Relaxation Breathing and Other Ways to Release Stress

When we slow down our breathing, we fool our bodies into thinking they are relaxing. Breathing to relax takes conscious thought and practice. Do it often, and it can become second nature.

The steps to relaxation breathing are:

1. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Let your hands rest on your knees.
3. Begin to inhale and let your belly relax as you take in as much air as possible.
4. Exhale slowly through your nose.
5. Repeat, taking breaths in and out with a slow, steady pace.

You can help your child learn this technique by letting her lie flat on the floor with a small stuffed animal on her tummy. Have her breathe in and watch the animal take a slow trip up as her tummy expands with each breath. Then watch the animal take a trip back down to the floor as she lets her breath out.

Another way to practice relaxation breathing with your child is to teach her how to blow bubbles. Dip a wand into bubble solution and show your child how to take in a deep breath and slowly blow it out.

Other ways to consciously relax your body include:

> **Yoga or tai chi** — Sign up for classes at a local community education program or recreation center.
> **Meditation** — Learn to spend time un-focusing your mind and letting go of your thoughts.
> **Mental imagery** — Imagine visiting a calm and peaceful place and go there in your mind.
> **Music** — Listen to quiet, calming sounds. They will influence your mood to match.
> **Massage** — Have a partner rub your back or splurge on a professional massage. Even giving your baby a massage has calming effects for you!