



Save the Children



Stress Busters

from our HEART program

Stress Busters that work for everyone...

School closings, sick friends and family members, isolation at home – these and other factors can cause anxiety and stress for children during this coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

As the world's leading expert on childhood, we're sharing these drama-based relaxation exercises that are part of our global Healing and Education through the Arts (HEART) program for children living in stressful situations.

Join your child in trying the Lazy Cat, the Turtle, the Lemon or all of these stress busters!





We run HEART programs in countries like Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Uganda, South Sudan and Mexico.

Getting started

- Find a quiet space away from distractions
- If you're trying these exercises with a child or a group of children, make sure your instructions are clear and engaging.
- You don't have to do them all. Keep an eye on how long the children are engaged and try again another time.

Flower and Candle



This is a simple exercise that encourages deep breathing – a way to relax.

Pretend you have a nice smelling flower in one hand and a slow burning candle in the other.

- Breathe in slowly through your nose as you smell the flower.
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth as you blow out the candle.
- Repeat a few times.

Lemon



This exercise releases muscle tension.

Pretend you have a lemon in your hand.

- Reach up to the tree and pick a lemon with each hand.
- Squeeze the lemons hard to get all the juice out – squeeze, squeeze, squeeze.
- Throw the lemons on the floor and relax your hands.
- Then repeat, until you have enough juice for a glass of lemonade!
- After your last squeeze and throw, shake out your hands to relax!



Lazy Cat

This exercise releases muscle tension.

Pretend you are a lazy cat that just woke up from a lovely, long nap.

- Have a big yawn.
- And a meow.
- Now stretch out your arms, legs and back – slowly like a cat – and relax.



Feather/Statue



This exercise releases muscle tension.

Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for ten seconds.

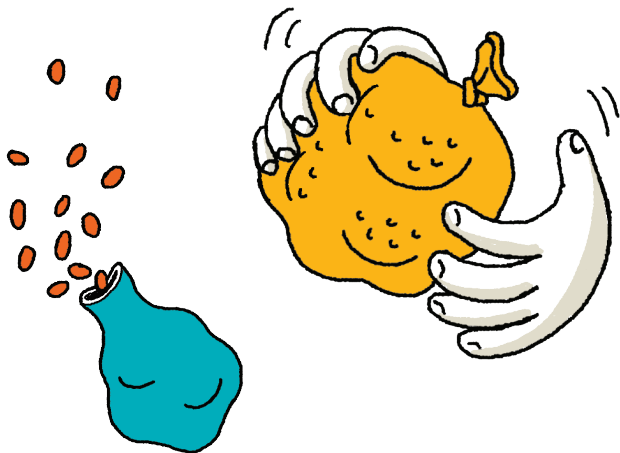
- Pretend you are a feather floating through the air for about ten seconds.
- Suddenly you freeze and transform into a statue. Don't move!
- Then slowly relax as you transform back into the floating feather again.
- Repeat, making sure to finish as a floaty feather in a relaxed state.

Stress Balls

This exercise releases muscle tension and massages your hands.

Make your own stress ball(s) by filling balloons with dry lentils or rice.

- Take the ball(s) in one or both hands and squeeze and release.
- Experiment with squeezing the ball. Find way that is right for you, adjusting the speed, pressure and timing of your squeezes to whatever way you like.



Turtle



This exercise releases muscle tension.

Pretend you are a turtle going for a slow, relaxed turtle walk.

- Oh no, it's started to rain!
- Curl up tight under your shell for about ten seconds.
- The sun's out again, so come out of your shell and return to your relaxing walk.
- Repeat a few times, making sure to finish with a walk so that your body is relaxed.
- Repeat, making sure to finish with a walk.