

Cortisol is a hormone, which is raised during times of stress and makes us feel alert and awake. It naturally reduces at night so that we can sleep. If your child is anxious at bedtime, their cortisol levels will be raised, and they will find it difficult to sleep. Please see our "Anxiety and fear" advice sheet for more information and try the relaxation techniques below.

Squeeze and release

Read this script slowly to your child:



1. Get comfortable in bed and lie on your back.
2. Gently close your eyes and lay your hands by your sides, palms facing upwards. Breathe slowly.
3. Now squeeze your toes together as tightly as you can. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
4. Tighten your leg muscle. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
5. Squeeze your bottom cheeks together tightly. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
6. Pull your stomach muscles in tightly. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
7. Clench your hands together to make tight fists. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
8. Tighten your arm muscles together. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
9. Pull your shoulders up till they are close to your ears. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and then relax.
10. Screw all the muscles in your face tightly together. Hold for a few seconds and then relax.



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4-7-8 breathing (It is best to do this together at first so that you can model the breathing for your child)

1. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4.
3. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
4. Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for a count of 8, making a whoosh sound.
5. Repeat this cycle three more times.



Other Ideas

- Dim the lights and play relaxing music when the bedtime routine starts. It is important to turn the music off when your child is awake so that they don't come to rely on it to fall asleep.
- Massage may help your child relax.
- Ask your child to tell you '3 Good Things' from their day before they go to sleep to end the day positively. You can also share your 3 with them too.
- Stretching and yoga before bed may aid relaxation.