

School Counsellor Newsletter



The power of breathing

Edition Eighteen

We can all expect to have 'ups and downs' as we adjust to this 'new normal'. Given the restriction on our movements we may have more frequent 'downs', or at least different types of 'downs', to cope with. As parents, it is important we model to our children that having ups and downs is normal, as well as having effective coping strategies. This could therefore be a good opportunity to focus on what I will refer to as our Wellbeing Superpowers. The term superpower is being used as in this context it means, "an exceptional or extraordinary power or ability." As human beings we have many of these - we just need to spend time focusing on them to maximise their benefits.

This newsletter will look at breathing so that you, and your son, can develop this Wellbeing Superpower - not just for the weeks ahead but hopefully beyond that as well. Many teachers at Medbury already incorporate breathing into their teaching and breathing is part of the Aristotle programme across several levels. I have made a teaching resource, similar to this newsletter, available to teachers for the school closure period.

Breathing

We breathe every minute of the day, without even thinking about it. This is a superpower in itself as we need to do this to survive. But we can do so much more. The adult brain needs about 20% of

the oxygen that our lungs breathe in so the better our breathing, the better our brain can work. The average person breathes about 20 000 breaths a day and if we can all start by consciously focusing on just 5 breaths each day, less than 0.1% of our breathing, we can make a positive change for our mind and body.

Eastern cultures have known the power of breathing for thousands of years. They see breathing as not just keeping us alive but as being fundamental to how we relate to our environment. Modern science and research is now able to provide evidence to support what these cultures have always known. To mention just a few of the benefits, slow, deep, regular and rhythmic breathing lowers blood pressure and cortisol (main stress hormone) levels; boosts immunity; calms the digestive tract; assists the removal of toxins from the body; and improves both physical and psychological health.

If you do not have a regular breathing practice, start by considering the following:

- Your nose is for breathing in (think of your mouth as being for eating not breathing)
- Take slow, conscious, deep breaths - think of it as "belly breathing" or breathing into your belly, not up in your chest or shoulders
- Start with this breathing exercise: 3-4-5 breathing - breathe in for 3 seconds, hold

your breath for 4 seconds and breathe out for 5 seconds. You can use different numbers as suits you. For example, 4-7-8 breathing is often recommended.

Here are some websites that can support you and your son:

[Health Navigator New Zealand: Hikitia te ha - Breathe Easy](#)

[Sparklers: Tummy breathing](#) - have a look at other activities on this site for your son as well.

Don't forget to talk to your son about the breathing tasks he has learned. Getting your son to teach you will hopefully be an easy and rewarding way to develop this skill into your daily practices.

Have fun and breathe well!



Jenelle Hooson

Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the school counsellor can provide please see your son's homeroom teacher or Amos Pilgrim amos.pilgrim@medbury.school.nz.