and stretching the breathing muscles, ask your child to inhale at a relaxed rate, breathing in until the maximum breath capacity has been reached. Then have him release the air and relax. Your child might want to use a mirror to watch his abdomen expanding, as well as noticing how the shape of the mouth and cheeks change during the inhale.

Next, ask your child to inhale, hold it, and release the air. Encourage the child to gradually inhale more deeply, and hold it longer. (One parent gave his child a penny for every five seconds she could hold her breath in preparation for swimming instructions.) Here are some great exercises for strengthening your child's inhale:

- ∞ Ask your child to inhale, hold her breath, puff out the cheeks; then, exhale and deflate the cheeks and belly.

- ∞ Ask your child to inhale as much air as possible while you count to three, four, or five.
- ∞ Pretend your child's belly is a balloon and ask her to "blow up the balloon" using an inhale. On the exhale, she can deflate the "belly balloon." (Some children like to make whooshing sounds during this game.)
- ∞ Have your child inhale, hold it, and exhale to a specific count or to the beat of a drum. (Once a rhythm is established, children can hold their breath for a longer period of time.) For younger children, breathing and holding for two seconds is a good place to begin, then building to longer counts as they gain a higher capacity.
- ∞ Add music, movement, rhythm, stretching, and dancing for variety and fun and to motivate children.

### *The exhale*

To increase your child's lung capacity and continue exercising the breathing muscles, have her practice the exhale. Exhaling has three properties: volume, force, and direction. Your goal is to encourage your child to enhance these three. Use the following exercises to achieve it:

- ∞ To gain full breathing volume, ask your child to empty his lungs: take a full breath, and then blow it out until the lungs feel empty. Another way to empty the lungs is to make a long sound or a tone on the exhale. When the sound stops, the lungs are empty.
- ∞ To enhance force, have him exhale with as much power and strength as possible. The exercises in blowing listed below can also strengthen the child's force of breath. To expend force, use a straw or a cardboard roll from toilet paper to direct the force of breathing to the ping-pong ball, a candle, etc.

- ~ Next demonstrate direction. For example, have your child blow toward the left hand, then the right hand. Have her blow like blowing out birthday candles. Take a walk outside, and be the wind. Blow in each of the four directions, and toward the heavens and then to the earth.

Other playful, exhaling exercises for your child include:

- ~ Blow to propel a ping-pong ball, or have ping-pong ball races to see who can blow the ball the farthest. This works best on linoleum and tile floors, or on a dining room or ping-pong table.
- ~ Blow out candles.
- ~ Push a feather using his breath.
- ~ Push cotton balls with her breath.
- ~ Blow up balloons.
- ~ Blow on his hand to feel the force of the breath, then describe its textures and qualities.
- ~ Stand or sit in front of a mirror, then move close to it and blow. Encourage your child to watch her breath cloud the mirror, then draw a ring around the width of it.
- ~ Blow dandelions or flower petals.
- ~ Blow bubbles and dance.
- ~ While your child exhales, have him watch and feel his stomach muscles working.
- ~ As she exhales, designate her breath a tone and a vowel sound, such as *ah*, *ee*, *eh*, *oh*, *uuu*, or something similar. The sound should last as long as the exhale; over time, your child can learn to prolong it.
- ~ Have a blowing contest with a few children, using balloons, bubbles, party horns, and whistles. Give prizes:
- ~ Who can suck in his/her belly the most while exhaling?

- ∞ Who has the loudest exhale?
- ∞ Who has the most forceful exhale?
- ∞ Who is the fastest balloon blower?
- ∞ Who can blow the most bubbles?

Use your imagination and invent creative activities both you and your child will enjoy. Increase your health and well-being and have fun at the same time.

### *Enthusiasm Is Contagious*

A professional breath coach once asked us to watch her session with a ten-year-old girl. The little girl was so excited to breathe that she had a difficult time relaxing and focusing. Once the session was underway and she was breathing abdominally, she was able to relax. Shortly, however, she became discouraged and wanted to quit. Puzzled by her attitude, the breath coach asked what we thought. What we observed was that this little girl very much wanted to please her breath coach, so she constantly scanned the woman's face for any expressions and clues that indicated success. Because the breath coach never smiled or acknowledged the child's efforts, the girl assumed this meant she was not doing a good job, which quickly dampened her enthusiasm.

When you are teaching your child to breathe, check your own expressions. If you don't feel the joy of breathing, how can your child muster any enthusiasm? Picture your child experiencing abundant health and happiness while learning a new way to breathe. Remember how learning deeper breathing enriches that young life forever. These kinds of thoughts and images will spark excitement and motivation for both of you!

**Keep in mind:** A child should never be forced to do breathing exercises, nor should the exercises be associated with chores, homework, or punishment of any kind.



## Step Three: Relaxing the Mind and Body

When we breathe shallowly, our body tenses, our emotions numb out, and our brain tries to take control. In this state, we simply react to our world rather than flowing with it and responding with clarity. When we are breathing rhythmically, deeply, fully and effortlessly, we are commanding our brain to slow down, allowing our body to release the stress. The brain is saying, *Okay...no emergency here...we don't need this stress anymore!* The command to the brain delivered by our deep breathing allows the body to relax. When the body is relaxed, we feel calm, balanced, fully aware, and in control. Effective breathing helps us all respond positively to life.

When children try to control their emotions by “holding” them in, their breathing becomes shallow and restricted. This is the last thing you want them to do! Help children breathe through the emotions, allowing the moment to pass so the body doesn’t become tense and hold stress.

When your child’s tension mounts, this very simple breathing exercise works wonders (repeat as often as necessary):

- ∞ Simply ask her to take five deep breaths.
- ∞ Then relax and take another five deep breaths.
- ∞ Then relax again.

Another effective way to calm an upset or overly excited child is first to ask him to take a deep breath, then ask what he wants to say. Words are difficult enough for children to find when they are calm, much less in the midst of a stressful reaction. Relaxing helps children express themselves more clearly and easily.

### *Jill's Story*

Jill, of Portland, Maine, uses breath to dissolve relationship struggles in her family. She is a high-powered sales consultant, earning a six-fig-

ure income. Jill wrote, “I tend to be overprotective and controlling in my family, but breathing is the one thing that helps me relax and reconnect with them, and helps me come back to reality! Also, I am learning how to be a more sensitive parent by literally giving my son the space he needs to breathe, without my often-controlling personality crowding him. Breathing is the tool we use for communicating, bonding, and understanding.”

As your child’s breath coach, you can help him increase his breath capacity, which allows taking in more precious oxygen into the body, and more easily handling day-to-day stress.

In the next chapter, you’ll learn to use the Full Wave Breath for yourself and your child. By learning and using this one simple technique, you’ll greatly enhance the quality of life for your entire family.

## Summary of Chapter 9

- ∞ Teach children to become aware of their breath patterns. Then teach them to enhance their breath and lung capacity through inhaling and exhaling exercises.
- ∞ To develop a breathing program for your child, include these three steps:
  - Become aware of current breathing patterns
  - Enhance breathing capacity
  - Breathe for stress reduction
- ∞ It helps for children to observe others when they are learning about breathing, making it easier for them to gain awareness of their own breath.
- ∞ Then when children learn the Full Wave Breath, teach them the sequence of these body parts: 1 = Abdomen, 2 = Belly, 3 = Chest (or A, B, C).
- ∞ It is important to emphasize how to breathe more deeply into the abdomen.
- ∞ The first step in learning to breathe effectively is to help children understand that their bodies breathe, that there is an efficient way to do it, and that they can control it.
- ∞ Good breath capacity is important not only for health and well-being, but also for speech and language development, mental focus, and attention.
- ∞ The first steps in breath training are to teach an effective inhale and exhale.
- ∞ Emphasize the goal of deeper breathing into the abdomen.
- ∞ Have her practice the exhale to further increase your child's lung capacity, and continue exercising the breathing muscles.

- ∞ Exhaling has three properties: volume, force, and direction.
- ∞ When your child's tension mounts, Full Wave Breathing works wonders (repeat as often as necessary):
  - Simply ask him to take five deep breaths.
  - Then rest briefly and take another five deep breaths.
  - Then rest again.
  - Repeat.



## Three Steps to Full Wave Breathing

*If we pay attention to that essence, we rediscover our natural birthright of joy. This is one of the most precious feelings we can experience, and in many respects it seems to be the total opposite of despair. Joy tells us that life is constantly renewed at every moment, and that there is every reason to go on living.*

Tom Rusk<sup>1</sup>

Full Wave Breathing™ consists of three easy steps that you can use with your children, regardless of age. This chapter uses diagrams and instruction to introduce the techniques to you and explains how this approach and your loving support can help your children cope with stress and trauma and have better health.

Coaching your child in Full Wave Breathing is straightforward and enjoyable. The following “breathing basics” are important elements in effective breathing:

- ∞ **Open throat** – allows comfort and good airflow.
- ∞ **Mouth breathing** – We start all breath retraining by breathing through an open mouth rather than through the nostrils to increase the flow of our oxygen. The jaw should be relaxed in an open, comfortable way.
- ∞ **Nostril breathing** – This clears the mind and quiets the body. Once you’ve learned deeper breathing, you’ll find nostril

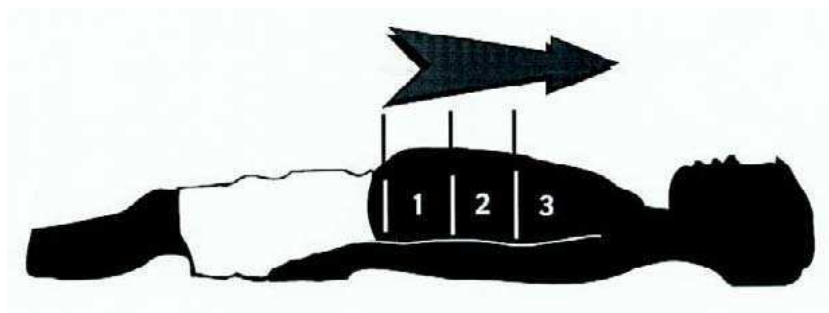
breathing helpful when you want to focus your mind and clear your head.

- ∞ **Inhalation** – A prolonged inhale increases oxygen in the body.
- ∞ **Exhalation** – A gentle release like a sigh completely relaxes the body.
- ∞ **Connected breathing** – There is no pause or breaks between the inhale and exhale. The oxygen flow is continuous and you are aware of your breathing rhythm.
- ∞ **Pace of breathing** – We encourage everyone to find their most comfortable breathing pace. Beginners should start with slow, deep breaths and relax into their comfort zone.

Learning Full Wave Breathing takes time and patience. To retrain a breath pattern a child hasn't experienced since infancy is not always comfortable if a stressful pattern is associated with emotional trauma or fear. However, you can make it easier for your child by teaching the skills in clear, concrete steps. Stay receptive to her pace and pattern, and positively reinforce each step along the way as she masters it.

## Three Steps of the Full Wave Breath

The three steps of Full Wave Breathing affect three body sections: **lower abdomen, solar plexus, and chest**. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the wave-like movement of the Full Wave Breath. This breath begins in the abdomen (1), expands into the solar plexus or belly (2), and moves into the chest (3). Mastering Full Wave Breathing takes time. Along the way, children learn powerful techniques and gain valuable experience. Combining breathing with other stress coping strategies in this book enhances the effectiveness of both. Breathing can be combined with singing, drama, movement, dancing, imagery, and other expressive activities that further inspire children's joy!



1 = A = Abdomen      2 = B = Belly      3 = C = Chest.

Figure 1. Three body sections used for Full Wave Breathing

Using Figure 1, have your child associate the number “1” or the letter “A” with the abdomen. Place your hand on your abdomen, and then help your child identify the same area on her body. Have your child lie down and expand the abdomen to match the picture.

Next, help your child associate the “2” or “B” area of the diagram with the solar plexus, belly, or diaphragm area, and then, the area marked number “3” or “C” with the chest.

Place your child’s hand on these areas of the body. Name each area again and match the diagram to the child’s body until the child understands that her breathing will begin in section 1, move to section 2, and flow upward to section 3. Move your hand in the wave-like movement to illustrate how the breath moves through the body like a wave.

## Step 1: Abdominal Breathing

All of the steps of Full Wave Breathing consist of breathing a full, connected breath, with a long inhale and a relaxed and complete exhale. Start your child breathing with an open mouth. Have him inhale into the abdomen, expanding his belly during the inhale. Have the child exhale all at once and relaxing completely. Without pause, continuing

the slow and rhythmic pace, start the inhale again. This continuous breath is a relaxed way to bring oxygen into the body.

Practice for brief periods of time, allowing your child to exercise the abdominal muscles. Gently increase the breathing time until your child can comfortably extend the abdomen on the inhale. Then exhale completely, fully relaxing.

You may stay at this for ten minutes, through several sessions or over a period of weeks, until you feel that your child can breathe into the abdomen easily and without strain. Play music to breathe by (see Resources at the end of the chapter). Use gentle touch to help him practice.

### *The inhale*

Younger or smaller children can lie down. For their comfort, prop a flat pillow under their knees to support the lower back. Do not place a pillow under the head—doing so would obstruct the airflow or strain the neck. Children who have trouble feeling the abdomen can be on their hands and knees.



Figure 2. Inhaling into the abdomen



Notice in Figure 2 that the child's mouth is open. When first learning to bring more oxygen into the body, we suggest you do it through the mouth as you sit or kneel beside your child, with your hand placed gently on the child's abdomen. Together, inhale and expand the belly. The abdomen is expanded, rounded, the neck is relaxed, and the mouth is open for the inhale. Do not hold the breath.

### *The exhale and connected breaths*

Exhale the breath in a gentle, complete release. The abdomen naturally becomes flat, like a deflated balloon. Again, gently inhale and expand the abdomen. A goal at this point is to connect one breath to another without long pauses and no holds between breaths.



Figure 3. Exhaling from the abdomen

Notice this exhale in the above illustration. The child's abdomen is deflated and the mouth is open on the exhale.

Use your common sense and intuition when you teach your children the first step of Full Waving Breathing. You judge how to pace them and

when to rest. Remember to smile and encourage progress in this wonderful response to tension and stress.

Older children who may prefer not to be touched, or who want to do it on their own, can either lie down or sit as shown in the next figure.

To help a teen who prefers to do it on her own better learn the approach, have her lie down, and place a book or other light-weight object across her abdomen. Breathing fully into the abdomen with a light weight across the abdomen will give her a way to gauge her breathing strength on the inhale. While sitting, have her hold her abdomen with her hands. Keep her hands in position as she inhales deeply, then follow with a gentle relaxed, exhale.

Repeat for ten breaths. Rest, and then repeat. Build up to a 30- to 45-minute breathing session per day. By this time, you'll have established a breathing ritual of bonding with your children. Eventually, all family members can feel connected in this activity that has such wonderful health benefits. Don't be surprised if your children become friendlier and more communicative as the stress disappears over time.



Figure 4. Expanding the abdomen when sitting

As tweens and teens practice expanding the abdomen, ask them how it feels in their body. During the first practice sessions, they may feel new sensations like tingling and a little light-headedness. This is the normal influence of increasing oxygen to the body. Explain to children that their body is learning to handle more oxygen. Ease the pace and practice slowly and deliberately, and the symptoms quickly pass. Within a few sessions, the mind and body adjust quickly and are comfortable with the changes.



### **Practice Deep Abdominal Breathing**

This consists of breathing in deeply and slowly through your mouth and expanding the abdomen as you practice. Visualize the air traveling right down to your abdomen and say the word “relax” to yourself as you breathe in. Then breathe out slowly and gently through your mouth. As you exhale, imagine the stress and tension leaving your body with your breath and think the word “calm.” Deliberately let your muscles relax as you breathe out. Take three deep breaths at a time.



### **Benefits of Abdominal Breathing for Overweight Children and Adults**

Abdominal breathing stimulates the metabolism, especially for children with weight problems. Many overweight individuals find their breathing and heart affected by the state of their body. They may have a breathing disorder that is partially related to cardiovascular problems. One of the common reasons for the heart problems is that overweight individuals are often inactive and do not give themselves a chance to strengthen their heart muscle.

If you or your children are overweight, here is a simple method to stimulate your metabolism. Lie down or sit comfortably as illustrated in the following figure. Place your hands on the side of your abdomen. Place thumbs on the lower rib, and the fingers around the upper belly. Inhale and exhale slowly and continuously as described above. Practice in increments of three breath rounds and then stop. Rest and practice three more abdominal breaths.

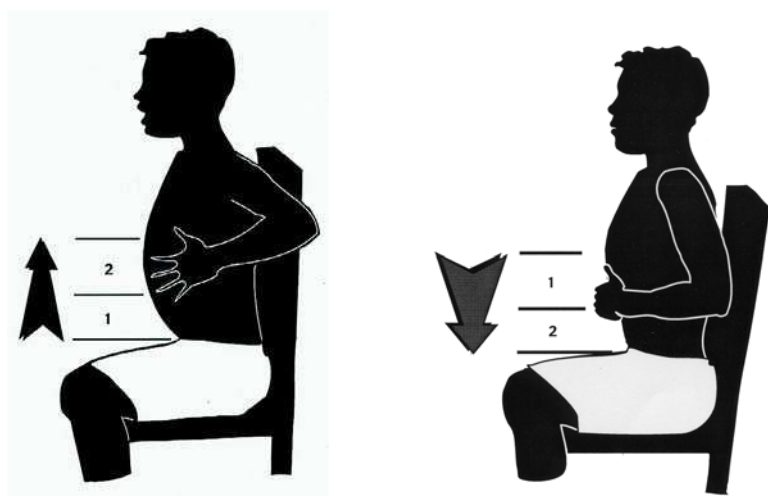


Figure 5. The breath moves upward in the full wave from the abdomen to the chest. Children can feel the lung expansion by placing their hands on the lower rib cage.

As you increase your breathing capacity, increase your practice. Move to five breathing rounds, and then to eight rounds over a period of several days. Placing your hands on your body orients you concretely to exercising your diaphragm and feeling the lungs expand and contract. Building your lung capacity and exercising your diaphragm are very important to your respiratory health as well as cardiovascular fitness.

### *Make it fun!*

One parent/breath coach, while teaching her five and seven year old's this first step, encouraged them to relax their bellies by being "jelly bellies." While one child lay on the floor, the other placed a hand on his sibling's belly, and then gently rocked the belly, making it turn into "jelly!" This relaxed the children.

Another parent/breath coach asked her children to crawl across the floor on their hands and knees while stretching and loosening up the body. Once they were more relaxed, she coached them to breathe into their bellies while watching their abdomens grow full, then suddenly shrink with the exhale. This exercise soon turned into a contest about who could have the most extended belly, the roundest abdomen, the straightest back, and the calmest inhale.

When children are on their hands and knees, they can easily observe the direct correlation between the inhale and their expanding bellies, and the exhale and their contracting bellies. This is a good position for practicing two other important skills: continuous breath and a relaxed, short exhale.

Take as much time as you need to coach your child into a fluid, natural deeper breathing into the abdomen. There is no rush. This first step of Full Wave Breathing, once learned, will not be forgotten. When you and your children are comfortable with Step 1, move to the next exercises in Step 2.

### **Step 2: Breathe Into the Solar Plexus**

The second step of Full Wave Breathing brings the breath from the abdomen into the solar plexus. Children can place their hands around the upper rib cage to feel their breathing rhythms. During the inhale, they first breathe into the abdomen, then expand the lower ribs and exercise the diaphragm and intercostal muscles.

## *Introducing the diaphragm muscle*

To understand how to perform this step, children need to know where the diaphragm muscle is located. A parent who was also a teacher used this story with her second grade class to introduce this concept.

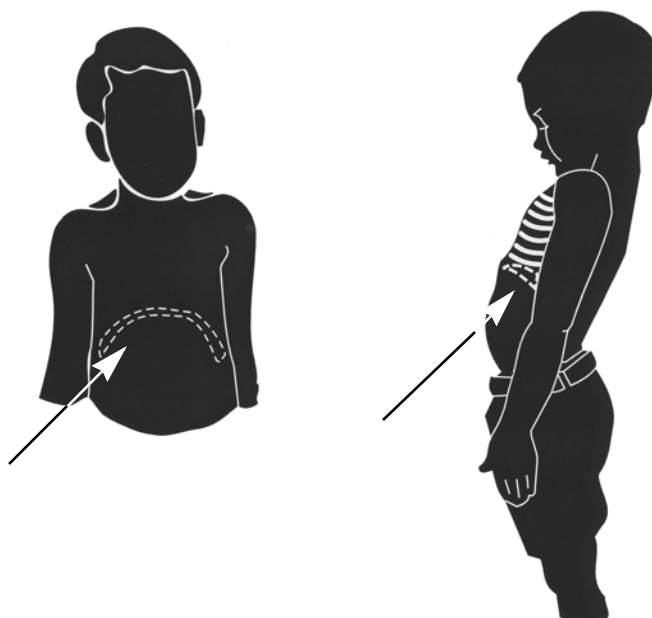


Figure 6. Diaphragm muscle

“First, I want you to meet a partner in our breathing game. Inside your body is this balloon-like muscle under your rib cage. (Show your child where the diaphragm muscle is; have her touch it and massage it.)

“Mr. Diaphragm is a shy kind of guy. He stays tucked under the ribs and doesn’t get out often. Sometimes Mr. Diaphragm would like a hug, so we reach into our middle and tickle and massage him. That reminds Mr. Diaphragm we haven’t forgotten him. But sometimes saying hello isn’t enough. Maybe he’d like to come out and play. Everyone likes to be

invited to play, right? The only way we can get Mr. Diaphragm to come out to play is to breathe this way.”

Place your hand on the abdomen as in step one. Next, move your hand to the solar plexus area, directly under the sternum, in the hollow area where the ribs meet.

### *Breathing into the belly*

Inhale through the mouth, expand the abdomen (step one), then expand or pull the breath into the solar plexus or belly, expanding the rib cage (step two). Exhale completely, relaxing and deflating the entire area. Breathing continuously, inhale again, following the same pattern. Note that on the exhale, the abdomen and solar plexus deflate naturally as a result of the exhale. There is no need to force it or try to make it happen. Rather, just observe that it does happen.



Figure 7. Expanding the inhale from the abdomen into the solar plexus, Note the rounded abdomen and open mouth.

Use your intuition to help children understand how to move the breath up through their bodies in expanding their rib cage. Action verbs like *move up*, *expand*, *pull up* have different connotations for children, and they may not understand what action you want them to take. Demonstration works! You might ask the children, “What word best

describes moving your breath from here (abdomen) to here (solar plexus)?”

The metaphor we like best is that of a wave. You can ask children to practice moving the wave through their body.

Another method to teach moving the breath from the abdomen into the solar plexus is the two-stroke breath. Here’s how it works.

- ~ On stroke or count one, inhale deeply into the abdomen.
- ~ On count two of the inhale, move the breath into the solar plexus.
- ~ Exhale smoothly, and repeat the two-stroke breath.

This two-stroke breath can be done lying or sitting. Children enjoy breathing to music so they can keep count of the two strokes. (Try the “Cosmic Waltz” offered by the International Breath Institute at [www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net).) As your child’s breath coach, clap or tap the rhythm to help her establish a pattern. Also, add fun gestures, such as raising your hands on the inhale and letting your arms fall on the exhale to help establish a rhythm.

### Step 3: Into the Chest

The third step of the Full Wave Breath is to expand the breath all the way into the chest from the solar plexus and abdomen. At this point, the Full Wave Breath truly becomes like a wave that begins in the belly and moves up through the chest. The three separate steps of the Full Wave Breath become a smooth flow of breathing.

As you did when teaching the previous steps, show your child the flow of breath by placing your hand on the abdomen, solar plexus, and then the chest. Practice breathing from the abdomen and expand into the chest. Help your child orient to his chest by placing your palm there



as he breathes. Fullness of the inhale is shown from the abdomen all the way to the upper clavicles. Emphasize the wave-like movement.

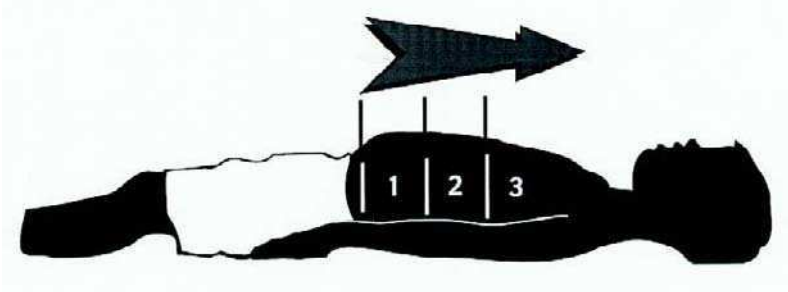


Figure 8. The Full Wave Breath moves from the expanded abdomen and solar plexus into the chest. Note the open mouth and enhanced areas of the body.

Explain the exhale as a gentle and completely relaxed deflation of the abdomen and diaphragm.

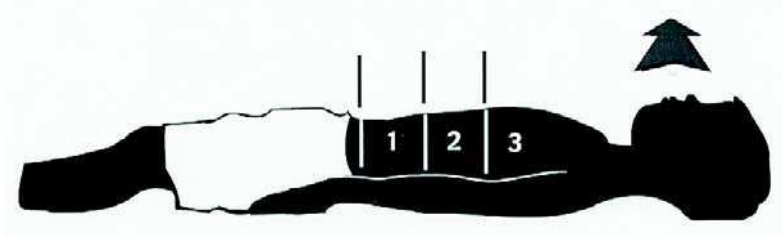


Figure 9. On the exhale, notice that the expanded abdomen flattens out while the child gently blows out his mouth.

Then continue to practice the continuous breathing process. These diagrams show your child how the air moves upward on the inhale, and outward on the exhale. Practice will coordinate the movement of breath and body.

## *Jake's story*

Jake was a ten year old who had great fear and anxiety over a stuttering problem. Fortunately, his speech therapist was also a certified breath coach. She learned from the family that Jake was a sensitive child who reacted strongly to emotional criticism and felt timid in new situations. Jake lived with his grandparents, but interacted primarily with his grandmother. His grandfather was considerably older and didn't participate much in Jake's life except for occasionally offering harsh criticisms. There was no other significant family history except for the fact that Jake began stuttering around six years of age, about the time he entered school.

The breath coach noticed that Jake's stuttering patterns happened mainly at home in the presence of his grandfather. Jake's physical and emotional reaction to his grandfather's harsh comments was to freeze and become unable to respond. His breathing literally stopped.

The breath coach quickly realized that Jake's first goal was to open up his breathing mechanism when he became anxious. Jake had very little trouble learning the Full Wave Breath. He quickly realized this technique could help him when he became anxious and frightened.

The next step was to apply this technique to Jake's stuttering problem, which was the real challenge. The breath coach asked Jake what he loved the most. He responded, "The ocean." One Saturday, Jake and his breath coach drove to the ocean to practice Full Wave Breathing. The coach knew this was the most likely place for Jake to feel more relaxed and uninhibited. The coach was right. Jake learned to inhale the Full Wave Breath, pause, and then speak what he wanted to say.

He combined this method of relaxation with speaking and soon felt more confident and happy. By using the Full Wave Breath, Jake became more proficient and relaxed when speaking to strangers. His breath coach was highly enthusiastic about Jake's new outlook on his world!

The breath coach worked with Jake for an entire year. As they breathed together, Jake talked openly with the coach about his anxiety. Over time, Jake overcame his stuttering problem and the anxiety that surrounded it. It took time and patience, but the effort was well spent. Jake walked away with a new breath exercise, renewed self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment that would last a lifetime.

Learning the Full Wave Breath is an important milestone for a breath student. At this point, they have conquered several challenges and gained many new skills for breathing and beyond. Children commonly exhibit new confidence and gain a fresh awareness of their body and emotions. The following examples are some of the benefits from learning the Full Wave Breath:

- ~ Sharper, more prolonged focus while performing a task (increased concentration)
- ~ Enhanced awareness of emotional patterns
- ~ Increased energy, improved physical and emotional well-being
- ~ Ability to choose to breathe for specific reasons, such as to relieve stress or anxiety or for sports or academic performance
- ~ Ability to notice and consciously regulate an emotional pattern, such as impulsive behaviors
- ~ Increased problem-solving ability
- ~ Ability to apply new knowledge and breath skills in everyday life

## Breathing Babes and Toddlers

You can use Full Wave Breathing to quiet, calm, or bond with younger children. By holding the child so she feels the breathing pattern of the adult, the child's breathing pattern will match that of the adult. The child's breathing becomes entrained to the parent's pattern.

A nine-month-old child was in a car seat in the back seat when his father's car was sideswiped and totaled by a drunk driver. Since the

mother was hospitalized, a friend and trained breath coach took care of her baby. The child would wake up screaming and crying from both naps and nighttime sleep. The breath coach spent hours holding the child in a rocker and breathing with the child. She would talk to him softly and sometimes sing. When the infant's breath matched her rhythm, he fell asleep. She repeated this day after day for two weeks, feeling that this little boy was reliving repeatedly the trauma of the auto accident. Touch, bonding, empathy, breath, and patience finally enabled him to sleep peacefully.

With infants and toddlers, our first concern is for their feeling of safety. Aromatherapy oils or air purifiers with aromas like vanilla and lavender soothe the senses. Touch and softness are especially important here. A gentle massage on the back, shoulders, tummy or belly also calms a frightened or traumatized child.

Helping a child feel safe again takes time. When physical comforts are taken care of and sensory input minimized and calmed, you can always return to the breath. One adoptive parent shared the story of her newly adopted son. These loving parents brought their son straight home from the hospital after his birth, so joyous to finally be able to hold him. The infant, though, was upset and screamed at the top of his lungs for three days. The new parents were frightened for him and frustrated that their attempts to calm him were ineffective. Music, walking, strolling, rocking, or feeding did not help. Finally their son quit crying on his own, but his parents noticed that his breath was thoracic and raspy, and his muscles were rock hard. This little newborn was at peak stress and anxiety.

They started to breathe with him. His head was placed on his mother's chest so he could hear her heart. He lay atop her abdomen so he could feel her breath, as she slowly breathed the Full Wave Breath

and his father stroked his back and hands. The parents took turns holding and rocking, breathing, and singing, touching and loving.

The infant was able to relax the tight muscles. In time, his breath did match his mother's slow paced respiration. The rhythm of the heart-beat and breathing were successful in quieting his heaving and calming him.



Figure 10. To breathe infants, hold them against your abdomen, and breathe the Full Wave Breath slowly and gently. Their body feels the rhythm and will match your breathing.

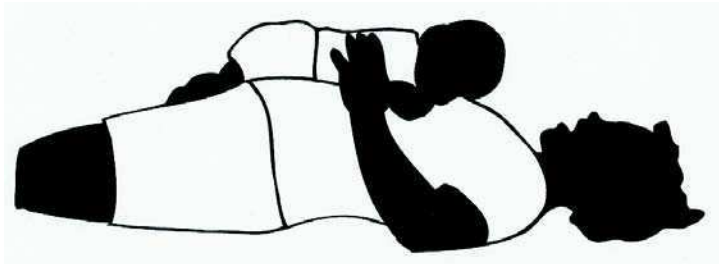


Figure 11. You can also hold the infant face down and follow the same process as given above.

Toddlers can be held for breathing, either with their back or their abdomen against the adult. With your gentle touch and instruction, toddlers are also capable of breathing into the abdomen while lying on the floor.



Figure 12. Toddlers can sit on your lap, with their back against your abdomen as you follow Full Wave Breathing movements. Some children may prefer to hug you instead, and this also works well.

Because of toddlers' activity levels, you can introduce a breath and then a stretching movement, and extend this into a game. Eventually add music and create a child's exercise period to help them move and focus their energy into a positive activity.

## Summary of Chapter 10

- ~ Healthy, effective breathing consists of three steps of the Full Wave Breath exercises that can be used with your children, regardless of age.
- ~ The following “breathing basics” will become very familiar to your child as he learns effective breathing:
  - **Open throat** (allows comfort and good air flow)
  - **Mouth breathing** (revitalizes and energizes the body; relaxes the jaw and releases tension) Start all breath retraining using an open mouth rather than the nostrils for increased oxygen and bodily relaxation.
  - **Nostril breathing** (clears the mind, quiets the body) When you and your children have learned Full Wave Breathing, you’ll also find nostril breathing helpful when you want to focus your mind and clear your head.
  - **Inhalation** (a prolonged inhale increases oxygen in the body)
  - **Exhalation** (a gentle release like a sigh, completely relaxing the body)
  - **Connected breathing** (no pause or breaks between the inhale and exhale; oxygen flow is continuous, breathing is more conscious)
  - **Pace of breathing** (We encourage everyone to find her most comfortable breathing pace; beginners should start with slow, deep breaths and relax into your comfort zone.)
- ~ The three steps of Full Wave Breathing™ correspond to these three body sections: abdomen, solar plexus, and chest.

- ∞ All of the steps of Full Wave Breathing consist of breathing a full, connected breath, with a long inhale and a relaxed and complete exhale.
- ∞ One benefit of this approach is exercise to stimulate the metabolism, especially for children with weight problems. They have a breathing disorder that is partially related to cardiovascular problems.
- ∞ What we like best is to use the metaphor of a wave and have children practice the movement of the wave through their body.
- ∞ Full Wave Breathing:
  - Take a deep, full inhale with the mouth open and relaxed; then release gently and completely on the exhale. Do not pause between breaths, thus breathing in a continuous, gentle cycle.
  - Breathe easily into the abdomen, then expand or pull it up into the solar plexus, and then up into the chest. Exhale, completely relaxed.
- ∞ Toddlers can be held for breathing, either with their back or their abdomen against the breath coach. Toddlers are also capable of breathing into the abdomen while lying on the floor with your gentle touch and instruction.
- ∞ Infants are held for breathing against the torso of the breather until breathing between infant and parent are in the same rhythm.



# 11



## Full Wave Breathing for Teens

*It was amazing. I was really happy. I had more energy with breathing and only one hour's sleep than I would have if I'd had twelve hours sleep. Before this, I was caught up in stuff at school like everyone's anger, and now it doesn't touch me. I completely shed all the barriers I put up to that part I don't want others to know about—the stuff deep inside. Other people take drugs and alcohol to feel the way this breathing makes me feel. My life is different than before, but I can't put my finger on it. Remember how I said I wanted to be more of myself all the time—like not get pushed off center. Well, I feel like I'm in touch with myself and not so influenced by what's around. I'm clearer, and it was great laughing like that again.*

T.A., age sixteen

### Be Your Teenager's Breath Coach

Full Wave Breathing™ offers adolescents a healthy and safe alternative to deal with this stage of their lives and the pressures it brings. You can use breath as a tool to help your teen integrate traumatic emotions, learn to express emotions safely, and retrain their physical bodies, eliminating any trauma and addiction patterns.

Between approximately 12 to 20 years of age, adolescents experience significant physical and psychological changes. Many variables confront today's teens, including:

- ~ Sexual maturity
- ~ Need for personal independence
- ~ Need for the safety zone of a peer group

- ∞ A flood of emotional feelings
- ∞ Psychic sensitivity
- ∞ Self-identity
- ∞ Possible spiritual awakening
- ∞ The push and pull between self and peers
- ∞ Reliance versus independence
- ∞ Gender identity
- ∞ Spirit versus the mundane

“The changes of just the past thirty years have introduced severe stresses into the adolescent experience—stresses that are taking an increasing toll in emotional and behavior-related illness.”<sup>1</sup>

Case studies link shallow breathing with a battery of physical and emotional disorders and psychosomatic illnesses.<sup>2</sup> Using Full Wave Breathing, you can give adolescents a tool to use during times of stress, thus helping to reduce emotional and behavior-related illness. Within the safety and the trust of a personal relationship, you can help your adolescent define her dreams and intentions, promote a positive lifestyle, make appropriate choices, and either avoid or eliminate addictions.

- ∞ Full Wave Breathing opens the inner doorways of clear thinking, intuition, and awareness so your adolescent can clarify values and goals, experience the feeling of joyful calm, and then act affirmatively.
- ∞ When introducing Full Wave Breathing, it is important to explain it honestly, describing how it can benefit your teen’s health, reduce stress, and allow inner exploration. During a breath session, you might focus on strengthening positive skills.
- ∞ Help establish personal boundaries.
- ∞ See the value in every person and every child, and champion the contribution that this child can make to society.
- ∞ Stay in present-moment compassionate awareness.

## Review Full Wave Breathing in Small Steps

When you teach Full Wave Breathing to your teenager, do it in small steps. Don't dive directly into explaining the three stages. Review the material in Chapter 10. Define the basics, the general preliminaries to breathing, and then demonstrate:

- ~ Open throat
- ~ Mouth breathing
- ~ Nostril breathing
- ~ Inhalation
- ~ Exhalation
- ~ Connected breathing
- ~ Pace of breathing

Show what steps the body takes:

1. Show your teen how to inhale. Have her take a deep, full inhale with the mouth open; then release gently and completely on the exhale. Have her repeat this until she is comfortable with it.
2. Demonstrate the same technique through nostril breathing. We retrain deeper breathing for more oxygen first by inhaling through the mouth. When the whole process of Full Wave Breathing is learned, an adolescent may choose mouth breathing for more energy, vitality, and calming emotions. Or he may choose to use nostril breathing to clear the mind and relax. It is also less noticeable, and a teen may prefer to use nostril breathing in school or with peers.
3. Demonstrate and practice continuous breath.
4. Have your teen breathe while sitting in a chair, then lying down. Discuss why she might choose one technique over the other. For instance, breathing while sitting up works well when she needs a break from intense mental activity like homework or after sitting

long hours at the computer. Breathing while lying down is best done when there are no surrounding distractions and at a time when she won't be interrupted. Either lying or sitting down with the eyes closed while breathing facilitates a deeper, meditative state of consciousness, heightening intuition and awareness.

5. Practice these mechanics of Full Wave Breathing with your teens through several sessions, until your teen is proficient.

Once an adolescent has experienced the above exercises, the awareness will come that she is responsible for making the body breathe in a certain way. Your teen is now ready to move ahead to the first step of Full Wave Breathing, which is abdominal breath.

Demonstrate the inhale. Show how the belly expands on the inhale, as if blowing up a balloon, then deflates by letting it go.

Have your teen either lie down or sit up, then follow your demonstration and observe her breathing. Below is a simple outline for this demonstration:

- ∞ Place your hand on your own navel.
- ∞ Inhale and expand your abdomen, allowing your hand to rise, as the abdomen expands. Remind your teen that it is her breath and simultaneous muscle movement that creates the expansion.
- ∞ Exhale and relax the abdomen, allowing your hand to move with it.
- ∞ To get your teen more involved in awareness of her breath, ask a few simple questions. Focus on Step 1 (see Chapter 10) as the ideal belly breath.
  - On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place your success in this breath pattern?
  - What could you do to improve your performance?
  - What physical sensations occurred as you breathed?

When your teen understands the mechanics of Full Wave Breathing and can demonstrate ease in abdominal breathing, he is ready to learn step two: breathing into the solar plexus; and step three: expanding the breath into the chest. Teach these steps in exactly the same way you learned yourself—through modeling, demonstration, discussion, and practice.

Practicing these breathing techniques retrain and strengthen muscles. The mind and body must adapt to having more fuel and vitality in the form of oxygen. These processes take time. Within thirty days of several practice sessions a week, teens have learned these breathing exercises and experienced the health and relaxation benefits they bring, thus gaining a long-lasting skill for coping with life. Here are some strategies for practical applications of Full Wave Breathing:

- ~ Relaxation Response: For stressed, high-strung, or highly intellectual temperaments, adolescents would benefit from ten Full Wave Breaths three to five times a day. How often depends upon their tension and when that stress occurs during their day—during a specific class, sports, specific events like a test?
- ~ Restoring Vitality: Students who sit all day with little exercise or those who need to build vitality and stamina for endurance events can use ten minutes of the Full Wave Breath, inhaling through the mouth. This restores energy.
- ~ Exercise: For tightening the abdominal and stomach muscles use the Full Wave Breath with an isometric approach. On the exhale, hold the abdomen and the diaphragm muscles taught for ten seconds. Repeat five times daily.
- ~ Calming and Mental Focus: Before starting a test, homework, or any task requiring mental focus, breathe ten Full Wave Breaths, using nostril breathing.

Note that each teen moves ahead at a unique pace. It may be comfortable for your teen to move her breath into the solar plexus and chest right away. Or she may need several sessions to open each level of the breathing mechanism fully. Honor your teen's process, encourage her progress, and support her insights. Continue to discuss how your adolescent can use this breathing approach in different areas of her life.

## The Atmosphere of the Breathing Session

As you set the stage for a breathing session in which you are teaching or facilitating the Full Wave Breath, consider these three things: your attitude as the breath coach, your relationship with your adolescent, and their intention for their work.

Regarding attitudes, an Ohio Breath Facilitator, Laurie Danner, addressed the characteristics of a breath coach who works with teens: "I think it's very important that adolescents feel accepted and not judged. Compassion and non-judgment are very significant in personal relationships. Asking questions also can be a plus after the sessions when teens need to talk. As the adult in the situation, I also respect their silence."

Regarding your relationship with your child: Invite your teen to bring an affirming attitude to whatever he does. You do the same as the role model. Help your teen understand that he doesn't have to change the world or other people. You don't instill confidence; you have confidence in your teen and you radiate it! Help her understand that life is not a destination, but a journey with discoveries along the way.

Here are some general guidelines that have proven to be helpful during breathing sessions:

- ~ Get right to the heart of the matter of your teen's current situation, or go directly to Full Wave Breathing.
- ~ Make no promises you can't keep.
- ~ Always hold high, but reachable, expectations.

- ∞ Assume nothing. Never assume you know your teen's world or can see through his eyes.
- ∞ Ask questions to seek answers and clarification.
- ∞ Be creative in discussing your teen's feelings and inner nature.
- ∞ Use sentences your teen can complete, or metaphors to help start a discussion after a session.
- ∞ For closure, leave time for conversation. Sometimes an adolescent's inner experiences are private, and we respect this. Yet, if a teen needs encouragement or an artistic form of expression, we provide that also through story telling, art, dramatic expression, or dance.

Continue to teach the breath skills for the game of life and to acknowledge your teen for his effort and progress. You can help your adolescent see his valuable contribution to life.

In the next section, you will learn how important the third element, intention, is in a breath work session.

## Using Intention with Breathwork

Intention is the deliberate aim or goal of a breathing session. It directs the attention of the mind and the body to the goal and process. While the body is breathing, the intellect focuses on the intention instead of wandering down thought corridors of distraction.

Because breath can be used for a variety of outcomes, discuss with your teen what intention means and how to best to use it. For instance, on the physical level, breath is used to increase sports performance, relax the body, heal illness, and develop coping skills. One twenty-two-year-old client at the Institute healed episodic asthma by breathing one hundred Full Wave Breaths daily between Thanksgiving and Christmas. In the following month, January, her doctor gave her a clean bill of health to pursue her scuba diving certification.

For adolescents who are addicted to prescription drugs, smoking or use marijuana, substitute Full Wave Breathing as a positive behavior to replace the addiction. Instead of taking a puff or pill, some teens breathe instead. When pairing Full Wave Breathing with walking or other exercise routines, the mind and body find pleasure in the healthy exertion of energy.

On an emotional level, sometimes the abstract qualities of feeling better such as happy, lighter, and peaceful are clear enough intentions for an adolescent to give himself permission to let go during a breathing session. Other adolescents use Full Wave Breathing as an emotional management tool. To self-regulate emotional responses, teens breathe to handle their anger, anxiety, depression, panic, fear, and stress.

The same principle applies to the mental state. If your teen needs mental clarity for a test, stating that intention aloud is enough to establish the result—when paired with the physical act of Full Wave Breathing.

What if your teen's emotional problems are deeper, or he is working on a more complex problem, such as an addiction, which can have physical as well as psychological components? In this case, encourage your teen to keep one positively stated intention (e.g., to feel energized, to experience relaxation) for several breathing sessions, to see that it takes discipline and persistence to manifest the intention. In following this formula, you teach far deeper attitudes of “stick to it,” “results follow persistent action,” and “patience will get you there.”

If you are working with your teen on one intention through several sessions, it is extremely important to spend time after each Full Wave Breathing session to clarify how he is closer to achieving the desired result. Your teen may feel this physically or emotionally, or may have new intellectual or intuitive insights. In whatever way your teen recognizes his improvement, reinforce the positive result.



Breath facilitator Laurie Danner explained the importance of intention: “I ask them to set an intention, then I explain what that means. I tell them it’s about where they are going in this session, like a goal they want in their lives. It’s not about what they want to get rid of and where they’ve been. I want them to hold their vision. It can be about joy or peace, or a specific issue they might want to work on. I ask them to really see it. I ask, *‘If you had that, how would that feel? What would your life be like?’* I really emphasize that whatever comes up is related to their goal. Their only job is to breathe. Whatever happens in a breathing session is all right.”

## One Breath Coach’s Experience

Another parent, Phyllis Roy, started a breathing group for her teenage children and their friends. She commented that her teen group members chose altruistic goals: “I was pleasantly surprised at the ability of these teens to have intentions that were not materialistic or peer-related. They have been choosing strong, sometimes ambitious intentions: *‘I am forgiveness. I am clarity. I am one with the universe. I am healthy.’*”

Full Wave Breathing is also used to connect to a spiritual state of awareness. If this is your teen’s intention, it is important to clarify exactly what he might be looking for: To gain insight about a personal problem? To experience a calm meditation? To remember a joyful time in life?

Such intentions can be either specific or more nebulous as long as you, the breath coach, bring clarification and closure to whatever your teen experiences in the session. You can help him achieve this by drawing from his deeply felt experience in tangible terms. Give it a color, metaphor, symbol, size, weight, and/or feeling. Draw, dance, or express the intention in movement following the Full Wave Breathing exercise.

## Does This Really Work?

Do teens really use this breathwork? Yes! Parents have helped their own children, and therapists certified in this approach also work with this age group using breathing, drama, storytelling, and music to manage moods. Here are what some of the teens in Phyllis' group had to say:

- ~ "It helps me harness my energy and gain focus. I'm not sure exactly what it's doing, but it feels real good. I like being with everyone. It's fun."
- ~ "Stress reduction. At the end of the school week, I can come here and breathe in a fresh start for the weekend and the next week."
- ~ "The breathing helps me get in touch with my emotions and relax."
- ~ "I use breathing to discover new aspects about myself."
- ~ "You know, it's Friday night and I'm here breathing. I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing on a Friday night."

Judy, a parent of one of these teens, wrote Phyllis a letter, which she has permission to share with other parents who worry about our kids. Judy's letter to Phyllis concluded, "Now these kids won't be lost. They are learning the power within them, which is indestructible, forever... together. Plus, they can't be arrested for seeking happiness through this means. Pamela sees with more clarity, deeper within, and farther beyond. She is less desperate. She was taking an anti-depressant, as a last resort, a hopeful antidote for suicide. She no longer needs it."

Finally, one last story: Allison Howard and Margaret Townsend, trainers for the International Breath Institute, used breathing with at-risk youth. They reported that after the initial resistance to something "weird," this technique was the one that the youth remembered when

they learned to say no to drugs and yes to life. A mentor in the program told this story:

“I took my youth to her work site at a corporation to speak to the workers regarding raising funds for the Great Human Race, a fund raising event. One of the employees asked the youth what she got out of the Youth At Risk program. Her response included that she learned how to breathe to help with stress, and proceeded to tell the employees that they needed it. She had them put their hands on their abdomens and taught them how to breathe deeply. The workers loved it, and donated funds for this youth because of her presentation.”

## Summary of Chapter 11

- ∞ As you set the stage for a breathing session in which you are teaching or facilitating the Full Wave Breath™, consider these three things: your attitude as the breath coach, your relationship with your adolescent, and their intention for their work.
- ∞ The following “breathing basics” will become very familiar to teens as they learn effective breathing:
  - **Open throat** (allows comfort and good air flow)
  - **Mouth breathing** (revitalizes and energizes the body; relaxes the jaw and releases tension) Start all breath retraining using an open mouth rather than the nostrils for increased oxygen and bodily relaxation.
  - **Nostril breathing** (clears the mind, quiets the body) When you and your children have learned Full Wave Breathing, you’ll also find nostril breathing helpful when you want to focus your mind and clear your head.
  - **Inhalation** (a prolonged inhale increases oxygen in the body)
  - **Exhalation** (a gentle release like a sigh, completely relaxing the body)
  - **Connected breathing** (*no* pause or breaks between the inhale and exhale; oxygen flow is continuous, breathing is more conscious)
  - **Pace of breathing** (We encourage everyone to find her most comfortable breathing pace; beginners should start with slow, deep breaths and relax into your comfort zone.)

- ~ The three steps of Full Wave Breathing correspond to these three body sections: lower abdomen, solar plexus, and chest.
- ~ All of the steps of Full Wave Breathing consist of breathing a full, connected breath, with a long inhale and a relaxed and complete exhale.
- ~ The following examples are some of the benefits from learning the Full Wave Breath:
  - Sharper, more prolonged focus while performing a task (increased concentration)
  - Enhanced awareness of emotional patterns
  - Increased energy, improved physical and emotional well-being
  - Ability to choose to breathe for specific reasons, such as to relieve stress or anxiety, or for sports or academic performance
  - Ability to notice and consciously change an emotional pattern, such as impulsive behaviors
  - Increased problem-solving ability
  - Ability to apply new knowledge and breath skills in everyday life
- ~ During a breath session, you might:
  - Focus on strengthening positive skills.
  - Help establish the personal boundaries.
  - See the value in every person and every child, and champion the contribution that child can make to society.
  - Stay in present-moment compassionate awareness.

∞ Full Wave Breathing:

- Take a deep, full inhale with the mouth open; then release gently and completely on the exhale. Do not pause between breaths, thus breathing in a continuous, gentle cycle.
- Breathe easily into the abdomen, then pull it up into the solar plexus, and then up into the chest. Exhale, completely relaxed.

∞ Intention is the deliberate aim or goal of a breathing session. It directs the attention of the mind and the body to the goal and process.

# 12



## Awareness Through Storytelling

*If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.*

Barry Lopez (as Badger, in *Crow and Weasel*)

Storytelling is an age-old tradition in cultures worldwide. Good stories are funny, entertaining, mysterious, touching, imaginative, instructive, creative, cathartic, and healing. We learn from stories because they stimulate our imaginations. They mirror the surrounding world, yet construct a reality of their own that meets the cognitive, psychological, and emotional needs of anxious children and stressed adolescents. We can listen, share, dramatize, and immortalize good stories for the healing effect they have on our psyches.

This chapter explains how to use different forms of storytelling for helping children cope with the variety of symptoms along the stress continuum. Stories help children meet both dramatic and everyday challenges in their lives. This chapter provides you with basic knowledge of how storytelling works and a few guidelines to put it into practice. Here is an example of a typical situation in which storytelling is used to a child's advantage:

Nine-year-old Tom liked to play football at school. However, he was easily frustrated when his team lost and would rage against his peers. Because of this behavior, he lost friends. One of his teachers observed

his outbursts and took time to tell him a story—The Legend of King Arthur.

This magnificent story, full of action and adventure, appeals to a child's vivid imagination. The protagonists, King Arthur and Sir Lancelot, show every hero's virtues: honor, courage, and kindness. The legend itself is rich in teachings and metaphors.

After telling this story, the teacher asked Tom what he liked best about it. Tom said he liked the part when Arthur took the sword out of the stone and, later, when Arthur fought battles with that sword.

The teacher agreed it was an exciting part of the story, saying, "Some people are naturally gifted and use their gifts in a positive way, just like King Arthur did with his sword. However, the King never could have made his country victorious alone. King Arthur's other gift was his ability to unite the Round Table knights under a common commitment to build a rich, united nation founded upon the values of justice and victory. For that to happen, each knight had to leave behind his selfishness and personal ambitions to work with the other members of his team. Arthur's team members had various talents as individuals—one, his courage; another, his purity; a third, his strength, and so forth. Only when they failed to stay united did the kingdom collapse and return to darkness."

Tom's teacher asked him what would have been the likely outcome if King Arthur had failed to cooperate with others, sharing his power with the Round Table knights, and had instead kept all his power to himself. That got Tom thinking about how the King Arthur story applied to his own behavior. He acknowledged that the other children on his football team each had their special abilities. The team could only succeed if they all worked together. As a result, Tom changed his behavior towards his peers. He took a more active role in the team meetings and learned to



control his temper for the benefit of the group. By doing this, he increased his popularity and, ultimately, his own self-esteem.

### Three Models of Storytelling

Clarissa Pinkola-Estes, a Jungian psychologist, renowned storyteller, and the author of *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, states that one can use storytelling “to teach, correct errors, lighten, assist transformation, heal wounds, and re-create memory. Their main purpose is to educate and enrich soul and worldly life.”<sup>1</sup>

There are three models of storytelling: linear, circular, and convergent.

#### *Linear storytelling*

The linear model of storytelling is a one-sided communication in which one person tells a story to another. For example, a parent tells a story to a child, but does not request the child’s feedback. Some parents and caregivers read stories in this way, neither expecting nor eliciting ideas about how the story affects the listeners, how the listeners interpret it, or if the story applies to their lives. Linear storytelling is entertainment.

This approach amuses older children when a storyteller’s dramatization accentuates the excitement. For younger children and toddlers, storytelling time can be one of bonding and “connecting.” Remember that in this chapter, we suggest storytelling as a way to not only gain insight into an issue or cope with adversity, but also to connect storyteller and listeners heart-to-heart. Older children, especially, may require the controlled intimacy surrounding the telling of a story before being able to communicate authentically with their parents and mentors.

A linear storytelling experience, although more limited in scope than other forms, is nevertheless useful because it accomplishes the following things:

- ∞ Contributes to early literacy development
- ∞ Induces the use of more complex grammar than everyday spoken language
- ∞ Enhances understanding of syntactic structure
- ∞ Heightens the comprehension skills and imagination of the listener
- ∞ Uses recognizable metaphors and recurring motifs to demonstrate a point
- ∞ Paves the way for story writing and creativity.

Most importantly, stories provide a way to interpret everyday events. They become a reference point by which to judge one's behavior and an archetype for problem solving, which ultimately promotes a child's resilience in the face of trouble.

### *Circular storytelling*

The second type of storytelling involves two-way communication in which the storyteller communicates the story and solicits feedback from the listeners. This model encourages children to respond to cues in the story. Teachers, parents, and caregivers can apply it either when telling a story or when listening to a story a child has made up. It allows for feedback and lets children ask questions of the storyteller as the tale progresses. A storyteller can involve the listeners in inventing a new ending or design activities around the story to let children freely express their emotions through the storytelling experience.

For example, you can use the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears to help a three-year-old child work through her tantrums. Use

your voice to emphasize that Goldilocks is a naughty, whimsical little girl who gets lost in the forest because she is capricious and disobedient. (You may want to check out Meg Ryan's recorded version of the story – see the Resources section at the end of the book.). Goldilocks goes on to eat the small bear's food, break his chair, and sleep in his bed without permission. The more capricious you depict Goldilocks' behavior to be, the more humorous the story will sound. You can even pretend you are Goldilocks and imitate one of her tantrums. Your child ultimately will understand how Goldilocks' tantrums are similar to her own. This gives you the opportunity for a discussion about more appropriate behavior. To see if a child has understood the concept, ask her to retell the story pretending to be Goldilocks and change the ending to show what she has learned.

### *Convergent storytelling*

In the convergent model of storytelling, the roles of storyteller and listener become interchangeable as both parties alternately participate in advancing the story. All members of the storytelling experience take part in it actively, and no one is passive.

To start a shared storytelling experience, encourage a child to start a story about a stressful event. If the story ends badly, then retell the story with a different, happier ending, showing that there is more than one way to cope with problems.

This type of storytelling is especially useful for working with adolescents because they possess the verbal skills to participate more fully than younger children do. One scenario in which convergent storytelling might be especially useful is after a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, earthquake, tornado, or flood, has affected a community. Invite the adolescents to create a shared story about what everyone was doing at the

moment the disaster occurred, who behaved like heroes or heroines, and how people can work together to repair the damage.

One father used the convergent storytelling approach to entertain his eight-year-old son during the long drive to school. The father had enrolled his son in a private school near his office so that they could share the morning commute. The father would begin the drive with a story such as follows: *Jack the Hare was running late this morning although the sun was not yet rising. In the morning darkness, he crept out of his burrow, looked right...and then looked left.... Uh Oh! He saw it.*

At that point, the son would continue the story with several more sentences: *He saw an ugly dog that liked to chase big rabbits. But the dog did not mean to catch the rabbits. He just had fun chasing them all the time. But Jack the Hare didn't understand that.*

Then it would be the father's turn to continue the story's development. This model of shared storytelling encouraged his son's creativity, imagination, language development, and mental focus. As the son was feeling some trepidation over attending a new school, this familiar bonding ritual every morning gave a safe and familiar beginning to his days. As a result, the shared storytelling experience built the son's self-confidence and ability to express himself.

## The Healing Power of Storytelling

Children may not want to talk about distressing topics. They may have difficulty articulating their emotions because of a lack of sufficient vocabulary, or they might feel embarrassed, guilty, or shy.

The behavioral sciences have developed a set of projective techniques used to elicit unconscious, spontaneous responses to uncover the causes of an individual's distress. Storytelling is one such technique because of these qualities:

- ∞ A story is a safe place, not a threatening reality. Children know a story is just an imaginary creation, no matter how similar it may seem to real life.
- ∞ A story conveys the message to the listener that he is not alone in facing a problem, since the hero of the story confronts a similar situation, and, more importantly, overcomes it.
- ∞ It shows that the storyteller is aware of the child's feelings and cares about offering comfort.
- ∞ A story can develop new avenues of intimacy and improved communication between the storyteller and the listener.
- ∞ Stories depict for children many alternatives for action when they find themselves in various circumstances.
- ∞ It shows that stressful things happen because they are a part of life, but people go on to survive them.

The healing power of stories is adaptable and flexible, so you can use them to help children who are at different stages on the stress continuum.

## Storytelling Promotes Resilience

Tension, anxiety, and uncertainty are part of life. How can storytelling help your children understand their emotions and make healthy choices in response to adverse challenges? At home or school, you can tell resilience-promoting stories that work by following these simple guidelines:

**Identify what could cause tension or stress for the child.** Could it be a social situation such as the first day in a new school or neighborhood? Perhaps it might be fear of separation from a loved one or a change in the accustomed routine of living. A child might feel anxiety in anticipating holidays, parties, or events like plays in which she is expected to act a part. To help your child through a difficult situation, choose a story that applies to the specific cause of the stress. For example, you might find a

story book at a local library that addresses such situations as first day at school, toilet training for toddlers, fear of the dark, how to make friends, how to share toys, how to cope at camp, and so on. You might prefer to make up your own story, tailoring it to fit a particular situation.

**Make sure stories convey positive values and messages.** Remember, you want to choose stories that will help children develop confidence and a sense of control over their surroundings. Children project themselves into stories and can then generate solutions for their problems.

**Choose the right time and place to tell a story.** Conduct the exercise in a quiet place with no TV noise in the background. Allow the children to be comfortable. If you are telling a story to young child, hold him close to you to “connect.” If you are with a group, make sure all children can see the pictures in the storybook.

**Show enthusiasm; it is contagious.** If you like the story you tell, children notice your attitude and become more involved in the story. Put some drama into the story, act out the parts, change your tone of voice when different characters within the story speak, and use movement to emphasize actions.

**Do not read or talk too fast,** especially to small children.

**If stories relate to stress, they might strike an emotional chord** in your children. Let them talk freely during and after story time.

**If children do not feel like talking about the story, ask them questions** to engage their interest as a way to trigger conversation.

**If appropriate, use gentle humor** to relax the children and turn their negative expectations into confidence and hope.

## **Anxiety, Panic, or Angst**

Storytelling can enlist the creative imaginations of children to help them work through and diminish the negative effects of stress in their lives. Children can learn practical lessons and new attitudes from examples of

story tale heroes who successfully master difficult circumstances similar to their own.

### *For painful memories*

Apply storytelling as a healing therapy for anxious children who have painful memories of an accident, abuse, or trauma. The source of the stress may no longer be present in a child's life, except in his memory. When children continue to feel that they are in a life-threatening situation, even if it no longer poses a danger in reality, their bodies continue to generate the biochemical responses of "fight, flight or freeze."<sup>2</sup> Children who have remained "hyper-alert" to jeopardy frequently experience surges of energy that can be damaging to their bodies over time, unless the energy has an outlet through storytelling. In such circumstances, the aims of storytelling are the following:

- ∞ To put facts into context
- ∞ To clarify feelings
- ∞ To provide ways to cope
- ∞ To promote a sense of hope for the future, and
- ∞ To work through stress by participating emotionally in the drama and action of the story.

*A Regular Flood of Mishap* by Tom Birdseye is a great story to tell an elementary-age child. The story's protagonist is Ima Bean, a girl who lives in the Appalachian Mountains. While she tries to help her grandfather do the farm work, all her efforts end up in a "flood of mishaps." At the climax, she feels anguish because she thinks her family will not forgive her. However, everything turns out fine in the end. She learns what a "family" really means and that loving is much more important than blaming.

After telling this story, encourage the children to imagine another story of their own about a child who also suffers a “flood of mishaps,” and see what they devise. In conducting this activity, you can build avenues of intimacy with children to elicit a spontaneous chat about what is troubling them.

### *Use of imagination to find inner strength*

Stories can call forth a child’s inner strength by demonstrating heroes and heroines who have answers about how to overcome adversity. What better way to gain confidence and a sense of control over difficult circumstances than to have a personal superhero show one how to gather courage and have hope? Here are some guidelines for stories involving heroes and heroines:

**The superhero should confront a similar problem** to that affecting the children so that they can easily identify with him. You want children to recognize the hero’s feelings as their own. That way, the hero’s expression of his feelings in the story can clarify the inner confusion children might be experiencing. After the story, you can ask children to contribute stories based on similar events in their own lives. The degree to which children can respond to this exercise will depend on their ages, circumstances, and personalities.

If a child does respond with a story, take mental notes about its negative parts, the hero’s actions and feelings, and the ending. You can then retell the children’s stories back to them, providing solutions and a positive attitude. In the ensuing conversation, be honest and truthful, yet gentle and calm, even while talking about sensitive matters like war, terrorism, death, sexuality, or substance abuse.

**Let your children reenact the story.** Perhaps you could even provide them with costumes to wear, but it is important to remain flexible about how much participation you require from them. Dramatization gives



children a creative, constructive outlet for the energy aroused by the story, which might otherwise simply create anxiety and stress. If children are able to channel negative energy in this way, you will have succeeded in teaching them one way to cope with their worries and fears. Convey the message that some difficult aspects of life are uncontrollable but that they can regulate their responses through artful expression.

## What Harry Potter Teaches Us

With the right techniques, your child can deal with stress and anxiety, even if the source of stress, such as threatened terrorism, is still present. Less dramatic sources of stress often go unnoticed. The pressure for good grades or sports victories can also cause excessive stress. Help children find ways to cope with any building pressure to succeed by relieving tension creatively. Encourage them to create a rich, joyous inner life to gain relief from the stresses of daily life.

The Harry Potter books provide excellent examples of how a story can contribute to a child's rich and vivid fantasy. First, Harry and his outrageous adventures cause lively imaginations to stretch further than ever. Children need this stimulation to envision and "try on" how they are going to live and what they want to do in the future.

Second, parents can help their children grow by gently moving them into "real" experiences that challenge them to move beyond their limitations. Their hero, Harry Potter, will inspire them because his intentions are always wholesome: to do well, to help his friends, to learn new things, and to solve problems. You can encourage children to find ways to cope with their real-life problems by imitating Harry, seeking answers based upon the same values Harry exhibited.

Finally, parents can help their children by supporting them in the storybook roles and characters they imitate as they develop their own identities. By assuming the diverse roles they observe in characters from

stories, children learn to understand how others feel under various circumstances, developing empathy and compassion.

## Storytelling as Healing Therapy

The effect of a dreadful (or even a small) event largely depends upon how children respond to it: Have they discharged the stressful energy? Have they regained their emotional equilibrium?

Storytelling as healing therapy has a lot in common with its uses as a stress reducer. Children need to be able to tell the story of a troublesome event as many times as they wish so they can accept the facts of it and regain a sense of personal control over their lives. Storytelling, or “narrative therapy,” as it is termed by psychiatrists, is also a medically recognized method of reducing the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). People have an “awesome power and need to tell a story,” said Alan Wolfelt, director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Colorado, adding, “Storying brings meaning and purpose to our life-and-death experiences.”<sup>3</sup> With professional guidance, storytelling has profound healing power. Oral or written storytelling can take place under supervision at a school to help children retell a traumatic event in a positive manner, sharing it among their peer group to release fears and anxiety.

Some of you might remember that in April 1999, students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed thirteen people at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, before committing suicide. Recognizing that after such a traumatic episode, people need help to process the events, the Colorado Council of the Arts sponsored a program to do Healing Arts work with students at the school. Thus, they appointed Tory Read (a photographer), Clarissa Pinkola-Estes (a Jungian psychologist and renown storyteller), and Bea Roeder (the state folklorist for the

Metro Denver region) to work with students and encourage them to look more closely at their own traditions, folk groups, and community.

They held photography classes in which photos taken by students triggered their storytelling. As the students participated, they were encouraged to examine more closely their traditions, social groups, and communities. One stated purpose of this exercise was to help students “understand themselves better and appreciate how multi-dimensional each individual [could be] and how we all behave differently in different situations and groups.” Other goals were “to have an opportunity to talk among themselves and release their emotions as they approach[ed] the anniversary of the killings at their school” and “to recognize the inadequacy and negativity of stereotypes.”<sup>4</sup> In the case of Columbine High School, therapists had to be especially sensitive to help students put what they had experienced into words. Once they could begin talking about the tragedy, students used stories to understand and cope with both their ensuing sadness for the loss of friends and their traumatic memories of the events.

## **Humor and Storytelling**

Along with being useful to dispel the negative effects of traumatic events and the subsequent sorrow, storytelling is useful to develop a child’s lighter, positive reactions to life through a sense of humor. After all, the burdens of life’s difficulties do not weigh so heavily upon the individual who can laugh about them. Thus, a sense of humor can be a very powerful coping device. The most obvious way of connecting humor and storytelling, of course, is by telling funny stories. However, what a child deems funny depends on his or her age and developmental level. Consider the following stories and activities to develop a child’s sense of humor:

- ~ *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish is a great story for 6 to 8 year olds. It features a girl who takes things literally. Thus, when she reads, “dress a turkey” in a recipe, she actually provides the turkey with dressy clothing.
- ~ As a storytelling project, older children can examine and imitate the humor in Mark Twain’s story, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.”
- ~ Children can invent funny names, apply them to superheroes, and then make up stories for each super hero. Try these names on for size: Banana Man, Windy Woman, Flatfoot, Power Kid.
- ~ Younger children can pick rhyming words and use them to create stories with successful conclusions. For example, you can introduce a story using only words that rhyme with “at” and begin by saying, “The fat cat got splat. How about that?” Then continue the story convergently with the children, allowing them to add rhymes to advance its theme.
- ~ Use jokes to reduce tensions as Ralph did with his son when explaining that people can sometimes speak the same language without understanding each other. “We have to be accurate and clear, you see, because other people may misunderstand us.” Ralph reinforced his point with humor, saying, “It’s like the joke: A father sends his son a letter that reads, ‘I am expecting you for Christmas. Do you want roasted turkey or duck?’ Then comes the answer: ‘Yes.’ The father writes again: ‘Yes ... what?’ and the boy replies: ‘Yes, Dad’.”

Using humor to help children laugh and release their tensions is not disrespectful of their feelings. Levity alleviates stress and helps an individual gain perspective. However, if you are not feeling particularly humorous on a particular day, smile anyway. Your body and mind will benefit, and so will those around you. It is up to you to remember to

model the coping skills, resilience, and confidence you hope to communicate to your children. You are the one they learn from, so keep yourself in good spirits. The next chapter will help you by showing the many ways in which you can convey stories.

## Summary of Chapter 12

- ~ Stories mirror the surrounding world yet construct a reality of their own, meeting the cognitive and emotional needs of anxious children and stressed adolescents.
- ~ Three models of storytelling are the linear, circular, and convergent methods.
- ~ The linear storytelling model is a one-sided communication in which one person tells a story to another who listens passively.
- ~ The circular model requires the storyteller to communicate the story and solicits feedback from the listeners.
- ~ The convergent model involves a dialogue between the storyteller and the recipients. It relies on mutual understanding that all parties need to participate to create the contents of the story.
- ~ From the behavioral sciences comes a set of projective techniques used to elicit from the unconscious mind spontaneous responses that help uncover the causes of an individual's distress. Storytelling is one projective technique psychologists commonly use. Anxious children find it a safe way to express their feelings and explore, at a pace they can accept, the various possibilities for coping with difficulties.
- ~ When you are telling a story, use the following guidelines for helping troubled children heal:
  - Identify what could cause tension or stress for the child.
  - Make sure stories convey positive values and messages.
  - Choose the right time and place to deliver the story.
  - Show enthusiasm; it is contagious.
  - Do not read or talk too fast.
  - If children do not feel like talking, ask them questions.
  - If appropriate, use gentle humor.



## Getting Started with Storytelling

*Australian Aborigines say that the big stories—the stories worth telling and retelling, the ones in which you may find the meaning of your life—are forever stalking the right teller, sniffing and tracking like predators hunting their prey in the bush.*

Robert Moss, *Dreamgates*

This chapter takes you deeper into the heart and art of storytelling. You will learn how to adapt stories for each age group of children, as well as what parameters to consider for children's healing and coping. The heart of storytelling is the relationship between the teller and the listener. To enrich the storytelling experience, review the many forms of the storytelling art.

**Traditional storytelling.** In this case, you choose a story, learn it and tell it to your children. To elicit enthusiasm and joy, use different tones of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and body movements. You can apply traditional storytelling to all four age groups – toddlers, elementary, preadolescents and adolescents – with the appropriate adjustment of topics, language, and length.

**Bodily storytelling.** You can ask children to follow the story with some bodily movement when prompted. Movement can consist of shaking heads, hopping, clapping, and sneezing, among others. This type of storytelling is ideal for toddlers and first to third graders, but it needs a

certain rehearsal before start. (Story example: *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*)

**Mutual storytelling.** With this technique, you tell a story, and then it is your child's turn to retell it in her own way. You might ask your elementary-aged kid to change some of its parts with the double purpose of exciting the imagination and finding solutions for the hero's new problems and adventures. (Story example: *The Prince and the Dragon*)

**First-person storytelling.** The storyteller becomes the protagonist of her real stories. Reality plays an important part and the story has to be credible. This is ideal for tweens' and teens' groups to understand their elders, peers, and other community groups.

**Playing pretend storytelling.** Children dress up like story characters and tell the story in first or third person or relive it after telling it. This is fun and creative. Toddlers and elementary-age children enjoy this tremendously, first while they prepare their costumes and then when they act out their parts. (Story example: *Caps for Sale*)

**Felt board storytelling.** While telling the story, the storyteller uses a felt board to affix previously cutout figures. The use of time is important: finding and affixing a figure on the felt board can take much longer than telling a phrase or two. That is why it is useful to place all figures in order before starting and choosing a story with only a handful of characters. The technique is highly successful among toddlers and preschoolers because it helps them follow the plot. (Story example: *Gingerbread Boy*)

**Storytelling with pictures and photographs.** The use of pictures and photographs can elicit new stories. Ask children to cut out pictures from a magazine and to make up a story using them. You may prefer to use a chosen set of photographs to emphasize a certain topic. While the first option is great for elementary-age children, the second is preferred among tweens and teens.



**Storytelling with puppets.** Equally as effective is this technique, widely used for healing purposes among toddlers, preschoolers, and schoolers. Ask your children to make up a story using puppets to express their own feelings or relive an event.

However, you can use puppets to simply make a storytelling experience even more enjoyable, especially for little kids. A puppet takes your place as the “storyteller.” It is the protagonist and therefore has to look as “alive” and credible as possible. This is not only a matter of how “crafty” the puppet is. Credibility also largely depends on the puppet’s performance. That includes its lip synchronization with your words, your ability to make it “look” straight to the audience (not at the ceiling or the floor), its overall posture on the stage (neither hanging out nor hiding back), and its movements. In particular, movements should be as continuous and natural as possible. (Story example: *Red Riding Hood*)

**Storytelling and drawing.** Drawing is an excellent way to enrich a storytelling experience. After you tell a story to children, they may want to express their emotions through a drawing. Create even more feedback by asking them to retell the story starting with the drawings. This technique is especially suitable for elementary-age children. (Story example: *Where the Wild Things Are*)

**Storytelling and book writing.** School teachers can also enrich a storytelling experience by writing and illustrating a book based on the story a child has previously invented. A strong sense of accomplishment and self-esteem will be the likely outcome of this technique.

**Journals.** Tweens and teens can write journalistic reports on events they have previously witnessed. Journalism can help adolescents put situations in context, and analyze and make sense of them. They are also efficient tools to make them feel they are in control of their lives.

**Computer virtual story sites.** You can share many interesting stories on the Internet with your children. (There is a list of web sites at the end

of the chapter.) If you have a family or school home page and are conversant with basic web design, you can put your children's stories and drawings on the Internet to share them with kids around the world.

You may combine and choose different storytelling techniques, depending on your audience's age, number of children, the kids' expectations and preferences, time and place restrictions, and the story itself. The combinations are numerous.

Carefully consider the audience's age in particular. Although storytelling is effective across all age groups, some people are still reluctant to use it with teenagers or do not know how to adapt it for little ones. Ideas for discussing storytelling with toddlers and with tweens/teens follow.

## Tailoring Stories to Younger Children

Infants and toddlers feel stressed, too. Even when babies are less than six months old, they enjoy listening to rhymes and repetition. It is the "musical" sounds of words that attract them, however, and not their meaning. Although the experience can be rich and useful for stress reduction, we cannot properly call this "storytelling." Only from the age of 18 months on can children really enjoy a plot.

Toddlers are active, talkative, and imaginative. They have a fiercely independent spirit and an insatiable drive to explore. Common sources of tension and stress at this age create the plots for storytelling and the inspiration for acting them out with young children. What a surprise when the child offers the story's happy conclusion through:

- ~ Being toilet trained
- ~ Improving language skills
- ~ Starting day care
- ~ Sharing possessions with friends or siblings
- ~ Accepting a new sibling
- ~ Controlling his anger
- ~ Going to a doctor/dentist

## Adapting Stories for Toddlers

Many books for toddlers address those and other age-related problems. When choosing a story for a toddler, keep in mind that:

- ~ They have short attention spans so the stories should be simple.
- ~ They will enjoy repetitive words or rhyming.
- ~ You can call the protagonist by your child's name to help identification and self-esteem.
- ~ It is good to talk about the child's surrounding world and people. If you are going to talk about a family, be sensitive to the way the family is made up.
- ~ It is good to talk about feelings such as love, rage, and fear. Toddlers are learning what these emotions are and how to control them.
- ~ If the book has pictures, their vivid colors will trigger the imagination. Use this to engage a child's attention.

Toddlers also like to hear stories about animals and to play pretend games after or during the story. Both hearing the story and playing pretend help reduce tension and stress. Here are a few other ways:

- ~ Whenever possible, establish close physical contact with the child to make her feel secure and beloved.
- ~ Two to five year olds can make up stories using bits and pieces of tales they have previously heard. Assist them to work out a happy conclusion.
- ~ A picture or an everyday event may trigger a typical story from a two year old who might say something like "here is Mickey Mouse. He is playing with his racket. And he wins. And then, he goes to bed."

- ☞ In contrast, four to five year olds are more prepared to add a plot to the story; they will likely talk about good guys fighting off bad guys in different scenarios.

## Helping Tweens and Teens through Storytelling

Many people think storytelling is a little kid's activity with no room for preadolescents and adolescents. Actually, storytelling is good for all of us, even for adults who want to successfully alleviate their stress symptoms and anxiety.

Adolescents who suffer distress or anxiety may have an aggressive behavior, anger and mistrust, a tendency toward self-blaming, increased self-criticism, perhaps even “survivor’s guilt” (the kind you feel when you have survived an accident when others didn’t), an inclination to isolation, a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, and/or a loss of interest in daily events.

Storytelling has many benefits for adolescents. It clarifies their feelings and helps get things off their minds. For this age group, you can choose between telling an appropriate story and asking them to create one.

Stories books and audios like *Rudy and the Roller Skate* by Dan Keding or *Storysinger* by Chris Holder are funny, entertaining and instructive for 11-to-15-year-old kids.

Adolescents may prefer real life stories, told perhaps by a war/disaster survivor or by someone who belongs to a group/community/country different than their own. While they listen to these people, kids learn to know, respect, and interpret other realities. Moreover, by creating a story, your teen can be the main character whose conflict is transferred to an objective reality.

Storytelling helps teens not take things personally, but view them like a movie. Telling a story enables the “observer” part of your teen talk

about her important questions: “Who am I? Why am I here? What should I do? How should I handle that situation?”

Teens’ stories usually follow a pattern of conflict that involves a hero in a struggle with an adversary. The plot is how that person (the protagonist) will get what he needs or wants, or removes the fear, or is saved. Stephen King’s novels are wonderful examples of this storytelling technique. TV soap operas mirror the polarized feelings of today’s youth: alienation vs. acceptance, good vs. evil, life vs. death, love vs. loneliness. Simple storytelling is an art always motivated from the heart.

The struggle may also be within the antagonist (enemy, bad guy). It could be a psychological drama and expression of your teen’s inner conflict. The plot unfolds according to the action needed to resolve the antagonism. The ending can be many things: a surprise, insight, moral, action, or resolution to the struggle. The main point is that your adolescent finds the key, the solution.

Storytelling for tweens and teens can assume the form of a journalistic work, where they report on a stressful event and later retell the story to their peers for discussion. This is an effective way to normalize their extreme emotions, hear other people’s stories, get to know positive examples, and develop confidence in the future.

Tense or anxious teens typically experience fear of change and fear about the unknown. When you ask your teens, “How do you feel?” the blank response you get back may be due to an inability to describe the depth of fear, change, transformation, or upliftment they’ve never experienced before. To speak about this internal change as an allegory, parable, or symbol objectifies the subjective feelings—a good key for helping adolescents clarify their journey.

However, those are not the only fears a tween or teen faces, as shown by a study published by CNN on March 8, 2001. Authors of the survey “Talking with Kids about Tough Issues” (sponsored by the Kaiser Fam-

ily Foundation and Nickelodeon) interviewed 1,249 parents of children ages 8 to 15 and 823 children ages 8 to 15 about their problems.

This report highlights that bullying and teasing are tops in the list of children's school problems—much higher than sex, drugs or alcohol, even at a time when these are also important concerns.

Is the fear of being an outcast an insignificant one? It does not seem so. Some evidence suggests that Charles Andrew Williams' suspected killings at Santana High School in Santee, California, were because people always picked on him.

"Seventy-four percent of 8- to-11-year-olds say teasing and bullying occur at their school; as kids get older (12- to-15-year-olds were a separate group in the survey), the number rises to 86 percent, still higher than for substance abuse or sex. In addition, both age groups called the teasing and bullying "big problems" that rank higher than racism, AIDS, and the pressure to have sex or to try alcohol or drugs."

Furthermore, one third of 10 to 11 year olds called the pressure to have sex at that age a "big problem." Yet parents and caregivers are reluctant to talk about these issues with their kids, do not find the time, or expect the teen to raise the subject. Even those who have talked may consider this a once-in-a-lifetime task and therefore fail to recognize the need to talk and keep on talking.

Storytelling is a safe place. There is no need to be afraid of it. However, for more reassurance, you may pay attention to some safety parameters.

## Creating Safety Parameters

Storytelling evokes emotions, inspires creativity, and invites children to uncover and discuss their deeper thoughts and feelings. We have discussed the respect and authentic behavior that we model when helping children understand their ability to integrate life through the metaphor,

analogy, and symbols in stories. Thus, when used as a healing technique to cope with stress and trauma, it is advisable to be aware of these issues:

- ∞ Children can learn to enjoy stories at any age. However, not all stories are suitable to all children. Your child has to be mentally prepared to understand the story you are going to tell.
- ∞ Each story needs the age-appropriate language for its audience. Four year olds enjoy nonsense words and laugh at stories that use them. Adjust complex sentence structure, vocabulary, and grammar to the audience's age.
- ∞ Words can have different meanings to each age group of children. Children aged 5 or less do not quite understand intangible concepts such as death, heaven, soul, and others. They also misunderstand the meaning of time.<sup>1</sup>
- ∞ Stories are rich with symbols and imagery. Children should be able to interpret the story. If they fail to see the point in it, then this might be intellectually above their age.
- ∞ Plots should be interesting and filled with action. While young children might delight in *The Peter Rabbit Pop-Up Book*, a 10 year old might find it boring. Plots are the heart of stories. Try reading them first to yourself before you choose to share them with your kids.
- ∞ Preschool stories should be short, perhaps around six minutes long. Plots should be full of action but simple, with lots of repetitive words as in *Goldilocks*, *Red Riding Hood*, or *Three Little Pigs*. Six to seven year olds may concentrate on a story for up to 12 minutes. Here, too, it is advisable to have a plot full of action, include three to five characters and much humor.
- ∞ Older children enjoy stories that are up to 20 minutes in length, have lots of action, involve some mystery, and give room for thought, participation and laughter.

- ~ Preadolescents and adolescents will like to hear stories about real people (grandparents, uncles or trusted friends), but not always from their parents. They will concentrate for long periods of time, and can take in plots that are more complex where a more realistic approach to situations replaces the clear-cut, childish division of good and bad.
- ~ You might want to carefully examine plots, symbols, abstract words, and concepts for spiritual reasons, too. Your beliefs might not be the same as the author's. Do you share the same concepts of life and death, of God, religion, and spirituality? The same values? This is an important consideration when you choose a story to tell to your children because you might well end up confusing them more if you contradict yourself, perhaps at the worst of times.
- ~ If a disaster has affected your child, be prepared to answer difficult questions that have little relationship with the story you are telling. Thus, a small child may enquire why Winnie the Pooh hasn't got brothers and sisters, whether his parents are dead or alive, or even what are they doing in heaven.
- ~ Feel free to add or change a story to adjust it to your child's spiritual needs and beliefs. Just think—through storytelling, you will be contributing to your child's peace of mind, inner strength, and wholeness.

## One Last Thought

Storytelling is an ageless and effective technique for coping with stress. Make use of these suggestions, and remember that only three things are indeed essential: your love, enthusiasm, and conviction.



Therefore, if you do not know how to have a conversation with your child, make free use of storytelling. Sit comfortably and start: “Once upon a time ...” and let the magical power of stories surround you both.

## Summary of Chapter 13

- ~ The heart of storytelling is the relationship between the teller and the listener.
- ~ There are many ways to tell a story. We list twelve ways to enhance storytelling with imagination and props. What best suits your style?
- ~ Things to consider when working with children who are learning coping skills include their vulnerability and sensitivity. Choose stories that help provide answers and methods they can consider for their own lives.
- ~ Babies respond to musical rhymes.
- ~ Toddlers enjoy short rhymes and stories that reflect their world and involve their movements. They also have their favorite characters.
- ~ Storytelling for children and adolescents clarifies feelings and helps put life into a broader context that they can understand.
- ~ Invite adolescents to tell their own stories—they can be profoundly healing.
- ~ Select stories that help children and teens deal with current issues like bullying, teasing, the pressures to have sex, and peer pressure.

# 14



## New Vision through Guided Imagery

*Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.*

Joel Barker

Anyone who enjoys watching athletic events has observed this scene: a gymnast stands quietly regarding the vaulting horse a few feet away. She squares her shoulders and raises her head high, as if suspended from a string. Her eyes close. Her breathing is measured and deep, as she stands in perfect balance, motionless before the crowd. Yes, she is in action now while her charge down the ramp, the placement of her hands on the horse, and the forceful spring of her body are taking place in another world. She is mentally picturing her successful execution of the difficult vault. As any athlete will attest, the clarity of her vision has everything to do with her victory.

Mental imagery is a powerful tool to rehearse for success. You will see in this chapter how the practice of guided imagery with children can increase opportunities for the successful development of their inner talents and personal resources. This chapter provides you with the necessary skill-building techniques to help children cope through guided imagery, and more than that, develop confidence, strength, and resilience.

## What Is Guided Imagery?

Imagery refers to the mental pictures an individual can create in his mind's eye. Guided imagery is the purposeful presentation of an image to evoke feelings for a specific purpose. When guided by a parent or teacher, children develop the ability to visualize or mentally create pictures and feelings to imprint a “roadmap” of the task in the body and mind. Earlier chapters explained that thoughts and feelings are not separate from each other. A thought triggers a biochemical response in the body. A feeling or sensation triggers a corresponding chemical response in the brain. Within these internal energy responses, imagery lets children empower their awareness and direct their minds and bodies into skill development and positive emotional states.

Scientific study has shown that the mental act of thinking about running a race can trigger some of the same bodily reactions as its physical counterpart. Obviously, only the physical act delivers the sense of elation, the muscular exercise, and the release of tension that we enjoy. What imaging the race beforehand can do for those who practice it is set the stage for accomplishment by focusing the mind on specific goals and preparing the body to perform the required actions. In the same way, imaging successful coping skills can build self-confidence and ease for the actual physical event.

Guided imagery is a method of creating pictures in the mind accompanied by sights, sounds, sensations, and feelings. It directs the mind and body to the optimal inner state for physical and emotional health. Positive images specifically calm the nervous system, strengthen the immune system, and trigger healing activity.

In a daydream, children drift mentally to places they would rather be that promise feelings of joy, comfort, safety, and peace. View imagery as daydreaming with a purpose. Help children use their imaginations to picture images that evoke positive feelings at times when negative

impressions seem overwhelming. The guides of guided imagery sessions can make its effects more profound by adding props to stimulate children's senses, strengthening the reality of the imagery experience.

## How Effective Is Imagery?

Health field specialists effectively use guided imagery to reconnect people to pastoral, peaceful images with accompanying sights, tastes, smells, and feelings to induce a relaxation response in their patients that strengthens the immune system. For cancer patients in particular, the successful practice of imagery returns them to a sense of control over their lives, enhancing their resistance to stress and overcoming treatment anxiety.

Guided imagery helps children build confidence and self-esteem while strengthening their emotional resources. Through its practice, children learn to express feelings they have formerly been unable to verbalize [especially those associated with stress or trauma].<sup>1</sup> Imagery has been especially useful for the following childhood conditions:

- ~ Calming hyperactivity
- ~ Helping children cope with a death in the family
- ~ Overcoming anxiety
- ~ Soothing panic episodes
- ~ Healing psychosomatic complaints
- ~ Developing sensitivity

The reason for the high degree of success in using imagery with children lies in their ability to close their eyes and use their imaginations to see another viewpoint, feel more deeply, or gain perspective on situations. Parents, teachers, and other service providers can also use imagery with confidence to increase a child's mental focus, help clarify values, increase study efficiency, or instill other beneficial traits.

Holistic health practitioners and doctors use imagery extensively in conjunction with traditional medical treatments. According to experts, “Imagery had been found to be very effective for the treatment of stress. Imagery is at the center of relaxation techniques designed to release brain chemicals that act as your body’s natural brain tranquilizers, lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety levels. Because imagery relaxes the body, doctors specializing in imagery often recommend it for stress-related conditions such as headaches, chronic pain in the neck and back, high blood pressure, spastic colon, and cramping from premenstrual syndrome.”<sup>2</sup>

People use imagery to relieve a number of conditions, including all of the symptoms identified along the stress continuum: tension, stress, anxiety, angst, panic, and trauma. It is a gentle, calming way to help the mind and body learn to integrate stressors. Along with treating anxiety and depression, guided imagery serves these purposes:

- ~ Mood enhancement
- ~ Improvement in the quality of sleep
- ~ Reduction of blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol
- ~ Improvement of the immune system functioning
- ~ Management of pain
- ~ Learning sports skills
- ~ Enhancing performance

## Passive Imagery

One of the easiest responses to teach children through guided imagery is relaxation. Later in this chapter, we give the steps to conduct an imagery session. Teaching the relaxation response is the first step. The relaxation response occurs naturally when brain waves calm and the body is still. When learning to relax, first direct children focus on their breathing. Then direct their attention to an image that is pleasant and calming—

perhaps a scene in nature or a favorite animal. The passive activities of concentrating on breathing and then on a soothing image represent a powerful combination for relaxation.

## Active Imagery

A guide uses active imagery when the goal of a session is to influence a specific behavioral outcome, such as improving sports performance, enhancing study skills, strengthening courage, or balancing emotions. Children can especially benefit by using active imagery as a self-healing technique to help speed recovery from illness. Active imagery is most valued in healing because it allows children a sense of participation in the imagery experience; hence control over the events their lives. Conversely, guided imagery is used to modify behaviors that compromise health and to motivate children to make positive, healthful changes in their lifestyles.

## Imagery Uses

Anna's son, Eric, announced one day that he wanted to make his own lunches for school. Concerned about how wholesome his choices of food would be, Anna took her son grocery shopping. She realized she could not force her food choices on him without his consent and that she needed to enlist his cooperation in choosing nutritious foods. At the grocery store, the pair went down the aisles of Eric's choosing (not a good start), but Anna countered with the following technique: she would place a food item, like a bag of cookies, in her son's hand after reading him the ingredients. Eric would then close his eyes and imagine how his body felt after eating it. He was able to tell his mother which food items felt good and which did not. Anna was surprised by his ability to perceive intuitively that foods high in sugar were not good for him. Anna reported, "He chose well, and I was surprised. I did not think it

would work, but I was willing to let him try based upon my commitment to empower him and not cower him.”

Whether external stressors (outside of the self) or internal stressors (mind chatter and worries), cause a person’s ongoing troubles, imagery can help. Over a prolonged period, we become physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted as we try to absorb the effects of stressful events. In other words, we become “dis-stressed.” Imagery offers rest, relaxation, and a chance for emotional or physical healing. It allows escape from stressful moments to a place of inner tranquility, which assists in the restoration of body and mind. One of the greatest strengths of guided imagery is that anyone can do it, anywhere, at any time. Like Full Wave Breathing skills, it is free and takes only practice, time, and patience.

Younger children as well as older ones, even those who have developmental problems or disabilities, can enjoy closing their eyes and acting out a story with movement, such as swimming with a pink porpoise in the ocean. Youth and adolescents, once taught to relax through deeper breathing and focusing on an image, can follow a subtler version of a guided imagery story. If some traumatized children are frightened of closing their eyes, a session guide might allow them to imagine a story or see an image with their eyes open, using whatever props they need in order to feel safe enough to relax.

## How the Flow of Guided Imagery Works

Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D., explains the process of guided imaging in *Empowering Kids Through Imagery* this way: “As with adults, guided imagery with children is a process that develops and utilizes the right side of the brain—the side oriented toward creativity, emotions, intuition, art, and holistic understanding. Imagery appears to use the same symbolic or metaphoric language as the unconscious mind, so it makes



communication possible between the conscious and unconscious mind, in much the same way as dreams.”<sup>3</sup>

Guided imagery has three to five stages depending upon how the material is used and with what age group:

- ~ Relaxation and/or induction
- ~ The main imagery experience
- ~ The return
- ~ Closure

A teacher, parent, or other caregiver does not need special training in relaxation techniques in order to employ the exercises. Here is a basic outline of how to conduct a guided imagery session that anyone can follow:

**Relaxation:** To begin a session, ask the children to sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and instruct them to close their eyes. Encourage them to quiet their minds by placing their attention on breathing as they inhale and exhale deeply, slowly, and evenly. As the children become more relaxed, ask them to notice their breathing—simply to observe it. This may take a few moments. Then move specifically to the steps of the Full Wave Breath (step one, the two stroke breath, or the entire three step, Full Wave Breathing sequence).

For younger children, step one of Full Wave Breathing works, as they fill their abdomens with air, gently and regularly, until they achieve relaxation. Older children benefit more from either the two-stroke breath or the entire Full Wave approach. Relaxation through breathing helps children maintain alertness while gaining the ability to shift fluidly to a more positive state of mind. This element of self-regulation is what they must learn to build a greater coping ability. The session guide may also use the script of a standard induction (see induction sidebar) accom-

panied by soothing music to aid the transition from regular consciousness into a more profound imaging state.

**Induction:** The induction is a brief, verbal interlude to guide children more deeply into relaxation and to help them focus their minds. Its purpose is to help them make the transition from the outer reality to their inner world. Although the children may appear to be asleep, their bodies are simply relaxed while their minds are alert and clear. A guide can invoke the image of an elevator going down, a door swinging open, or a person descending a staircase, moving into another room, or stepping from indoors to outdoors. All are examples of the “transition” metaphor by which a child shifts her attention to the inner eye and senses.

If children need further relaxation or induction, other ideas for a guide to facilitate the transition experience are below:

- ∞ Direct children’s attention to a single object, such as their favorite color—as it might appear on a television or computer screen, if they prefer—and commit their entire concentration to imagining the color.
- ∞ Ask them to adjust the color by turning an imaginary control knob or lever. (A major point of this exercise is to build an individual’s skill at controlling his or her mental images so that they can be summoned at will when the need to relax arises.)
- ∞ Ask children to imagine a rainbow light starting at their heads and filtering down through and around their bodies.
- ∞ Starting at their toes, and moving upward through their body, ask the children to relax each body part as you name it.

Be aware of the intellectual level appropriate to the age of children taking part in the exercise. Their ability to understand the meanings and vocabulary of various emotions may limit the words used in an induction. Unless the children understand what it is like to experience the

feelings you ask them to imagine or the words to indicate those feelings, they may not follow the exercise.

Guide the children through a range of different positive feelings by naming them slowly one at a time. After each, ask the children to imagine experiencing that emotion. (The body and mind systems of most children may also benefit by practicing positive emotions.) Here are some suggestions for what to say when leading children through constructive emotional states:

- ~ “Concentrate on feelings of \_\_\_\_\_” (Fill in the blank with happiness, peace, joy, love or safety.)
- ~ “Identify where you feel love in your body.”
- ~ “If smiles are hiding in your heart, will you find them and let them smile through your face?”
- ~ “How does peace feel? Where is it in your body?”
- ~ “Imagine health (also wellness, vibrancy, vitality), and tell me what it would look like?”

Once the children have imagined the several positive emotions, move gently ahead to the next phase.



## **Relaxation Inductions**

Use one of these three inductions before an imagery session to relax children. The more children become familiar with it, the better the induction will serve as a cue for relaxation. If possible, record and distribute the standard induction so the children can use it whenever they wish to relax, such as before studying or sleep, or to improve their performance at any endeavor. You and the children determine the specific use of the induction and choose appropriate language or instructions at the end of the induction.

### **[One]**

Get comfortable now so that you relax completely. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Blow all the air out of your lungs each time. Now that you are relaxing, go to a place within yourself that is very quiet. Place your hand where it is quiet inside. (Pause until everyone has placed his or her hands.) If you focus all your attention on that spot, your body becomes even more deeply relaxed. Your mind is becoming so quiet that you can hear only the sound of my voice. Listen carefully and relax even more as we begin our inner journey.

### **[Two]**

Close your eyes now and take three very deep breaths. You feel good inside right now. There is nothing to do. Your body is relaxed and your mind is quiet. You are focusing all of your attention on what I say ..... paying very close attention to my words. This helps you to relax your mind and imagine more easily. You'll be able to see the pictures in your head as I speak the words. Take three more long, deep breaths and get very comfortable for our guided story.

### **[Three]**

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. While exhaling, say to yourself several times, "Relax, relax." Breathing in and breathing out...slowly...and deeply.

To enter a deeper and a healthier level of mind, take another deep breath. While breathing out, repeat the word "healthier" several times. Breathing in... and out... very deeply and slowly.

To enter a still deeper, healthier level of mind, take another deep breath and mentally repeat the word "deeper" several times... breathing in... and out... slowly... and deeply.

You are now at a healthier and deeper level of mind, deeper and healthier than before. To assist you to reach a

deeper and healthier level of mind, I am going to count backward from twenty to ten. As I count backward, feel yourself becoming increasingly relaxed. Imagine that you are a leaf or a feather floating gently on the wind. As I count backward, you gently float downward on the wind, coming to peaceful landing on the soft earth. Going backward now... 20... 19... 18... more and more relaxed (pause) 17... 16... 15... healthier and healthier (pause) 14... 13... 12... deeper and deeper, 11... 10.

You are now at a deeper and healthier level of mind.

Your body is relaxed and your mind is at peace.<sup>4</sup>

[Excerpt from *Mind Fitness for Esteem and Excellence* by Dr. Caron Goode & Joy Watson.]



**Imagery:** Dr. Reznick writes, “The actual imagery experience will vary depending on the specific goal to be achieved. Whether we want to heal past hurts, create a safe basis for emotional growth, or clear our minds to concentrate and learn easier, there are a myriad of images one can conjure up. (See the next chapter for delightful imagery to use with children and adolescents.) You might guide children to a special place where they can be unconditionally loved and accepted, or they might climb a majestic mountain where they can reach a goal they design for themselves, or meet a special person or wise animal friend to help them with their concerns. Although there is no limit to the kind and variety of guided imagery scripts, the same imaginary journey can be taken over and over again each time with a fresh and new approach.”<sup>5</sup>

**Return:** The return brings the children back to normal, waking consciousness and helps them to remember the experience. Let the children rest for a few moments before guiding them back to the present reality. A session guide can use the script for a standard return (see ending sidebar). Counting from ten back to one, ask them to open their eyes slowly

and reorient themselves to their surroundings. Encourage them to stretch, move around, breathe deeply, and renew themselves.

**Closure:** After the return, some children may feel completely satisfied with their experiences. However, others may be wishing to write, draw, dramatize, or talk about what they experienced. Allowing for a period of self-expression may complete the experience of the feelings and thoughts that surfaced. A closure activity also deepens the effect of the guided imagery session. If a guide is directing a group imagery class, discussions and mutual sharing among the children often lead to forming bonds of friendship. In individual sessions, there can be interaction and feedback during the imagery experience itself.

Once a guide has successfully led a child through an entire guided imagery session, they have both mastered the technique! The key to mastery is relaxation. Conduct each exercise slowly for optimal results. Spend only as much time on each guided imagery practice as is comfortable for both guide and children.



## **Standard Closes**

### **[One]**

In a moment, I am going to count from one to five and make a sound with my fingers. When you hear the number five, you can open your eyes very slowly. You will be wide awake and feeling fine, feeling even better than you did before... as if you had taken a long and restful nap. Coming up slowly now. One... wiggle your feet and your toes. Two... move your arms and your legs. Three... begin to move your body. Four... move your eyes and your head now. Five... your eyes beginning to open. (Snap fingers, clap hands softly, tap a desk, or make some other soft sound.) Eyes open... wide awake... feeling great!

## [Two]

Bringing that good feeling back into your body now, take a deep breath and count from one to five with me. Say it out loud now. One... two... three... four... five... Good! Wide awake, focused, and energized.

## [Three]

Let that positive feeling now return to all the parts of your body. Move your fingers, toes, arms, and neck. Slowly let your eyes open by themselves. (Pause and wait for everyone to open their eyes. Even if some students are slow, move ahead with the exercise.) Take a deep breath now and refocus your attention here in the room. Good! Feeling focused, attentive, and ready to work!<sup>6</sup>

[Excerpt from *Mind Fitness for Esteem and Excellence* by Dr. Caron Goode & Joy Watson.]



## Considerations for Children of Different Age Groups

These are factors to consider when using imagery with children:

- ∞ Take into account the age characteristics of the children experiencing the guided imagery. Later in the chapter, age-related factors are discussed in detail.
- ∞ Consider the degree of sensitivity to distraction exhibited by the children. Conduct imagery sessions in a quiet place, free from disturbance or interruption. Some individuals gain increased sensitivity to sounds and/or touch when they are deeply relaxed. Others can ignore diverting sounds or movements. It is important to be aware of a child's sensitivity to distraction.
- ∞ If children are new to the experience of a guided imagery session, walk them through the process in advance so they will know exactly what to expect. Some children will gladly close their eyes. Others prefer to keep their eyes open, which also works.

One objective of a session is to induce positive emotions within children. Cultivate positive emotions as they form a profound means of coping successfully with negative experiences. Therefore, discuss with younger children, especially, the meaning of different positive emotions and how to recognize them. Define words such as “joy,” “rest,” and “satisfaction” in a simple way. Make a game of experiencing different positive emotions. How do they feel in the body? Where do children experience an emotion on their body? Allow children to look in a mirror and posture their bodies and facial features to dramatize an emotion.

Use vocabulary that is age-appropriate to the children you are guiding. Use words that come from the children themselves as they respond to open-ended questions or short phrases of instruction. The session guide might say, “Where are you now? What are you aware of? Tell me more about it? Talk to me about the experience. Can you describe the feeling? Raise your hand when you want to stop. When you’ve arrived, lift a finger (nod your head, let me know).”

Introducing young children to the language of the imagery experience—words and meanings for various positive emotions—is key to the success of their experience with it. One way of preparing children is to help them remember past scenes and situations from their own lives that they can associate with words such as “pleasure,” “peace,” “happiness,” or “joy.” If they have access to such memories, when you ask them in an imagery session, for example, to imagine “relief,” they can recall the associated experience.

A child’s memory of happy experiences is used to help build another association of utmost importance: to her ability to practice a positive coping response. To prepare children in a group, establish with them their most favorite, optimistic, and satisfying happy places (persons or events). The more personal meaning these favorite persons, and places carry, the stronger the positive emotions called forth when a child



remembers them will be. Once chosen, a session guide can refer to them as the induction progresses to intensify the relaxation process. Further, instruct a child to recall them at any time he needs soothing. Such an image can form a child's imaginary "safe haven," which serves as a source of strength in times of distress, anxiety, and panic.

Before a guided imagery session begins, be aware if any children are on medications that would reduce their attention spans or produce grogginess, increasing the difficulty of concentration. In using imagery to diminish psychological problems such as generalized anxiety disorders, phobias, panic attacks, or post-traumatic stress disorder, it is best to work in collaboration or under the guidance of a qualified health professional.

**Toddlers:** For three to five-year-old children, the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. Imagery may not yet be a stable inner experience. A guide can conduct active imagery with young children. Pre-school children move easily from a world of inner thoughts to acting out the imaginary scenes they encounter. A toddler's willingness and ability to act out imagery in therapeutic play can be as effective as guiding her through a session.

Use simplified words and subject matter toddlers understand with their limited vocabularies and learning experiences. In addition, young children respond to concrete, tangible, sensory cues, props, and words. Using pictures, photographs, scarves, stuffed animals, dolls, toy trucks, comic books, and story books to present information or to help them form mental images is often effective prior to an imagery session.

**School-aged children:** Guided imagery works best with children over the age of five because they are more proficient in vocabulary and their imaginations are starting to flourish. However, young children require simplified imagery exercises centered on activities, environments, or situations familiar to those of their same age group. As a result, it is

important that the participants within any guided imagery group be with others of similar age.

Once a homogenous age group is gathered, a guide can use words, images, symbols, and experiences within the context of the children's generation. Younger children derive pleasure from playing with a specific toy or identifying with a certain cartoon character or an athlete. They especially relate to archetypes such as rainbows, dinosaurs, a netscape filled with stars, or animal characters used in commercials, movie animations, and storybooks. The guide's task is to help younger children choose a specific stimulus with which they can resonate and relax.

Older children have control of their bodies and can name and identify with feeling. Children of this age group, especially the distressed ones, appreciate a feeling of familiarity with their activities and the sense of safety that predictable activities generate. Thus, introduce routines into the guided imagery sessions by keeping progress charts to show how well a child uses imagery or maintaining graphic time lines to show increases in periods of relaxation.

**Adolescents:** Adolescents need a sense of control over their lives, especially if their circumstances do not offer them many opportunities to feel competent or independent. On the other hand, children in this age group have more life experiences, are able to think abstractly, and can perceive the world in greater depth. To keep their attention, a guide might use stimulating or action-packed stories in imagery exercises.

Adolescents are capable of abstract thinking, which means that they can follow more complex imagery exercises. Using visuals and vocabulary that are current in adolescent trends enhances exercises aimed at this age group.

The tastes of adolescents blend with those of older children in their love of cartoon images, but adolescents additionally identify with MTV

pictures, romance, action, or adventure movie scenes and characters, and calming landscapes or seascapes.

Remember that healing takes places with relaxation and calmness. This goal directs any selection of images. Older children and adolescents may also respond to specific questions that help them arrive at a favorite image, such as, “If you could...”

- ~ Pick your favorite place. Where would it be?
- ~ Meet someone famous from television, cartoons, or movies. Who would it be?
- ~ Meet your favorite sports figure. Who would it be?
- ~ Pick any color or shape, what would it be?

After a child has chosen an image that brings up the most positive emotions, guide her into a deeply relaxed state. Keep terms positive, as guided imagery is full of magic and potential—a way to explore and feel safe inside at the same time.

## How Children Experience the World

Physically healthy individuals possess five senses to perceive the world they live in: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. However, we tend to rely on only one or two of these senses, especially hearing, sight, or touch, when we experience things. Most people are classified as predominantly hearers, feelers, or seers. If a guide learns a child’s primary orientation to sensory input, she can choose words more effectively to help the child experience the guided imagery. For example, if a child tends to respond most to sounds, listening perceptions can be emphasized by saying, “Listen to the music” or, “Hear the sound of the waves.” If a child responds to touch, a guide may appeal to that sense by saying, “Feel how warm the water is,” or, “Touch the animal’s fur and feel how soft it is.” If a child responds strongly to sights, phrases that conjure up

visual images can be used, such as, “Picture yourself on the ride,” or, “See how deep the colors are.” Thus, if a guide knows the sense on which the child depends most, he can intensify the child’s experience of the imagery and hold their attention longer.

Even though it is well to capture a child’s interest by appealing to a dominant sense, it is also beneficial to include images that invoke the other senses. If children are encouraged to utilize all of their senses and learning capacities, they can experience the world in ways they had never tried before.

## Dealing with Resistance

Occasionally a guide encounters children who insist they cannot form a picture inside their minds. If this occurs, ask the children to open their eyes and focus on any visual object of their choice, like their hand, a spot on the wall, or an art piece. After the children view the object for a few moments, ask them to close their eyes and try to see the object in their mind’s eye. For most individuals, this technique is effective to begin visualization.

If a child or adolescent becomes frustrated with the visualization process, she could be “trying too hard.” It is important not to let the visualization experience become associated with negative feelings. If this appears to be happening, stop the exercise and request a break. Remember these three **R**’s when dealing with resistance:

- ∞ **Review** the overriding purpose of the exercise.
- ∞ **Reassure** the children that there is no way to do the exercise “wrong,” and be sure to avoid placing expectations on anyone, as expectations defeat the purpose of the exercise.
- ∞ **Relax** the child again, and move ahead. Spend more time in the relaxation and induction phase.

An imagery experience has a stronger effect if children are encouraged to form emotional links to their visual images by associating them with the other physical senses of taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing. The larger the number of specific sensory impressions that children can experience during the imagery session, the closer to reality it is for them and the greater emotional impact it will have. Therefore, ask questions such as, “What do you see? How does the texture feel? What sounds are you hearing?” As the emotional meaning of the guided imagery session grows, the greater the emotional healing.

If children have difficulty responding to specific sensory questions, broader questions may be helpful, such as “What are you aware of? What are you sensing? What is it you know?” As children answer, collect and list specific information from a child about the image or scene to help the child remember it more quickly in future imagery sessions.

The next chapter describes different types or categories of images and discusses the general purposes each kind serves in improving an individual’s coping skills. Such background is important if an imagery guide helps children choose healing imagery that accomplishes a specific goal. Choose imagery that the children enjoy, modifying it if necessary to suit a child’s personal coping needs. Once you conduct a session, record it for a child to play at will, even when they are alone. Every time a guided imagery session is repeated, it offers the child an opportunity to strengthen his confidence and resilience.

## Summary of Chapter 14

- ∞ Imagery is the ability to visualize or mentally create pictures and feelings.
- ∞ Imagery lets children empower their awareness and direct their minds and bodies into skill development and positive emotional states.
- ∞ Body and mind science has shown us that thinking about running a race can trigger the same bodily feelings as the physical act of running.
- ∞ Positive images specifically calm the nervous system, strengthen the immune system, and trigger healing activity.
- ∞ Guided imagery:
  - Is the method of creating pictures in the mind accompanied by sights, sounds, sensations, and feelings.
  - Directs the mind and body to the optimal inner state for physical and emotional healing.
  - Is used extensively in giving holistic care in conjunction with traditional medical treatments.
  - Can be either passive or active.
  - Has three to five stages depending upon how a guided imagery session guide uses the material and with what age group. The stages are Relaxation and/or Induction, the Imagery Experience, the Return, and Closure.
- ∞ The most effective guided imagery sessions consider the ages, abilities, and emotions of the participants.

# 15



## Getting Started with Imagery

*Cherish your visions and your dreams, as they are the children of your soul;  
the blueprints of your ultimate achievements.*

Napoleon Hill

The images children experience in a guided imagery session and the positive emotions these images come to be associated with give children a “safe haven” to access when they need emotional strength and resiliency to cope with stress. But mental images can serve a child in even more ways. Different kinds of images can accomplish different tasks in maintaining mental health and fostering a child’s growth and development. They can change attitudes and behaviors, encourage physical healing as well as mental well-being, and engender creative responses to the problems life presents. This chapter details the benefits of different types of images and indicates when and how they can help children over the hurdles and rough spots in life.

### Different Kinds of Images

Joy Watson, founder of Mind Fitness International and author of *Mind Fitness* books for children and adults, suggests in *The No-Sweat Way to Sanity* using different types of images for different purposes. According to Watson:

- ~ **Memory images** draw from a person's past learning and experiences, either from the personal life or from the culture of which he is a part.
- ~ **Creative images** call on an individual's active use of imagination to paint new pictures in her mind's eye.
- ~ **Intuitive images** bubble up from the world of dreams, inner wisdom, and archetypal knowledge.
- ~ **Purposeful images** create changes in a person's attitudes and behavior. You can direct them like arrows towards a specific and well-defined goal.

**Memory images** help us learn what is valuable and meaningful to our inner selves. When a teacher first learned that she had cancer, she would let her mind wander and watched what surfaced as she lay in bed. Her mind continued to focus on standing on a balcony, gazing at the Pacific Ocean surf. She understood that during her confinement, she needed a space where she could feel free and experience the calm of the ocean waves as she used to do as a child. Since she could not travel, she honored her image and gave herself thirty minutes a day to stand on the balcony, gaze at the ocean, and internalize the rhythmic pulse of the waves. This exercise became part of her healing process.

**Creative images** help us break through our surface confusion to access new creativity and inspiration deep within. Creative images help us solve the problems in our lives. These images suggest a movement of some sort from the old (way of thinking) to the new. They can involve mentally picturing ourselves walking up or down steps, moving up and down in an elevator, riding to a new place in a vehicle, or sailing to a different shore. Children respond especially positively to creating their own movement imagery. A guide can supply their imaginations with a starting point and then direct them to move away from the familiar image towards something new. Adolescents use creative imagery to arrive at a



fresh outlook, a new view, or inspired thinking on a situation that used to trouble them.

Below are more examples of creative images from which to choose:

- ∞ A magic carpet that lifts you up and delivers you to a new place
- ∞ Leaving a room or house of old ideas and walking through a doorway into new rooms
- ∞ Walking through a doorway into a fresh, new day filled with joy
- ∞ Riding a power animal, like a dragon, horse, buffalo, eagle, hawk or wolf, toward new creativity
- ∞ Stepping over the rainbow into a new reality
- ∞ Riding a rocket ship into the stars and new possibilities
- ∞ Floating on a cloud, quiet and serene, until new energy brings you insight

**A story illustrates** how you can use intuitive images to help a child overcome seemingly insurmountable stress. When Lynn was a little girl, her stepfather would pick her up from daycare but then find reasons to punish her, frequently beating her before her mother returned home from work. The only way Lynn could escape his temper and insanity was by retreating into another world. In that world, she ran through tall grass in a cool, green meadow, feeling the wind against her face, as if she were flying or running until she dropped. Then she would rest and watch the clouds roll by—giant animals turning and playing against a deep blue sky. She felt safe and protected by the dense woods that rimmed the meadow in which she played in her imagination. When she felt comfortable enough, two beautiful horses—one black and one white—would approach her. At first, the three of them just talked and walked together. The horses told Lynn about the wonders of her imaginary place and the many animals that lived in the sky and on the land. The horses also talked about people and explained that there were many

kinds of people with different needs. Some of the people she would like but some she would not. Nevertheless, she would always find friends among the animals of this place.

The horses encouraged Lynn to believe in them, to trust them, and, eventually to ride them. When Lynn's fear of others lessened to the point that she allowed herself to ride these beautiful creatures, her courage returned. When she felt the wind rush through her hair and knew what it meant to fly across the land unfettered by the pain of others, her strength returned. When she learned what it meant to be free of all cares, at one with the energy of the horse, the land, and the wind, her joy returned.

Healing became an adventure for her. Her imagination transformed reality, and her spirit soared. Shortly after these understandings took hold, Lynn's mother divorced her stepfather. When her mother married again, it was to a gentle and sensitive man who was an engineer, a musician, an artist—and a cowboy! He gave Lynn a horse and the opportunity to run with the wind again, this time in physical reality. In this landscape, she thrived!

As Joy Watson reminds us, intuitive images, such as those of the horses, are not of the intellect. They come from an individual's inner world, the psyche—our connection to what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious. Oftentimes, they are archetypal descriptions that are common to mythologies around the world. Sometimes the images have a personal message. Sometimes intuitive images come to us in dreams.

## Purposeful Images for Healing

*Purposeful images* help children define, detail, and maximize their efforts towards a specific goal. They are excellent tools for acquiring skills, such as playing a better ball game, completing a test, preparing homework, or handling shyness. Purposeful imagery focuses a child's

energy towards a task he defines to improve his performance. In addition, combining purposeful imagery with intentional breathing techniques produces an even more powerful synergy that has immediate effects. Try the following scenarios in a guided imagery session, asking children to modify them according to their imaginations and inspiration.

**Brighten your day and lighten your stress:** Imagine a gray cloud above you, laden with rain and moving around your head. The cloud is heavy, filled with all that is difficult for you at this moment. Breathe in, step back, and look up at the cloud. Exhale gently and deeply.

As you breathe, watch the cloud slowly dissolve. It break ups and dissipates. Watch the cloud transform into sunshine and blue sky as you continue to breathe in and out. Each exhalation brightens the space above and around you.

When the area above your head is clear and bright, draw that brightness into you as you breathe in. With each inhale, breathe in more lightness. Relax and feel the brightness inside of you.

**An ocean of energy to revitalize your health:** Imagine that you are standing in a large tidal pool with a waterfall cascading down around you. Make the water crystal clear, or if you like, Caribbean blue. Immerse yourself in the waterfall, then step into the ocean and swim below the surface. Now breathe the water in.

Allow this ocean of energy to seep into your skin. Let every pore drink in this energy. Let it renew you. Let it move through your brain and body, circulating to every cell in every organ, tissue, muscle, and bone. Continue to inhale and exhale in a continuous, connected cycle. Your breath pulls this ocean of energy through you and keeps it circulating just like the blood throughout your body. Be aware of your feelings. When you are relaxed, alert, and renewed, resume your tasks.

**Massaging hands:** Most tension lies in tight shoulders and neck as well as tense jaws. Sometimes this distress results in tension headaches.

If this tension is not relieved regularly, it often shows up in the stomach area as indigestion, a tight gut, or even as difficulty breathing fully. We suggest the following exercise:

(Before the imagery be sure to prepare yourself with the suggestions for breathing and calming down.) With your eyes closed, and your body relaxed, breathing slowly, imagine two hands. (Some people prefer hands of light; others envision the hands of someone who cares for them. If you associate caring and tender feelings more readily with someone you love, you may release tension more easily.)

See the hands clearly behind you at the back of your neck and shoulders. When the hands are in focus, direct their movement to your shoulders first. Feel the hands gently massage them. The hands knead the muscles deeply as you relax and go deeper.

Without leaving the muscles, the hands can move up your neck, around to your jaws and up to your temporal lobes above the ears. The fingers and thumbs soothingly massage the tightness, and you can feel it dissolve. Continue your breathing, and direct the hands away from your body while you let your tension melt away.

When you are ready to resume, envision the hands starting at the top of your head. The fingers gently press tension points at the top of your head and move back from the crown. The thumbs press gently, side by side, until they have traveled all the way down your crown to the back of your head. Now direct the hands to the points around your brows, forehead, jaws, and head where you still feel tightness.

Stay with the image as long as you need to relax. The feeling of caring stays in your mind and body for up to six hours. Therefore, it is a good idea to do this kind of relaxation and revitalization at least once a day.

## Revitalizing Images

Imagery works with the memories of pleasant and spirit-renewing scenes that children have already experienced. Children, who want to renew their energy, might take a moment to think about what really makes them feel excited and energized. Common themes for sports enthusiasts include seeing themselves jogging, walking, hitting a golf ball, or zapping a tennis ball across the net. True, the body is invigorated when the sports are physical. In addition, individuals can achieve a similar renewal of their body and mind systems when they are sitting in an office, taking a moment to hold revitalizing images in their minds.

Common themes for revitalization include standing on a mountain peak, viewing the expanse of land below while breathing in the crisp, clean air. For others, sitting by a running stream or alongside a placid pond has a tranquilizing effect. Another image that many find soothing is imagining the wind blowing away tired feelings and cleansing your energy field. Finally, a fourth image many people use is to see themselves standing on cold glacial snow, feeling their feet pull the invigorating cold temperature from the earth, up through their soles and into their legs, to radiate throughout their bodies. That is refreshing and focusing!

What works for you and your children? Your family could have a discussion before dinner and vote for one image on a Friday night to set a relaxing and calming tone for the weekend. In addition, imagery has many other applications for children in a family. Children can overcome sleep problems as well as phobias and other fears. We have listed some situations that might apply to your children.

**Helping children who are having problems going to sleep** is one of the most common uses of imagery in the family. By teaching children how to focus their minds on an object for an extended period, children learn to relax themselves into sleep. Another way to help children sleep is to make personal audiocassettes of guided imagery that focus on relax-

ation for your child at bedtime. Remember to include an exercise in full wave breathing as an induction. Here are some ideas for images that might work well in this context, and you can ask your children for more:

- ~ Their happy and safe place
- ~ A journey into dreamland
- ~ Moving light or water that carries away worries and tension
- ~ Sleeping in the arms of an angel
- ~ Watching shooting stars in the mind

You can also use variations of Barbara Morse's bedtime imagery (starting in the following paragraph), which serves several purposes: it helps the kids let go of the anxiety, fear, and anger built up over the day. It helps them let go of their struggles, and it helps them relax so they can sleep comfortably without night terrors or nightmares.

**"Props are helpful** in facilitating imagery at bedtime. 'Can we do the crystal now?' the children often ask. When I hear those words, I know it is time for the "lightfall" imagery. The crystal I use to facilitate the imagery is a very special prop given to me by a loving, caring friend. The crystal imagery begins with my holding the crystal on a child's forehead, above and between the eyebrows. I have tried placing the crystal on the tops of children's heads, having them visualize that it was a star pouring light into their heads. However, so many of them requested that the crystal be placed on their foreheads, I came to believe that the forehead was the better point of contact. Then I voice the following visualization: The crystal is full of wonderful, positive energy. It pours the energy into your head, like a beautiful waterfall of light...a lightfall. The light may be white, golden, or rainbow-colored. It pours into your head and over your face, relaxing your eyes, your nose, your cheeks, your forehead, and your mouth. It flows into your throat where there are lumps...lumps of tears that were not cried, lumps of words you said and wished you hadn't, or

words you wanted to say, but couldn't. The light melts the lumps, and they flow away, opening your throat so you can breathe evenly and comfortably. Then it flows to the back of your neck where there are knots that make you feel tight and tense. The light unties the knots and sends them flowing away, like many-colored ribbons, into the sky.

"Now the light flows to your chest. It touches your heart, which may feel closed and heavy. The light opens your chest and flows into your heart. As your heart opens, butterflies of love fly out to touch the hearts of others, and their butterflies of love flutter into your heart and fill it with love and beauty.

"The light flows to your center. There are hard, burning coals of anger. They are red and hot and make you hurt. As the lightfall touches them, they begin to cool. They turn pink and soft, and flow away, cooling your anger and filling you with calm, tranquility, and forgiveness.

"Now the light flows to that place where you hold on to all the things that you do not need. It is like a stagnant pool of water, filled with debris...old junk you don't want and would like to replace. The light opens the dam that holds it there, and the water flows, washing the junk away, replacing the stagnant pool with a clear stream of refreshing ideas and new things to try.

"At last, it is time to open the cages where the scary things live. They are deep, deep inside you, squeezing, kicking, and pounding at you. They are dark, shadowy monsters. However, you have the light on your forehead, and as you shine the light into the cages, the fearsome monsters change. Some disappear, as dark shadows do when you turn on the light, and some transform into angels and beautiful thoughts. You are feeling free, brave, courageous, and safe. Now the light flows through you, and you flow with it, feeling it from your toes to your head, and back down your arms and out your fingertips. You are full of love and joy, beauty and warmth—comfortable feelings. You are relaxed, and

ready to drift off to sleep, flowing with the light, dreaming gentle dreams.”<sup>1</sup>

**Overcoming phobias and fears**, as speaking on stage or in front of class, is another of the most usual uses of visualization. Public speaking is a common source of fear human beings face, especially children who must give oral reports in school. Children who practice guided imagery find it easier to make oral presentations before their classmates. Try any variation of this visualization:

Here is the picture to create in your mind, remembering the goal of this story is to help you feel comfortable in communicating and to feel clear about what to say before you speak.

You are on center stage. Look in front of you, into the eyes of the many people in your audience. They are silent and friendly, anticipating your words. You feel safe and secure as they sit quietly in the semidarkness of the theater, gazing at you. The reflections of the dim overhead lights sparkle in their eyes as they watch you.

Follow these steps to prepare your speech for your audience as I guide you. Mentally repeat to yourself, “Communication is easy for me. I speak clearly and precisely.” Try saying it now.

(Pause, and with a lower voice that speaks as if in the background, repeat), “Communication is easy for me. I speak clearly and precisely.”

Next, in your head, create the message about yourself that you want to share with your audience. Keep it to five sentences or less. Signal me when you have thought out your message. (Pause.)

Good! Now adjust your posture on the stage until you feel comfortable. Imagine how you would sit or stand to convey your feelings to the audience. When you are ready, tell the audience about yourself. (Pause a little longer this time, allowing for mental rehearsal.)

Now that you have practiced this mental rehearsal, let me summarize for you. Remember these steps: (1) always see yourself as feeling



open and comfortable before you speak; (2) affirm, “I speak clearly. Communication is easy for me,” and (3) mentally create the clear content of your message.

Conquering the fear of doctors and dentists is a third way imagery can be useful. Many people of all ages suffer such anxieties, especially about dental visits. Some dentists have tried to help their patients feel more at ease by placing murals and soothing, scenic pictures on the ceilings of examination rooms (the part of the room a patient sees when he or she is in the dentist’s chair). Allowing a child to see peaceful or calming images can reduce fear.

**Recovery from health problems** can be hastened by positive visualizations. They often speed a patient’s medical progress if used in conjunction with more traditional treatments. Dr. O. Carl Simonton, an expert who works with cancer patients, uses guided imagery in giving treatments at The Simonton Cancer Center in California. Dr. Simonton’s web site also has guided imagery scripts that can be used for healing. For more information, refer to the Resources section in this book.

Dr. Karen Olness, director of the Pediatric Bio-behavioral Center at Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital, and associate professor of pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, reports her findings about guided imagery used in conjunction with standard medical care, as well:

“Our research has determined that learning relaxation techniques and using imagery is more effective in eliminating juvenile migraine headaches than prescribing preventive medication. Children using these techniques experienced fewer headaches, and for the first time in a controlled study, we’ve shown that the same type of mass cell activation that occurs in adult migraines is also present in children.”<sup>2</sup>

“Beach Vacation is an easy guided imagery exercise and is applicable to many stressful situations:

“Imagine yourself strolling along a white, sandy beach. The sun is bright and slightly behind you. A soft breeze gently cools the heat of the sun on your shoulders, back, and head. Amble along, squeezing your toes in the sand occasionally. Feel the difference between the cool and hot sand, wet and dry granules. In the distance, you can hear the call of a sea bird. As you stroll, breathe in the salty sea air, and tell yourself, ‘I am at peace. I feel an inner peace deep within my body.’”

Stay with the image until you are breathing deeply and calmly.

**Building healthy self-esteem** requires an exercise much like that done by “the little engine that could” in the well-known children’s story by that name. To achieve its goal of climbing a steep hill, the little engine repeated the mantra, “I think I can, I think I can,” until it finally accomplished the task through positive mental orientation. By practicing imagery, children who formerly may have pictured themselves as “losers” have a chance to alter their images of themselves for the better. The “loser” label they generated by their own negative thinking and self-talk. An imagery coach can help children develop positive self-talk, reversing the damage to self-esteem, by leading them through visualizations in which they see themselves as “winners.” The following imagery is helpful if tailored for the age group:

Imagine that you are going to be in a bike race. You are with twenty other contestants in a big field where the race will be held. You regard the red racetrack that goes around the field. It looks smooth. It looks easy. You think to yourself, “I can do it. I can win this race.” Imagine the big, gold trophy you will win.

You walk over to the track where you left your bicycle. Look at your bicycle. What kind of bike is it? What color is it? Get on your bicycle for a moment and feel it underneath you. (Pause.)

The whistle is blowing now. It is time for all the racers to gather. All the contestants move to their places on the track, and you take your

place at the bright blue starting line. Take one last look down the red track and get into position. Feel your bike under you. You have one foot on the ground, ready to push off. You have the other foot on the pedal, ready to go. (Read with enthusiasm.) Clear your mind now. Take a deep breath and say, “I *can* do it. I can win this race.” Imagine yourself riding swiftly over the finish line. You can do it. Keep saying it in your mind until you can feel the surge of energy for the race rising up in your body. (Pause.)

Ready? On your mark. Get set. GO! Keep your eyes on the track in front of you. Pump your legs swiftly. Move ahead at an even, steady pace. The breeze blows against your face. Now here comes a turn in the track. Keep pedaling. The racer on your right is catching up with you. Take a deep breath, and in your head shout, “I *can* do it!” Now, you have a burst of energy, and you pull out ahead.

Move quickly ahead of the others. You are in the lead. You don’t feel any fatigue. You burst with vitality, and you move ahead toward the finish line.

You can do it! Your eyes are on the finish line. It is right in front of you... closer and closer. Five feet... 4 feet, 3 feet, 2 feet... 1. You *fly* over the finish line. Feel the wave of excitement as you say to yourself, “I did it! I won the race!” You did it. You won the race. Congratulations!

**Mentally practicing sports skills** in guided imagery builds performance ability, especially if the skills are broken down by task. For example, break down the skill of swinging a bat into smaller tasks: how to stand, how to bend over the plate, how to grip the bat, where to position the bat, where to focus the eyes. Children can imagine the proper execution of each task separately and in sequence until they memorize the entire skill set. Then, when the batter is up in a real game, they can rely on the memories developed in visualization to guide their form and actions, achieving much better results than ever before.

**Management of emotions**, especially anger, is an urgent need of most individuals habituated to a pattern of angry reactions. Frequently they find that the negative emotion consumes them before they have a chance to evaluate rationally how best to respond to a situation. Associated with anger and other negative emotions is negative self-talk. As self-talk enters the mind, an individual visualizes images that stimulate his emotions. Many events take place in the mind, even though they occur in microseconds. Guided imagery can help change negative images and self-talk to those of a positive nature.

“Seeing red” is a phrase people commonly use to express the fact that they are angry. The widespread acceptance of this expression indicates that in the minds of many individuals, red is associated with anger because it is a hot color. Could that mean that consciously visualizing a cool color, such as blue, might be useful to diffuse anger? An imagery guide can teach children to associate blue with calmness. Then whenever a child becomes enraged, he can focus attention on the color blue and allow the anger to subside. The same technique of focusing on an appropriate color can work to help an individual manage other negative emotions, too, such as sadness or anxiety.

It is best to choose an exercise that conforms to the time frame allowed, the child’s comprehension and age level, the size of the group, and also the results desired from the exercise.

**Rolling away worries:** This simple exercise is flexible in the time it takes. Have the children sit or lie in a comfortable position. Ask them to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly. Have them visualize a very black screen. Once they are able to see it, ask them what their favorite color is. Then ask them to imagine a ball of their favorite color in the middle of the black screen, and focus on it. When they acknowledge that they see the ball, lead them to describe it in vivid detail with the following questions:

- ∞ How big is it?
- ∞ What color is it?
- ∞ Is it moving? Is it growing?
- ∞ How do you feel watching the ball?
- ∞ Do you feel warm? Do you feel cold?
- ∞ Do you feel safe? Do you feel comfortable?

When you are ready, wrap your thoughts and worries all around the ball, and roll it away. Slowly it rolls away from you, taking all of your worries. Bye worries! Slowly the ball disappears, and so do your worries.

**To deal with fears**, especially fears of the dark, children can travel to another place in their minds that they associate with comfort in the following guided meditation:

Imagine you are in a warm, wavy pool. It is a bright, sunny day. You are floating on a yellow raft as you look up at the sky. The sky is very blue and occasionally a big, puffy, white cloud floats overhead. You are gently rocking back and forth on your yellow raft. Each time you think about being afraid of the dark, a wave hits your raft and gently bounces away. The raft is your safe place. It is bright yellow, like the noonday sun. Whatever hits it bounces off, and you are always safe. Imagine each frightening thought about the darkness is just a wave that bounces off your raft and you are safe. In fact, each time you have a scary thought of the dark, you immediately see yourself floating on a bright, yellow raft, safe and feeling good. You can go to your raft on this wavy pool anytime you like. All you have to do is close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to see yourself floating on it.

## Conclusion

New feelings emerge through time as children learn to master guided imagery for themselves. Even if they don't believe it at first, their minds and bodies *do* receive the healing information from the imagery,

and gradually new attitudes, reactions, and memories are constructed that are much better than those of the past. Performing imagery is as simple as closing your eyes and creating an image in your mind's eye. If guided imagery meditations are tape-recorded so that a child can play them at will outside of the imagery sessions, the increased repetition will afford children even more time and practice at mastering the use of imagery to create successful coping skills, confidence, self-esteem, and resilience. Remember these key points:

- ∞ There is power and energy in a mental image.
- ∞ Guided imagery is a way to use mental pictures to create success patterns in the body and mind system.
- ∞ Guided imagery is used to program roadmaps for success.
- ∞ Relaxed alertness and positive imagery work magic.

## Summary of Chapter 15

- ∞ There are different kinds of images:
  - **Memory images** call upon an individual's memory and past learning, either personally or as a participant in a culture.
  - **Creative images** require the use of active imagination to paint new pictures in an individual's mind.
  - **Intuitive images** bubble up from the world of dreams, inner wisdom, and archetypal knowledge.
  - **Purposeful images** are creative and directed like arrows toward a specific, well-defined goal.
- ∞ Positive visualizations can speed a patient's medical progress if used in conjunction with more traditional treatments.
- ∞ Images contain power and energy.
- ∞ Guided imagery can be practiced to program roadmaps for success.
- ∞ Guided imagery is a way to use a mental picture to create success patterns in the mind and body system.
- ∞ Relaxed alertness and positive imagery work magic.





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# Resources



## *Chapter 4 – Body and Mind, a Single System*

### **Vaccines**

<http://www.909shot.com/Default.htm> - The National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) is a national, non-profit educational organization founded in 1982. It is the oldest and largest national organization advocating reformation of the mass vaccination system. See this site for articles, books, and congressional testimony as well as links for more information.

<http://www.healing-arts.org/children/vaccines/> - **Vaccines** - In this very comprehensive and extensive section on vaccines, we hope to continually update you in a balanced manner regarding the many new studies and controversies regarding vaccinations and the possible risks involved, especially concerning developmental delays and neurometabolic disorders in children.

<http://www.healthychild.com> - Well researched educational and medical articles on health alternative for families. Free newsletter, books, and archived research.

### **Books about Vaccinations**

Order these from this web site <http://ebiz.netopia.com/chiropractor/vaccinationbooks/>

Diodati, Catherine MA, *Immunization History, Ethics, Law and Health* - The author wrote this book after conducting research for her master's thesis at the University of Windsor, Canada. Includes over 350 docu-

mented resources, interviews with leading health care authorities, case history review and Health Ministry surveys. Readers will find: the history of vaccine development; rational behind mass immunization; illustrated tour of the immune system; clear explanation of the differences between natural and artificial immunity; the risks associated with both biological and chemical vaccine components; the true effects vaccines have had on disease-related morbidity and mortality; how vaccines can affect your health; legal and ethical rights; and more.

Koren, Ted DC, *Childhood Vaccination: Questions Every Parent Should Ask*

Updated information on the vaccination controversy and includes a variety of questions that parents should ask, such as: Are vaccinated children healthier than unvaccinated children? Can vaccines cause cancer or fertility problems? Are there any benefits to a child having acute infectious childhood diseases? Are the ingredients in vaccines safe? How do vaccines cause damage on a cellular level? Are multiple vaccines safe? These questions and many more are answered with actual Congressional testimony, research findings from other authors.

Murphy, Jamie, *What Every Parent Should Know About Childhood Immunization* - Explains what vaccines are, how they are made, what little-known toxic chemicals are used in their productions, and how frequently the DPT vaccine causes local, systemic and neurological reactions and deaths in infants and children. Other topics include: vaccination and animal experimentation, the decline of childhood diseases before vaccination, vaccination and the law, how to legally avoid immunization, the protective factors in breast milk, and more. Soft cover, 192pp

Fisher, Barbara Loe and Coulter, Harris M. Ph.D, *A Shot in the Dark* - Contains solid information about a very controversial subject: the mass mandatory use of the DPT vaccine in the United States. It

discusses in chilling detail just how dangerous the whole-cell pertussis vaccine has proven to be. It exposes the roles played by the Food and Drug Administration and the drug companies. *Soft cover, 242 pp.*

Miller, Neil Z., *Vaccines: Are They Really Safe and Effective?* - A parent's guide to childhood shots. Discusses 13 different vaccines (mandatory and others) and provides information and statistics on their effectiveness, or lack thereof, as well as possible long-term consequences. Some of the vaccines covered are: smallpox, hepatitis B, polio, tetanus, diphtheria, measles, and pertussis. The National Childhood Vaccine Injury act, along with information on reporting vaccine reactions, promoting vaccine safety, and natural immunity are also included. *Soft cover.*

Scheibner, Viera, *Vaccination* - One hundred years of orthodox research shows that vaccines represent a medical assault on the immune system. This book aims to inform medical professionals and parents about short and long term side effects of vaccines, the ineffectiveness of vaccines in preventing infectious diseases and the causal link between DPT and polio vaccine and sudden infant death syndrome.

## Holistic Health

White, Linda B. MD and Mayor, Sunny. *Kids, Herbs, & Health: A Parent's Guide to Natural Remedies*, Independent Publishers Group; ISBN: 1883010535; (May 1999)

Wiese Sneyd, Lynn, *Holistic Parenting: Raising Children to a New Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Well-Being*. McGraw Hill - NTC; ISBN: 0658003062; (November 2000). See related articles and health issues at

[http://www.wiesesneyd.com/lynn\\_wiese\\_sneyd\\_home2\\_page.htm](http://www.wiesesneyd.com/lynn_wiese_sneyd_home2_page.htm).

Ballantine, Rudolph MD, *Radical Healing: Integrating the World's Great Therapeutic Traditions to Create a New Transformative Medicine*.

Three Rivers Press; ISBN: 0609804847; Reprint edition (March 14, 2000)

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Mendelsohn, Robert S M.D. *How to Raise a Healthy Child...In Spite of Your Doctor*, Ballantine Books; ISBN: 0345342763; Rei edition (June 1990).

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## *Chapter 5 - Caring for the Whole Child*

### **Web Sites**

<http://www.preparerespondrecover.com/childrensneeds/> - educational information about stress, children and therapeutic activities that are age specific

[www.healthychild.com](http://www.healthychild.com) - Advocates safe and healthy alternatives for children through the free e-newsletter, database of in depth articles and resources and carefully selected products.

[www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net) - articles and free newsletter that deal with the mind body approach to rearing the whole child. Includes stress and illness topics.

[www.fullwavebreathing.com](http://www.fullwavebreathing.com) - Offer information on educational and lifestyle approach to health and stress prevention through using the full wave breathing technique.

<http://www.preparerespondrecover.com/childrensneeds> - Within the About.com family of web sites are educational articles for families and parents regarding children and stress.

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/disaster.htm> - American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Helping Children After a Disaster

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/disastercomm> - American Academy of Pediatrics Offers Advice on Communicating with Children About Disasters

<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster/teacher/csndact2.html> - Children, Stress and Natural Disasters: School Activities for Children (Univ. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

[http://www.connectforkids.org/usr\\_doc/CopingWithGrief.htm](http://www.connectforkids.org/usr_doc/CopingWithGrief.htm) - Connect for Kids: Aftershocks of a National Trauma: Helping Kids Cope

<http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/Ca-0022.HTM> - Families Can Help Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety. (The Center for Mental Health Services)

[http://www.parentingpress.com/resp\\_issues.html](http://www.parentingpress.com/resp_issues.html) - Helping Parents Talk to Their Kids About Violence: Resources for Parent Educators

<http://www.nmha.org/reassurance/children.cfm> - National Mental Health Association. Helping Children Handle Disaster-Related Anxiety

<http://www.divorcetransitions.com/resources/links.htm> - All links, information and resources for families coping with divorce.

<http://www.imt.net/~randolfi/StressLinks.html> - provides a holistic approach to stress management and gives link therein as well as for emotional well-being, humor, alternative therapies and more.

<http://www.counseling.org/> - home of the American Counseling Association with advice, lists of therapists, and educational information.

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/> - The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a worldwide nonprofit organization based in Alexandria, VA. The association provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to more than 12,000 professional school counselors around the globe.

<http://www.aapc.org/> - The American Association of Pastoral Counselors provides information and links if you are interested in finding a pastoral counselor near you, or learning about AAPC, this web site provides easy access to that information.

<http://www.amhca.org/> - American Mental Health Counselors Association

<http://www.americanpsychotherapy.com/> - The APA promotes psychotherapy and psychotherapists committed to the practice of the profession. The APA encourages individual professional growth and works to elevate professional standards for practicing psychotherapy.

## **Books**

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Elkind, D. *The Hurried Child*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. (1988)

Garmezy, Norman, Ed. & Rutter, Michael, J. *Stress, Coping, and Development in Children*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr; ISBN: 0801836514; Reprint edition (1988).

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Savicky, Victor. *Burnout Across Thirteen Cultures: Stress and Coping in Child and Youth Care Workers*. Praeger Pub Text; ISBN: 0275974537; (2002).

Seligman, Martin E., Reivich, Karen, Jaycox, Lisa, & Gillham, Jane. *The Optimistic Child*. Harper Perennial; ISBN: 0060977094; 600 edition (1996)

**Audiocassettes for Self Esteem, Self Hypnosis, Confidence and others**

[www.internationalbreathinstitute.com](http://www.internationalbreathinstitute.com) - See Cosmic Waltz series

[www.creatingpower.com](http://www.creatingpower.com)

[www.dnaofdsuccess.com](http://www.dnaofdsuccess.com)

[www.hypnosisaudio.com](http://www.hypnosisaudio.com)

## *Chapter 6 & 7: Touch and Bonding Resources*

### **Web Sites**

**Soulrise** [www.soulrise.com](http://www.soulrise.com) - This practical and inspiring site was developed by husband and wife Debbie and Jim Spaide. It is an out-growth of an earlier project they started to help their five children “grow their hearts and souls through community service.” That organization, called Kids Care Clubs, now has 700 clubs nationwide. Soulrise is designed to be a “source of online information and interaction for individuals, parents, grandparents and others who care about the spiritual lives of children.” The site includes helpful and hopeful articles on issues such as “Stress and Fear in Children,” “Responding to School Violence” and “Talking About Terror with Kids,” as well as more light-hearted topics including creative projects, healthy cooking and the gifts in service to others. Of special note following the attacks of September 11, is the article “Healing the Spiritual and Emotional Pain of Terrorism” at [www.soulrise.com/common/soulholes.htm](http://www.soulrise.com/common/soulholes.htm)

**The Natural Child Project** [www.naturalchild.org](http://www.naturalchild.org) - A parenting resource site with articles that cover a wide range of parenting concerns and focus on ways to raise children with “dignity, respect, understanding and compassion.” Many articles incorporate the concepts presented here of making empathic emotional connections with our kids and the power of touch. Other resources include community resource pages (links), a newsletter, and a “Global Children’s Art Gallery” with over 600 works of art created by children in over 50 countries—amazing and inspiring!

**The Parent’s Journal** [www.parentsjournal.com](http://www.parentsjournal.com) - An excellent general parenting site that is the web-home to a national radio series for “parents, grandparents and others who care about children.” In the words of Bobbi Conner, radio show and website host, “This is not a program that dispenses “quick-fix” solutions on child rearing, but rather a program that is designed to help parents understand how children develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Our program shares information from renowned authors, leading child psychologists, child development experts, and real parents.” You can access the weekly programs at the site, and link to articles and other parenting-related resources.

**The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA)** [www.nara-licensing.org](http://www.nara-licensing.org) - At the website’s “NARA Public Information Room, Aisle 2” you will find short, credible and creative articles that introduce ideas for interacting with children in healthy, healing ways. Of special note is the article “Why Moments Count with Children” [www.nara-licensing.org/why.htm](http://www.nara-licensing.org/why.htm) NARA provides curriculum, consultation and technical assistance to organizations that offer out-of-home human care services for children, adolescents and older adults.

**The Foundation for Human Enrichment** [www.traumahealing.com](http://www.traumahealing.com) - Dr. Peter Levine, a psychologist and neurophysiologist who specializes in the healing of traumatic events, offers excellent articles, books, train-

ing, a practitioner's directory, and links at this site. Articles we referenced in writing this chapter and available at the site are "We Are All Neighbors" and "Understanding Childhood Trauma" (the latter appeared in *Mothering Magazine*, June 1994).

**David Baldwin's Trauma Information Pages** [www.trauma-pages.com](http://www.trauma-pages.com) - Focuses on emotional trauma and traumatic stress, including Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurring after individual trauma or large-scale disaster. Dr. Baldwin created the site primarily for clinicians and researchers in the traumatic-stress field. We include it here because it provides an extensive resource list of websites and books for anyone seeking information about healing from trauma of all kinds. The site also offers a large library of articles and research in the field of trauma and trauma treatment.

**United States Association for Body Psychotherapy (USABP)** [www.usabp.org](http://www.usabp.org) - We include this site for parents and other caregivers who are interested in exploring how psychotherapy practice is evolving to access the wisdom of the body in helping us heal from stress and trauma. The site provides a definition and history of body psychotherapy, as well as abstracts from the last three conference presentations.

**The Touch Research Institute (TRI)** [www.miami.edu/touch-research](http://www.miami.edu/touch-research) - Conducts extensive and practical research into the essential health sustaining and promoting nature of touch and touch therapies. The site provides information about The Institute's ongoing research and its results, offers a newsletter and other background information about their mission and work.

## Books

*Job's Body: A Handbook for Bodywork* by Deane Juhan, 1998. Published by Station Hill/Barrytown, LTD., New York. Job's Body provides a remarkable perspective on what it means to experience life in a human body, and contains both historical and current research explaining why

touch and physical interaction is so essential to human growth and maturation. A deeply hopeful and illuminating book on the powerful resources we all have available to us.

*Gentle Hands: A Step-by-Step Guide to Giving Healthy Massage to Children* by Susan Harley - Ms. Harley is a massage therapist and holistic health practitioner who has studied and gives workshops around the world. Her book is available through her website where you can view excerpts, a full table of contents, and reviews/testimonials. Visit [www.gentlehandsbook.com](http://www.gentlehandsbook.com).

From the website: The powerful message delivered in this book is dedicated to healthy relationships for babies, children, parents and extended family. Sue Harley believes that by creating positive relationships within families, children develop confidence, clarity and security. *Gentle Hands* teaches people how to touch and massage to express love. The book is fully illustrated and worded in a systematic format.

*Touch* by Tiffany Field, Ph.D., Director, Touch Research Institutes 2001. Published by The MIT Press. - As stated on the Touch Research Institutes' website ([www.miami.edu/touch-research](http://www.miami.edu/touch-research)): The first sensory input in life comes from the sense of touch while a baby is still in the womb, and touch continues to be the primary means of growth and learning throughout infancy and well into childhood. Touch is critical for the child's growth, development, and health, as well as for the parent's physical and mental well-being. *Chapter contents include:* Touch Hunger, Touch as Communication, Touch in Development, Touch Deprivation, Touch Messages to the Brain, Touch Therapies, Infant Massage and Massage Therapy for Children, Adolescents and Adults.

*Waking the Tiger—Healing Trauma, The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences* by Peter Levine, Ph.D. 1997. Published by North Atlantic Books. - Dr. Levine has been a pioneer in the field of somatic or body-centered psychotherapy as it applies to healing human

trauma. In this book, he presents his approach in a fascinating and accessible way for the general public. From the back cover: *Waking the Tiger* offers a new and hopeful vision for healing and transforming trauma. It views the human animal as a unique being, endowed with an instinctual capacity to heal as well as being an intellectual spirit that can access this innate capacity. It both asks and answers an intriguing question—why are animals in the wild, though threatened routinely, rarely traumatized? By understanding the dynamics that make wild animals virtually immune to traumatic pathologies, the mystery of human trauma is revealed. *Waking the Tiger* demystifies the symptoms of trauma and provides the steps needed to heal.

*Touch Therapy* by Tiffany Field, Ph.D., Director, Touch Research Institutes 2000. Published by Churchill Livingstone – Harcourt Brace. - The Touch Research Institutes website states ([www.miami.edu/touch-research](http://www.miami.edu/touch-research)): *Touch Therapy* focuses on recent research in touch therapy regarding the promotion of wellness and healing. It contains a review of research on the effects of massage therapy in stress reduction, pain relief, growth and development, immune function and auto-immune disorders. *Chapter contents include:* Enhancing growth, pain reduction during painful procedures and chronic pain syndromes, enhancing attentiveness, alleviating depression and anxiety, auto-immune disorders, immune disorders, further reading.

## *Chapters 9 - 11: Breathing Resources*

### **Web Sites**

[www.internationalbreathinstitute.com](http://www.internationalbreathinstitute.com) & [www.transformbreathing.com](http://www.transformbreathing.com) - A research and training organization, International Breath Institute (IBI) offers seminars in Full Wave Breathing for lifestyle changes, emotional management, and health recovery. For information on becoming a breath coach, for personal training and/or professional -

certification, contact the International Breath Institute, download the information packet, and receive the *Inspired Times* news updates

[www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net) - For further information about using Full Wave Breathing and other mindbody approaches for parenting the whole child, please see this web site and sign up for Dr. Goode's monthly newsletter and new books.

<http://www.ofspirit.com/breathwork.htm> - Educational articles about the benefits of breathing

[www.theheartofbreathing.com](http://www.theheartofbreathing.com) - Educational articles and transformational services in Southern California area.

<http://healthy.net/> - Archived columns by noted expert, Robert Jahnke, O.M.D. regarding different breath approaches, the health benefits, and practice exercise

[www.vivation.com](http://www.vivation.com) - Specific breath technique for stress and pain management and emotional clearing.

<http://healing.about.com/cs/breathwork> - a variety of breathwork resources and links

<http://www.buteyko.com.au/> - well known breathing approach for asthma relief

<http://www.ibfnetwork.org> - A well-established international network of breathwork schools and practitioners which organizes the annual Global Inspiration Conference to further the exchange of research and experiences in different methods of conscious breathing

<http://www.bway.net/~breathe> - News, articles, ideas, techniques dealing with relaxation and stress reduction, with special emphasis on breath work, creative imagery, and guided visualization.

### **Music & Breath Training Programs on CD's**

**The Cosmic Waltz CD** - This calm, soothing music encourages a relaxed alertness and is especially good for breathing sessions. Positive affirmations have been added beneath the melody to enhance your well-

being and joy. Engineered to "speak" to the body, listen to this music for mental focus, relaxation, emotional harmony, and FUN! See [www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net).

**Relax & Breathe CD** – Breath Trainer and Healer, Anna Coy's gentle guidance leads you on a journey inward, using whole-body breathing and visualization. See [www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net)

**The Whole-Body Breathing Series** – CD's – See [www.heartof-breathing.com](http://www.heartof-breathing.com)

- ∞ # 1 Relax and Breathe - Learn to breathe deeply, teach your body to fully relax.
- ∞ # 2 Breathe for Healing - Increase your body's oxygen intake, enjoy the healing benefits.
- ∞ # 3 Breathe a Loving Heart - Breathe into your Heart, create a life with more love for yourself and for all your relationships. Also, learn how to access and hear the heart's guiding voice.
- ∞ # 4 Breathe Your Spirit - The whole body breathes. A journey of reclaiming your Spirit.

**Stress Breaks** – relaxation Audio using imagery and breathing. See [www.wholeperson.com](http://www.wholeperson.com)

### **Books on Breathing**

Please go to the International Breath Institute Web site ([www.internationalbreathinstitute.com](http://www.internationalbreathinstitute.com)) for the most complete library of book on breathing available.

## *Chapter 12 & 13: Storytelling*

### **Websites**

The following websites contain useful storytelling resources, activities, and tips:

<http://www.storynet.org/resources/links.htm>. This site gives storytelling resources.

<http://www.aaronsherp.com/storytelling/>. This is Alan Shepard's storytelling site that contains sections titled "Finding Your Story;" "Preparing Your Story;" "Telling Your Story;" and "Final Hints."

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/drama.htm>. This site contains the articles, "Storytelling," "Theater for Children and Young Adults," and "Puppetry."

<http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/index.html>. This site contains instructions for class activities and lesson plans for teachers who use storytelling in the classroom.

<http://www.seanet.com/~eldrbarry/roos/art.htm>. This site contains storytelling resources. (Note: the location of this website has moved.)

<http://www.pe.net/~funsmith/story1.html>. The title of this site is "Storytelling 101."

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/storyhandbook.htm>. This site is called, "The Storytelling Handbook."

## **Suggested stories**

### ***Stories for younger school-age kids***

Asch, Frank: *Good-bye House*

Bradley CoCo, Eugene: *Glow in the Dark Stars, Moon and Clouds*

Brett, Doris: *Annie Stories: A Special Kind of Storytelling*

Brown, Marcia (retold): *Stone Soup*

Crary, E.: *I'm Mad*

Daugherty, James: *Andy and the Lion*

Fox, Mem: *Koala Lou*

Freeman, Don: *Corduroy*

Freeman, Don: *Dandelion*

Galdone, Paul (retold): *The Gingerbread Boy*



Galdone, Paul (retold): *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*  
Krauss, Ruth: *The Carrot Seed*  
Leaf, Munro: *The Story of Ferdinand*  
Martin, Rafe: *Foolish Rabbit's Big Mistake*  
Munsch, Robert: *Paper Bag Princess*  
Plume, Ilse (retold): *The Bremen-Town Musicians*  
Hertz, Kurt @ Schure, Kimberly: *Kasey and the Dream Forest*  
Rosen, Michael (retold): *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*  
Sendak, Maurice: *Where the Wild Things Are*  
Silverstein, Shel: *Where the Sidewalk Ends*  
Simon, Norma: *All Kinds of Families*  
Skutch, Robert: *Who's in a Family*  
Slobodkina, Esphyr (retold): *Caps for Sale*  
Udry, Janice May: *Let's Be Enemies*  
Viorst, Judith: *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*  
Zolotov, Charlotte: *Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present*

**Free stories available on the Internet for young children**

“Aesop's Fables”, edited by George Fyler Townsend: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgibin/toccer?id=AesFabl&tag=pub-lic&images=images/modeng&data=/lv1/Archive/eng-parsed&part=0>

“Fairy Tales and Stories”, by Hans Christian Andersen : <http://www.math.technion.ac.il/~rl/Andersen/>

“Grimm's Fairy Tales”: <http://www.belinus.co.uk/fairytales/FaerypiecesGrimmBrothers.htm>

**Stories for older school-age kids (ages 8-12)**

Barron, T.A.: *The Lost Years of Merlin* (Lost Years of Merlin, Bk. 1)  
Brumbeau, Jeff and De Marcken, Gail (Illustrator): *Quiltmaker's Gift*

Bunvan, John, Shmidt, Gary D. and Moser, Barry (Illustrator): *Pilgrim's Progress : A Retelling*

Dahl, Roald and Blake, Quentin (Illustrator): *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Puffin Novels)

Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso (Editors): *American Indian Myths and Legends*

Evslin, Bernard (Introduction) and Hofmann, William (Illustrator): *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of Greek Myths*

Evslin, Bernard, Homer Odyssey, Hunter, William (Illustrator): *Adventures of Ulysses* (Point)

Green, Rober Lancelyn and Reiniger, Lotte (Illustrator): *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (Puffin Classics)

Irving, Washington, Kelly, Jack and Marcos, Pablo (Illustrator): *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Rip Van Winkle* (Great Illustrated Classics)

MacDonald Czarnota, Lorna: *Medieval Tales: That Kids Can Read & Tell*

Mark, Jan (Editor): *The Oxford Book of Children's Stories* (Oxford Books of Prose)

McCaughrean, Geraldine and Williams, Sophy (Illustrator): *Starry Tales*

Morpurgo, Michael (Compiler) and Davidson, Andrew (Illustrator): *Animal Stories* (Story Library)

Russell, William F.: *Classic Myths to Read Aloud*

Sandberg, Rosemary (Illustrator) and Riddle, Chris (Illustrator): *Great Girl Stories: A Treasury of Classics from Children's Literature*

Smith, Philip (Editor) and Kliros, Thea (Illustrator): *Aladdin and Other Favorite Arabian Nights Stories* (Dover Children's Thrift Classics)

Smith, Philip (Editor) and Kliros, Thea (Illustrator): *Favorite North American Indian Legends* (Dover Children's Thrift Classics)

### ***Free stories available on the Internet for this age group***

“Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts”, mostly oriental and Nordic tales, edited by D.L. Ashliman: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folk-texts.html>

“Myths and Legends of the Sioux”, compiled by Marie L. McLaughlin: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgibin/toccer?id=McLMyth&tag=public&images=images/modeng&data=/lv1/Archive/eng-parsed&part=0>

“Old Indian Legends: Zitkala-Sa [aka Gertrude Simmons Bonnin]. Stories of Iktomi and other legends of the Dakotas”: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgibin/toccer?id=ZitLege&tag=public&images=images/modeng&data=/lv1/Archive/eng-parsed&part=0>

“Stories in a Nutshell: a Collection of Concise Folktale Plots for Student Retelling” by Heather Forest: <http://www.storyarts.org/library/nutshell/stories>

### ***Stories for teens***

Kimberley (Editors): *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul: 101 Stories of Life, Love and Learning* (Chicken Soup for the Soul Series)

Canfield, Jack, Hansen, Mark Victor and Kirberger, Kimberley (Editors): *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul II: 101 More Stories of Life, Love and Learning* (Chicken Soup for the Soul Series)

Canfield, Jack, Hansen, Mark Victor and Kirberger, Kimberley (Editors): *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul III: More Stories of Life, Love and Learning* (Chicken Soup for the Soul)

Canfield, Jack, Hansen, Mark Victor and Kirberger, Kimberley (Editors): *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul on Tough Stuff: Stories of Tough Times and Lessons Learned* (Chicken Soup for the Soul (Paper))

Desetta, Al and Wolin, Sybil (Editors): *The Struggle to Be Strong: True Stories by Teens About Overcoming Tough Times*

Firedman, Linda and White, Dana (Editors): *Real Life Diaries: Inspiring True Stories from Celebrities and Real Teens* (Teen People)

Krippayne, Scott and Weiss, LeAnn: *Hugs for Teens: Stories, Sayings, and Scriptures to Encourage and Inspire*

Osborne, Mary Pope and Snively, Scott (Narrator): *American Tall Tales* [Unabridged]

Stahl, R. James (Editor): *Merlyn's Pen: Fiction, Essays, and Poems by America's Teens*

Trelease, Jim (Editor): *Read All About It!: Great Read-Aloud Stories, Poems, and Newspaper Pieces for Preteens and Teens*

Youngs, Bettie B. (Editor) and Youngs, Jennifer Leigh: *Taste Berries for Teens: Inspirational Short Stories and Encouragement on Life, Love, Friendship and Tough Issues*

Youngs, Bettie B. (Editor) and Youngs, Jennifer Leigh: *More Taste Berries for Teens, Inspirational Short Stories and Encouragement on Life, Love, Friendship and Tough Issues*

Youngs, Bettie B. (Editor) and Youngs, Jennifer Leigh: *Taste Berries for Teens 3: Inspirational Short Stories and Encouragement on Life, Love and Friends—Including the One in the Mirror*

## *Chapter 14 & 15: Guided Imagery*

### **Web Sites**

[http://www.imageryforkids.com/art\\_empoweringkids.asp](http://www.imageryforkids.com/art_empoweringkids.asp). Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D. is an expert in using imagery for children. Her site provides information and exercises that parents and others can use.

<http://www.simontoncenter.com/Pages/about.htm>. Dr. Simonton's continued research is discusses as well as his use of mindbody approaches as music and imagery to help cancer patients and their families. His web site also gives on-line courses introducing you to imagery and its uses.

<http://www.imagerynet.com/>. This site offers *Atlantis, the Imagery Newsletter* with contributions on the use of imagery for healing by well-known experts in the field.

<http://phillips.personal.nccu.edu.tw/guidedimagery/script-books.html>. This site is an excellent source of scripts for guided imagery for children and adolescents.

<http://www.bow.k12.nh.us/pcain/guided.htm>. The subject matter of this site is how to use guided imagery with children to establish heart-centered qualities

<http://www.guidedimageryinc.com/meet.html>. Meet Diane L. Tusek, RN, BSN and her company, Guided Imagery, Inc. that provides audiocassette tapes of relaxation and stress management for children.

<http://www.healthjourneys.com/catalogue.asp?view=item&cid=47>. This is the site of The Guided Imagery Resource Center. It contains programs for children on audiocassettes tapes.

## Books

The following books are helpful to learn more about using guided imagery for wellness and about the bodymind relationship:

*Two Hundred Ways of Using Guided Imagery in the Classroom: A Guide for Developing Imagination and Creativity in Elementary Students.* Michael T. Bagley and Karin K. Hess, Trillium Press Inc., 1987.

*Guided Imagery for Healing Children and Teens.* Ellen Curran, Beyond Words Publishing, 2001.

*Guided Imagery for Self-Healing: An Essential Resource for Anyone Seeking Wellness.* Martin L. Rossman, M.D., Starseed Press, 2000.

*Mind Fitness For Esteem & Excellence.* Caron Goode and Joy Watson. Zephyr Press: 1992.

*Spinning Inward: Using Guided Imagery With Children for Learning, Creativity & Relaxation.* Maureen Murdock. Shambhala Publications, 1987.

*Guided Affective Imagery With Children and Adolescents.* Hanscarl Leuner, Gunther Horn, and Edda Klessman. Plenum Publisher Corporation, 1983

*Healing Yourself: A Step-by Step Program for Better Health Through Imagery.* Martin L. Rossman, MD. New York: Pocket Books, 1994.

*Healing with the Mind's Eye.* Michael Samuels. New York: Random House, 1992.

*Rituals of Healing: Using Imagery for Health and Wellness.* Jeanne Achterberg MD, Barbara Dossey RN, and Leslie Kolkmeier. New York: Bantam Books, 1994.

*Staying Well With Guided Imagery.* Belleruth Naparstek. New York: Warner Books, 1995.

### **Other Venues**

CD's from Amazon.com

Kalamalka Colors Relaxation & Guided Imagery

Healing Cancer Guided Meditation And Visual Imagery CD

Releasing Chronic Pain Guided Meditation And Visual Imagery  
CD

Kalamalka Colors Relaxation & Guided Imagery

Healing Cancer Guided Meditation And Visual Imagery CD

Releasing Chronic Pain Guided Meditation And Visual Imagery  
CD

### **Videos from Amazon.com**

Inner Awakenings - Guided Imagery to Quiet the Mind,  
Strengthen the Body & Soothe the Soul

### **Audiocassettes**

*Images of Health: Biofeedback and Integrative Imagery®.* This is a complete set of audiotapes of the imagery use programs endorsed by the Bio-

feedback Society of California, the Academy for Guided Imagery, and the International Association of Interactive Imagery® November 9 - 12, 2000, Monterey, California. See <http://www.conferencerecording.com/altmed/bsc20.htm>

### **Organizations and How to Contact Them**

**Academy for Guided Imagery**, P.O. Box 2070 , Mill Valley CA 94942, Phone: 800-726-2070

**American Imagery Association**. 4016 Third Ave., San Diego CA 9210, Phone: 619-794-8814

**American Imagery Institute**, P.O. Box 13453, Milwaukee WI 53213, Phone: 414-781-4045

**International Imagery Association**, P.O. Box 1046, Bronx NY 10471, Phone: 914-423-9200

**The Simonton Cancer Center**, P.O. Box 890, Pacific Palisades CA 90272, Toll Free: (800) 459-3424, Local: (310) 457-3811 Fax: (310) 457-0421, e-mail: [info@simontoncenter.com](mailto:info@simontoncenter.com)





# About the Authors



**Caron Goode, Ed.D., NCC, DAPA, CL** – As a psychotherapist and educator, Dr. Goode works with children and their parents to discover each youngster's innate gifts, develop a lifestyle plan that suits each child's temperament, and teaches mind, body, spirit wellness for the whole child and parent. Caron is a National Certified Counselor, and Diplomat of the American Psychotherapy Association. She has written four books on child development. Caron conducts seminars and workshops, and shares her insights about children on radio and television and in newspaper articles. She is the co-director of Inspired Living International and International Breath Institute, and the founder of the Heart-Centered Path to Enlightenment. Caron and her husband Tom conduct certification programs in health, lifestyle management and holistic, spiritual living.

**Tom Goode, BS, ND, CL** – Author, teacher, and musician, Tom has been a life-long student of health and healing. Diagnosed as having a terminal degenerative disease at age 38 and healing the condition naturally, Tom concluded his career in business to dedicate his life to helping others. His story appeared in *Prevention* magazine and he continued his education to become a naturopath and healer trained in over two dozen natural modalities. Tom is an ordained minister, inspirational speaker and seminar leader who manages Inspired Radiance Ministries and their outreach projects including the International Breath Institute and Inspired Living International.

**David Russell, Ph.D., ND, O.S.F.** – For the last twenty years, David Russell has taught classical medical disciplines and spiritual psychology in Europe, Nepal, and the USA, as well as teaching Diagnostics and Homeopathy in Naturopathic schools in Denmark and Norway. David currently works with the chaplains' ministry at the Tucson Medical Center, at the Wilmot Federal Prison in Tucson, and has his own practice for Integrated Health Practices in Tucson AZ, Reno NV, and Denmark. A member of the Secular Franciscan Order and Vice Minister for the St. Thomas More Region, David is also founder and director of the non-profit organization *Caritas Traditionalis*; an international project (NGO) whose goal is to create self-sustainable medical presences in economically depressed communities.

## *Nurture Your Child's Gift: Inspired Parenting*



This ground-breaking parenting guidebook by Caron Goode is for anyone who works with children—parents, grandparents, teachers, social workers, therapists, caregivers. Cutting-edge techniques and play activities help parents help their children learn self-esteem, confidence, inner direction, and self-reliance.

Easy-to-use exercises foster children's trust in their heart's desire and individuality and hope for their lives. The innovative whole-child parenting techniques integrates the latest research in mind-body science.

To order, visit the web site below or call 520-886-0538.

### *Inspired Parenting Web Site*

**[www.inspiredparenting.net](http://www.inspiredparenting.net)**

A web community providing information and inspiration for everyone who is interested in working with children. The web site provides mind-body approaches for parenting the whole child, including support for children's health, emotions, mental development, and spirit. Advocating a balanced approach to parenting, we combine leading-edge information and research with real-world experience.

***Sign up online for the FREE Inspired Parenting Journal***

