

Managing Stress Healthfully: Guided Imagery

Parent Activity

Overview

Parents will practice guided imagery, an easy-to-do stress management technique that they can do anywhere and anytime.

Head Start Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) Outcomes:

- #1 Family Well-being
- #2 Positive Parent-Child Relationships
- #4 Families as Learners
- #6 Family Connections to Peers and Community

Supplies

Quiet environment

Steps

Pre-Activity Discussion: The more stress someone has, or the longer stress lasts, the more physical and mental problems it can cause. Stress can lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, an upset stomach, high blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Emotional problems such as depression, panic attacks, or other forms of anxiety and worry happen in people who have too much stress.

A simple technique for dealing with stress in a healthy way is to use your imagination. By moving attention away from stress, you can create a relaxing place in your mind.

Activity Instructions

Read the following to parents:

1. Sit comfortably, close your eyes, and take a couple of deep breaths in and out.
2. Visualize yourself in a calm and relaxing setting - a place such as a nature trail, on a beach, or anywhere that makes you feel calm. Take a couple of deep breaths in and out. I will guide you by asking a couple of questions. You do not need to answer aloud, just use your imagination to create a vivid image in your mind.
3. In your mind, look around - what do you see? Look to your left and to your right. What do you notice? What colors do you see? What objects do you notice? Look down toward your feet. What are you standing on? Look up. What do you see in the sky? Is it bright and sunny or shady and cloudy?
4. In your mind, be very quiet. What do you hear? Is it quiet or loud? Do you hear a breeze, birds, or other people?
5. Take another minute or so to enjoy the calm setting - looking, hearing, seeing, and smelling what is around you.
6. After about 3-5 minutes, have parents slowly bring awareness back by wiggling their toes and fingers. Encourage parents to roll their wrists and ankles and to slowly open their eyes.

Post-Activity Discussion:

Ask: How do you feel? Where did you go in your mind? Do you feel more calm? Do you think this is something you can try on your own when you feel stress?

