

## **Relaxation techniques**

Here are some ideas for teaching the skill of relaxation, which can be learnt in a variety of ways. Encourage the children to try different techniques in order to find one that really works for them. Teachers often find it useful to remind children to put this skill into practice at times of excitement (for example after play time, at Christmas or at the end of term) or during stressful situations, for example during SATs week.

### **Tense-relax techniques**

There are many of these, such as animal-based images for younger children (KS1) or visualisations, for example a butterfly gently landing on each part of the body, from feet to head. Older (KS2) and the more able or practiced children may be able to tense and hold each body part in turn and then relax, a technique that can be developed to link with breathing, by tensing on inhalation and relaxing on exhalation (KS2/3/4).

### **Breath control**

Breath control is a really useful skill for reducing anxiety in pressured situations, particularly by extending the out-breath, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. Always allow the children ultimate control of their breath and make sure they all understand that anyone who feels light-headed should let their breathing return to normal.

### **Quick fix breath**

People of any age (particularly stressed teachers!) can do this. Breathe in through the nose and at the same time lift your shoulders as high as you can with your arms by your sides. Breathe out through your mouth and drop your shoulders down. Feel floppy! Repeat two or three times as necessary.

### **Visualisations**

These are many and varied. It's usually necessary for the children to sit or lie still for five to ten minutes, so you may wish to use one to end a session after discussing feelings and trying a breathing technique. If the children find it impossible to sit still it may be tricky at first, but as with story time, they often calm down during the visualisation.

It may be helpful to think of a scenario that will appeal to various factions of the class. For example, for Yr5/6 boys you may want to start the visualisation by asking the class to picture a football pitch, arriving for a game with friends and having to be dropped off early. It's early morning and you are alone; it's very still and quiet with a light covering of frost and a veil of mist drifting over the valley ...

Always make sure the children have "returned to the classroom" afterwards. You can get them to stand up and jump up and down three times to make sure.

Many books and CDs, with or without music, are available. Two can be borrowed from us:

*Enriching circle time: dream journeys and positive thoughts* by Yvonne Weatherhead contains visualisations that can be used as part of circle time, as assembly themes or in class, as well as for pure relaxation.

*Picture this: guided imagery for circle time*, book and CD.

Have a look at the relaxation page on our website. You will find a children's visualisation, as well as some that are suitable for adults:

<http://www.cornwallhealthyschools.org/core-themes/emotional-health-well-being/relaxation/>

Further examples are included in the ReSET resources.

You could also have a look at the information on our yoga page

<http://www.cornwallhealthyschools.org/yoga-information-for-schools/> and try the Massage in Schools Programme, read more at

<http://www.cornwallhealthyschools.org/core-themes/emotional-health-well-being/massage-in-schools-programme/>.