

Helping your child unwind for better sleep

Why It's Important

Just like adults, children and teens sometimes experience stress and anxiety that interferes with their ability to fall and stay asleep. Helping them learn to relax is essential for promoting restful sleep and nurturing their overall well-being.

Tips for Supporting Children and Teens

The following Muscle Magic Tool outlines an effective progressive muscle relaxation exercise.

We recommend practicing it nightly to teach your child to calm their mind and body before bedtime.

Sleep may pose unique challenges for neurodivergent individuals and those with disabilities, including delays in circadian rhythms (the body's alarm clock), fluctuations in melatonin production, medication side effects, and difficulties with habits and behaviors. Here are additional strategies to consider to support your child's sleep routine:

Ensure they get enough movement and exposure to sunshine throughout the day to assist with natural sleep/wake cycles.

Try to keep them from spending time in bed during the day, so their brain only associates their bed with sleep.

Encourage them to put away electronics, shut off anything noisy, and limit beverages 1 to 2 hours before bedtime.

Help them prepare for the following day early in the afternoon.

Build a consistent bedtime routine, so their body and brain will recognize the steps and prepare for rest at the right time.

Muscle Magic: Relax Your Body and Brain

Tightening your muscles and then letting them loosen slowly can help your body and brain feel more relaxed. Use this Muscle Magic Tool at bedtime or anytime you need to calm down.

For each area of your body, squeeze your muscles and hold them tight for 10 seconds. Then, relax your muscles, breathe in and out for 10 seconds, and move on to the next area. If any part of your body hurts, just skip it. Imagine you're turning your body from dry, stiff pasta into cooked, wiggly pasta!

Step 1: Head

Scrunch up your forehead like you're thinking really hard.

Step 2: Eyes

Close your eyes tightly like you're trying to see something far away.

Step 3: Cheeks

Squeeze your cheeks by making a really big smile.

Step 4: Mouth

Tighten your mouth by pressing your lips together.

Step 5: Shoulders

Lift your shoulders up toward your ears, as high as you can.

Step 6: Arms

Make fists with your hands and tighten your arm muscles.

Step 7: Back

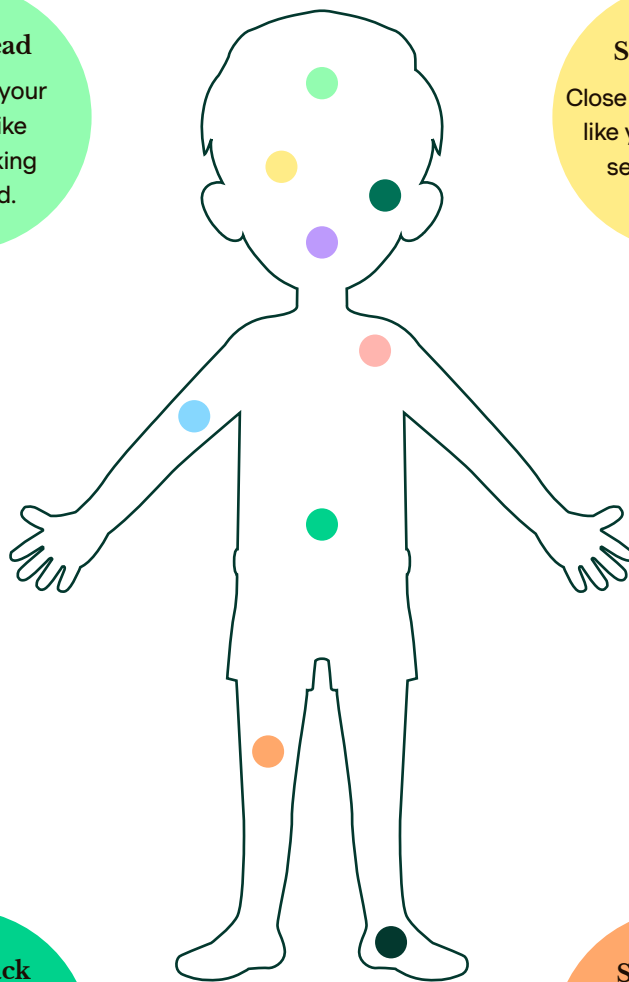
Tighten your lower back muscles by arching your back slightly.

Step 8: Legs

Straighten your legs and point your toes like a ballerina.

Step 9: Feet

Curl your toes like you're holding something with your feet.



*Great job!
Hopefully you're
asleep. (If not, try
it one more time!)*