

Learn Self-Awareness Through Deep Relaxation

Deep relaxation is a great way to create the conditions for learning by helping students let go of tension and worry. Practicing in this way, students learn to self-soothe, regulate their behavior, and find relief from stressful situations by focusing attention on their breath and body.

What You Need:

- [Deep Relaxation Reflection Questions worksheet](#)

What You Do:

1. Explain that we are going to take some time to relax our bodies and minds. Share that doing this can help us feel peaceful, rested, and ready to learn.
2. Have students lay down on their backs. Make sure they are not touching each other and are comfortable.
3. You may use a mindfulness bell or sound a chime at the beginning and end of the deep relaxation to help students maintain a more relaxed state. Begin by telling students to get comfortable on their back. Ask them to congratulate themselves for taking important time to relax.
4. Once they are in a comfortable position, ask them to gently close their eyes and, if they can, bring a half smile to their face.
5. Tell them to bring awareness to their breathing. Say that they can place one hand on their chest and one on their belly to feel their breath if it is helpful. With each breath in and out, have them silently count to themselves. Tell them to take up to five mindful breaths and as they breathe, feel their whole body on the floor and sink deep into the ground. Ask them to imagine they are weightless, floating on water or a fluffy white cloud. Reassure them that they have nowhere to be but relaxing with their breath—no worries, no tension, just breathing.
6. Now ask them to bring awareness to their arms. As they breathe out, tell them to relax their arms all the way down to their hands. As they breathe in, ask them to bring awareness to their hands, focusing first on their right. Then have them bring awareness to each finger. Repeat with the left.
7. Ask them to breathe deeply and send love and gratitude to both of their hands. Remind them that our hands make it possible for us to draw, play sports, cook, and so much more. Our hands are very precious.
8. Now it is time to move on to the legs. As they breathe out, ask them to relax their legs completely. As they move their awareness down their right leg, tell them to relax from their thighs to their knees to their calves, down to their ankles and finally their right foot. Next, relax each toe one by one. Repeat with the left leg and wiggle all toes as they relax both feet. Remind them that their feet bring them so much joy by allowing them to play, dance, and more. Have them send love and gratitude to their feet.
9. Now have them move up their body to the top of their head. Breathing in and out, have them take a few breaths as they relax the muscles around their head. Breathing in, ask them to relax their eyes.
10. As they breathe in, tell them to bring awareness to their shoulders. As they breathe out, tell them to release and relax their shoulders. Then have them focus again on the top of their head. Have them take a few breaths to relax the muscles around their head. Now, breathing in, tell them to relax their eyes.
11. Have them next bring awareness to their mouth. Perhaps they still have that gentle half smile on their face. Ask them, "Did you know that smiling releases the tension in the hundreds of muscles in your face?" Tell them to feel the tension release as they smile and silently thank their mouths for all it allows them to do—eat, sing, and more.
12. Lastly, as they breathe in, instruct them to bring awareness to their heart. Tell them that our hearts work so hard 24/7, but we often forget to love them back. Tell them to silently thank their heart for all it does.
13. Tell them to bring awareness to their breathing. They may now stretch if they'd like, and when they are ready, they should slowly and mindfully stand up.
14. In deep relaxation, you can use any part of the body: the hair, the ears, the nose, lungs, internal organs, the digestive system, or any part of the body that needs healing and care. Just have students embrace each part of their body with mindfulness and gratitude as they hold their awareness while breathing in and out.
15. Complete the Deep Relaxation Reflection Questions worksheet.



About the author: Meena Srinivasan, MA, National Board Certified Teacher, is a leader in the fields of Mindful Awareness Practices (MAP) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). She is the author of *Teach, Breathe, Learn: Mindfulness In and Out of the Classroom* (Parallax Press, 2014) and *SEL Everyday: Integrating Social and Emotional Learning With Instruction in Secondary Classrooms* (Norton, 2019).