

## Wellbeing

### Books

#### 101 Things for Kids to Do Screen-Free

Dawn Isaac



Stuck for activities to do with the children (or grandchildren) now school – or rather, home school – is out? This timely book is packed with fun ideas for keeping them busy,

with not a screen in sight. Its author, Dawn Isaac, draws on the experiences of occupying her own children – Ava, 16, Oscar, 14, and Archie, 11 – as well as memories of activities she enjoyed doing as a child.

Dawn, an award-winning garden designer, blogger and children's author, was born and raised in Lincolnshire with two older brothers. "My parents were real *Good Life* types who brewed their own cider and kept chickens. Our garden had fruit trees and bushes, where we would make dens and invent other games.

"That's what I wanted to recreate with my own kids and share in the book," says Dawn, who now lives in Cambridgeshire with her husband Reuben, and their children.

Dawn admits that, as in most families, her children have spent more time on screen over the past few months but adds: "We've also had plenty of breaks to do important things like make milkshakes, play with the dog – and have competitive Just Dance sessions on the Wii. We also have 'screen free until 3pm' every Sunday, which is a great time for crafting, baking or playing board games."

Whether you're enjoying the easing of restrictions or are in an area that's in lockdown again, you'll find plenty of creative ideas for things the kids can do indoors or out, using materials you've probably already got lying around your home. "Let your children decide what sort of activities they want to do and learn to live with a bit of mess," advises Dawn.



**INTREPID EXPLORERS** Let children discover the natural world around them

## Breathe your way to better health

Simple changes in how we inhale and exhale can help improve our physical and mental wellbeing. Breathing coach Rebecca Dennis explains how



We inhale and exhale 20,000 times a day. Breathing is something we all do without thinking. Yet by the time we are adults, the majority of us lose our natural ability to breathe fully and are using just a third of our respiratory system capability.

From childhood we are told to 'take a deep breath' when feeling upset or angry. Intuitively we all understand, even if we've never heard the science, that the breath and mind are intrinsically linked. We are conditioned from an early age to control our feelings and emotions, and often as a result, our respiratory muscles contract and our breathing becomes restricted.

Long-term tension and anxious thought patterns can impact the immune system and affect our health, digestion, nervous system

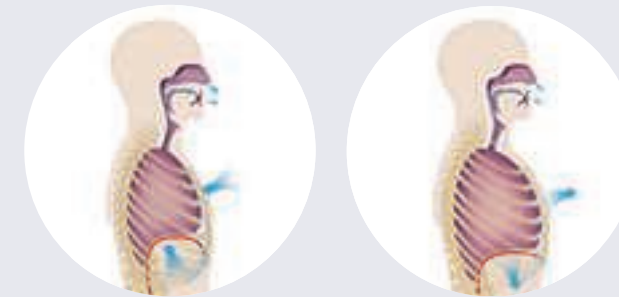


**COVER UP** If you find face masks restrictive, nose-breathing can help

and respiratory system. We hover in fight-or-flight mode, stimulating what's known as the sympathetic nervous system and reverting to poor breathing patterns, such as shallow or chest breathing and breath-holding.

When we feel overwhelmed or stressed, our breath can become laboured. We use up a lot of energy and are more reactive to little things that may not have bothered us otherwise. By changing the way we breathe, we can stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which takes us into a more relaxed state and helps clear our mind to make a more balanced response.

By breathing deeply into the belly, we release tension from the diaphragm and other primary breathing muscles. This helps to increase our lung capacity, protect our



#### CONSCIOUS BREATHING EXERCISE

Conscious breathing is the basic rule of breathwork. As you intentionally regulate the way you breathe, you change your physical and mental state. You are in control.

Relax your jaw and shoulders and bring your focus to the breath. Slowly and gently, breathe in through your nose to the count of five. Hold the breath for five counts. Exhale through your nose to the count of five. Hold the breath for five counts. As you breathe in, expand your lower abdominals, and as you exhale, allow them to contract.

Allow the breath to be relaxed and steady without trying to force it. If five

counts feel too long, begin with three and then move to four. Be patient and find a rhythm that is comfortable for you.

#### Continue this for a few rounds

**Inhale 1,2,3,4,5**

**Hold 1,2,3,4,5**

**Exhale 1,2,3,4,5**

**Hold 1,2,3,4,5**

Notice how you feel in your mind and your body after doing this for one or two minutes. Practise this at night-time to soothe the nervous system before you sleep, or at any time during the day to help you feel calm and focused.

immune system and boost blood flow – which gives us more energy and helps us relax.

Many of us hold physical, mental and emotional tension in our bodies which can impact our health. The breath is the central link between our body and mind, influencing all the systems in our body. Yet despite breath being the very source of life, we take breathing – and the way it can impact our mental and physical wellbeing – for granted.

#### HOW NOSE-BREATHING HELPS

Mouth-breathing can be used for more advanced techniques, but for everyday life it's advisable to breathe through your nose. The nose is the first line of defence before air reaches our lungs, but when we feel stressed, unwell or anxious our breathing is affected and sometimes we might catch ourselves sighing, clenching our jaw, or mouth-breathing. If you feel anxious when wearing a face mask, for example, it's a good idea to practise nose-breathing, which offers various benefits.

The hairs, mucus and cilia in your nasal passages catch and dispose of irritants like dust and pollen, pollution and dangerous chemicals. They also catch potentially infectious bacteria and viruses. Nitric oxide in the nasal passages and sinuses can kill bacteria. The bitter taste receptor in your olfactory system helps trigger your body's immune response.

There are even suggestions that the expansion and contraction of the diaphragm when you breathe correctly through your nose can stimulate your lymphatic system and act to 'massage' your internal organs. The lymphatic system works with the immune system to help the body remove internal toxins.

So next time you're feeling anxious, try the simple breathing technique above to boost your immune system and calm your mind.

*Listen to the And Breathe with Rebecca Dennis podcast via all good platforms and find out about her workshops at [breathingtree.co.uk](http://breathingtree.co.uk)*



#### 24 HOURS ON MY PLATE

### Big Zuu

The English rapper and presenter of *Big Zuu's Big Eats* loves a piece of fruit and his mum's okra stew

"I got up at 1pm – a bit late for me but I didn't go to bed until 4am the night before. I had a bowl of Krave cereal with oat drink, a glass of Innocent apple juice and some water.

"I spent the rest of the day with a friend on Hampstead Heath chilling in the sun. I drank more water and ate lots of fruit – strawberries, bananas and cherries.

"Leaving the Heath around 7pm we picked up a takeaway from Eat Tokyo – a chicken teriyaki roll, crispy tuna roll and more water – en route to Sunny Hill Park in Hendon where we watched the sun go down. We stayed there until around 9pm before heading home, stopping to buy some fresh Iranian bread and Puck cheese spread, which I ate on the go."

"I am addicted to the news so as soon as I got in, I switched on the TV, but soon fell asleep. Waking up around midnight, I drank lots of water to rehydrate after being in the sun for so long before going to bed.

"My favourite food is my mum's Sierra Leone okra stew made with lamb shoulder and basmati rice. We only have it once every two weeks to keep it special. I also love cheesy egg bagels – an egg omelette grilled with sliced cheese, on a bagel. I have a really sweet tooth and love Haribos, but I know they're bad for me so try to avoid them, as I do fizzy drinks.

"I missed eating out during lockdown but had fun experimenting with new dishes at home with my mum. I love Mexican and Italian dishes – my proudest moment has been ditching jars of pasta sauce and cooking them from scratch. I hate washing up and cooking gives me a reason not to do the dishes!" **2/5**

*Move Right ft. Drizilik by Big Zuu is out now. Big Zuu's Big Eats is on Fridays at 10pm on Dave and on demand on UKTV Play*



#### VERDICT

**Emma Williams, Partner & nutritionist, says:**

"Keep the portion size in check when consuming breakfast cereals and ensure the oat milk you use is fortified. Chocolate-based cereals are high in sugar (we should try to consume less than 30g a day). Despite being 1 of your 5 a day, the juice also contributed to your daily sugar intake (around 14g/serving). Although you had plenty of water, you needed more fibre – think brown rice and bread and wholegrain cereals. Add some veg or beans and pulses to meet your 5 a day without the extra sugar that comes from fruit." **2/5**