

# Anxiety Tools for Kids: Body-Based Calming Tools

Helping children find safety in their bodies during moments of worry

Anxiety lives in the body before it becomes words. These tools work with your child's nervous system — gently guiding it from alarm back to safety. Practice them together during calm moments so they feel familiar when worry arrives.

## Balloon Breathing

Breathe in slowly through the nose, imagining a big balloon filling up in the belly. Then breathe out through the mouth, letting the balloon slowly deflate. Repeat 3–5 times.

*Why it works: Slower exhales signal safety to the nervous system — one of the fastest ways to calm a racing heart.*

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Gently guide your child to notice: 5 things they can see, 4 things they can touch, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, 1 thing they can taste.

*Why it works: This pulls attention back into the present moment and out of the worry spiral.*

## Shake It Out

Encourage your child to shake their hands, arms, and legs for 30–60 seconds. It can feel silly — and that's part of what helps!

*Why it works: Animals shake after stressful events to discharge tension from their bodies. Children can too.*

## Butterfly Tap

Have your child cross their arms over their chest and gently alternate tapping each shoulder — left, right, left, right — while taking slow breaths.

*Why it works: This bilateral movement is deeply calming for an overwhelmed nervous system.*

## Heavy Feet (Grounding)

Ask your child to press their feet firmly into the floor and imagine roots growing down into the earth. Notice the pressure, temperature, and texture beneath their feet.

*Why it works: Grounding through the feet is a surprisingly powerful and quick reset for anxious energy.*

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## Cold Water Reset

Splash cold water on the face or hold a cold glass of water. Simple and fast.

*Why it works: Cold water activates the body's dive reflex, which naturally slows the heart rate. Especially helpful for older children and teens.*

**A gentle reminder:** These tools work best when practiced *before* the hard moments — during calm, playful times with no pressure. You don't need perfect words. Your calm presence *is* the tool.