

## rock-a-bye

We pretend to rock a stuffed animal to sleep on our bellies to relax our bodies and quiet our minds. As we breathe in, the animal rocks up; as we breathe out, the animal rocks back down.

---

### LIFE SKILLS



**DURATION** 3 minutes or more

---

**SUPPLIES** Stuffed animal or pillow and a yoga mat or blanket to lie on

**AGE** Young children (with a modification for older children and teens)

---

### LEADING THE GAME

1. Lie on your back with your legs flat on the floor and your arms by your sides. If you like, you can close your eyes. Feel the back of your head touching the floor. Feel your shoulders, upper back, arms, hands, lower back, legs, and feet touching the floor.
2. Now I'm going to place a stuffed animal on your belly. When you breathe in, the animal gently moves up; and when you breathe out, the animal gently moves back down. Imagine that this animal loves to be rocked to sleep by the movement of your breathing. Good—I can tell you're already helping it to feel very calm and relaxed!
3. Notice what it feels like to breathe in and out, moving the animal up and down. You can pat the stuffed animal on your tummy and

notice what that feels like too. How does your body feel? What's happening in your mind?

4. If it's hard to keep your mind on your breathing, silently say the word *up* every time the animal moves up and silently say the word *down* every time the animal moves down.

*Wait about 1 to 3 minutes before moving to the next instruction.*

5. Feel the back of your head touching the floor. Now feel your shoulders, upper back, arms, hands, lower back, legs, and feet touching the floor.
6. When you're ready, open your eyes and sit up slowly. Take a breath and notice how you feel.

#### **TIPS**

1. Placing something on their tummies makes it easier for children to feel their breathing. Stuffed animals, beanbags, and pillows that sculpt to the shape of children's bodies are perfect for this activity.
2. After the children focus on their breathing for a few minutes and are relaxed and comfortable, lead them in a *Friendly Wishes* visualization.

#### **MODIFICATION**

For older children or teens, substitute a pillow, cushion, or other soft, weighted object for the stuffed animal (leaving out the imagery of rocking the animal to sleep).