

# Meditation for Children

## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Using playful imagery, this meditation can help children learn to relax their body. It's a type of meditation called progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), which simply refers to tensing muscles and then relaxing them. This meditation script was developed by the Department of Clinical Psychology at the Manchester Children's Hospital. It is a creative approach to teaching PMR, using playful visualization and movement to help children learn to tune in to their body states.

To get started, make sure you are in a safe place, where you won't have many interruptions. Take a moment to get comfortable. Tune in to your breathing, and notice the rise and fall of your chest, as you breathe in, and breathe out. If it's okay, let your eyes close. As you read through the meditation, make sure to go slowly, creating pauses between sentences.



Let's start by pretending that you have a bowl of lemons in front of you. Reach out with your left hand, and imagine picking one up. Now, imagine you are squeezing that lemon as hard as you can. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Keep your hand tight, as you squeeze that lemon. Feel the tightness in your hand, and forearm. Breathing out, release that tightness now, and imagine that lemon dropping to the floor. Notice the sensations in your hand, as the tension releases. Just enjoying that sensation of relaxation that starts to take the place of muscle tightness. Breathing in calm, breathing out tension. Give your fingers a little wiggle, and let that left arm rest by your side. *(Repeat one more time for the same hand)*

Thinking about the big bowl of juicy lemons in front of you, Reach out with your right hand this time, and imagine picking one up. Squeeze your hand shut tight as you imagine squeezing that lemon as hard as you can. Imagine squeezing so hard that all the juice dribbles out. . Keep squeezing, noticing how it feels in your hand to be tight. Release that tightness now, imagining that lemon dropping to the floor. Notice the sensations in your muscles as you release all that tension. Maybe it feels tingly, and you might want to give your fingers a little wiggle. Notice how wiggling your fingers seems to release even more tension. *(Repeat one more time for the right hand)*



This time, pretend you are a furry, lazy, cat, who really wants to stretch. Reach your arms out in front of you, and then move them right up over your head. As you reach up, let your arms shift ever so slightly back, so that you feel the stretch in your back. Try stretching your arms up even higher, feeling a gentle pull in your shoulders. Breathing in... and as you breathe out, let your arms drop down to your sides. Notice how it feels in your shoulders and upper arms, as your muscles relax

Okay kitten, let's do that stretch again. Move your arms way out in front of you, and then move them right up over your head. And as you reach up, let your arms shift ever so slightly back, so that you feel that stretch in your back. Noticing the gentle pull in your shoulders as you reach up, up, up. And this time, let those arms drop to your sides quickly. That's it, let all those muscles release. Notice the relaxation in your shoulders. Notice how good it feels to release and relax those muscles. It feels good, and warm, and restful.



This time, imagine you are a turtle. You are sitting out on a rock, by a nice peaceful pond. Just relaxing in the sun. It feels nice and warm and safe. Breathing in calm, breathing out tension. Uh oh, that turtle senses danger! Pull your head into your shell: try to pull your shoulders up to your ears, and duck your head down. Hold it tight. It isn't easy being a turtle! Ah, the danger has passed now. You can come out of the shell, and into the warm sunlight. Relax all the muscles in your neck, and shoulders, moving your head gently from side to side; just noticing your breath as you breath in, and out.

Oh no – watch out now, that little turtle senses danger again! Hurry, tuck your head little turtle, back into the safety of your shell and hold tight! Keep your shoulders up and your head down, Hold tightly – you have to be closed in tight to be protected. Okay, you can relax now, there is safety. Let your shoulders drop down, and let your neck be tall. Moving your head gently from side, to side. Notice how much better it feels to be relaxed, instead of all tight and tense. Relax and feel comfortable in your safety, in this moment. There's no more danger little turtle, nothing to be afraid of, you feel good. Breathing in calm, and breathing out any bits of left over tension



Imagine now, that you have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum ball in your mouth. It is very hard to chew. Imagine trying to bit down on it: let your neck muscles help you. Tensing your jaw to bit that giant gum ball. And, now relax. Let your jaw loosen. Notice the sensations in your mouth and jaw, how good it feels to let your jaw muscles relax.

Let's try to bite that gum ball again. Ready, tense your jaw as you imagine biting down. Keep it tight. That is so good, you are really tearing up that gumball! And, now relax your jaw. Maybe wiggling your lower jaw from side to side, really sinking in to that relaxing feeling. It feels so good just to those muscles relax now, and not have to fight with that bubble gum ball. Let your jaw relax. Breathing in calm, breathing out tension.



This time, imagine that a beautiful butterfly is fluttering near you. Oh, it has landed right on your nose! And, it is very tickly. Try to get the butterfly off your nose without using your hands. That's right, scrunch up your nose; try to make as many wrinkles in your nose as you possibly can. Keep it up.. Wiggle as many parts of your face as you possibly can to get that butterfly off. Phew, you've chased him away! Now you can relax your nose and face. As the muscles in your face relax, notice how the sensations there shift.

Oh oh, here comes the butterfly again, landing right back on your nose! Shoo it off by wrinkling up your nose, and wiggling any parts of your face that you can. Wrinkle up you nose, and wiggle your cheeks to get it off. Wrinkle, and wiggle; wrinkle, and wiggle You did it – the butterfly flew off your nose. Go ahead and let your whole face relax. Noticing any sensations at your forehead, your eyes, your nose, your cheeks, and your mouth. Breathing in calm, breathing out tension



Imagine this time, that a cute baby elephant is approaching you. But he is not watching where he is going! He does not see you laying there in the grass. It looks like that baby elephant is about to step on your belly. Don't move, you do not have time to get out of the way: you just need to get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard and tight. Tighten your stomach muscles. Hold it tight - Phew, the baby elephant turned away! You can relax now. Let your belly go soft – as relaxed as you possibly can. That feel so much better.

You won't believe this, but this time it looks like the baby elephant is coming straight for you again! Tighten up your stomach muscles. Stay tight hard as a rock, that little elephant is coming this way! Hold it. Oh, he stepped right over you. Take a big breath out, and release those muscles. That baby elephant is walking away, he is gone for good now. Just let yourself completely relax. You are safe, everything is ok. You can feel relaxed and at ease. Breathing in calm, breathing out tension.



Imagine now, that you want to squeeze through a very narrow fence. The boards might have splinters on them, so you'll have to make your body as small as possible if you are going to squeeze through. Suck in your stomach, try to squeeze your belly button to your spine. Make yourself as narrow as you can – squeeze in. And you are through! You can let those muscles relax. Notice how your stomach feels warm, and loose.

One more time, we have got to squeeze through that narrow wooden fence. Squeeze in your belly. Keep it tight, stay as narrow as you can to go through that fence. You so pulled in and tight right now. Ah, you are through. Breathing out, and releasing all those muscles. You made it through that narrow fence without being touched by a splinter. Well done. You are safe and sound. You can relax completely now. Settle back, and let your stomach muscles relax fully. Notice how good that feels, letting all the tension leave your body. You are doing so well at this.



Imagine, that you are standing bare foot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep into the mud. Try to get your feet down to the very bottom of the mud puddle. You will probably need your legs to help you push. Go ahead, push down, and wiggle your toes. Spread your toes apart, imaging the mud squishing up between your toes. Push, and wiggle, and stretch. And relax, you are out of the mud puddle. Let your feet be still, and relaxed, letting all the tension leave. Let your legs, and feet, and toes be loose. Notice how good that feels!

And step one more time into that mud puddle! Squish your toes down deep into the mud. Try to get your feet down to the very bottom of the mud puddle. Pushing down, spreading your toes. Push, and wiggle, and stretch. And relax, you are out of the mud puddle. Let your feet be still, and relaxed, letting all the tension leave. Let your legs, and feet, and toes be loose. Notice how good that feels! Maybe it feels tingly, and warm. Just noticing that as your body relaxes Breathing in calm, breathing out tension.



In a moment, I will count backwards from 4, to 1. When I reach the number 1, open your eyes (if they have been closed). Just remaining still, and giving your whole body a little wiggle in your spot. You will likely feel pleasantly relaxed, and refreshed.

Four: begin to feel more awake and alert. You are aware of your whole body, and your muscles feel relaxed. Three: take a big breath in, and release. Two: look around the room you are in, just noticing everything around you. Breathing in calm, Breathing out tension. One: open your eyes if they were closed. Feeling relaxed, and peacefully calm.

As you go through your day, remember how good it feels to be relaxed. Sometimes, you may have to make yourself tighter before you can relax, just like you did now. Try practicing these exercises a few times a week, to help your body relax. Knowing how to relax your body can help you during times when you feel nervous. A good time to practice might be at bedtime, relaxing all your muscles to help your body relax for sleep.

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