



BIRTHDAY CAKE & PIZZA BREATHING

The Power of Breathing

At times, all of us, adults, and children alike, feel upset, angry, worried, or afraid and need help calming down. When we are having these feelings, we often take quick, short, and shallow breaths, preventing us from getting enough air/oxygen into our bodies to help us calm down. By simply shifting to longer and deeper breaths, we can bring calm to our bodies and minds.

Think of long, deep breaths as a remote control for the brain. They help the brain change the channel from a loud, busy, upsetting show to a much calmer, quieter, and more helpful show.

Even very young children can be taught and will benefit from deep breathing and visualization exercises, such as Birthday Cake or Pizza Breathing.

[Instructions for breathing exercises on the back]



The key is to teach the activity to your child and practice the activity with your child when things are calm and your child is not in a state of distress. Once the practice is learned, however, you can assist your child in using one of these strategies at the first sign he or she is becoming upset or overwhelmed.



Like everything else, it takes a little practice to use these strategies effectively, but with your help and support, your child may eventually learn to recognize the signs of stress within him- or herself that Pizza or Birthday Cake Breathing will help to calm and relieve.



Birthday Cake Breathing

1.

Imagine that it is your birthday and your favorite cake is placed in front of you, lit with candles.

2.

Using your imagination, really try to picture it. What flavor is the cake? What shape is the cake? What is the color and flavor of the frosting? How is it decorated? How does it smell? Are the candles dripping?

3.

Taking a deep breath in through your nose to a count of 3, imagine that you are inhaling the scent of that cake in front of you. Really smell it. Anticipate how it will taste too! Notice how quickly your brain can focus on something other than your worries, fears, or any other upsetting thoughts and feelings you were experiencing.

4.

Now, blow that same breath out slowly through your mouth to a count of 4, as if you are blowing out the candles on your cake. Try holding out your fingers and pretend they are candles to blow out. Feel your breath on your fingers as you blow out the candles.

5.

Repeat 3 more times:

Breathe in the scent of the cake for 3 seconds and blowing out the candles for 4 seconds.



Pizza Breathing

1.

Imagine that you have a whole pizza pie sitting right in front of you. It just came out of the oven, so it's too hot to eat, but it's your absolute favorite pizza (with all your favorite toppings) and you cannot wait to eat a slice! So, once it starts to cool, you pick up a yummy, gooey slice and hold it in your hands.

2.

While you hold both your palms facing up in front of your chin, as if you are holding a delicious slice of pizza, take in a deep breath through your nose, as if you are smelling the pizza. Make sure you are breathing in that amazing pizza smell for a count of 3.

3.

Exhale/blow for a count of 4, as if you are blowing on the pizza slice to cool it down. As you blow to cool off your pizza slice, feel your breath across your palms.

4.

Repeat 3 more times:

Breathe in the pizza smell for 3 seconds, then blow for 4 seconds to cool off the pizza slice.