

# Lesson 2: Calming

## Introduction:

Being able to calm oneself in the face of big emotions is foundational to getting along with others, as well as being able to follow directions, and concentrating on a task. When children learn that they can be in charge of calming down, their confidence increases. Practicing the skills of calming down trains the brain to notice when a big feeling is coming on, and evaluate and respond rather than react. In early childhood, children can begin to learn these skills, and get better at them as they practice, and as they continue developing

## Goals of this lesson:

1. Children will continue to learn about the three parts of the brain and their functions.
2. Children will experience their breath and learn how to control it.
3. Using calming exercises, children will learn they can begin to control their impulses and feelings using their breathing, senses, and body.
4. Students will learn that choices have consequences, both good and bad.
5. Teachers and parents will continue their own calming and focusing practice, and be able to model these practices in the classroom and at home.

## Lesson 2 Exercises:

### The Breath:

1. Core Breathing
2. Count Your Breaths
3. Belly Breathing with Elmo

### The Body:

1. Squeeze It!
2. Turtle Pose
3. Hug the Monkey

### The Senses:

1. Popcorn in a bag
2. Colorful Water
3. Listening to Music

## Lesson 2 Materials:

1. Laptop for video
2. Chime
3. Toy monkey, or monkey puppet
4. Laptop for video
5. Bag of popped popcorn
6. large jar filled with water, and 4 colors of food coloring
7. Paper to make brain journals for each child.

## Starting the lesson:

Gather kids to sit in a circle, or in front of you if you are at home. Talk about times during the day that they might feel scared, or tired, or hungry, or grumpy. Use the dog puppet to demonstrate each feeling. Give examples of when a child might have big feelings, like arriving at school, when a parent leaves, when it is time to change the activity we are doing, when we have to share a toy. Have Owl explain that these are times we need to calm our body so our brains can think what to do so we can feel better. Today we are going to practice different ways to breathe and move to see how it calms our brains and bodies.

# The Breath

## Core Breathing Practice

Instruction:

The point of mindful breathing is to calm and focus the mind while bringing awareness to the body. With practice, a child can learn to calm down during a moment of anxiety or stress and re-focus the attention. Over time, child who uses mindful breathing on a regular basis will be calmer, more relaxed, more focused, and ready to learn.

1. I stop (palms up like a stop sign)
2. And feel my breathing (hands on belly)
3. Peaceful and calm I'm ready to...(eat, play, nap, etc.)
4. Practice 3 times a day!

Source: Susan Kaiser Greenland

## Belly breathing with Elmo

Instruction:

1. Belly Breathing with Elmo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZbzDOpyIA> Show this video to the kids and let them move with it. Have the brain puppets join in.
2. After the video, talk about how they could tell Elmo was angry. Have Guard Dog puppet confirm and demonstrate calm and angry.

## Count your Breaths

Instruction:

1. In this exercise the exhale is longer than the inhale. It helps your body turn on the "relaxation response" to help you feel calmer. You may want to close your eyes, or look down.
2. Now count: 1 in and out, 2 in and out, 3 in and out. Repeat 2 more times.
3. Have Guard Dog puppet breath with you.

# The Body

## Squeeze it!

Instruction:

By squeezing and releasing your muscles, you focus your attention on the activity, and release the stress hormone cortisol. This brings the stress level down.

1. Lie on the floor on your back.
2. Take 3 deep breaths. Count them out for the kids.
3. Now breathe in and squeeze your face: forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth. Breathe out and relax your face.
4. Now breathe in and squeeze your hands. Breathe out and relax your hands.
5. Now squeeze your arms. And relax them.
6. Breathe in and squeeze your feet. Breathe out and relax your feet.
7. Now squeeze your legs, as tight as you can. And relax your legs.

(By squeezing and releasing your muscles, you focus your attention on the activity, and release the stress hormone cortisol. This brings the stress level down.)

## Turtle Pose

Instruction:

1. If something frustrating happens, encourage the child to "go into your shell, take three deep breaths, and think calm thoughts."
2. Optional: Use a puppet to demonstrate.
3. Check in with the puppet about how it feels to be in his shell, or have a child operate the puppet and do this. Have children do the turtle pose.
4. Can be done with a whole class, or at home with the family.

## Hug the Monkey

Instruction:

A hug causes the brain to release its “feel good” chemicals into our bodies. They physically help us feel better. It’s reported that our brain needs 10 hugs a day to feel happy! Practice hugging every day, throughout the day. In this exercise, (adapted from Dr. Rick Hansen), we use a monkey puppet to represent our “inner monkey,” that part of us that feels hurt or scared when something hard happens. When we feel this way mostly we just want “recognition, inclusion, respect, and love.”

1. Share a time when you felt this way.
2. Then have the children talk about a time when they felt that way. Ask them what helped them feel better.
3. Share the story of our “inner monkey” who just needs a hug when things aren’t going well.
4. They can either hug the puppet, or hug themselves and their inner monkey, or get a hug from someone they care about. Talk about how it feels to hug the monkey. How does the monkey feel now? (ask the monkey)

# The Senses

## Smelling popcorn in a bag

Instruction:

1. Sitting in a circle, pass a small bag of popcorn around having each child take a deep breath in to smell the contents. (You can add the puppets to the group as well.)
2. Ask the group to check in with Ms Elephante to remember something associated with this smell? (often the movies or a party)
3. Then ask the group to check in with Guard Dog to see how this smell makes them feel. (often happy!)
4. Ask the group to think of other smells that make them feel happy.
5. Ask the group to notice how they feel after doing this exercise. (often good, or happy)
6. Remind them that when they are feeling upset or unhappy just remembering or sensing a happy time can help them feel calmer. Check in with the puppet about the experience.

## Making and seeing colorful water

Instruction:

1. Place a large jar of water in the middle of the group, or in front of a child.
2. Ask them to choose the first color, and you (the adult) add a few drops of color to the water.
3. Have the children quietly watch what happens as the color drops and spreads in the water.
4. Point out to the children how quiet and focused they are.
5. If the puppets are present, have all three together and watching your experiment.
6. Point out to the kids that the puppets are quietly together observing. This is how your brain is when you are calm and focused and learning something new.

## Hearing Music

Instruction:

A music break is a wonderful reset for the brain. After an active period or just when you see the need to regroup, have the kids put their heads on their desks or table, or have them lie down in circle.

1. Start with a deep breath and the chime, and then explain we are going to take a brain break and listen to a song. (Recommended songs in the resource section.)
2. Play the song asking the children to listen closely to the words.
3. Remind them to breathe deeply, and to relax their body, letting their muscles “melt.”
4. After the song is over have everyone stand and take a big stretch, like a tree blowing in the wind.

## What We Learned Today

We learned that we always have our breath to help us calm down. We also learned we can use our whole body to calm ourselves, and that we can hug the monkey when we feel upset. Finally, we learned that when we focus on our senses, we are training our brain to pay attention, and that gives our brain a rest.

**Fact:** Impulsive behavior often occurs when a child is not fully engaged. The human brain is wired in such a way that it will not allow itself to be bored! When not engaged the brain will do something to put itself to work. Attention may be drawn to anything novel in the environment or will simply create something novel. (source: Momentous Institute)

## Integrating the Lesson

1. Brainstorm with your children times during the day when they know they will need to be in charge of themselves. Use the Wise Owl puppet to help them figure out those times (waiting in line, being quiet when someone else is talking, waiting your turn to play with a toy.)

- Have the children draw pictures of one of these times in their brain journals.
- Have the child describe the picture with two sentences. Write those sentences under the picture.

2. Something to do while waiting: Finger Plays

- Finger plays are simple rhymes paired with actions, and are a simple way to engage the brain while children are waiting and have nothing constructive to do. Teach children 3-4 finger plays and practice them several times a week in class, or at other times of transition like in the car, at the grocery store, etc.)
- Example:

Way up high in the apple tree *point up high*

Five red apples looked at me *hold up 5 fingers*

I shook that tree as hard as I could *Pretend to shake the tree as hard as I could*

Down came an apple *Wiggle fingers from the air*

Mmmm, it was good *Rub tummy*

Repeat with 4, 3, 2, 1 apple “smile at me.” (source: [www.teachpreschool.org](http://www.teachpreschool.org))

Use the Wise Owl to lead the Finger Play if desired. Kids love it! (Folkmanis Puppets has a finger puppet you can use.)

## Resources

Belly Breathing with Elmo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZbzDOpyIA>

Music:

Kermit “Rainbow Connection:” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2DTLbTQj0I>

Willy Wonka “Pure Imagination” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2pt2-F2j2g>

Kenny Loggins: “Back to Pooh Corner” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2pt2-F2j2g>

Monkey Puppet by Folkmanis: Amazon

Turtle puppet if desired

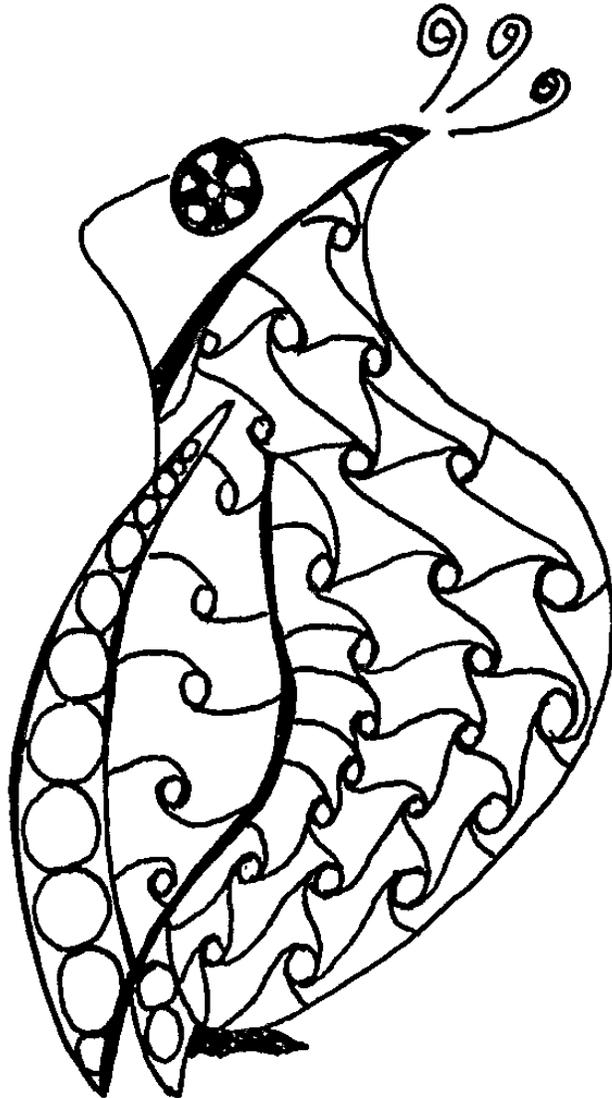
Hug the Monkey  
When You Need to Feel Better





Like A Turtle, we can pull into our shell and take a  
breath when we need a break

1-2-3.....breathe with me!



Wise Owl breathes in, 1-2-3, and out 3-2-1.