



# Counselors' Corner

June 2015

## Self-Calming Strategies

Children and adults experience tension in response to stress at home, at school, and at work. Becoming aware of the physical reaction to a stressful problem or conflict is the first step in recognizing and managing the stress caused by an upsetting situation.

When adults or students are stressed to a certain maximum point of being overwhelmed, they can become reactive and unable to learn or to make good decisions to solve the stressful situation. Adrenaline takes over the body and a person may react to the problem with fear, anger or anxiety. Without being able to calm down they may feel the urge to fight, run away, or to try to avoid the problem.

A simple breathing exercise can help children reduce and manage stress and let the mind reach a calm state that is productive in facing the problem. Breathing-counting exercises can be done anywhere to quickly calm the self. The child focuses on the inhale and the exhale of breathing for a short time instead of the stressful event. One can be seated, walking or standing to do a calming breathing exercise.

The mind focuses on a slow conscious inhaling count of one, two, three, and four. After a slight pause, exhale slowly counting one, two, three, and four. Repeat the process. Become aware of the body beginning to relax. Repeat as often as necessary to reach a state of calmness.

Children can use various slow breathing techniques to reduce stress and to become aware of the feelings and thoughts that they have in response to certain situations. If they can use a breathing exercise to calm themselves, they can slow down the stress reaction and use their thoughts to realize other options to control strong feelings of fear, anxiety or anger that extreme stress can elicit.

In a calm and more attentive state children are aware of choices in deciding how to act in the face of a problem. They can take time to talk to a parent, teacher or trusted friend about making good choices. Then they can return to learning, play or work feeling calmer and in control.

Adapted from Guidance Character Education Curriculum

For further details or information, please contact your child's guidance counselor.

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