

RISE & SHINE

RISE NI (NHSCT) PRESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first RISE & Shine newsletter of the 2023-24 school year! If you have received our newsletters in previous years, we hope you found them both informative and beneficial. If you have just signed up to the RISE NI (NHSCT) service for the first time, we are delighted to have you on board! Each term, we will send you a newsletter to provide you with information on developments in RISE NI (NHSCT), along with activity ideas that you will hopefully find useful in your preschool setting. Please feel free to share these with the parents of the children also. As in previous years, every newsletter will have a different focus. This year we are starting with 'Autumn'. We look forward to getting to know you throughout the time ahead!



AS A REMINDER...



WHO ARE WE?

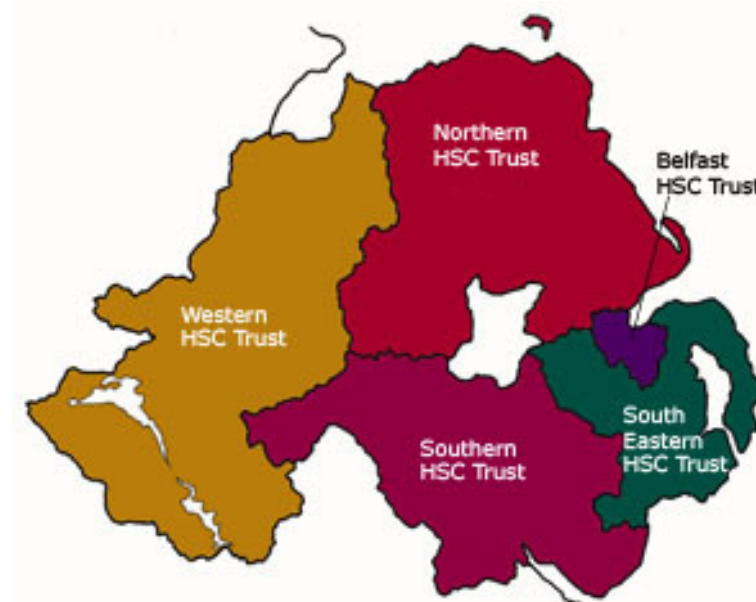


RISE NI stands for Regional Integrated Support for Education NI. We work in mainstream preschools and primaries in the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (NHSCT) area to support staff and children in their preschool year and years 1-4. The service focuses on the following areas:

- social, emotional skills and / or behaviour
- speech, language and communication
- sensory processing, fine motor and visual perception
- gross motor development

Our activity pages will tell you a little more about the professions which target each of these areas.

WHERE ARE WE?



The Northern Health & Social Care Trust covers a large area within Northern Ireland. To manage this, we work across 4 different 'sectors':

- **East Antrim** which covers the Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Larne, and Ballyclare area
- **Antrim/Ballymena** which covers the Crumlin, Antrim, Randalstown, Ballymena area.
- **Causeway** which covers the Ballymoney, Coleraine, Ballycastle area.
- **Mid Ulster** which covers the Portglenone, Maghera, Magherafelt, Cookstown area.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Our regional aim is to support children in schools by working closely with parents and staff to help children develop the foundation skills for learning. We do this through different levels of support - **universal**, **targeted** or **specialist**:

Universal support:
General training, advice and strategies for staff and parents to enhance and enrich the development of all children.

Targeted support:
Targeted advice, consultation, strategies, training, class based and small group programmes.

Specialist support:
Assessment for children with persistent needs who have not responded positively to strategies and support already used in school.

ADVICE AND STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS AND STAFF

Over the summer, we have been busy developing our websites for parents and staff. These now have a specific section for Early Years. This section is full of advice, strategies, videos and training. Feel free to check out the one that is relevant to you via the links or QR codes!

- **RISE NI Education Staff Website** may be found at <https://view.pagetiger.com/RISENI/educationstaff>
- **RISE NI Parent Website** may be found at: <https://view.pagetiger.com/RISENI/parents>.

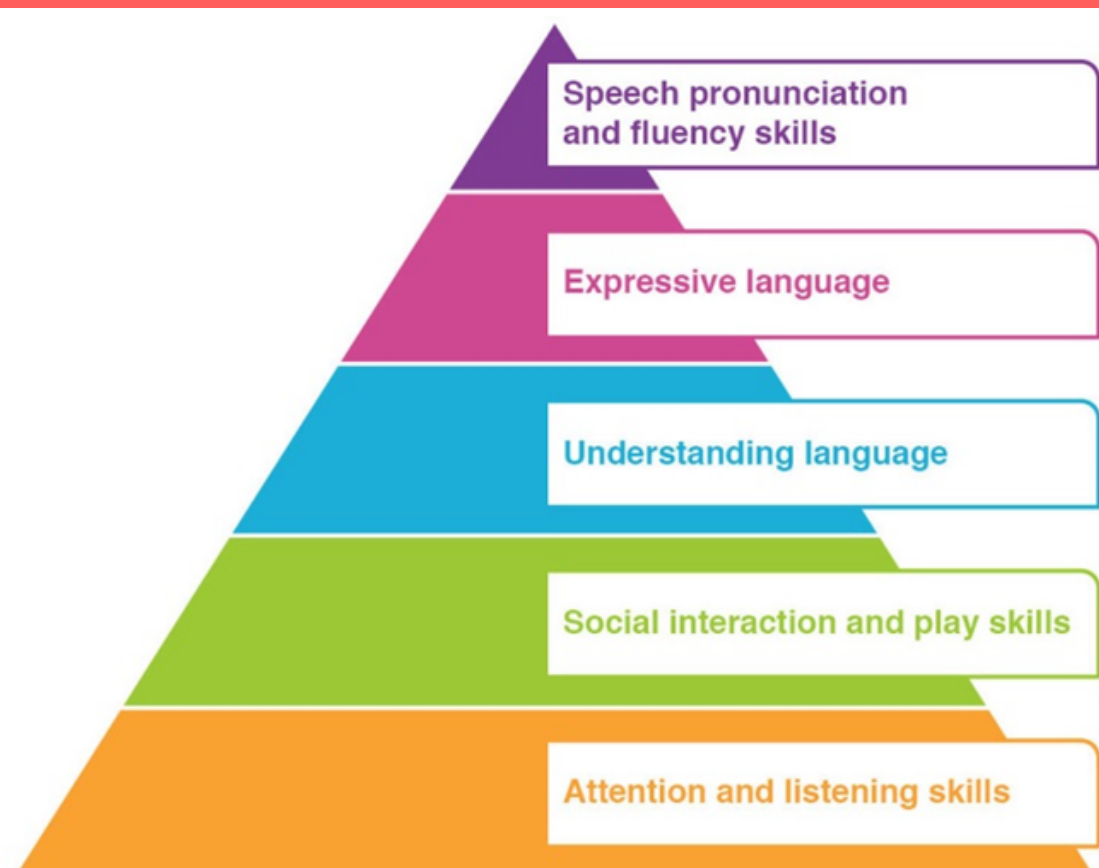


Just so you know, here's what to expect of children in their preschool years...

Look what I can do!

To support the development of these skills, see the RISE NI Preschool Strategy Resource

<p>I'm beginning to control my attention, but can only concentrate on one thing at a time</p>	<p>My attention is two-channelled - I can do a task and understand an instruction at the same time</p>
<p>I understand simple concepts (e.g. on/under, big/little); 'who', 'what', 'where' questions; and two part instructions, e.g. "Get your coat and hat"</p>	<p>I follow simple stories and can understand instructions with concepts like 'first', 'after', 'cold', 'empty', etc.</p>
<p>I use short sentences and ask "Who?", "What?" and "Where?". My grammar is immature (e.g. "Him is smiling"). I link ideas using phrases like "and then...". I enjoy talking and conversation.</p>	<p>I tell long stories and describe pictures using well formed sentences but have problems with plurals and tenses - e.g. "The mouses falled"</p>
<p>My speech is understood by unfamiliar adults, but it's not perfect! I may reduce blends to single sounds, e.g. "poon" for 'spoon'. It's unlikely I'll say "sh", "ch", "j" and "l". My 'k' and 'g' sounds are emerging.</p>	<p>I might blend consonant sounds (e.g. 'bl', 'st'). The 'sh', 'ch', 'j' and 'l' sounds will be emerging. The 'r' and 'th' sounds will still be tricky.</p>
<p>I show and name emotions. I confuse real and "make believe" play. I play with other children and separate from my caregivers more easily. I may struggle with changes in routine or not getting what I want.</p>	<p>I play with others and choose my friends, but may argue with peers. I show imagination and imitate adults. I follow rules, take turns and share. I may test boundaries and demonstrate fears or insecurities. I can be bossy, complain, or name call.</p>
<p>I can walk on a line, stand on one foot and go upstairs using alternate feet. I am beginning to pedal a tricycle and use a scooter. I can build a tower of small blocks; snip paper using scissors; and copy a circle. I can dress myself but need help with fastenings. I can feed myself and toilet independently.</p>	<p>I can walk up and down stairs using alternate feet, jump forward without falling and catch a bounced ball. I have a dominant hand. I can cut on a line continuously, write my name and copy letters. I'm independent with most self care, except fastenings.</p>



Speech and Language Therapists can help develop skills in each of these areas, further information about these areas will be provided in subsequent editions of the newsletter.

WHAT IS RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE?

- This refers to our ability to understand words, sentences and instructions.
- Understanding spoken language requires good attention and listening skills.
- Appropriate receptive language is essential for a child to successfully access the curriculum.
- Firstly, children will understand a wide range of words - names of objects, action words, and concepts e.g. big, heavy, long, fast.
- Secondly, they will understand longer sentences.
- Thirdly, they will understand more complex sentences and short stories.



WHY IS SUPPORTING A CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

It will help and support the child to:

- Take part in the class setting e.g. following instructions, completing activities.
- Communicate appropriately with peers e.g. having a conversation.
- Communicate appropriately with adults e.g. retelling events, sequencing ideas.
- Understand and respond to questions.
- Understand concepts.
- Improve their reading and writing skills.
- Use alternative/augmentative forms of communication e.g. BSL, Makaton, Communication book.
- Promote expressive language development.



ACTIVITIES TO HELP DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE

TREASURE HUNT

Autumn is a great time for collecting treasure and connecting the outdoors with children. A shared experience can help a child remember. Take a bag or basket with you. Items you might collect could be: colourful leaves, conkers, sticks, pinecones. At school display the treasure and talk about it e.g. a big green leaf, find the one that feels smooth, find the one that is rough. On the walk... notice and talk about the different things: squelch in the mud on a rainy day, crunchy leaves, spiders webs. Move in different ways as you walk, take tiny steps or giant leaps. Tell a story as you walk - 'Going on a bear hunt'. Play a game such as 'I spy' e.g. 'I spy something that is brown and shiny'.



BIRDS NEST RECIPE

Make a chocolate nest with the child. Talk about what you might need on the shopping list. Follow the recipe and talk about what comes first/next, use words- smooth/crunchy, ingredients - more/less.

Ingredients:

- 100g cornflakes
- 250g milk chocolate
- 2 Tablespoons golden syrup
- 75g butter
- A bag of mini chocolate eggs or other decoration of choice (optional)



Method:

- Melt chocolate, butter and golden syrup in a bowl; stir until melted and combined
- Place the cornflakes into a mixing bowl and gently pour over the chocolate mixture
- Mix the chocolate mix and cornflakes together with a spoon until they are well coated
- Line the muffin tray with paper cases, and spoon the mixture into each case, using your finger to make a dent in the middle of the nest
- Place in fridge to cool
- Decorate with decoration of choice.

BOOKS - STICK MAN

Look at picture books with the child. Take turns in asking each other questions about the pictures (e.g. Who is in the picture? What is the girl/boy doing?). Try to think about what might happen next in the story and different possible endings.

Stick Man lives in the family tree. One day he goes out for a walk but keeps getting used for different things. Join him on his journey back to the family tree. What will he get used for next? Use the video below to watch Stick Man:

<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/activities/read-and-explore-stick-man/>



Here are three ways to explore the story with the child as you watch together:

- Encourage the child to join in with repeated parts of the story: "I'm Stick Man, I'm Stick Man, I'm Stick Man, that's me."
- Talk about how Stick Man is being used. Ask the child what they might use a stick for or give them some other suggestions.
- Point out the changing seasons in the background of the pictures.



STICK MAN ACTIVITIES



After you have finished the story, try these Stick Man themed activities together:

- Season spotting - go outside to your garden or a nearby outside space. See if you can spot signs of the current season e.g. blossoms on the trees in Spring or orange and brown leaves in Autumn 
- Collecting sticks - see what sticks or other natural materials you can find and collect such as leaves, pebbles or conkers. You could use these to make your very own picture of stick man!
- Rubbings - take some paper and crayons outside with you. Hold the paper onto a tree trunk and rub over the top with the side of a wax crayon. You could also try rubbing over leaves or objects you have at home such as Lego bricks
- Draw your family - talk about who Stick Man lives with in the family tree. Work together to draw the child's family and talk about who each person is 
- Songs and rhymes - talk about the weather in the story and what the weather is like outside today. Sing these rhymes about weather: I Hear Thunder; It's Raining, It's Pouring; I Can Sing a Rainbow.

CLOUD WATCHING

Lie down on your back and look up at the sky. Explore the clouds and the different shapes. Maybe you see a dinosaur or a car. This is a good opportunity to name items, learn new words and explore concepts in different ways e.g. 'fluffy' clouds, 'wet' for rain etc.

CHILDREN DEVELOP SKILLS AT DIFFERENT RATES. BY 4 AND 5 YEARS I SHOULD...

- Understand spoken instructions without stopping what I am doing 
- Take turns in longer conversations
- Understand sentences with 3 important words e.g. 'put the big spoon on the table'
- Understand more complicated words such as 'first', 'last', 'might', 'may be', 'above' and 'in between' 
- Understand words that describe sequences such as "first we are going to the shop, next we will play in the park"

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE EAR INFECTION

Some children may find it hard to hear and understand speech if the sound is muffled. Children who experience hearing loss due to ear infections or glue ear (the build up of fluid in the middle ear) may be more at risk of having speech and/or language difficulties. It is important to get hearing checked.

Signs of possible ear infection include:

- Fluid draining from the ear
- Tugging or pulling at the ear
- Difficulty responding to sounds
- General signs of infection (example: fever, increased crying or fussiness)



The child:

- Does not respond to loud sounds (example: startle)
- Does not turn head to look towards sounds by four to six months
- Does not react to the sound of your voice by three months
- Needs to sit very close to a sound source
- Turns the volume up on devices.

SENSORY MOTOR & PERCEPTUAL

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

Occupational therapists (OT) help children and young people **grow, learn, have fun, socialise and play** – so they can develop, thrive and reach their full potential. The focus could be on self-care, like getting ready to go out, eating a meal or using the toilet. It could be around being productive – going to nursery or school. Or it could simply be about improving their ability to play with friends, compete at sport or take part in hobbies. (RCOT, 2022)








DEVELOPING HAND DOMINANCE IN PRE-SCHOOL

WHAT IS HAND DOMINANCE?

Hand dominance, or hand preference, is favouring one particular hand to lead activities instead of the other. Having a hand preference allows us to become skilled at completing motor tasks e.g. when cutting, our preferred hand holds and moves the scissors along the line, while our helper hand supports the page. Not having a dominant hand can lead to children having difficulty completing fine motor tasks at the same level as some of their peers.

Developing a hand dominance only happens after complex brain development, and we shouldn't therefore try and help children to decide what hand will be dominant when they are very young.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE HAND DOMINANCE:

-  Position toys, food, crayons right in front of the child so they can have to choose what hand to use.
-  Encourage the child to complete activities that need both hands to work together e.g. cutting, threading, construction toys, playing with wind up toys, throw and catch, dipping a wand into a bubble mix.
-  When the child shows a hand preference, talk to them about using their 'doing' or 'boss' hand, while their other hand is their 'helper' hand.
-  Say things like "I love how your doing hand is holding that crayon" to build up the child's awareness of which hand they are using.
-  Encourage the child to try and finish an activity with the hand they started with.

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP HAND DOMINANCE

STICK HEDGEHOGS



Roll a body from clay or playdoh; snap sticks into smaller sections and stick them in to make prickly spines!

TREE PAINTING



Use a cut up sponge or corks to make an autumn tree picture.

PAPER TEARING



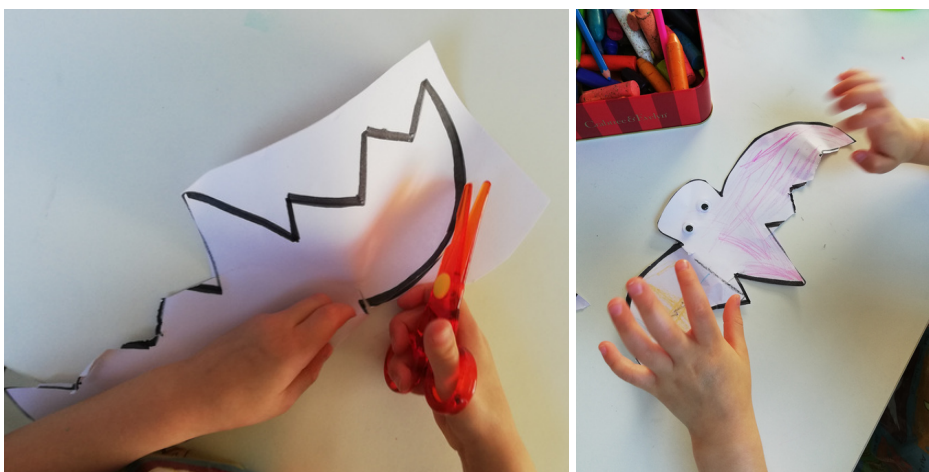
Use 2 hands to tear up tissue paper to stick onto an autumn outline.

HAND PAINTING



Have children paint their own hand to print onto a page to make into trees.

AUTUMN CUTTING



Print or make your own Autumn themed cutting pages and have children cut around the outline.

TREE RUBBING






LEAF WRAPPING



Wrap wool around cardboard leaf templates.

OTHER IDEAS

-  Make a rain shaker: have children hold an empty plastic bottle while they place acorns or other garden collections into it to make an autumn rain shaker.
-  Peel Autumn stickers.
-  Scoop up soil or leaves.
-  Hammer/ push golf tees into a pumpkin.

SENSORY MOTOR & PERCEPTUAL

PHYSIOTHERAPY

CLIMBING

Why is climbing important? Climbing trees helps to develop children's confidence, strength, dexterity, balance, vestibular system (helps orientation in space), coordination, problem solving and spatial awareness (judging the distance from one branch to another, or to the ground).



Find a tree that has lots of low branches to climb up or swing from. If you can't find a safe climbing tree with low branches to start off from, how about going to a park and using a climbing frame!

BUILD A TEDDY TEEPEE

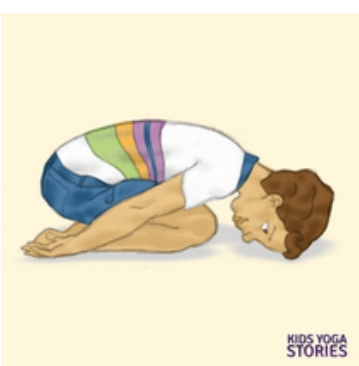
Find lots and lots of long sticks and arrange the ends into a circle standing nice and tall and upright. Push the ends of the sticks very firmly into the ground making sure to keep the circle formation. Arrange the sticks to a point and tie securely at the top with some long grass, a bendy branch, some string, or anything else you can think of! Decorate however you want with lots of leaves and flowers, and then invite your teddies or toys along to play!



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FOREST ANIMAL FUN



Use a dice to determine what animal to become.

Can you...

1. Balance like a bird (stand on one leg)
2. March like an ant
3. Flap like an owl
4. Jump like a squirrel
5. Run like a fox (on all fours!)
6. Curl up on your back like a hedgehog



FOREST SCAVENGER HUNT

Reach up high...bend down low...can you find...

- A crooked twig
- A conker
- A flower
- A feather
- A mushroom
- A bug
- Something soft
- Something rough



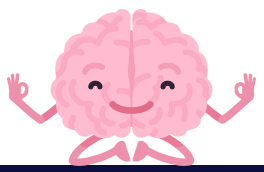
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HEDGEHOG CURLS



Hedgehog curls are great for strengthening tummy muscles (your core). Start by lying on the floor -bend your knees so feet are flat on the floor. Place hands behind your knees and lift your feet off the floor. Tuck your chin up into your chest and hold. Count out loud so you don't forget to breathe!!

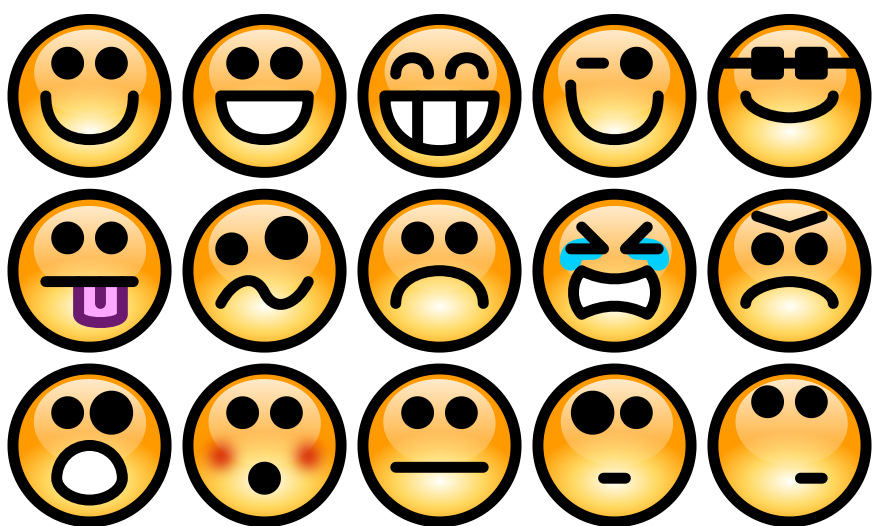


SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIOUR

TEACHING RELAXATION STRATEGIES IN PRE-SCHOOL SCHOOL

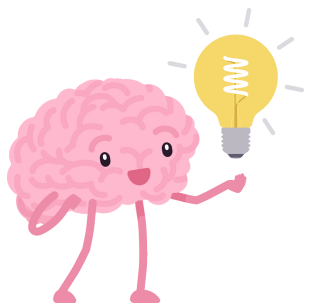
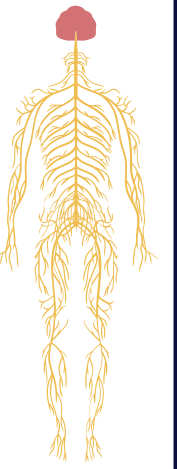
WHY DO CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN RELAXATION TECHNIQUES?

Children need to learn coping strategies which teach them how to tolerate overwhelming feelings. Coping strategies and skills help us better manage our feelings, thoughts and behaviours. By teaching children coping strategies, we are teaching important skills that will help them face difficult and stressful situations as they get older. It will start to build up their resilience. Often when we feel overwhelmed by our feelings we first notice it in our bodies. Relaxation is a coping strategy that helps children calm their bodies and calm their thoughts. Relaxed children are able to think more constructively and positively.



BENEFITS OF RELAXATION

- Relaxation can help relax muscles and calm the nervous system
- Relaxation can help promote general good health
- Relaxation can help children sleep
- Relaxation can help calm and clear your child's mind
- Relaxation can help with concentration
- Relaxation can help memory retention
- Relaxation helps reduce stress and anxiety in children
- Relaxation can help develop children's self-confidence and self-esteem
- Relaxation improves emotional health and literacy
- Relaxation can develop children's imagination, creativity, and self-expression



A C T I V I T I E S T O P R A C T I S E R E L A X A T I O N

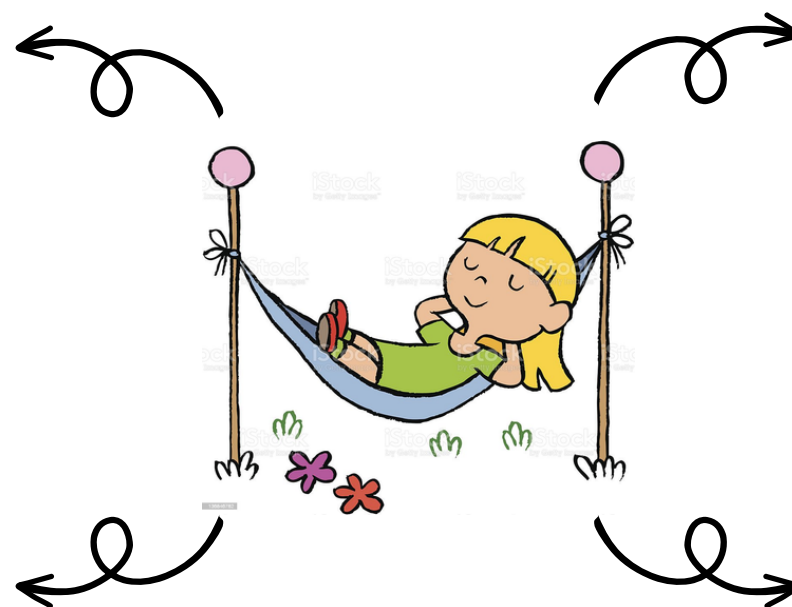
NOTE:

Relaxation exercises should be practised regularly so children learn the skills when they are feeling calm and will know what to do when they feel overwhelmed.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR RELAXATION

You may like to ask the child to find a space on the floor where they can lie down

You can provide blankets to put on top of them and create a calm feeling



You can pretend spray "fairy dust" over them as a way to help them settle down

Moderate your tone of voice - children can respond well to soft and soothing moments because of their big imaginations

BREATHING EXERCISE

This activity helps children become aware of their own breath and what happens in the body when you breathe. It teaches children body-awareness and serves as a tool for relaxation. For this activity hand out mini pumpkins, orange beanbags or leaves to the children. Tell the children to lay down, and put their mini pumpkin/beanbag on their belly. Ask children to carefully watch their little pumpkin rise and fall with each breath. Have children inhale and exhale for three to five rounds. Ask children to keep watching the pumpkin on their belly rise and fall with each breath.



AUTUMN CALM/SENSORY BOX

Make an Autumn sensory box or calm kit, a good activity for children to make and then use to practice calming coping skills. Prior to this exercise, if time allows, take children on a nature walk. Point out falling leaves, scents in the air, ask children how the cooler air feels on their skin, their face, or their hands.



Have children collect items they see or associate with fall. This can be leaves in various colours, acorns, rocks, etc.

CALM DOWN BOTTLES

Create a calm down sensory relaxing bottle using leaves, pine cones and water. Alternatively you can use liquid soap and gold/red glitter and glycerine and put leaves in it.

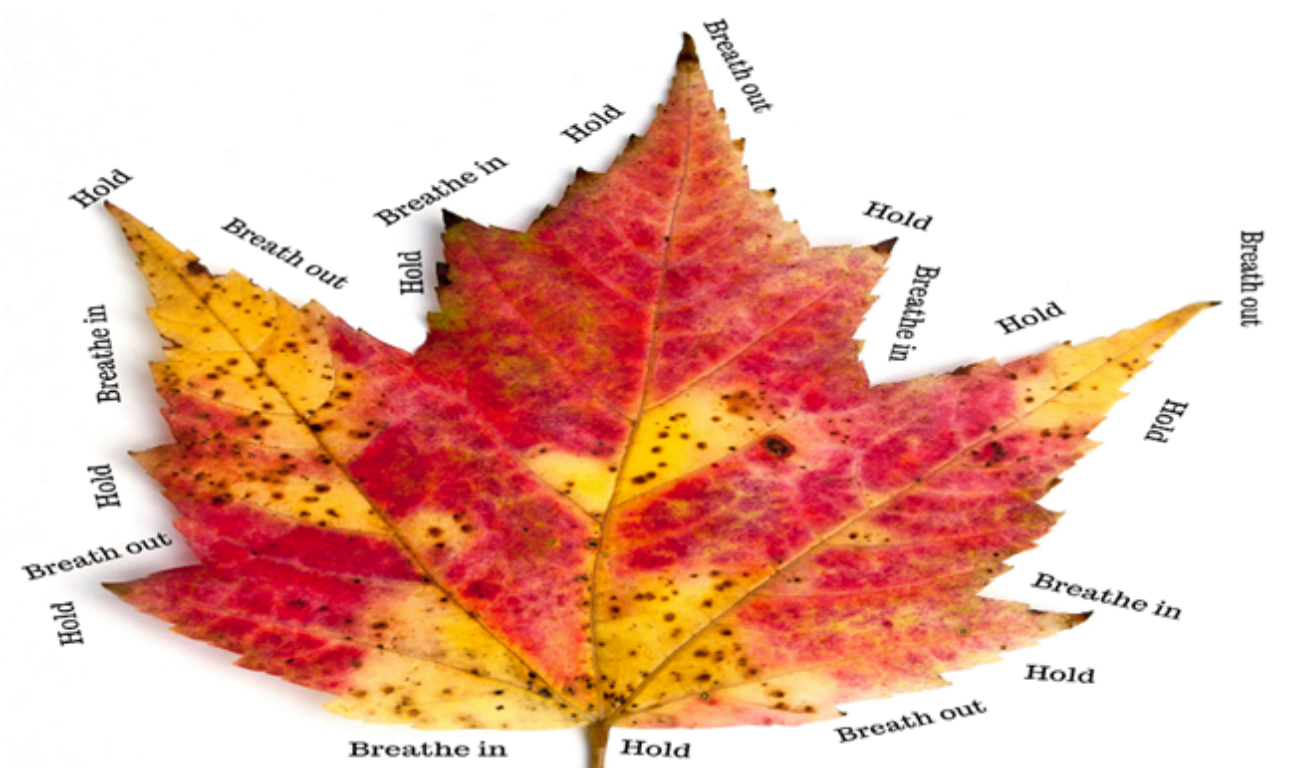


VISUALISATION

Close your eyes and allow your whole body to relax. Let your feet relax, let your legs sink into the mat, allow your belly and your back to get soft and heavy, feel your arms melt and let your neck and head be totally supported by the ground. Imagine that your yoga mat slowly turns to a soft pile of autumn leaves. Let your body sink in and hear them crunching underneath you. Take a deep breath and smell the crisp and earthy air. See above you the clear blue sky, with fluffy white clouds slowly drifting by. Maybe you see a flock of birds heading south for the winter, flying together in a perfect V shape. Then in your mind see the trees all around you, getting ready for the winter. Watch the leaves turning their vibrant colours. See them shudder and flutter, dancing all the way to the ground as the wind blows. All around you the leaves fall, surrounding you with their cozy warmth. Keep breathing slow and steady. Watch the leaves fall until you feel completely surrounded; resting in your pile of leaves. Stay here for as long as you want, being nourished by the crisp autumn air and the warm sun. When you are ready to get up, take a deep breath and stretch your body from fingertips to toes. Keep your eyes closed, curl up and roll onto one side. Slowly sit up and take a minute or two to focus on your breath. Gently open your eyes, and try to keep that peaceful feeling.

LEAF BREATHING

This Autumn leaf breathing exercise is a twist on star breathing where you trace around a star while you breathe in and out, over and over. Simply trace the leaf and follow the instructions.



MEET THE TEAMS WHO PRODUCE THE RISE & SHINE NEWSLETTERS!

OUR TEAMS...

Each sector team has a team lead, therapy assistant and admin support, and has input from behaviour therapy, clinical psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy.

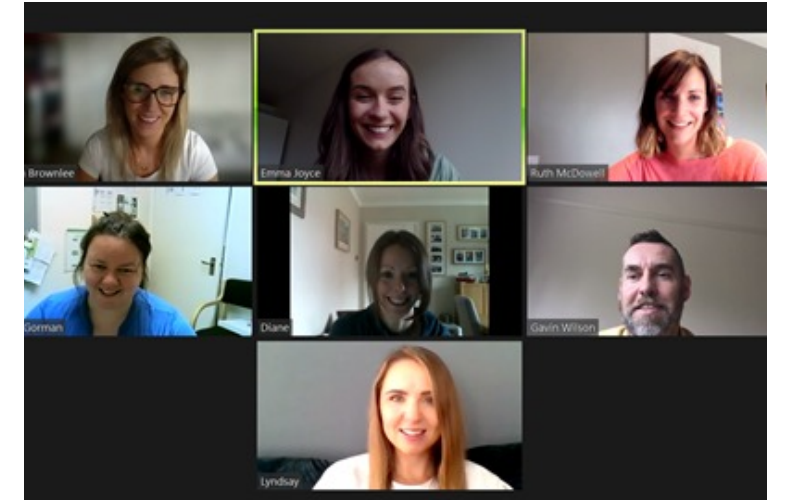


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MID-ULSTER

Mid Ulster Hospital
59 Hospital Road
Magherafelt
BT45 5EX
Tel: 02886 747860

CAUSEWAY

Route House
Route Complex
8E Coleraine Road
Ballymoney
BT53 6BP
Tel: 02827 661237



WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

We are aware that you will have children who you may have concerns about as you get to know them better. Any concerns should first be discussed with the person with parental responsibility for the child, and if consent is granted, the following are details about existing services which may be able to offer advice and support:

Children's Speech and Language Therapy - if you have concerns about a child's ability to speak as clearly as other children their age, or their ability to understand what you are saying, you can contact Children's Speech and Language Therapy by phoning:

East Antrim area: 028 90 831442

Mid-Ulster area: 028 79 365080

Antrim/Ballymena area: 028 2563 5366

Causeway area: 028 27 660315

Children's Occupational Therapy - if you have concerns about how a child is managing their daily activities, coping with the nursery environment, or has difficulty using their fingers effectively, you can contact Children's Occupational Therapy by phoning:

East Antrim area: 028 93 353745

Mid-Ulster area: 028 79 365080

Antrim/Ballymena area: 028 94 415725

Causeway area: 028 27 661349

Children's Physiotherapy - if you have concerns about a child's ability to move, balance, or use a ball effectively, a referral to Children's Physiotherapy can be discussed with the child's GP.

Social Emotional and/or Behaviour - if you have concerns about a child's social, emotional wellbeing and/or behaviour, please access the following website to locate suitable services or supports in relation to any concerns you may have e.g. Action for Children, Barnardos, The Early Intervention Support Service - www.familysupport.ni.gov.uk. Parents can also access support via www.parentingni.org and via their child's health visitor.

Don't forget: you can also discuss any concerns with the named Health Visitor for your setting.

EMAIL US:

If you have any comments on the content of this newsletter or indeed any queries, please send an email to us at riseni.nhsct@northerntrust.hscni.net