

# OM-TIMES



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# Nine Imagination

## Tools to Help

### Children Cope



by Charlotte Reznick PhD

As a parent, you may not realize that your child possesses many of the answers to life's challenges—right in her own imagination. Through learning and practicing visualization, kids can develop emotional self-care skills to help themselves with a variety of everyday, practical concerns. These imagination tools can help your child:

- Love, accept, and appreciate himself.
- Reduce pain and heal other physical ailments.
- Overcome fears, such as fear of the unknown, abandonment, doctors, disasters, and dying.
- Deal with bedtime issues such as insomnia and bedwetting.
- Cope with death, divorce, and other losses.
- Handle anger, hurt, and frustration.
- Achieve success at school and in sports.
- Live peacefully with siblings and parents.

Here are nine imagination tools you can teach a



child to help her deal with stressful times and navigate the challenge of growing up.

#### **TOOL #1: USE THE BALLOON BREATH.**

With her hands around her navel, have her breathe slowly and deeply into her lower belly so it presses into her hands like an inflating balloon. The balloon breath has calming effects and facilitates a waking state of focused concentration and receptivity to positive suggestions. Kids can use it to calm down before musical performances, soothe anger or hurt feelings, or wind down at night, for example.

#### **TOOL # 2: DISCOVER A SPECIAL PLACE.**

This is a safe, special place within your child's inner world where he can relax, regroup, or take mini-vacations from the stresses of life. It's a place to pose endless questions about life issues, and create numerous positive, possible solutions. Your child might visit his special place to find courage before taking a difficult test at school, or to get away from a bully's harsh words.

#### **Tool # 3: CONSULT AN ANIMAL GUIDE.**

This is an imaginary guide—a kind, loving, and protective creature—that helps children tap into their wisdom. It's often safer and easier for animal friends to offer solutions to problems in creative ways, than expecting logic and linear thinking to do the work. Your child's animal guide can help her fall asleep, or practice

patience at school in long, boring classes, or be brave before a trip to the doctor.

#### **TOOL # 4: CONJURE UP A PERSONAL WIZARD.**

Wizards come into play when animal friends "just won't do." His Personal Wizard is a mentor and magical teacher in human form who brings a different level of wisdom: human but extraordinary. A wizard can give advice, conjure up special powers such as math answers, and even cure troubling feelings like jealousy, anger, and grief.

#### **TOOL # 5: RECEIVE GIFTS.**

Gifts from imaginary helpers can be thoughts, objects, or ideas that symbolically provide children with exactly what she needs in the moment to help her. Gifts can be obvious or require further explanation by the animal friend or wizard. Sometimes gifts are hidden and need to be unwrapped or dug up. When a child goes to her special place and asks a wizard or animal friend for a gift containing the solution to her problem, she often finds the answer.

#### **TOOL # 6: CHECK IN WITH HEART AND BELLY.**

This tool is comparable to suggestions of "listen to your heart" and "pay attention to your gut feelings." Children are encouraged to take a few minutes to "check in" with their heart and their belly, and to notice what messages are there for them. The heart and belly often have two different, but equally important, messages to relate.

#### **TOOL # 7: TALKING TO TOES AND OTHER BODY PARTS.**

The body is a repository for lots of hidden information. With this tool, children discover where and how they stash different feelings in their body. Kids then find they can have a dialogue between emotions and/or symptoms to find answers to their concerns. For example, your child might discover that his stomach knows exactly why it hurts every day 30

minutes before school starts—it doesn't want Mom to leave, and it's afraid she won't come back.

#### **TOOL # 8: USE COLOR FOR HEALING.**

Color is especially helpful in healing pain. Feelings and symptoms often have different colors associated with them. They can be unique to each individual and change over time. You can teach children how to imagine a color, such as ice blue or deep forest green, cooling down his hot fever. When a child imagines color inside or surrounding her body, it can be a remarkable tool for transforming pain, shifting emotions, and accessing healing energy.

#### **TOOL #9: TAP INTO ENERGY.**

When words are insufficient, a loving touch from a parent can do wonders to restore calm and well-being. For example, you can help a child "pull the pain" out of his head by holding your hand about three inches from his forehead to give him a direction in which to send his pain—out and away.

You're now armed with nine simple, efficient, and totally free options to mix and match—depending on the situation and your child's favorite. When we teach our kids effective imagery techniques to solve their own problems, it can transform their world.

Charlotte Reznick PhD, author of the LA Times bestseller *The Power of Your Child's Imagination: How to Transform Stress and Anxiety into Joy and Success* (Perigee/Penguin, 2009), is a child educational psychologist, UCLA Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology, and creator of several therapeutic relaxation CDs for children, teens, and parents. An international workshop leader on the healing power of children's imagination, she maintains a private practice in Los Angeles, California. Visit: [www.ImageryForKids.com](http://www.ImageryForKids.com)