

## Tips for combatting stress, for parents and children

Leaving your own country and starting again in a different one can cause great stress. Our bodies are not made to withstand this kind of stress for long periods. That's why they show symptoms such as sleeping problems, sadness, tiredness, forgetfulness, pounding heart, restlessness, bad memories, thoughts going round and round.

Relaxation exercises can help adults and children to calm down and regain their strength.

### Breathing in colours



Think about a colour (your favourite colour) that gives you a good, nice feeling. Which colour would you choose/see?

Now think about a colour that gives you an uncomfortable feeling. Which colour would you choose/see?

Now breathe slowly and calmly in and out. Every time you breathe in, imagine your nice, pleasant colour. And imagine that, along with that pleasant colour, lots of nice feelings and thoughts come flooding into you as you breathe in.

Every time you breathe out, imagine the unpleasant colour. The unpleasant feelings and thoughts will be blown away every time you breathe out.

This will help to calm you down. You can breathe anywhere. In your bedroom. In the kitchen. During a conversation. Your breath is with you all the time.



### Moving around does you good: The comfortable cat

This exercise relaxes you and reduces physical and mental stress.

Pretend to be a cat just waking up. Yawn widely. Do a "miaow".

Now stretch your arms, legs and back – really slowly like a cat – and relax.



**Moving around does you good: A tortoise in sunshine and rain**

This exercise relaxes you and reduces physical and mental stress.

Pretend to be a tortoise. Go for a v-e-e-e-ry slow walk.

It starts to rain – crouch down, make yourself really small and retreat inside your shell. After about 10 seconds, the sun comes out again – stretch out and walk on.

Repeat the exercise until you feel good again. Finish the exercise by walking.



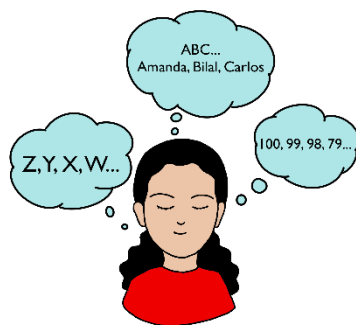
**Moving around does you good: Feather or statue**

This exercise relaxes you and reduces physical and mental stress.

Pretend to be a feather floating through the air. Drift around the room for about 10 seconds.

Then suddenly turn yourself into a statue and stand completely still. Do not move. After 5 seconds, start to drift round the room like a feather again.

Repeat the exercise until you feel good again. Finish the exercise as a light feather.

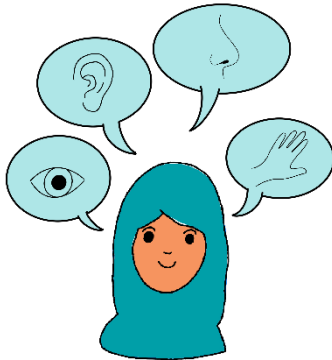


**Come back to the here and now**

Sometimes we are overcome by bad memories or thoughts. We can't stop thinking about bad things. Sometimes we even forget where we are. If that happens, it can help to divert your thoughts with the following exercises:

- Name all the objects that you can see that are the same colour. Name three blue objects. Name five yellow objects.
- Walk around counting your steps.
- Count things in alphabetical order (first names, food, makes of car, etc.)
- Count backwards from 10 down to 1.

### **Come back to the here and now**

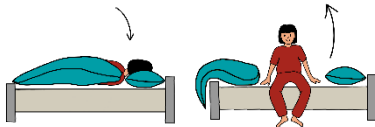


Sometimes we are overcome by bad memories or thoughts. We can't stop thinking about bad things. Sometimes we even forget where we are.

If that happens, it can help to prove to yourself that you are safe now:

- Say out loud or to yourself all the things you can see with your eyes at this moment.
- Say what you can hear with your ears.
- Say what you can smell with your nose.
- Say what you can feel with your fingers.
- Say where you are right now. In which country. In which town. In which room.

Really notice your surroundings. Realise that you are safe here.



### **Sleep rituals**

Your body needs sleep to recuperate. But sometimes it's hard to fall asleep. These methods can help both adults and children to sleep better:



- If possible, get up at the same time every day. Then your body learns a day/night rhythm and automatically becomes tired in the evening.
- Do the same thing every day before you go to bed. Then your body learns that it's time to sleep. For example: Clean your teeth before you go to bed. Tell your child a story. Read something pleasant. Pray. Sing or hum a song. Hold your child in your arms. What's important is that you do something pleasant. Do the same thing every evening.
- The light from mobile phones, tablets and the TV keeps us awake. Your body thinks it is daytime. So it's important to stop using your mobile phone and the television 30 minutes before you go to bed.

On this website you can find lots of free information about health and education, in your own language: [www.savethechildren.ch/parents](http://www.savethechildren.ch/parents)