



Revolutionary Love Letters to Parents

Breathe

From:

The Revolutionary Love Project

To: You





Breathe

Dear Parent,

Breathe. Right now. Let the period at the end of this sentence invite you to close your eyes and take a nourishing and pleasurable breath; take as many as you need.

Good. Now, say to yourself, *"No matter what hasn't been achieved (laundry, homework, racial justice, a remedy for climate collapse), we still deserve to flourish. We are outcroppings of nature born to grace this world for a tiny spark of delicious time. We are here to thrive. This is true for all."*

If you, like me, forget how to breathe, your children will teach you how. They will remind you to: Throw rocks in puddles. Draw pictures that don't look like anything. Imagine you're a bunny sleeping snuggled in your mother's belly. Pick up every beautiful leaf and smell every flower (even if they aren't fragrant). Talk in whispers to your friend. Taste all the flavors of chocolate. Sing your favorite song fourteen times in a row. Throw that ball as hard as you can into the air. And please, whatever you do, remember to dance.

Nothing fills your child up more than joining them in their favorite way to breathe. It doesn't have to be much. Five minutes will do, as long as it's wholehearted.

Also, meowing at the top of your lungs or the 25th game of go-fish might not be the breath that fills your soul-lungs. So please find the spaces at the end of your life's sentences. We need you and the beautiful ways you parent in this sweet labor.

Your children also need you to breathe. When resourced, it's easier to remember that our children have their own independent lives. They need room to make mistakes, to

try things out, to fall and get back up. They need space to learn who they are. When we have taken time to breathe, we can put the quirks of growing up in perspective and love our children even when they make choices we wouldn't. The same holds for loving others and our opponents. Returning to wonder requires a bit of breath. So breathe to love your family, to love those around, including you.

If you need our help, we are here. Close your eyes and open your hand (your children know the true power of imaginary friends). Let us whisper in your ear. *You've been brave, dear one. Rest now. We've got you.*

—With love, The Revolutionary Love Project Team

Defining breathe

Breathing is the practice of taking conscious deep breaths. It is also the act of creating space in our lives to slow down and care for our bodies, minds, and spirits. Breathing in community is how we sustain ourselves and our labors for justice — and let joy in.

Choosing to love ourselves, by breathing deeply each day, is a political intervention. Taking the time to breathe—literally and metaphorically—is a way to assert that our bodies are worthy and beloved. Loving our bodies is the first and primal act of loving ourselves. This is how breathing becomes an act of Revolutionary Love.

“Taking the time to breathe—literally and metaphorically—is a way to assert that our bodies are worthy and beloved. Loving our bodies is the first and primal act of loving ourselves.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 217)

You belong to a community and a broader movement. Your life has value. We need you alive. We need you to last. You will not last if you are not breathing.” (Kaur, 2020, p. 247)

For more exploration of breathe, get [the Revolutionary Love Project Compass guide](#).

Practices to foster breathe

Ask questions that prompt awareness of pleasure and relaxation

In moments of relaxation or enjoyment, you can ask children questions that will prompt you both to be more mindful of the nourishing aspects of the experience—*Does that feel good? Where does it feel good in your body? I wonder if we can enjoy this (or relax) even more?* Our loving attention and enjoyment increase the effectiveness of our rest time. Practicing this with our children is joyful and will help them remember to ask these questions independently.

Create breathing times and rituals together

You probably already have ways that you relax as a family: cozy cuddle time, reading books, or spending time in the backyard. Consider talking about these times as breathing sessions. Talk about how they nourish the family and how they are necessary ways to love one another. *Wow, I love it when we get the blanket and lay in the sun in the yard. I feel my whole body relax, and I feel so close to you. I'm glad we are taking time to breathe together.* Speaking about the importance and benefits of relaxing together will help your child remember to make space to breathe in their own lives.

Create or join a babysitting co-op

In babysitting co-ops, groups of parents amass babysitting hours by caring for one another's kids. If you don't have the resources to pay for quality babysitters, this is a great way to carve out time to breathe for the caretakers in your family. Not only will it make time for you to breathe, but you will also be helping other parents do the same. This is a community act of Revolutionary Love. If you want to read more, here is an [article on the practice](#).

Practice breathing techniques with your children

Breath is intimately tied to mental states. Teaching children methods for tuning to and changing their breath is a resource they can use to care for themselves. Consider making breathing techniques part of bedtime routines. Here are several breathing techniques you can try with your children.

Blow out imaginary birthday candles on your fingers to increase attention to breath, lowering each finger as it's "blown out."

To introduce a slow, sustained breath that stabilizes, pretend that you fill your body with breath like a balloon, then exhale slowly like there is a tiny leak.

Breathe is more nourishing and restful when we pay attention lovingly. To do this, introduce breathing in peace, gentleness, and sweetness to make breathing more restful.

Imagining breathing in different colors that fill the body can be pleasurable, relaxing, and energizing.

Consider breathing as different kinds of animals will offer an imaginative way to discover various types of breath. It could be a dolphin under deep, peaceful water, a bird breathing to sing just before the sun rises, a mama cat breathing in the smell of her baby kitten, or a baby sleeping.

Connect breath to compassion by breathing as a form of love to others; it adds heartfulness and tenderness.

Model taking time to breathe

Let your children know you are taking time to breathe because you need it. This will prioritize your rest and teach your children to do the same for themselves. If you can't slip away from your children, insist it's time to pick an activity to help you both breathe.

Regularly talk about how emotions or experiences are felt in the body.

Knowing you need to breathe comes from being sensitive to your physical and emotional life. Help children become sensitive by narrating your own experience and asking them about theirs. *The other day, I was so tired. You know how I knew? It felt all scratchy behind my eyes, and I just kept feeling like I wanted to cry. I wonder how you feel when you're tired.*

When possible, be flexible with time

Most of us live on schedules that could use more space. In the past thirty years, children have had a 25% decrease in unstructured playtime. Play is vital for many reasons, but especially for a sense of calm and breath. Make sure your family has regular periods of fluidity and spontaneity, even time for boredom. Children often feel more resourced and creative when they can flow from one thing to another at their own pace.

Be open to the variety of ways children experience the practice of breathing

It doesn't have to do with being calm or actual breathing. It's whatever resources your child. For some, it could look like sitting down to draw. For others, it might look like running screaming across a vast open space or a few extra laps on a bike. Knowing what your child needs to resource themselves is valuable information.

Children's books for breathe

- **Breathe and Be** by Kate Coombs — A book about breath, mindfulness, and the joy of living. Each poetic page is an opportunity to reflect on different ways to breathe.
- **Big Breath: A Guided Meditation** by William Meyer — This book is great for augmenting your breath experiences or giving ideas on different breath meditations for your class.
- **The Ugly Place** by Laura Deal — This story follows a child from a difficult emotional place through the experience of shifting that and seeing the world transform. This story is a good one to illustrate the necessity of caring for ourselves through breathing.
- **Breathe** by Scott Magoon — Who better to represent the necessity of interspersing play with breath than a young whale? This simple story follows a whale through his day as he plays and breathes.
- **Breathing Makes it Better** by Christopher Willard —This award-winning book takes children through various emotions, reminding them to breathe as a resource.
- **Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day** by Judith Viorst — In this classic book, Alexander has a horrible day and could use a moment to breathe but doesn't get it. Each page allows children to ask how they might help Alexander breathe.
- **My Incredible Talking Body** by Rebecca Bowen — A book that describes how different emotions feel in the body. It is excellent for building emotional awareness and taking time to breathe.
- **A Quiet Place** by Douglas Wood — This book is about finding a quiet space to breathe and the power of the imagination to create space.
- **Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing** by Christopher Willard—Learn the alphabet with twenty-six creative breath techniques.