

# COPING SKILLS



# BELLY BREATHING



**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger

**What is it?** Belly breathing is a special way of controlling your breathing that can help you relax, feel better and help your body to work its best.

**What do I need?** You really don't need any tools but yourself to make this work, but some things that may help are:

- A comfortable place.
- Your hand.
- Items such as a book, a pinwheel, bubbles or a harmonica.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry or are in pain. You can use it when you first notice these feelings, while you have these feelings or after the feelings to help keep them away.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things.
- Try to practice 2-3 times per day. In order for this to work at stressful times, you must practice breathing techniques frequently when you are calm. By becoming aware of your breathing and learning to use belly breathing it will become more natural and automatic.

## **How do I do it?**

1. Get into a comfortable position and let all of your muscles be soft and loose.
2. Imagine that your belly is a balloon and that right now it's deflated.
3. Put your hand on top of your belly.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose while you count to 3. Feel the balloon fill with air as it raises the hand on your belly.
5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth while you count to 5. Feel the balloon get flat as the hand on your belly lowers.
6. Try to breathe out for longer (5-6 seconds) than you breathe in (3-4 seconds.)
7. Imagine that the uncomfortable feelings leave your body as you breathe out.

### Tips:

- To check whether you are doing belly breathing or chest breathing, you may find it helpful to place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. The hand on your belly should be moving up and down while the hand on your chest shouldn't move at all.
- Some kids might want to lie down on the floor with a small toy, book or paper cup on their belly. With each breath, the object should move up and down.
- While you are exhaling slowly, you can:
  - Keep a pinwheel spinning for 3-4 seconds.
  - Blow out through the straw part of a pinwheel (take the top off) to help slow down your breathing.
  - Blow long, slow streams of bubbles from a bubble wand.
  - Hold a note while blowing on a harmonica for 3- 4 seconds.

**How can this help me?** Breathing calms the mind and produces a state of relaxation in your body. This is because when you breathe deeply, the message "calm down and relax" gets sent your brain. Then your brain sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as a fast heart rate and quick breathing, all decrease as you breathe deeply. For example, Belly Breathing relaxes your muscles, calms your nerves and helps release chemicals (called endorphins) in your body that reduce pain.

# GUIDED IMAGERY



**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Fatigue

**What is it?** Guided Imagery is a tool that helps your body by letting your mind take you to healthy places that feel good. It uses your imagination to change your thoughts by focusing on your senses (sound, vision, smell, taste, touch, movement.) It's like daydreaming – when your mind begins to wander and you imagine that you are doing something fun. You can decide what to think about and what to imagine and the best part is that your brain will listen.

**What do I need?** The main things you need are your brain and your imagination. Other things you may use:

- A favorite memory or pictures of things you like doing or places you wish you could be.
- A favorite smell or scent.
- A CD with a visualization or imagery script.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry, worried or are in pain.
- You can use it during times you wish you could go or be somewhere else because you are uncomfortable.

## How do I do it?

1. Close your eyes.
2. Take 3-5 deep belly breaths (see card #1: Belly Breathing.)
3. It's time to imagine you are going to your special place. Where would you like to go? If you could be anywhere in the world at this moment, where would you be? At the beach with family, out with friends, at a sports game, somewhere feeling healthy?
4. When you have picked out a place, picture yourself there. Through your mind, you can be at this place as if this were really happening.
5. Use all of your daydreaming skills and think about every little thing that makes this place and experience just as you like it.
  - a. What do you see?
  - b. What does it smell like?
  - c. What does it taste like?
  - d. What sounds do you hear?

- e. What do things that you can touch feel like?  
f. How does your body feel as it moves (or rests) just the way you want it to?
6. Be aware of how comfortable your body feels when you are imagining yourself in this place. You may notice your breathing slow down and your muscles feel looser as your whole body starts to relax.

**Tips:**

- A favorite smell or scent can make your imagination activity more enjoyable and bring your special place to life. Using a special scent before or during the imagery activity can help you to feel even more comfortable and relaxed.
- Sometimes people find it difficult to do this imagination activity on their own. If this is the case for you, you may be able to use a photograph or a picture from a book or the computer to help jump start your imagination. It may be helpful to have someone, like your mom or dad, lead you through this activity. Or maybe you already have a CD that describes a special, relaxing place to you. You can listen to this CD and use it to help your mind picture yourself there. Or, if you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can loan you a CD.

**How can this help me?** Have you noticed that when you think about sad stuff you feel sad or when you think about things you are worried about you feel nervous or when you actually think about your pain, you hurt more? Fortunately, just like your body and brain listen to you when you are thinking about bad stuff you can start to think about good stuff to feel better. Usually when you think about good stuff, you start to feel better and more comfortable. It's like changing the channel on your TV to something you really want to watch or turning the volume up or down in your body to a level that is more comfortable for you. If you're sad or afraid, your mind can bring you to places that feel happy and calm. If you have pain, for example, your mind can help you picture yourself comfortable and relaxed. You can find the places in your mind where you're in control of your body and where you feel happy and relaxed.

# JOURNALING



**Helps with:** Everything.

**What is it?** You can use a journal or computer to write about your experiences. It's a way to get your thoughts and feelings out. You can keep these writings to look back on yourself or to share with others. Or you can tear them up or delete them right away. It doesn't matter what you do because the most important part is just to release the feelings and better understand them for yourself.

**What do I need?** A piece of paper and a pen or pencil is all you need. However, other things you might want to use are:

- A special notebook.
- A computer.
- An audio or video recorder.
- Crayons or markers, stickers, pictures.
- If you are in the hospital, the Child Life department can provide you with a notebook, computer or crayons/markers and stickers.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- When you can't seem to get things off your mind.
- When you are feeling scared, nervous, upset, sad or angry about something.
- When you want to share with others about what is going on with you.
- When you are excited about something that just happened or is about to happen.
- When you want to encourage, help or inspire others.

## **How do I do it?**

1. You can write, type, draw or even talk about your thoughts and feelings.
2. Be open and honest.
3. Consider writing about an upsetting emotional experience, especially if it is something that you haven't talked about before.
4. It is helpful to keep a balanced view, writing about both the positive and negative feelings you are having.
5. You can tell about the lessons or things you've learned through a particular experience. What would you want other kids who are going through the same thing to know? Who knows, maybe you or someone else might learn from your experience.

6. You can also talk about things you are looking forward to, things you are proud of, or goals for your future.
7. Try not to spend too much time writing about the details of the situation. Writing about your feelings is what really pays off. Really let go and explore your deepest thoughts and feelings about this experience. As you are writing, you may discover ways that this experience connects with past situations, feelings or relationships.
8. If you can, try to journal for about 15 minutes each day for 10 days and then twice weekly for the next month. You can write about the same experience for several days or about different emotional experiences each day.

### Tips:

- Remember that at first you might find it upsetting to write about some topics or experiences. But those feelings will usually settle down within a day or two. Often, after only a few days of writing, many people find surprising and unexpected insights that can lead to important changes in the way you feel from day-to-day.
- A special notebook can hold all of your experiences. Place this somewhere you will always know where it is so you are never searching around the house for paper.
- If you don't like writing with a pen and paper, using a computer for keeping an electronic journal may be the way to go for you. You may also consider blogging (but remember, blogs are not private and you are sharing your information with the world.)
- Another option if you don't like writing with a pen and paper is to use an audio or video recorder for a media journal.
- Some people draw in their journal to express their feelings through art. If this sounds like you, grab some crayons, markers or color pencils and add drawings to your journal.
- You may want pictures, photographs or stickers to add to your journal entries to fully capture the experience in a way that is meaningful to you.

**How can this help me?** Getting your feelings out, as you can through journaling, can help you to better understand the problems you are dealing with and to find good solutions that can help you feel better. Did you also know that stress from any part of life (including school, friends, and family) has an effect on our physical health? Research shows that the effect of stress on our health is the biggest when these issues and feelings are not directly expressed. So, finding a way to “get your feelings out” cannot only help with your feelings but also with your physical health.



# GETTING ACTIVE

**Helps with:** Pain, Sleeping, Fatigue, Sadness, Anger, Anxiety or Worries, Improving Health

**What is it?** Getting active means exercising or moving your body.

**What do I need?** Depending on the activity you choose, some things can be done without any tools.

(If you have any medical problems, talk to your doctor first about what activities are safe for you.)

- Have comfortable athletic shoes that fit well.
- Make sure to use protective equipment (like a helmet for bike riding or skateboarding.)
- Some activities require special equipment (like a bike, a football, baseball and mitt, music for dancing, a DVD for yoga, just to name a few.)

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime.
- When you are bored or tired.
- When you have extra energy.
- When you are sad or nervous about something.
- When you are angry and need to blow off some steam.

**What can I do?** There are so many ways to be active. The possibilities are endless.

- Go for a walk.
- Ride your bike.
- Jump rope.
- Go for a swim.
- Do yoga.
- Go rollerblading.
- Go hiking.
- Play a sport with friends, like basketball, soccer, kickball or tennis.
- Wii Fit games.
- Dance
- Do housework or chores.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator (little changes help in big ways over time.)

- If you are in the hospital, talk to your doctor about what you can do to stay active while hospitalized.

### **How do I do it?**

1. Try different activities to figure out what you enjoy doing. It will be easier to make things that you like to do a part of your routine.
2. Start out slowly, especially if you haven't been active in a while.
3. Slowly increase the amount of time you spend doing your enjoyable activities.
4. Notice how great it feels as your body gets stronger and stronger.
5. Work your way up to exercising 3 times per week for at least 30 minutes.

### **Tips:**

- Ask a family member to get active with you. Ask a friend to be your exercise buddy. This can help you get motivated, makes exercise more fun and give you time to spend time with others.

**How can this help me?** Research shows that physical activity can help you feel stronger, have more energy, sleep better, improve mood, improve memory and concentration, decrease pain, decrease stress and improve health in general.



# TALK BACK TO YOURSELF

**Helps with:** Pain, Fatigue, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Sadness, Frustration

**What is it?** Talking back to yourself (also known as positive self-talk) is a way to change your thoughts to be more positive, hopeful and optimistic, even when it seems impossible to do because you are going through such a tough time.

**What do I need?** Just yourself and your amazing brain! Some things that may help are:

- Pictures of people, quotes or other things that inspire you and make you feel good.
- Someone who is very positive or who you like to be around.
- A notebook.
- You can find a variety of inspirational quotes online or in books (check your library or bookstore). You can ask your parents or Child Life Specialist for help.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- Do this anytime you want to feel better. You can use it when you are feeling nervous, stressed, tired, crabby, frustrated, sad, angry or are in pain.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things. Try using these thoughts before a situation that makes you nervous, stressed or uncomfortable to make it easier to face and get through it.
- You can use it at home, in school, with friends, during a sporting event or practice, at the doctor's office or at the hospital.

## **How do I do it?**

1. In your mind, tell yourself positive things about what has happened, is currently happening or will happen in the future.
2. Make positive statements about yourself to yourself.
3. Catch yourself when you are thinking negative thoughts and STOP (it may help to think of a big stop sign whenever you catch yourself thinking negatively.)

4. Tell yourself that something good will happen or that things will go well.  
You'll see that if you think it, it is more likely to happen.
5. You are your best cheerleader. Some things you can say to yourself are:
  - a. I can do this. I've been through harder things than this!
  - b. I am refreshed, energized and ready to go!
  - c. I can shrink my pain. I can turn down the volume on my pain.
  - d. I can relax. I can feel good.
  - e. I will be ok.

### Tips:

- Photographs of people, quotes or other things that inspire you can help you to think of positive things to say to yourself and to feel more hopeful.
- Someone who is very positive or who you like to be around can help you to think more positively. When talking to someone who has an optimistic view, you can start to gain some of their energy and see things more positively. When talking to someone who you trust, they can help to challenge some of your negative thoughts and help you to reframe those thoughts in a more positive and hopeful way.
- You may want to use a notebook or journal to write down your favorite quotes or the positive thoughts that work the best for you. It may help to think about what negative thoughts pop into your head most often, then write down the opposite thought. Focus on that thought and practice saying it to yourself.

### How can this help me?

Have you ever found yourself thinking that things are going to go badly? Because you have already decided that things aren't going to work out, you may actually behave in ways that make it more likely the situation will turn out poorly. These negative or pessimistic thoughts can make you feel tense, nervous and upset. They may even cause you to not try your best. When this happens and it's your time to do your thing, it's hard for your body to make things go well. When we are tense, stressed, upset or expecting bad things to happen, we feel pain more strongly and can feel sicker.

Your brain listens to your body and your body listens to your brain. We know that if you think about something, you can make your body do it – like kicking a ball or doing homework. During positive self-talk, you tell your mind to think positively. Because focusing on positive things and the feeling of hopefulness that good things will happen, you can also increase the likelihood that positive things will happen. You will also feel better when doing this. This works even if you are not sure you believe it.

# GIVING THANKS



**Helps with:** Worries, Anger, Sadness, Frustration, Boredom

**What is it?** Being thankful for what you have, things that have happened to you or for the people in your life.

## What do I need?

- Paper and a pen or pencil.
- A journal or notebook.
- Markers, stickers, scrapbook supplies.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this anytime you want to feel better. You can use it when you are feeling stressed, crabby, frustrated, sad or angry.
- You can even use these activities when you are feeling fine in order to remember all the great things about your life.

## How do I do it?

1. Write a letter to someone who has been very nice to you, but you haven't said thank you to yet.
  - Give or mail this letter to the person. Or you can read it to them in person or over the telephone.
2. Write three good things that happen to you each day.
  - Keep doing this everyday for one week.
  - Some examples are you made a new friend, you feel healthy, you got to do your favorite activity or you did well on a test at school.
  - Be sure to write about what caused the good thing to happen or why it happened. For example, did you meet a new friend because you said hello or tried a new activity? Did you do well on a test because it's a subject you are really good at or because you studied a lot?
3. Send someone kind thoughts. Write down all the things you wish for someone. Send these kind thoughts to someone in your home and then to someone not in your home.

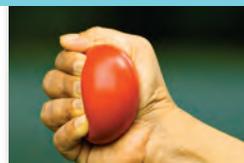


### Tips:

- Markers, stickers and other scrapbook material can help you to make these thank you cards your own. Decorate them with things that remind you of the person you are thanking or of things that remind you of being thankful in general.
- Keeping a journal of the good things that happen to you over time is a great idea. Try writing in it for one week every month. When you are feeling down, go back and read about all of the good things that have happened to you and how your strength and courage helped it to happen.
- Write down all of your kind thoughts on a big piece of paper or write them on little pieces of paper and place them in a small jar for the other person to read one at a time.

### How can this help me?

Giving thanks activities help you to remember the good things that have happened to you. Telling others that you appreciate them or are thankful for something they have done can help you to feel good. When you focus on the good things instead of the bad things, you feel better. When you feel thankful, you feel happier. If you feel and express thanks often, you may wake up each day feeling more positive and wanting to be around others more.



# MUSCLE RELAXATION

**Helps with:** Sleeping, Anxiety, Worries, Anger, Pain

**What is it?** Squeezing and then relaxing each muscle of your body from head to toe.

**What do I need?** You really don't need any tools but yourself and a comfortable place to make this work. Some other things that may help are:

- A squeeze/stress ball.
- A relaxation script or CD.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## **When to use it?**

- 2-3 times per day to relieve stress or to keep you calm and relaxed.
- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry or upset.
- Before things that make you nervous (like getting a shot.)
- Before, during or after uncomfortable situations like a long medical treatment.

## **How do I do it?**

1. Get into a comfortable position.
2. Start by taking 5-10 belly breaths.
3. Squeeze all of the muscles in your face – eyes, cheeks, nose, forehead—(scrunch up your face). Hold it tight and count to 10. Then let go of the tightness and feel the muscles in your face melt into relaxation.
4. Now do the same thing with each muscle in your body working your way down from your face:
  - a. Jaw (clench your teeth, bite down like you have a jawbreaker in your mouth.)
  - b. Shoulders and neck (lift your shoulders up to your ears.)
  - c. Back (arch your back and try to touch your shoulders together.)
  - d. Stomach (make your stomach hard like a rock.)
  - e. Arms (lift your arms up to the ceiling or squeeze them against your body.)
  - f. Hands (pretend you're are squeezing something tight in your hand.)
  - g. Legs.
  - h. Feet and toes.

5. Imagine a nice feeling of warmth or heaviness moving through our body as you relax the muscles.
6. Notice the difference between how your body and muscles feel when they are tight and when they are loose and relaxed. Do you feel like a stiff robot when you are tight? Do you feel like an old, sloppy stuffed animal or a wet, cooked string of spaghetti when you are loose and relaxed?

### **Tips:**

- Use your stress ball each time you are supposed to make your muscles tight, especially when you are focusing on the muscles in your arms and hands or squeezing all of the muscles in your body at the same time.
- If this is hard for you to do on your own, ask your mom or dad to lead you through a muscle relaxation exercise. Maybe you and your parents can put your heads together to imagine situations that can help you to tighten your muscles. For example, pretending you have a jawbreaker in your mouth can help you to tighten your jaw or pretending that you are a turtle and need to pull your head into your shell can help you to tighten your shoulders and neck.

### **How can this help me?**

The muscles in your body can all get very tight when you are stressed, worried and angry. When you are in pain in one area of your body, you also may notice that the muscles in other areas of your body get tight. When you squeeze a muscle as tight as you can and then let it go, it actually relaxes your muscle more than it was before. Your muscle actually does not have a choice—when you make a muscle tight and then let that tightness go, it has to relax. This is great because it gives us a little bit of control over the state of our bodies. After you tighten and relax your muscles, the muscle may feel warm and tingly afterward which is just a sign that it is letting go of the tension and relaxing. When you do this to all the muscle groups in your body, your whole body will feel relaxed.

Relaxed muscles need less oxygen. When your muscles are relaxed, your breathing will slow down and your heart will beat slower. And this all works together to help you feel calm and relaxed.



# PAY IT FORWARD

**Helps with:** Sadness, Loneliness, Boredom

**What is it?** Being kind to another person or animal that could use a helping hand. Volunteer with a group or organization.

## What do I need?

- Paper and a pen or pencil.
- A journal or notebook.
- Markers, stickers, scrapbook supplies.

*See the tips section to see how these items can help.*

## When to use it?

- Do this any time you want to feel better and happier about yourself. You can do it when you are feeling sad and lonely or even angry.
- You can also use these activities when you notice someone else around you needs help or is feeling down.

## How do I do it?

1. Look around your community and find an organization or a person that could use a helping hand.
2. Help them even though they are not expecting it and you will not get any payment or reward for it.
3. Examples of things you could do **outside** the hospital:
  - Donate food to a food bank.
  - Read a book to a younger sibling or friend.
  - Visit a senior citizens center to brighten their day.
  - Organize some friends to help clean up trash in your neighborhood, school or park.
  - Bring a meal or treat to someone who is sick.
  - Offer to babysit for a parent who needs to work late.
  - Help with yard work for an elderly neighbor.
  - Volunteer to walk your neighbor's dog.
  - Volunteer at a local community organization.
  - Put change in someone else's parking meter.
4. Examples of things you could do **inside** the hospital:
  - Cheer someone up in the play room by offering to play a game together.
  - Make a card for another patient to help brighten their day.



### Tips:

- If you want a little extra inspiration, try watching the movie “Pay it Forward” (PG-13) with Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Haley Joel Osment.
- Some acts of kindness have motivated other people to pay it forward too. For instance, there was a news story about a person who paid for the next person in line’s coffee at a coffee shop. That person then chose to keep the sharing going and paid for the person behind her who paid for the person behind him and so on.

### How can this help me?

Doing an unexpected act of kindness for another person not only helps the other person but makes you feel better by decreasing feelings of sadness and anger and by increasing feelings of happiness, connection and love. It also helps you learn about other people and become more sensitive to their thoughts and feelings.

# ACCUPRESSURE



**Helps with:** Pain, Fatigue, Anxiety, Worries, Nausea

**What is it?** Acupuncture and acupressure are part of the art of the traditional Chinese medicine system that has been used for more than 5000 years. In Chinese medicine the body is viewed as having channels or pathways where energy travels. When there are problems in the body, these channels don't function well and the energy gets stuck like a traffic jam. This is when symptoms like pain or nausea occur. Applying pressure to specific points on the body will open the channels and help your energy flow smoothly. This can help pain, nausea and anxiety go away. For example, if you feel nauseous, there is a very powerful point on your wrist that can make you feel better just by pushing on it.

**What do I need?** Just yourself, although, you might want to ask someone else (like your mom or dad) to help.

- Acupressure points can be turned on by applying pressure to them with a finger.

## When to use it?

- As often as possible—the great thing about this is that you can't do it too much.
- Do it before symptoms start, during the symptoms and after you feel better.
- Begin before any procedure or receiving medical treatment (i.e., chemo.)
- Use it to prevent stress, anxiety, nausea or pain—any time you want to feel more relaxed.

## How do I do it?

1. Breathing and pressure are important parts of opening the energy channels.
  - Pick the appropriate pressure point and take 3 deep breaths before you start.
  - If someone is applying the pressure for you, take the deep breaths together.
  - Close your eyes and imagine something that flows smoothly like water.
  - Apply pressure with a gentle circular motion for about one minute.
  - Take 3 more deep breaths and repeat.
2. Specific pressure points on the body are activated to help with different types of symptoms
  - Ears: You can treat pain in your tummy by rubbing your ears. Remember start with your 3 big breaths! Bring your thumb and finger together at the top of your ear. Gently rub massaging in a downward motion to your earlobe. If you find a spot that feels really good, keep rubbing it. This is your body telling you where it wants some attention.

- **Tips of the finger & toes:** The most powerful points to activate the flow of energy are located in the tips of your fingers and toes. Did you know that when people bite their nails they are moving stuck energy by activating these points? Start with your 3 big breaths. Gently rub the tips of all five fingers and all five toes. If one of these points feels really good, stick with it. Your body is telling you "That's the spot".
- **For Pain:** A main point for pain control is located in the webbing between the thumb and index finger. Bring your thumb and finger together and notice the top of the area that protrudes. Start with your 3 big breaths. Pinch the webbing between your thumb and index finger together with a gentle but firm pressure for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat as needed. This point is very helpful for headaches.
- **For Nausea:** The main point is located on the underside of your forearm. To find it measure two finger widths down from the middle of your wrist crease. The point is located between the two tendons in the middle of your forearm. (Tendons are the bands you can see when you wiggle your wrist). It is important to use your child's fingers when measuring to find the point.
- **For Anxiety:** One point for anxiety is between your eyebrows. To activate this point, close your eyes, place your palms together, bring your hands up toward your face. Press on the point with the tips of your middle and index fingers. Take slow deep breaths and hold this pose for a minute. You will feel calm and relaxed.

### **Tips:**

- Remember to keep practicing this regularly, even when you are feeling healthy, so that you're comfortable with it. Practicing and being comfortable with acupressure will also help it to work better when you need it, like when you are in pain.

**How can this help me?** According to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, acupuncture regulates the flow of vital energy through the body. It is believed that each acupressure point is connected through your nervous system to a place in your brain that is in charge of a specific symptom (like headaches, nausea.) Pressing on these spots helps the body to make feel-good chemicals (endorphins) to ease the not-so-good feelings. Applying pressure to these points also relaxes muscles and allows better blood flow, which helps oxygen and nutrients move through your body and helps your immune system work better too. Research to test scientific theories about how acupuncture might work to relieve pain is under way.

# AROMATHERAPY



**Helps with:** Stress, Pain, Anxiety, Fatigue, Sleep

**What is it?** Have you ever noticed how a special smell can bring back memories? Scents can be very powerful and affect our moods and feelings. For example, how do you feel when you walk into a kitchen and smell chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven? Even if it was a stressful day, you probably felt more relaxed and cozy after being greeted by that smell, right? That is the power of aromatherapy. Certain scents can make us feel better—for example they can make us feel sleepy, relaxed or alert. In aromatherapy, the scents come from essential oils that are made from different plants like lavender, peppermint and orange. There are many different types of essential oils; each has a different scent and effect on the body. These oils can be smelled or dispersed in a room by a special device called a diffuser.

**What do I need?** You may wish to consult with a clinician who specializes in aromatherapy. However, you don't have to meet with an aromatherapy specialist or use essential oils in order to enjoy the benefits of scent on your own feelings of well-being. Consider natural ways to use specific smells to help you feel better and experience the benefits of these commonly used aromatherapy scents. For example:

- A fresh lemon or orange.
- A sprig of spearmint.
- A few stems of lavender.
- Any other item that produces a smell you enjoy and find helpful.

## **When to use it?**

- We recommend you use inhaled essential oils up to 6 times daily.
- Use it before symptoms start, during the symptoms and/or after you feel better.
- They can be used when you are in getting ready for bed to help with sleep.
- Use them throughout the day to prevent stress, anxiety or pain.

**How do I do it?** Everyone is different and each person may find a different scent that works best for them. Try a few different smells in order to see what works best for you. Below are common scents frequently used to help specific symptoms:

- Pain: lavender, sweet orange, peppermint.
- Insomnia: sweet orange, lavender.
- Worries/Anxiety: lavender, sweet orange.
- Fatigue: lemon, peppermint.



### Tips:

- Aromatherapy can work very well when used together with belly breathing and guided imagery.
- You may need to try different smells to find the right one that works for your body.

**How can this help me?** The idea of aromatherapy is that smelling essential oils activates the part of the brain connected to smell—the olfactory system. Then it sends a signal to the part of the brain that controls emotions and connects to memories (limbic system). This causes chemicals to be released which make the person feel relaxed, calm or stimulated.

Many patients and their families have found aromatherapy to be helpful. Scientific research has also shown some benefits and more research is underway to better understand the possible benefits.

**Are there any risks of aromatherapy?** Aromatherapy is considered quite safe when the essential oils are properly diluted by a trained professional. Using aromatherapy by smelling the essential oil has no known side effects. It is important to always use as instructed. Concentrated essential oils may be poisonous if swallowed and should be handled with care. **Don't ever drink an essential oil.** We recommend only using aromatherapy with children who are at least 6 years old.

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