

LESSON ONE

BREATH: Using our breath & awareness to begin to calm, balance, and focus.



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Start by showing your tots the Awareness Practice Position one step at a time:

1. Sit cross-legged (or a comfortable sitting position in the lap of a grown up)
2. Palms up (allows more awareness of body)
3. Eyes closed (helps us focus on "inner space")
4. Notice (with your attention) your whole body: your bottom (can rock side to side), your belly (take a deep breath), your feet (wiggle your toes), your hands (move them gently on your lap), your head.

Start the Breath Daily Practice:

1. Five-second breaths
(breathe in for 5, hold for 5, exhale for 5)
2. Breath awareness mustache (make a finger mustache and notice cool air on the tip of your nose as you breathe in and cool air as you breathe out.) Repeat three times, then notice how it makes our body feel.
3. Then add "MA sound" (breathing in thinking or

saying MMMM and breathing out thinking or saying AAAAA) Repeat 10-20 breaths, then notice how it makes our body feel.

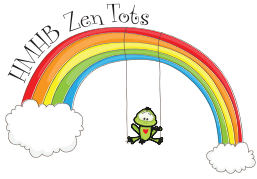
4. Sit quietly, with a quiet body. Attention can be on belly rising and falling with breath, or in the palm of the right hand. Start with 30 seconds, then gradually increase to one minute for each year a child is in age (4 years old = 4 minutes.)

WHY?

These breaths calm the mind and emotions, promote focus, and help shift children into awareness.

WHEN?

Start off your daily practice this way. You can do this anywhere, to practice at any time of day, or when big feelings come up (being sad, mad, scared, or wanting something badly) such as at a restaurant, during temper tantrums, in the grocery cart, or in line at public places. A magic tool is a bell rung to ceremoniously begin your practice, and also through out the day. When your bell rings tots can do 3 to 5 rounds of 5 second breaths.



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The Power of Breath

We all have heard the saying “take a few breaths” to help us calm down, but it’s not just a saying, it’s a well-researched practice that quickly alters our brain chemistry. Here’s what you should know:

1) Deep breathing = full oxygen exchange = more oxygen enters the body and more carbon dioxide exits

2) Controlled breathing (holding our breath for 5 seconds) triggers the stimulation of the vagus nerve, which releases a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine, that catalyzes increased focus, calmness, and decreases feelings of anxiety in our brain and body.

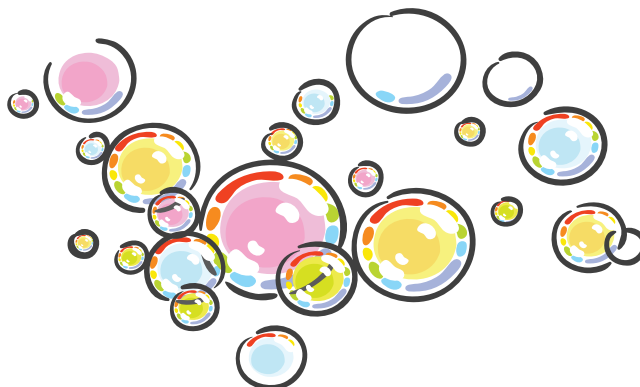
3) Controlled breathing research is now showing deep breathing can even alter the expression of genes, particularly the genes involved in immune function, metabolism, and insulin secretion. This means that controlled breathing helps us stay healthier over our lifetime.

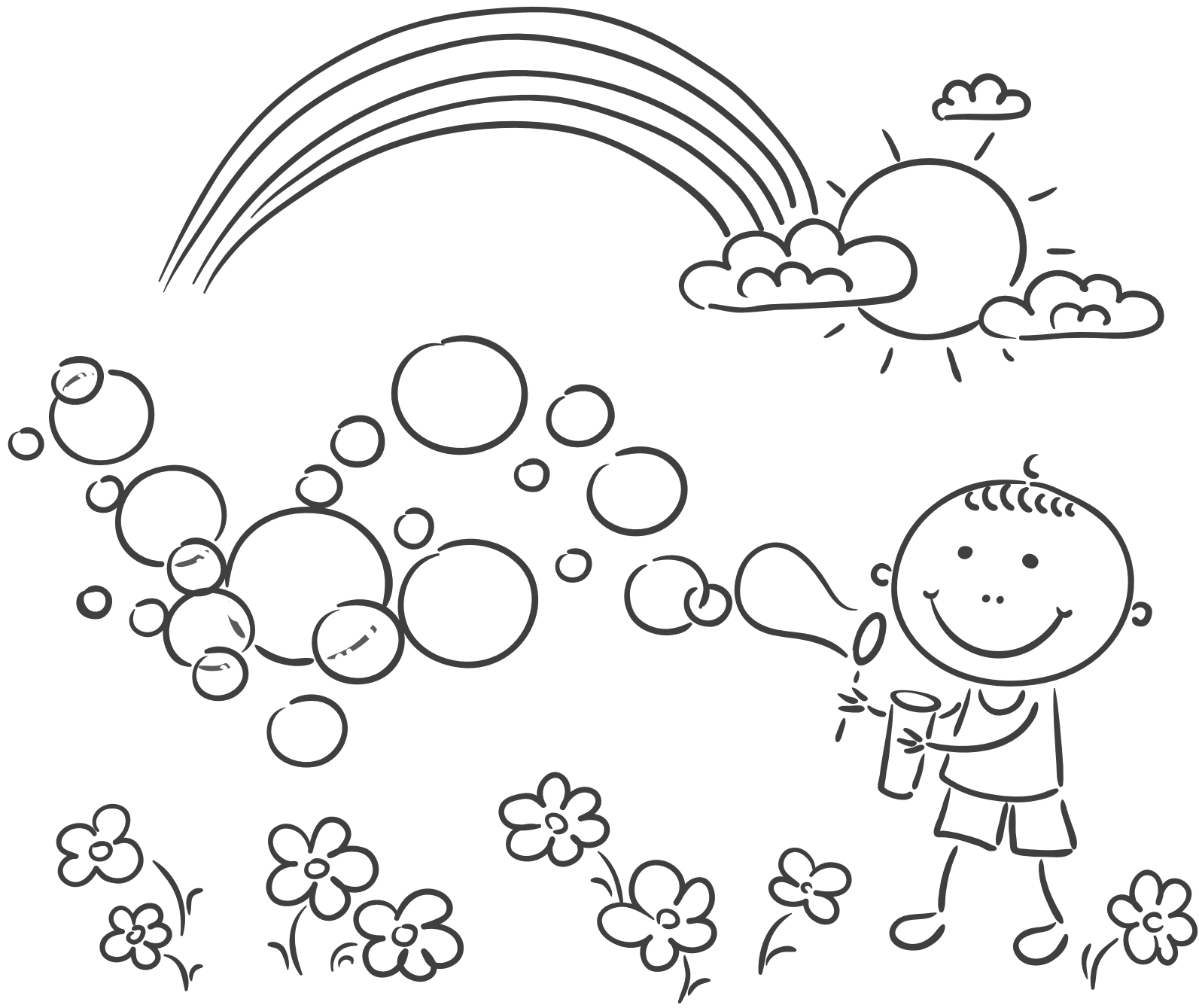
1) Our voice resonates every cell of our body with every sound we make! We use the MA sound in our daily practice, and here’s why:

- Voicing the MMM sound on our inhalation makes our cranium vibrate, and directly effects the cerebral cortex, and approximates the effect of a dreamless sleep state of consciousness when repeated (Just thinking the MMM is effective as well, because you are connecting to the energy with your consciousness!)

- Voicing the AAAhhh sound on our exhalation has a vibratory effect on the whole physical body, and is a primordial opening sound, as we express the sound Ahhh naturally when we feel good about something.

REFERENCES: Dr. Herbert Benson (founder of Harvard Mind/Body Medical Institute), [forbes.com/](https://forbes.com/health/2015/05/27/breathing-and-your-brain/)
[soundwellness.com](https://www.soundwellness.com/), [health.usnews.com](https://www.health.usnews.com/)





ZEN TOTS LESSON ONE *Breath*