

Practice the PAUSE



Helping children understand their emotions and build resilience in the face of trauma or loss.

Ages 5-12

COVID-19 is more than just a virus. COVID-19 is a natural disaster.

When we think of natural disasters, we think of hurricanes, tornados, or earthquakes, but our minds and bodies react the same way to any disaster—even a pandemic. These are traumatic experiences.

Anger. Confusion. Difficulty concentrating or remembering. Worry. Sadness. Frustration.

These are normal responses to an abnormal situation.

These tips can help parents or caretakers teach children ways to identify their emotions during these periods of stress and take more control over their reactions to these emotions.



What is the pause?

The pause is the moment between feeling something and reacting to it.

Kira Mauseth, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist who specializes in disaster behavioral health, developed a series of skills models (trainings) to teach how to better manage emotions.

- The **COPE** model focuses on changing thoughts (thinking)
- The **CALM** model focuses on changing actions (doing)
- The **CARE** model focuses on changing how you want to live (being)

The key to each of these models is to pause, recognize what you are feeling, think about why you're feeling that way, and choose a different thought, action, or behavior. Learn more about the COPE, CALM, and CARE skills models at practicethepause.org.





COPE: THINKING SKILLS

Using our minds in ways that help us feel better

Key concepts for COPE:

Helping kids learn how to change their thinking, establish healthy patterns, and create a greater sense of control.

Explain to children:

- If your thoughts make you feel sad or angry, what are some things you can think about that help you have different feelings?
- The trick to changing a 'bad' thought into a 'good' thought is just to find a little bit of a different thought. It doesn't have to be something wonderful or even happy—just different.

Example:

Instead of - "I'll never see my friends again."

Think - "When the pandemic is over, I will go swimming with my friends."

Sometimes, imagining a special place where you feel safe and calm can help you feel that way when your worry thoughts take over.

COPE activity for kids age 10 and older:



Go to a Special Place

Help kids to **imagine and then describe** a physical place - their room, the beach, a special fort, or any other place where they usually feel calm and safe.

Language to use:

- Tell me about a place that you feel safe and calm—maybe your room, or a special fort, or place you have visited?
- Describe what you see, hear, and smell.
- When your **angry or worry** thoughts start to take over, take a break from them by going to this place in your mind. Imagine all the things about the place that you just told me, take some deep breaths, and give yourself a few minutes. Then, after you feel better, go back to what you were doing.
- Learning how to control what you are thinking about will help you feel much better!





CALM: DOING SKILLS

Learn to regulate and control the way our bodies respond to emotions and stress

Key concepts for CALM:

Helping kids learn how to regulate their bodies with deep breathing and muscle relaxation.

CALM activities for kids ages 5-12:

GET ACTIVE!



Bubble Breath - Breathing Exercise

Tell children to imagine they have a birthday cake in front of them. Ask them to slowly smell the imaginary dessert by inhaling through their nose for a count of four—then as slowly as they can, breathe out through their mouth and imagine blowing out all the candles.

Another fun way to master our response to anxiety is to imagine blowing bubbles. Encourage deep breathing with these instructions:

1. Breathe slowly in through your nose, feel the air fill your lungs and expand your lungs toward your tummy. Push your tummy out as your lungs fill up with air.
2. Slowly count to three and then imagine you're blowing a bubble and slowly blow all the air out from your lungs for another count of three.
3. Blow out slowly and steadily and try to blow the biggest bubble you can.

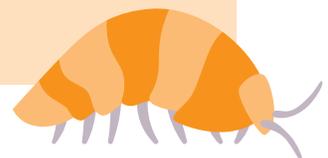
It is impossible to blow a big bubble without slowing down your breathing and breathing deeply. Be sure to pause for a few seconds between bubble breaths.



Grow & Scrunch - Muscle Relaxation

A fun way to teach kids muscle relaxation is to have kids mimic the movements of a bug.

1. Lie on the floor.
2. Hug your knees to your chest making a tight ball—like a roly-poly bug.
3. Stay as tight as a bug for five seconds, then unroll, stretch, and let your arms and legs flop to the floor.
4. Try being a bug anytime you feel bad and it can help you feel better!





CARE: BEING SKILLS

Reminding us of our connection to people who care about us and how good it feels to be part of something bigger

Key concepts for CARE:

Helping kids learn to recognize the importance of connecting to other people and ideas and being a healthy, positive community member.

Help children find ways to connect to other kids, adults, or even pets. Encourage them to spend time each day talking, sharing, and learning about other people and important ideas.

For older kids:

- Ask them about social causes or issues important to them and how they may get involved.
- Encourage them to talk to a parent, caregiver, teacher, or other adult about these ideas.
- Suggest ideas such as raising money for a cause, collecting food for a food bank or food drive, or writing notes to people who live in long-term care facilities.

For younger kids:

- Introduce books, art, and other media that helps kids learn about their community.

Talk to children about what is happening in terms they can understand.

Let children know when unexpected things happen, it can make us feel really uncomfortable.

- Our bodies and brains are having to make all kinds of changes right now, and changes are hard for everyone!
- When we feel uncomfortable, we may also feel sad, angry, or confused.
- This is normal and we ALL have these feelings.

The **COPE THINKING SKILLS**, **CALM DOING SKILLS**, and **CARE BEING SKILLS** give us tools we can use to feel better, stronger, and happier!



Practice the PAUSE

Want to learn more about how to manage
your emotions and stress at any age?

Find additional resources and
downloadable tools at:

practicethepause.org

Practice the Pause is based on the COPE, CALM, and CARE skills models developed by Kira Mauseth, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Snohomish Psychology Associates Senior Instructor, Psychology, Seattle University. They have been adapted for public use by Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health.



**DOWNLOAD TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN, TEENS,
AND ADULTS AT [PRACTICETHEPAUSE.ORG](https://practicethepause.org)**