

Coping & Stress Management



LET GO AND STRETCH

Purpose	To build a regular practice that helps students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress.	
Division	All	
Time Required	5-10 minutes (practice these steps ahead of implementing them with students).	
Materials	NOTE: You can do one or all of these stretches as needed.	
Instructions	Side Stretches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stand up straight and tall with shoulders relaxed. Take a deep breath and let it out with a sigh.• Now breathe silently. Bring your palms together above your head and stretch them as high as you can. Relax your shoulders as you breathe out. <p>Breathe in and gently lean to one side, from your hips. On your next breath out, stretch a little bit further. Breathe in and out as you center yourself. Breathe in and tilt from your hips to the other side. On your next breath out, lean a little further, then centre yourself again.</p>
	Twist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shape your hands into fists and place them on your hips. Breathe in and stand tall, shoulders relaxed. Now twist from your waist to one side, as you breathe out. Take another breath and then twist a little further as you breathe out. Breathe in as you come back to the center. Breathe out and twist a little further from your waist to the other side. As you breathe in, come back to the center.• Bring your hands to your heart. Notice if you feel a little more relaxed or strong.

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Instructions (continued)	<p>Tree Stretch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand tall, stretch your arms slightly to the side and relax your elbows and shoulders. Shift your weight onto your right foot and lift your left foot off the ground. Gently put your left foot to the inside of your right leg, avoiding your knee (can be above or below knee, just not on). To maintain your balance, focus your eyes on an object on the floor or keep your arms at your side. • Imagine you are a tree and you are growing arm branches out towards the sun. • Bring your left leg down and place your foot on the floor. Shift your weight over to your left foot. Repeat with the opposite leg.
Supplementary Resources	Calm Kids (free app with optional in app purchases) Go Zen
Adaptations	<p>Stretching can be modified to suit your students' developmental level. Keep adapted activities on hand to suit the needs of students who have mobility challenges.</p> <p>*Remind students to keep breathing and to avoid holding their breath. Model these actions as you go through your instructions.</p>
Evidence	Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011).
References	Diamond, A., & Lee, K. (2011). Interventions Shown to Aid Executive Function Development in Children 4 to 12 Years Old. <i>Science</i> , 333(6045), 959-964.