

Creative Visualization with Children

Developing Mindfulness in Children

EXCERPT

Releasing Restrictions

*Note: These processes are not intended to replace therapy or any other form of professional counseling. If you are concerned or doubtful about the application of any of the exercises in this book, discuss your concern with a professional counselor or psychotherapist. This book is for reference only and should not be used instead of properly qualified medical or mental health advice.

At the beginning of any quiet or special time with your child or children, whether you meditate or just do a creative visualization, it is important to remove any restrictions that might block or disrupt the process and your time together.

Restrictions can take several forms:

1. *Space*: Make sure you are in a room that is warm and comfortable with no drafts. When doing guided imagery with children, it is important to ensure that the environment is quiet and you will be undisturbed for the length of the process. Ensure that your children are sitting comfortably and that the room temperature is agreeable to everyone
2. *Clothing*: Take your shoes off and ensure that any restrictive clothing –such a belts or tight jeans- is removed.
3. *Noise*: Be sure all computers, tablets and phones and any technology that could create audible interruptions are turned off. If you fear you might be interrupted by someone at the door, place a ‘do not disturb’ note on the door.
4. *Mental*: If either you or your child is exceptionally tired, leave your creative visualization and quiet time for later or another day. If however your child is not tired but merely ‘doesn’t feel like it’, kindly but firmly tell him or her that this is your special time together and remind yourselves of how good it makes you feel. This will usually help. If your child still insists on not participating, calmly give him or her the option of spending some quiet time in his or her room, -and on no account disturbing you- while you close the door and have your special quiet time to yourself or with your other children. On no account should you cancel it. You will soon find your child

wishes to rejoin you. (NOTE: This approach teaches not only respect for the process of quiet time/meditation, but also consideration for you and the other children, as well as developing the self-discipline and ability for impulse-control so greatly needed by all growing children.)

5. Physical: These restrictions usually take the form of physical tensions such as tense shoulders, neck, arms and buttocks, caused by stress. Following are some tension-release exercises you can do together that will relieve stress reactions and enhance the flow of energy. Until you have memorized them, it may be advisable to pre-record the instructions so you can play them back. (That way you will not be distracted by constantly having to refer back to these pages.)

* [CREATIVE VISUALIZATION WITH CHILDREN – A PRACTICAL GUIDE](#) has many more exercises for releasing restrictions than the examples listed below – as well as an array of guided meditations and visualizations designed to help children relax, handle stress, build resilience, and develop the ability to self-soothe.

Tense and Let Go (*You may want to play music in the background to enhance the enjoyment. Instrumental is usually preferable.*)

Stand facing each other, in a circle if you are more than two. Have everyone lift their right leg slightly off the floor and tense all the muscles in the leg until it begins to vibrate. At the count of three relax the leg, making it go limp. Repeat with the left leg. Now tense the stomach, buttocks and pelvic area, as tight as possible. Exaggeration often makes this more fun for children! Don't be afraid to playful! At the count of three, relax, letting the stomach 'hang out'. Repeat with the back and chest area. Now hold the right arm to the front and tense all the muscles in the arm until it begins to vibrate. Clench the fist and bend the elbow, flexing the upper arm muscles and simulating a body-builder (Popeye, for example). At the count of three, relax, letting the arm hang limply at your side. Repeat with the left arm. Now lift the shoulders and tense the neck as much as possible. Again, exaggerate. Relax, drawing attention to how different the shoulders and neck feel when they are not tense. Now clench the teeth and tense the jaw, followed by the facial muscles. Squeeze the eyes tightly shut, frown hard and tense the entire scalp. Enjoy the funny faces you all make! At the count of three relax, ensuring that the jaw and tiny muscles round the eyes also relax. Now bend forward and 'hang' limply with your arms dangling towards the floor for a

minute or so, letting any remaining excess tension run out of your arms, through your fingers and into the floor.

Shakin’

Play a cd of primitive drums or percussion. Keeping in time with the rhythm, stomp into the ground with one foot at a time, keeping your knees bent and relaxed. Keep on stomping, imagining that you are barefoot in the sand or earth and with each stomp you are creating a deep foot-print. Start shaking your arms and hands at the same time, as if shaking off water. Now feel your neck completely loose and shake your head gently. As you do this, inhibitions will gradually be released and you will soon be shaking wildly! Feel free to let out a few primal shrieks as well!

Be a Tree

Stand with your feet hip-width apart, arms relaxed alongside your body. Imagine that the soles of your feet have roots growing through the floor and into the earth. Imagine that your body is a long, supple tree with your ankles being the joints that you move and sway from. Now lean forward as far as you can, as if being blown by a gentle breeze. Try not to lift your heels. You may want to relax your knees slightly. Return to the central position and lean to one side and then the other, each time as far as you can without lifting your feet (or destroying your roots!). Finally, lean back as far as you can. Notice where you feel tension as you lean – how much of that do you need to stand or move? Try to find at what point your tree is the most stable – where you have perfect balance without holding unnecessary tension in your shoulders, neck, calves or feet. As soon as you have located the position, close your eyes and stand perfectly still for a moment, enjoying your own personal position of minimal stress.

You and your children can remind each other of this whenever you observe physical tension in each other. ‘Being a Tree’ is a quick way to check for tension during the course of the day and you may be surprised at how astute your child is at recognizing when *you* are holding tension!

Check out [CREATIVE VISUALIZATION WITH CHILDREN – A PRACTICAL GUIDE](#) for dozens more physical activities (including yoga, tension release, kino-visualization, stretching, etc.), creative visualizations, meditations, and much more –

all you will need to help your children develop mindfulness and learn to use their imagination to build the capacity for managing stress and emotions.

“An easily understood and very effective practical guide. Whole-heartedly recommended!” **Brian Graham, Book Reviews**

“Many people have asked me how to use this powerful tool effectively with children. Jennifer Day has created a wonderful guidebook for doing exactly that!”

Shakti Gawain, bestselling author of Creative Visualization

“A fine key to introducing visualization to children and using it as a coping tool early in life.” **Children’s Bookwatch**