



JUST BREATHE?

25+ Fun Ways to
Help Kids Regulate

Welcome!



I'm, Christina, a pediatric occupational therapist and a mom of two, here to support parents in feeling more confident in their parenting journey with OT-based strategies and real-life encouragement. On my Instagram, **OccupiedOTMom**, you'll find a mix of expert advice and real parenting moments.

What Can You Expect From Me?

I share mom life tips, helping busy parents balance work and self-care while tackling the mental load of parenting.

For those seeking Pediatric OT Advice, I provide practical strategies for behavior and emotional regulation, toileting challenges, potty training, regressions, and nighttime dryness, as well as feeding and sensory processing tips to support your child's development.

I also bring you real-life parenting, sharing the highs and lows of daily routines, parenting wins and struggles, and those funny or heartfelt moments that make parenthood special.

Looking for tools to make parenting easier? Check out my **Amazon Storefront** where you'll find my top recommendations for emotional regulation and sensory items, age-sorted gift ideas, working parent must-haves, potty training essentials, and baby/kid sleep must-have products.



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25+ Fun Ways to Help Kids Regulate (Without Just Saying "Take a Deep Breath")

HELPING KIDS LEARN TO SELF-REGULATE

Kids aren't born knowing how to calm themselves—self-regulation is a learned skill. When they're frustrated or overwhelmed, they rely on us for guidance. Relaxation techniques help kids slow their breathing, settle their bodies, and regain control.

All feelings are okay! Being mad, sad, or overwhelmed is normal, but kids need safe ways to express big emotions. These tools help channel feelings in a positive way. Since no single strategy works every time, variety is key. Try these ideas, see what works best—and most importantly, do them together! Your support makes all the difference.

PLAYFUL & ENGAGING BREATHING PROMPTS



Smell the Flower, Blow it over – Pretend to sniff a flower, then blow it over.

Dragon Breaths – Breathe in deep and then blow out like a fire-breathing dragon!

Hot Cocoa Breaths – Pretend you have a cup of hot cocoa. Inhale to smell it, then blow out slowly to cool it down.

Bunny Sniffs – Take three short sniffs in through your nose like a bunny, then a long exhale out.

Snake Breaths – Breathe in deep, then hiss out like a snake.

Bumblebee Breaths – Take a deep breath in, then hum like a buzzing bee as you breathe out.

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MOVEMENT-BASED STRATEGIES



Teddy Bear Breathing – Lie down and put a stuffed animal on your belly. Watch it rise and fall as you breathe.

Rocket Breaths – Crouch down, take a deep breath, then jump up while exhaling like a rocket taking off!

Pinwheel Breaths – Hold a real or imaginary pinwheel and breathe out to make it spin.

Butterfly Wings – Put your hands together like butterfly wings. Breathe in as the wings go up, out as they go down.

Candle Hands – Hold up five fingers like candles. Blow out one candle with each breath.

SENSORY & GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

5-Finger Breathing – Trace your fingers with your other hand as you breathe in going up and breathe out going down.

Hand on Heart & Belly – Feel your breath moving by placing one hand on your chest and one on your belly.

Cooling Breath – Inhale through your nose, then breathe out with a slow "haaaa" like you're fogging up a window.

Finger Tapping – Tap each fingertip to your thumb while naming an object in view.

Pretend to Be a Jellyfish – Move your arms up and down gently with each breath like a floating jellyfish.

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STOP THEM IN THEIR TRACKS



Silly Surprise – (A current favorite at our house) Do something unexpected ex. make a fart noise with your hands over your mouth

Freeze Game – Say, "Freeze!" and have them pause like a statue, then take a deep breath before "unfreezing."

Mystery Voice – Whisper a silly phrase in a mysterious voice and have them guess what you said.

Backwards Talk – Say a simple phrase backward ("Time for a hug" → "hug a for time") and let them decode it.

Animal Switch – Say, "Quick! Act like a sloth (or bunny, turtle, elephant, etc.)!" to redirect their energy.

Shake It Out – Have them shake their arms, legs, and whole body like they're getting the "grumpies" out.

Instant High-Five – Hold up your hand and say, "Quick, high-five me as soft as a cloud... now as fast as a rocket!"

Magic Word Reset – Say, "When I say 'pickle' (or whatever word you pick), we both take a big stretch and let out a deep sigh."

Race to Reset – Challenge them: "Can you take 3 big jumps and land like a superhero before I count to 5?"

Rainbow Hunt – Ask them to find something red, then orange, then yellow, etc., to shift focus.

Tactile Reset – Hand them something interesting to feel, like a cold washcloth, a soft stuffed animal, or a squishy toy.

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SELF-REGULATION IS A LEARNED SKILL. KIDS AREN'T BORN KNOWING HOW TO CALM THEMSELVES—THEY NEED GUIDANCE AND PRACTICE.

Relaxation techniques help kids regain control. Strategies like movement, breathing, and sensory activities can calm their bodies and minds. For more tips on sensory needs, emotional regulation, toileting, feeding and so much more, follow [OccupiedOTMom](#) on Instagram.

This mini guide is a part of something bigger in the works. So, stay tuned!
-Christina

PLEASE REMEMBER:



Connection is essential. Doing these activities with your child makes them more effective and strengthens your bond.

Different kids need different approaches. Experiment with various techniques to find what works best for your child.

All feelings are okay. It's normal for kids to feel mad, sad, or overwhelmed, and they need safe ways to work through them.

No single strategy works every time. Kids respond differently depending on their mood and environment, so variety is key.

Practice calming strategies when kids are calm—learning them in neutral moments makes them easier to use when upset.

Helping kids regulate emotions takes patience, but consistency builds lifelong coping skills.