

# 12 COPING SKILLS TO HELP KIDS DEAL WITH STRESS

## Calming Coping Skills

### 1 || Take Deep Breaths and Make it Playful

Taking deep breaths can actually have a physiological effect on the body. When you're stressed, your body goes into fight, flight or freeze mode and your breathing automatically gets more shallow. To trick your body into getting back to a more restful state, take deep breaths. To make it a little more fun for kids, you can use bubbles, a feather or a stuffed animal.

### 2 || Use Your Imagination

Talk with your child about their favorite place. Have them think about what they hear, see, smell and feel when they are there. When they're having a tough time, they can take a mini vacation wherever they are just by closing their eyes and thinking of their favorite place.

### 3 || Take a Drink of Water

Sometimes the sensation of having a drink of water, especially a cold one, enter their body can help a child reset, take a quick break or energize them to move forward with the day. Try a water bottle or straw so the child has to suck against resistance to get a drink. This resistive sucking is a great oral sensory strategy for calming.

## Distracting Coping Skills

### 4 || Laugh and be silly

Laughter and silliness can reduce stress. When kids are in a cranky mood, sometimes reading a funny book will make them laugh and relax a bit more. What makes your child laugh? Joke books? Silly dance parties? Funny videos?

### 5 || Play a board game

There are so many fun and entertaining games out there. Arrange a play time with a friend of theirs and invite them to bring their favorite board games.

### 6 || Do a word find puzzle

When kids focus on solving the puzzle, their brains will be less focused on the stressful situation. Does your child dislike word puzzles? Pick something else they might enjoy, like sudoku or a hidden pictures puzzle.

# 12 COPING SKILLS TO HELP KIDS DEAL WITH STRESS (CONTINUED)

## Physical Coping Skills

### 7 || Play at a playground

When you are feeling stressed, your body gets a ton of extra energy. To release it, the best thing to do is to move. Visit a playground and encourage your child to run, climb and play with other kids.

### 8 || Keep your hands busy

Find an item that your child enjoys holding or playing with and keep it nearby.

#### Some ideas for fidget toys include:

- Small stones
- Cards to shuffle
- Tangle Therapy fidgets
- Jacob's Ladder
- Small shells
- Baby Bumble Bee

### 9 || Go for a walk

By simply taking a walk together, you and your child can take a break. Being outside in nature can be calming and relaxing for everyone.

## Processing Coping Skills

### 10 || Talk about what's happening

A great way to get a snapshot of a child's day is to ask about their "roses" – happy and positive things that happened and their "thorns" – tough or negative things that happened at school. This can give you a good understanding of what's happening in their life day to day.

### 11 || Understanding Triggers for Stress

There are certain things that might make your child feel more frustrated and stressed. It could be a class presentation, small group work, or certain classes. Once you know what those triggers are, you can make a menu of strategies for your child to use to manage that stress.

### 12 || Where do they feel things in their body?

When kids have big feelings, their body can give them clues about it. Once they are able to recognize those clues, they can start to use the appropriate coping skill to deal with that stress. For example, have them think about the last time they felt worried and ask the following questions:

- How did their neck and head feel?
- How about their face? Their arms and hands? Their bellies?
- How did it make their legs and feet feel?