



Objective: To help children become more aware of their breath and bodies, as well as to help children learn how to relax their bodies.

Teacher: Before introducing this activity, give each child a small stuffed animal that will be theirs, to connect with for the remainder of the year.

Materials:
A small stuffed animal - one for each child

Breathing Buddy

INTRODUCTION

Hi Friends! Let's give our animals some love (*hug animals*).

My animal is a little over excited today. I want to help her calm her body and feel better. I am going to rock my animal to sleep, but I'm not going to use my hands or arms. I am going to use my breath.

MODEL

I'll show you how, and then it will be your turn to calm your animal. First, I lie down, with my animal beside me. I have my hands to my sides, my legs straight. I am still, and my eyes are closed. I let my body relax; I pretend I am melting into the floor.

Then I put my animal on my belly. I s-l-o-w-l-y breathe in, as I fill my belly with air, my animal goes up. See how my animal went up? Then I s-l-o-w-l-y breathe out, as my belly goes down, so does my animal (*repeat*). I am rocking my animal to sleep.

Deep breathing improves the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain.

NOW, IT'S YOUR TURN

Ask your children to lie still on their backs with their legs flat on the floor, arms by their sides. Use your own words when guiding them through this exercise. If it's helpful, here's an example of what you might say:

Close your eyes, relax, and feel your head against the floor; your back against the floor; your arms by your sides.

Feel your body melting into the floor, like a pad of butter on a hot pancake.

Take a deep breath, in...and out.

I am going to put your animal on your belly now. Keep breathing in and out.

Then place a stuffed animal on each of the children's abdomens.

Feel the weight of the stuffed animal on your belly.

Now gently rock your animal with your breath.

S-l-o-w-l-y breathe in, filling your belly with air. Your animal is rocking up.

Now, S-l-o-w-l-y breathe out. Your animal is rocking down.

Keep breathing; in, slowly (*inhale*)... and out, slowly (*exhale*)...

In... Out...

Feel your animal rising as you breathe in...and falling as you breathe out.

Is your animal feeling calm?

Breathing in, the animal rocks up; breathing out, the animal rocks down.

How does your body feel as you breathe in and out?

(repeat pattern, as needed)

When you are ready to finish, in a gentle, quiet voice guide the children in waking.

Now, friends, it is time for us to wake up.

Let's take two more deep breaths.

Ready, breathe in...breathe out.

Gently and silently tell your animal to wake up.

Breathe in...breath out. Ok, open your eyes and sit up.

TIPS

- Some children may fall asleep. This is fine. Just gently wake them when the activity is finished. Also, this activity can be used to settle into naptime.
- If a child has trouble focusing, you can tell him to silently say the word "up" each time he inhales and "down" each time he exhales.
- When the children are comfortable with belly-breathing, you can ask them to breathe without your guidance, for a short while. If you see a child struggling, individually guide her or breathe with her.