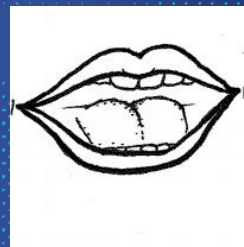
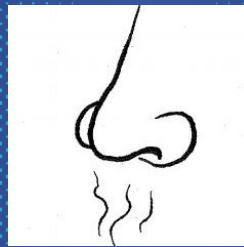
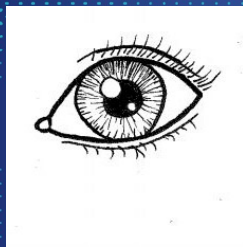
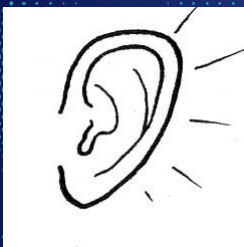


SENSORY ACTIVITIES TO TRY AT HOME



Sensory Interventions for Emotional Regulation



Emotional Dysregulation...

We learn about our world through our senses. This process starts in utero and affects us throughout our life span. Children who have not had adequate care-giving, not only miss out on the nurturing emotional and social experiences required to build a secure attachment, but they have also often lacked the movement and sensory experiences they need in order to develop a well functioning sensory system. This can result in children being so out of tune with themselves that they struggle to make sense of feelings or sensations – physical or emotional. They are so dysregulated that they can often not work out if they are hot or cold, hungry or full. For many children this physically and emotionally dysregulated state also means that they are unable to identify when they are becoming stressed or aggravated and this can result in outbursts that are hard to control.

Being able to regulate our emotions is an essential part of coping with daily life. Children who have experienced ongoing, early trauma find it very difficult to manage and control their emotions and are often overwhelmed by them. This can then be reflected in aggressive and defensive behaviour making it a challenge to take care of these children.

Why sensory interventions can help...

Most of the children we look after at By the Bridge have come from situations where they have experienced ongoing relational trauma and neglect from very early on, sometimes pre-birth. It is often the case that before a child can make use of psychological therapy or even the offer of a healthy attachment some sort of sensory integration work will need to be done to address the dysregulated state they are in physically. There are many creative ways that foster parents can help to regulate and develop the child's sensory system by introducing a 'sensory diet' to help children become more aware of themselves and their bodies. Part of the re-parenting task of foster parents is to go back and redo some of the movement and sensory experiences that have been missed. This can make a huge difference to children's physical, emotional and social development.

Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model teaches us that good bodily awareness and functioning is like the foundation or bottom layer of a tower of blocks. Before you can develop the higher areas of the brain, interventions need to be targeted at the lower parts of the brain which are responsive to sensory input.

Activity

Cotton Ball Football

This activity is designed to

- Give child permission to have fun,
- Help the child enjoy engagement with parent figures
- De-escalate fear-adapted behaviours (survival 'skills')
- Encourage right-left brain communication
- Assist concentration
- Aid in the agreement and acceptance of rules
- Develop new neural pathways
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Raise awareness of facial muscles
- Help breathing control,
- Help gain control of sphincter muscles

Pom-Poms

- Help the child enjoy engagement with parent figures
- Encourage right-left brain communication
- Assist concentration
- Develop new neural pathways
- Improve eye-hand co-ordination
- Encourage spatial awareness
- Improve co-ordination
- Develop sensory awareness

Have you made Eye Contact

- Help the child enjoy engagement with parent figures
- Encourage right-right and right-left brain communication
- Assist concentration
- Develop new neural pathways
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Raise awareness of facial expressions
- Assist verbal and non-verbal communication
- Improve eye-hand co-ordination
- Encourage good eye contact
- Develop speech and language skills
- Encourage spatial awareness
- Aid understanding of symbolism
- Use the imagination
- Process memories

Face painting

- Minimise the child's desire to take control
- Encourage eye contact
- Give child permission to have fun
- Help the child enjoy engagement with parent figures
- Build bonds of attachment
- De-escalate fear-adapted behaviours (survival 'skills')
- Develop new neural pathways
- Help the child to accept care, physical touch and nurture
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Help the child manage choices
- Raise awareness of facial expressions
- Promote sensory awareness

What's the Flavour

- Minimise the child's desire to take control
- Help the child develop trust in their caregiver
- Help the child enjoy engagement with parent figures
- Build bonds of attachment
- Develop a sense of fun and curiosity
- De-escalate fear-adapted behaviours (survival 'skills')
- Develop new neural pathways
- Help the child to accept care, physical touch and nurture
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Help the child manage choices
- Promote sensory awareness (taste, smell, texture)
- Help improve the child's relationship with food

Guided Imagery

- Bring awareness to the mind-body connection using visualization and imagination.
- Gain tools to deal with stress, pain or difficult feelings.
- Connect with your child as they learn to listen to their inner wisdom and access their own power of healing.
- Help reduce stress in all children, but it can also help with specific issues like sleep problems, test anxiety, back-to-school jitters or illness.
- Enhance coping skills, encourage self-esteem, increase creativity and boost the immune system.

Cotton Ball Football

The game:

The object of the game is to blow the cotton ball over the centre defence into the opponent's area, using the drinking straw, and score a goal. The opponent will use their straw to 'goal-keep' and blow the ball out of their area into the opponent's.

Each player could play as their favourite football team or player.

Two parents and two children can play as teams of two or in a tournament

IMPORTANT

It is of critical importance that the adult is a mature role model, is consistent with the rules they have agreed with the child, and has the patience to complete the task. An adult who cannot engage in this way will not be able to help the child with this activity.

Time required: any chosen time limit

You will need: Cotton balls, sturdy drinking straw – preferably curly

Environment: Just about anywhere there is space for lying on tummies on the floor, or a table and two chairs if sitting is preferred; a 'defence' for the centre line (such as a rolled tea towel or a line of pencils) and agreed 'goal areas' (such as a strip of tape or paper towel) the smaller the goal, the longer it will take to score. (This game can be played outside if it is not windy!)

Before the task:

Prepare the 'pitch'; place goal areas in front of adult and child and put the centre defence in place. Agree the rules with the child; how long will the game last? Will there be half time and change of goal end? Will you play one game, or best out of three? Or perhaps the first player to get 21 goals is the winner? Should the free hand be behind your backs at all times the cotton ball is 'in play'? Will there be a 'penalty shoot' from inside the centre line if a rule is broken (such as a 'hand ball', or using the straw to push the ball)? Can players act out a 'slow motion action re-play' for really impressive goals?

Talk to the child about taking care when they have the straw in their mouth; knocking or pressing the straw against a surface might cause the other end to dig in the gum or roof of mouth. Beware of banging heads whilst on attack and defence, explain how it will take all the fun away if

Parent-child interaction:

- Praise the child for following rules, scoring goals, good goal keeping and 'unlucky' misses.
- You could cheer and hug as in professional football "and Ronaldo scores the winning goal/ FA cup or World Cup winning goal".
- There could be drinks at half time (and a change of cotton ball).
- Does it make any difference if the straw is held in the opposite hand? What about if you close one eye – does it improve or ruin your aim?

Pom-Poms

Guidelines

Activity time: 30 minutes

Environment: Almost anywhere!

You will Need

- Stiff card
- Compass (or two circular objects to draw around)
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Ball of knitting wool

Instructions

- Cut out two discs of stiff card 6" diameter
- Cut a 2" diameter hole in the centre of each disc
- Place the two discs together and wrap knitting wool round and round, threading it through the hole each time until there is no hole left. Cut the looped ends of wool round the outside of the discs until you have a mass of cut ends. Wind a length of wool around the outside, between the two cardboard discs, pull very tightly and tie in a knot.
- Remove the cardboard discs from your pom-pom and fluff it up.

Extra Fun

- Learn to catch – two people and one pom-pom or two Pom-Poms
- Use the pom-pom as a de-stress toy – squeeze it, throw it.
- Use the pom-pom for waiting your turn to speak – only the person holding the pom-pom can speak.
- Make some more and learn to juggle
- Make lots of little pom-poms (with smaller discs of card) and make a mobile for the child's bedroom.

Parent-Child Interaction

Discuss the feel of the wool, does it feel different when it touches your cheek to when it touches the back and palms of hands. Stroking the cheek with a soft, fluffy object can calm anxiety, fear and irritability.

Developing a positive sense of touch helps to process emotional memories and assist a child in learning to self-regulate (soothe) their emotions.

Catching games help children to become aware of the space they take up (spatial awareness) and judge distances, adjusting their gross motor skills (movement of body and limbs) accordingly, along with their fine motor skills (e.g. grasping the pom-pom with their finger tips in mid-air)

Have you made Eye Contact?

Guidelines

Time required: 1 hour

You will need: Eye outline drawing, paint palette, hand held mirror

Environment: 2 chairs and a table, indoors or outdoors

IMPORTANT

It is of critical importance that the adult is a mature role model, is consistent with the rules they have agreed with the child, and has the patience to complete the task. An adult who cannot engage in this way will not be able to help the child with this activity.

Instructions

Using the eye outline drawing and paint palette the child should be asked to paint a close-up picture of one of your eyes. Have the mirror handy so that you can look at your eye – you might not be as familiar with it as you think!

Ask the child to start by looking very closely at your eye, ask what colour the iris is – has it got any other colours in it?, does it have lines in or around it? Or little flecks of colour?, is there any light reflected in it?, if so, how might they paint the light? Perhaps they could use white paint, or leave some unpainted paper where the light reflections are on the eye. What about the white part of the eye – is it really white, or a creamy colour? Does it have any little red veins?

Now talk about the pupil – does the child know that it dilates in the dark and contract in the light? Is it big or small now?

Now ask the child to begin, starting in the middle (so that they don't smudge it with their hands), painting the pupil black. Ask them to experiment mixing colours to get the colour of the iris as close as they can to the real thing. Finish with the white – add a tiny touch of yellow to white to get a realistic colour.

Tell the child to leave all the veins, flecks and lines until the pupil, iris and white are dry, but they could paint on the eyelashes now.

Parent-Child Interaction

Whilst the painting is drying do the following communication exercise:

Talk about how important it is to look at a person when you are talking to them – if you don't look at them they won't be as interested in what you are talking about and might not even understand you properly. It's also important to use your hands when describing things; it helps the other person 'picture' what you are talking about.

Think of two objects that you and the child know well that you can both describe. It could be a toy, an item of clothing, their favourite cake etc.

Sit opposite each other. The adult starts. Using eye contact, exaggerated facial expressions and hand gestures, describe the thing (e.g. cake) Say "In my hand I have a cake" help the child picture the sponge, pale yellow and crumbly; the white icing, soft and sweet and sticky; the cherry on the top, shiny, red and round – as big as this! Pick the cake up, take a bite – lick your sticky fingers – mmmmm – would they like a bite?

Have you made eye Contact cont...

Now the child can describe their item. You, the adult, must be engaged, looking at the child's face and hands, making your expression obvious when you understand them and puzzled when you don't, ask questions if necessary.

Praise the child for the things that they did well.

For the next part of the exercise each of you must describe the other's item, but this time no eye contact is allowed, you should look at the floor or table and not look up.

How difficult was this for the person talking?

How difficult was it for the person listening?

Was it as interesting when you couldn't see the person's face?

Was it as easy to picture the item they were describing?

For the next part of the exercise no hand gestures are allowed, but eye contact is. You must both sit on your hands facing each other and describe the journey from your house to school/ the shops/the park/ friends house (a short journey with a few turns).

What was this like? Was it difficult not being able to use your hands? What was it like being the person describing and the person listening?

Explain how talking to others isn't just about the voice and the words, we communicate with our eyes, faces, hands and whole body. When people learn to talk in this way they will find that other people find them interesting and will listen to what they are saying.

Practice some expressions and guessing what they are – sad, puzzled, happy, scared, angry.

Now return to the painting, it should be dry enough to add all the details – light, veins, lines etc.

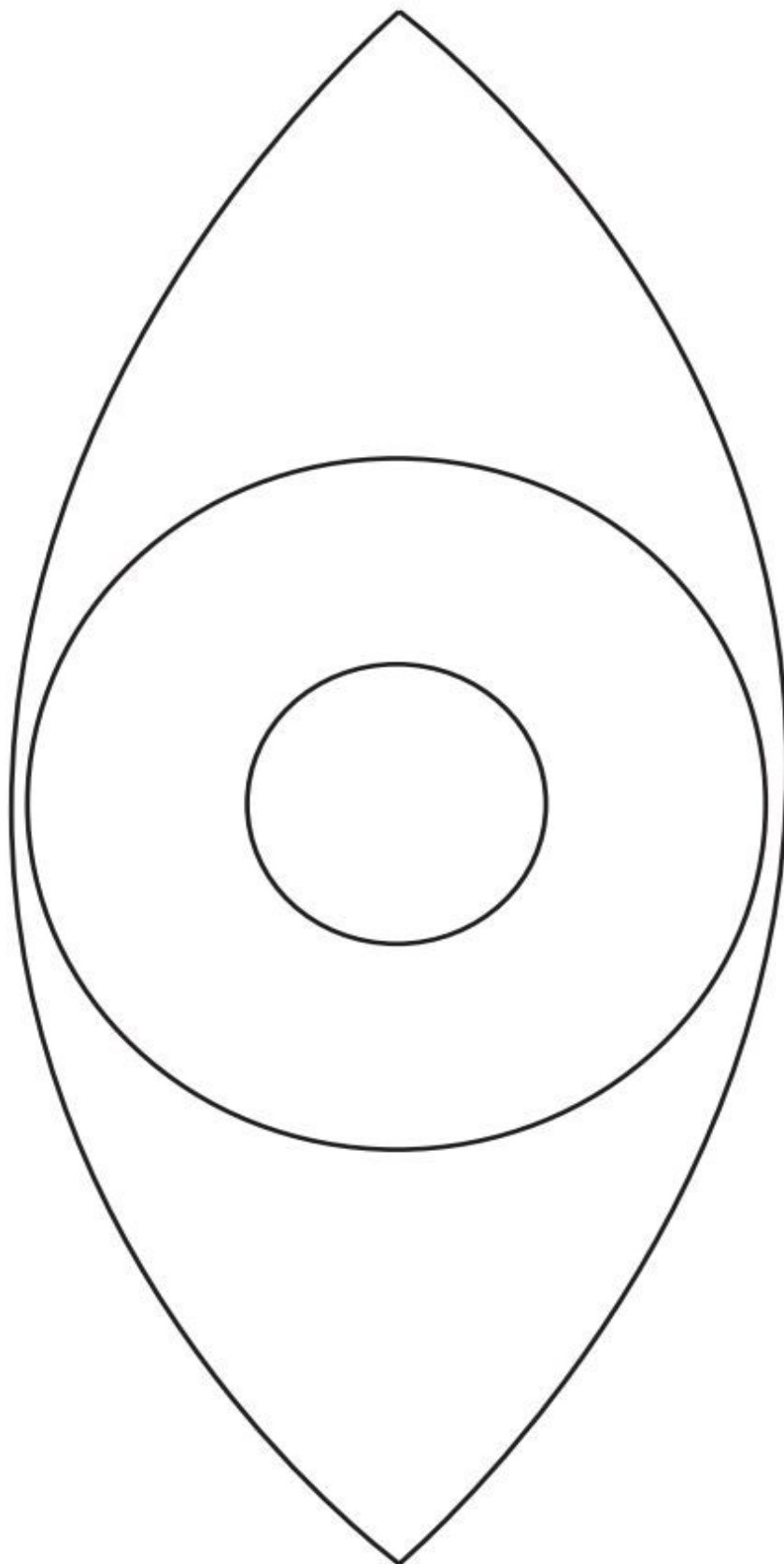
Talk to the child about their finished painting, can it be put up somewhere to remind everyone to look at each other when they are speaking? Are you, the adult, pleased with the painting of your eye? Praise the child and show it off to others.

You could paint a picture of their eye.

Why not try

- Not blinking (stare into each other's eye's, the person who does not blink for the longest period of time is the winner)
- Funny faces (pull faces at each other, the one who doesn't laugh is the winner)

The eye



Face painting

Guidelines

- **Time required:** allow one hour, or 30 mins for experienced face painters.
- **You will need:** Face paints, sponge, brush, wipes, instruction book, mirror, an old towel, clothes peg.
- **Environment:** The kitchen is ideal; the surfaces are easily cleaned if paint is spilled. A table and two chairs are required.

Before you start

Look through the pictures (see link below) with the child and choose a design together, explain the extent of your talents and which designs are best suited to your current skills. Older children may prefer to have their face painted in the colours of their favourite sports team, or to have a small design, e.g. a butterfly or lizard, painted on a cheek.

Children who are uncomfortable with the idea of facial touch may prefer to start with having a design painted on an arm.

Let the child know that it takes practice to learn the art of face painting and you may not be able to reproduce the picture in the book to perfection. Ask the child to select the colours.

Wrap the towel around the child's shoulders; explain that you do not want to get paint on their clothes. Secure the towel with the clothes peg.

Sit opposite the child if at a table, or to the side of child if there is no table.

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/explore/easy-face-painting/>

Parent-Child Interaction

Apply the base colour with the sponge, using both firm and light strokes; ask which feels nicest, ask whether the paint feels warm or cool, smooth or sticky, give the child the mirror so that they can see themselves with a different colour face.

When using brush strokes ask the child which areas of the face are most 'tickly', tell them they can ask you to stop if they wish. Take care around the eye and lip areas.

If your hand is shaky, let them know that you are practising and trying to do as best you can, if you make a mistake, correct it by using damp cotton wool and more paint. At intervals, ask how you are doing, what does the child think of your efforts?

Once the design is finished talk about how different the child looks – perhaps unrecognisable? Ask them how it feels to have a different face – do they think they would actually be different if they looked different.

Do they feel brave, daring, confident, scary, big, small? Does the design look different if they smile/growl/laugh/furrow their brow/poke their tongue out? Perhaps they might like to act like the character their face portrays?

Don't forget to take pictures for the child's album.

When it is time for the design to be removed, clean the child's face gently with the wipes, does this feel cool, tingly?, what does it smell like?

Once the paint has gone, tell the child that you're pleased that 'they' are back and that you like it best when they look like themselves! Practice different designs over the next few weeks, perhaps you might feel brave enough to allow the child to paint your face? or perhaps a tattoo on your arm?

What's the Flavour?

Guidelines

Time required: 30 minutes if using ready prepared or raw foods, add cooking time as applicable if preparing own foods.

You will need: At least three different foods you know the child likes,

a thick scarf or dense fabric to use as a blindfold, a small fork with rounded prongs or a wooden skewer, a teaspoon.

Environment: The kitchen is ideal; the surfaces are easily cleaned, or the garden would be suitable (although wasps and flies might be a bit too interested!). A table and two chairs are required.

IMPORTANT

It is of critical importance that the adult is a mature role model, is consistent with the rules they have agreed with the child, and has the patience to complete the task. An adult who cannot engage in this way will not be able to help the child with this activity.

Before you start

- Discuss the activity with the child; you will be feeding them (number) different types of food whilst they are wearing a blindfold. Using their sense of taste and the feel of the food in their mouth they must guess what the food is.
- Explain that some foods seem to taste different when you can't see what you are eating. Promise the child that you will not be feeding them any food you know they don't like and that you would absolutely not put anything that is not a food in their mouth.
- Some children may, quite understandably, be unwilling to trust anyone to do this, in which case the child can help prepare the food so that they know what they will be eating (the task for them is to guess which of the foods they are tasting).

Parent-Child Interaction

- Show the child the blindfold and the fork; these are the only things that will be used. Explain that you want to be sure that the child won't hurt their mouth on the fork/skewer, so they will have to listen to you telling them when to open and close their mouth. Explain that you will talk to them the whole time so that they know where the food is and when you will be feeding them.
- Tie the blindfold; ask if the child can see anything, ask if it's too tight or too loose.
- Sit opposite the child, placing the bowls of food on the table.
- Ask the child if they can smell any of the food? Do they think they know what some of it might be, just by the smell?
- Only use one food at a time to start with, talk about the texture – is it crunchy, soft, smooth, thick, sweet, sour?
- Praise the child throughout; give them hints if they are unsure e.g. "this is one of your favourite breakfast cereals/fruit".

What's the Flavour cont...

After the task

- Cleanse the child's mouth with a facial wipe if necessary, show them the foods and tell them how many they guessed correctly.
- Perhaps you might let the child feed you? If so, explain that the rules of the game that have already been agreed apply to you as well.

Food suggestions

- Dry breakfast cereal, strawberries, grapes, cubed Melon/ Mango, cubed cake, Marshmallows, celery, tomato, cucumber, cubed cheese. yoghurt, jelly, carrot.
- Try to avoid highly processed foods with lots of artificial additives.
- Children who are less willing to trust should be engaged in preparing the food prior to the task e.g. chopping fruit and vegetables, making the jelly or helping to bake the cake (all of these activities are highly beneficial to forming positive relationships and memories of positive experiences).

Dips

- Once the child is confident that you won't spring any unpleasant surprises on them, the game can get a bit more complicated by using dips such as melted milk and white chocolate, cream cheese, ketchup.
- If the child can guess that they are tasting a strawberry dipped in white chocolate or tomato in cream cheese, then they have developed quite a sophisticated awareness of taste.
- Don't forget to ask the child how the dip has affected the texture of the food – can they describe "smooth, sweet and warm chocolate on the outside and cool, crisp and fruity strawberry on the inside"?
- Only use unusual combinations of flavours if this has been agreed with the child.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is a meditative process that uses visualization and imagination to bring awareness to the mind-body connection. Children can easily access this healing process because they're naturally imaginative. By relaxing into a vivid story they gain tools to deal with stress, pain or difficult feelings. It's a wonderful way to connect with your child as they learn to listen to their inner wisdom and access their own power of healing.

Guided imagery can be beneficial for a variety of issues and the process can be tailored to suit your child's specific needs. It can help reduce stress in all children, but it can also help with specific issues like sleep problems, test anxiety, back-to-school jitters or illness. It can enhance coping skills, encourage self-esteem, increase creativity and boost the immune system.

Guided imagery is directed by a script, either read by an adult or listened to on a recording. The script guides your child on a journey specific to their area of need.

As you become more familiar with the process you may want to personalize your scripts or create your own based on your child's interests. Experiment with what works for your child.

Guided imagery should be done in a quiet environment, away from interruptions, TVs and electronics. Playing soft, relaxing music can help shut out background noise. And using the same music each time can help create a sensory reminder for the body to relax.

Here are two examples: (you can look up many more free examples on the internet by putting 'Guided imagery for children' into the search bar

Balloons

(Once your child is lying down and comfortable, simply repeat the following, speak slowly and deliberately. Pause or exaggerate the underlined words or when it feels comfortable)

"Let's learn how to relax our bodies and minds tonight. Are you comfortable? OK, now let's start with something called a Balloon Breath. Let's breath in very deeply and fill up our tummy like we're filling up a big balloon. Doesn't that fill good? Give your balloon a color. What color is your balloon? Make it really big and beautiful, as you fill it up completely. Breathing in from your nose, fill up your balloon completely and when it's full, exhale the air out and watch your balloon completely deflate! Isn't that amazing? Again a very deep breath, and now, exhale... very good.

Now just imagine that you are floating on a huge, white cloud. Feel how this fluffy light cloud totally supports your body and makes you feel so peaceful and light. The cloud seems to wrap itself around you so comfortably so you feel safe and warm. You have a feeling of being loved and cared for. It feels so great. Feel yourself floating on this soft wispy cloud, enjoying the gentle motion of this loving cloud as it glides and softly sways. There is a feeling of total peace and easiness.... it feels so wonderful to just relax here.

Now in just a moment, there is a large balloon that is going to float up near your float. This balloon is your blow away worry balloon. It's going to take away any worry you have, far far away. See that balloon coming up, floating close to your cloud. Picture the balloon any colour you want. Now, put any worry of fear you have up into the balloon..... just watch that worry go into the balloon and see how tightly and nicely the big balloon holds onto that worry for you. Whatever it is that you are worried about, just see that going into the big balloon. Feel it lifting up out of your body and going straight into that balloon. The balloon is helping you and loves to take away that worry for you. Now, the balloon is quickly floating far far away. In the distance now, you see that balloon just pops a HUGE pop! And your worry is completely gone! How wonderful that feels! Now you see another balloon floating up to you on your nice fluffy cloud.

Guided Imagery Cont....

This balloon is a different color. What color is this balloon? Now this is another blow away worry balloon and it's here to help! So put another worry into this balloon and watch it do the same as the first did.... it quickly floats far far away and then POPS! Wow... this is really amazing! (Continue with new balloons coming until you ask...)

Do you need anymore balloons or are all your worries gone? (Proceed according to your child's answer, if there are more worries, use more balloons, if not continue with script). If you look below you now, you will see that in fact there is someone down there sending up these beautiful helpful big balloons to you. It's someone you love very much and who loves you very much! How wonderful it is to know you are so loved and cared for! Wave to that person and send love back as a Thank You! Just by imagining you are sending love to that person, you are. So send love now.

Now that all your worries are gone, you start to feel the sun shining it's beautiful warm rays done on you. You start to feel a very warm, loving feeling in your heart. You feel so wonderful and so loved! You are such a wonderful and special child! You are unique and amazing. Always remember that and keep that special feeling in your heart all the time. There is no one else like you. You are a very important part of the Universe and no one can do exactly what you do in the way you do it.

Now when you are ready, you can float back down on your soft cloud and back to this room. It was a wonderful journey!"

Now it's time for hugs and kisses goodnight! Wasn't that EASY? Guiding a meditation with your child IS truly easy to do and a lot of fun. You'll find that you will develop a very strong emotional bond and your child will truly be amazed at your ability to take them on magical journeys and help them alleviate their worries! In a child's mind, the journey has been very real. I like to close my eyes and get into the scene with my children. Your creativity is sparked and you can do whatever you want in your story! Magic happens here!

The Treehouse

This relaxation script is related to finding a peaceful place. Activities that support children finding a peaceful place help them to feel safe and re-establish feelings of tranquility when they are experiencing challenging emotions. Next time your child is experiencing stress, worry, tension or other unwanted emotion, read this relaxation script to help him to calm down. Happy Climbing!

1. Get your body comfortable and gently close your eyes.
2. Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
3. Spend a moment or two, relaxing your feet and legs. Letting go of any tightness and letting them become heavy and relaxed. Imagine a wave of blue light traveling up from the earth into your feet and legs, relaxing everything it touches.
4. Now relax your tummy, chest, and shoulders. Imagine this wave of blue light sweeping through and relaxing this area for you.
5. Pay attention to your arms and fingers, allow the blue light to move through. Feel how relaxed you are.
6. Finally bring the blue light to your head and allow it to flow out of the top of your head and into the air around you. Beautifully done!
7. Imagine you are standing in front of a massive tree. This tree has deep, deep roots and branches that reach out in every direction.
8. This tree is home to your very own treehouse. This is a treehouse of your own design. Picture how you would like your treehouse to look.
9. (Pause between each idea) You can add swings, windows, trapdoors, plants, animals, your favorite things, your favorite colors, just allow yourself to design the treehouse anyway you like.
10. Can you see it? Good. Now allow yourself to travel inside the treehouse. (Pause) Are you inside? Good.

Guided Imagery Cont...

11. Inside the treehouse, imagine anything that makes you feel good to think about. Place pillows, waterfalls, plants, trees, birds, pictures of mountains, anything that you would like that you feel good when you think about it. Go ahead and design the inside of your treehouse now.
12. Know that when you go inside your treehouse you feel really really relaxed. This is a place to let go of all your thoughts, all your worries.
13. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to feel very peaceful and relaxed inside your treehouse.
14. This is a place that you can go any time you would like to feel more peaceful and calm. Know that your treehouse is available to you any time you would like. You can visit here whenever you would like.
15. Now take a deep breath and imagine yourself walking down out of your treehouse. Gently bring your attention back to the room.
16. Rub your hands together to make them warm. Gently place them over your eyes.
17. You can open your eyes whenever you are ready.

More ideas

For more ideas, go to a website called 'Inner Health Studio: Coping Skills and Relaxation Resources'.

Below is the link to the website:

www.innerhealthstudio.com/relaxation-scripts-for-children.html