



Back-to-School for Families and Students Toolkit | *Tip sheet*

Family Relaxation Techniques

Life can get busy and stressful for both kids and adults. Even a few minutes of relaxation each day can help. Simple practices like breathing exercises, mindfulness and family check-ins can lower anxiety, improve focus and help everyone feel more connected.

A Stanford University study found that “cyclic sighing,” a breathing exercise with long, slow exhales, can lower stress hormones. Families who use calming practices together report better communication and fewer emotional outbursts. You do not need special tools or a lot of time. A few quiet moments can make a big difference.

Here are some easy ways to bring relaxation into your family routine:

Family check-ins

Set aside a moment each day to ask, “How are you feeling today?” Keep the space calm and judgment-free. Naming feelings helps kids feel seen and teaches them it is okay to talk about emotions.

Breathe together

Teach your child cyclic sighing or a steady technique like box breathing. For box breathing, inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4 and hold for 4 again. You can do this in the car, before homework or during stressful moments. With practice, kids can use it at school or with friends when they feel overwhelmed.

Stretch it out

You do not need to know yoga to stretch. Just five minutes of light stretching can calm the body and quiet the mind. Try making it part of your bedtime routine.

Create relaxation reminders

Place simple notes around your home with messages like “Take a breath” or “Check in with yourself.” You can also use a feelings chart or thermometer to help kids show how they feel. These tools help kids learn how to manage their emotions on their own.

Stress is part of life, but you can help your family handle it in healthy ways. Practicing these simple techniques can build emotional strength and help your family feel closer and more connected.

#BackToSchool #StudentMentalHealth

If you or your kids need help with mental health at school, you can contact the [National Alliance for Mental Illness](#) by calling 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or text NAMI to 62640.

Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine and Director of Clinical Operations.