

# Deep Breathing

STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE™



Children's  
Healthcare of Atlanta

As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy **coping skills** (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more **resilient** (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why practice deep breathing?

Unlike normal breathing, taking deep breaths encourages you to slow down and pay attention to your body as you inhale and exhale. This relaxation exercise can help improve your ability to focus and better handle your emotions by lowering your heart rate, allowing your muscles to relax, and calming your mind and body.



It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, angry or distracted.

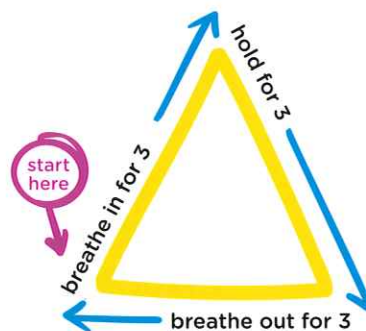
Teaching and practicing coping skills when everyone is calm gives us a variety of tools we can use to manage our feelings and reduce stress.

## How to practice deep breathing

- 1 Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 2 Place your hand on your stomach so that you can feel your hand moving up and down with each breath.
- 3 Inhale through your nose and feel your stomach fill with air.
- 4 Hold your breath for a few seconds.
- 5 Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- 6 Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.

With deep breathing, you want to fill your stomach with air.

If you notice that only your chest or shoulders are rising and falling, try to breathe even deeper so your stomach fills with air.

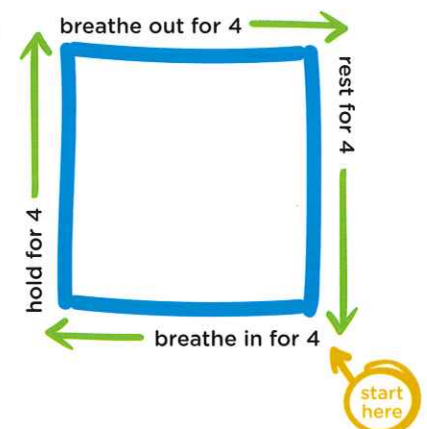


## Triangle breathing

- Start at the bottom left of the triangle.
- Breathe in through your nose for 3 counts as you trace the first side.
- Hold your breath for 3 counts as you trace the second side.
- Breathe out of your mouth for 3 counts as you trace the final side.
- Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.

## Square breathing

- Start at the bottom right of the square.
- Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts as you trace the first side.
- Hold your breath for 4 counts as you trace the second side.
- Breathe out of your mouth for 4 counts as you trace the third side.
- Rest for 4 counts as you trace the final side.
- Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.



## Make deep breathing fun



Think of your belly as a balloon. As you breathe in, let the balloon fill with air, then breathe out and let the balloon deflate.



Practice taking deep breaths by inhaling and then exhaling as you blow bubbles, or blow on feathers, dandelions or a pinwheel.



Lie down and place a small object on your stomach so you can see it rising and falling with each breath.



Inhale as if you are smelling a flower, and exhale as if you are blowing out birthday candles.



Trace shapes to help you focus on your breathing. Practice with the triangle and square breathing diagrams.



**Coping strategies**, like deep breathing, are also helpful for adults. Practicing coping strategies is a great way to take care of yourself, be more present and model healthy ways to manage stress.

For more coping skills ideas, visit [Strong4Life.com/coping](https://Strong4Life.com/coping)

This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.

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