



# Activities/Practices for Managing Stress

These sample activities are designed to help manage stress. They can be used with students individually or in groups, or during professional development sessions with staff. All activities can be modified depending on age group and amount of time available.

<h2>Design Your Own Stress Ball</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p> 	
<p><b>Materials</b> Balloons Playdough (store bought or homemade)</p> <p><i>Optional</i> Permanent markers</p>	<p><i>Some people experience emotional, physiological and psychological benefits from using a stress ball. Stress balls can help to release tension, stimulate nerves, divert attention and improve mood. They have been found to be helpful for students with sensory considerations such as autism or ADHD.</i></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work over a table to catch bits of playdough.</li> <li>• Half of a 4-ounce can of playdough makes a stress ball the perfect size for little hands. Use more for adults. Homemade playdough also works well for this activity.</li> <li>• Roll the dough into small “snakes” measuring about 2 inches in length and insert into the balloon. The playdough will fall down to the bottom, versus having to push it through the opening. Work in pairs to hold the balloon open for each other.</li> <li>• Push the excess air out of the balloon and tie off the end.</li> </ul> <p>Optional: Decorate with permanent markers.</p>

<h2>Create Your Own Worry Stone</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p> 	
<p><b>Materials</b> Paint Brushes Acrylic Paint Bowls (for paint) Stones (flat, smooth stones are preferred)</p> <p><i>Optional</i> Clear paint or glue</p>	<p><i>Worry stones, also known as palm stones, are usually oval shaped. These smooth stones are small enough to be held between the thumb and index finger. Gently moving the thumb back and forth over the surface of the stone while focusing on positive thoughts helps many people release physical tension and feel a sense of calm and renewed focus.</i></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover the working area with newspaper or a tablecloth.</li> <li>• Wash stones to remove dirt.</li> <li>• Pour paint into bowls.</li> </ul>



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<p>Dough or clay that is dryable (air-dryable is preferred)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a paintbrush to apply paint to one side of the stone. Make a pattern or picture, if you'd like.</li> <li>• Wait for the first side to dry, then apply paint to the other side of the stone.</li> <li>• Optional: Create a more colorfast, extra-smooth surface by applying clear paint or glue to both sides of the stone.</li> </ul> <p>Alternatively, worry stones can be created using dough or clay that can be dried. If using this method, take a small amount of clay and roll it into a ball. Flatten it to make a flat oval shape. Press your thumb into the oval to make a small indentation on one side.</p>
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<h2>Create Your Own Worry Doll</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p>	
<p><b>Materials</b> Wooden Clothespins (round or flat) Yarn (multiple colors) Scissors Markers (fine tip)</p> <p>Hot Glue Gun (regular glue will work if there's adequate dry time)</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> If no yarn is available, use markers to color the body of their worry doll.</p>	<div> </div> <p><i>Worry dolls are colorful, teeny-tiny dolls that students can customize. They are thought to have originated in Guatemala, where they were given to those who had trouble sleeping due to worries. Students can make more than one worry doll. The idea is to share one worry with each doll and let the doll worry for you so that you can sleep.</i></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover the working area with newspaper or a tablecloth.</li> <li>• Select colors of yarn and begin wrapping the clothespin from the bottom up stopping a little above the top to allow room for a face. Secure the yarn with glue.</li> <li>• Use markers to draw a face at the top of the clothespin.</li> </ul> <p>Optional: To add hair to the worry doll, add additional yarn to the top of the clothespin.</p>



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<h2>Zen Coloring Pages</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult  <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p>		
<p><b>Materials</b>          Coloring pages          Markers or colored pencils</p> <p><i>Optional</i>          Soft, calming instrumental music</p>	<p><i>Coloring has the potential to reduce anxiety, create focus or bring about mindfulness for children and adults. Coloring books can be purchased, or coloring pages can be printed out from websites like these:</i>  <a href="https://www.justcolor.net/coloring-zen/">https://www.justcolor.net/coloring-zen/</a> or  <a href="http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/arts-culture/zentangle">http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/arts-culture/zentangle</a></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer several design choices and skill levels for the coloring activity.</li> <li>• Allow participants to choose their own design, and emphasize the joy in the process, not just the product.</li> <li>• Provide enough markers or colored pencils for all participants.</li> <li>• Allow participants to color at their own pace.</li> </ul> <p>Optional: Play soft, calming instrumental music while participants color.</p>	

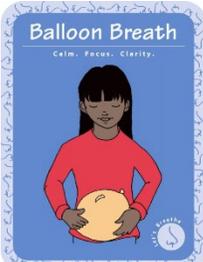
<h2>Hot Chocolate Breathing Technique</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult  <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p>		
<p><b>Materials</b>          Your imagination</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Hot water          Hot chocolate mix          Spoons          Cups          (tea, coffee or another hot drink can be substituted)</p> <p><i>Optional</i></p>	<p><i>Deep breathing also goes by the names of diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing and belly breathing. When you breathe deeply, the air coming in through your nose fully fills your lungs and the lower belly rises. Deep abdominal breathing encourages full oxygen exchange. The exchange can help slow the heartbeat and lower or stabilize blood pressure, which can help to create calming feelings.</i></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix a cup of hot chocolate by combining hot water and hot chocolate mix <i>or</i> imagine you are holding a cup of hot chocolate. (Tea, coffee, or another hot drink can be substituted.) Young children might even enjoy the exercise of “preparing” their imaginary hot drink.</li> <li>• Close your eyes and feel or imagine the warmth of the drink in your hands.</li> <li>• Bring the drink close, or pretend, and take a big deep breath through your nose to smell the beverage.</li> </ul>	





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<p>Whipped cream Chocolate chips Marshmallows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathe out slowly through your mouth as if you are gently blowing on the drink to cool it.</li> <li>• Repeat this multiple times, as if taking in the smell and blowing out to cool the drink.</li> <li>• Take a sip of the hot chocolate or imagine yourself taking a sip.</li> <li>• Think to yourself: Is it cool enough to drink? Can you feel the warmth of the hot chocolate in your mouth? Can you feel it moving through your chest and down into your stomach?</li> <li>• You can repeat these steps as many times as you like.</li> </ul> <p>Find other breathing techniques at these sources:  <a href="https://www.heysigmund.com/how-to-calm-anxiety-using-figure-8-breathing/">https://www.heysigmund.com/how-to-calm-anxiety-using-figure-8-breathing/</a>  <a href="https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Relaxation-using-controlled-breathing.pdf">https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Relaxation-using-controlled-breathing.pdf</a></p>
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<h2>Balloon Breathing Technique</h2> <p><b>Suggested Age Range:</b> Pre-K through adult  <b>Time:</b> 5 minutes or more</p> 	
<p><b>Materials</b> Your imagination</p>	<p><i>This simple activity needs no materials. By focusing on their breathing, students may find themselves calming quickly.</i></p> <p><b>Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close your eyes and imagine a balloon in your belly. Give the balloon a color or a design that changes as it inflates and imagine how it feels.</li> <li>• Take in a slow breath and “fill up” the balloon. Count to 4 or 5 as you breathe in, then exhale slowly and calmly.</li> <li>• Repeat this multiple times, breathing in to fill up the balloon all the way, then slowly letting out the air.</li> </ul> <p>Retrieved from <a href="https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Relaxation-using-controlled-breathing.pdf">https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Relaxation-using-controlled-breathing.pdf</a></p>

