

***Cognitive  
Behavior  
Management  
#26***

***The Calm  
Technique***

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***The enclosed techniques and procedures were developed with materials from a book titled *The Calm Technique* by Paul Wilson. The book was published by Barnes & Noble in 1999 after an earlier edition published in 1985. We have obviously adapted the material toward children with inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity.***

# ***Technique #26      The Calm Technique***

## ***Clinical Prompt:***

1. Establish Relaxation Technique
2. Establish Goal Statement
3. Establish diet language and concepts
4. Teach language and concept of the Calm Principle
5. Think of an egg
6. Relax countenance
7. Relax stance
8. Breathing in and out five times
9. Exercise 1 - swing top of body
10. Exercise 2 - part 1 - head turn back
11. Exercise 2 - part 2 - head elevated/lowered
12. Exercise 2 - part 3 - head turned left/right
13. Exercise 3 - raise arms in circle
14. Exercise 4 - push arms - palms up/down
15. Prepare for breathing meditation
  - prepare the environment
  - check posture
  - close eyes & relax
  - talk about the breathing process & distractions
  - talk about the breathing process
  - internal talk about the breathing process
  - visualizing the breathing process
  - counting the breaths
  - counting
16. Select *mantra*
17. Prepare for mantra meditation
  - go to the special place
  - lower lights; perhaps use a warm colored globe
  - use a straight backed comfortable chair or sit in the lotus position on the floor
  - place a clock or timer nearby
  - back straight, head up
  - wear comfortable clothes, no shoes
  - be relaxed
  - Sit for a few moments, breathe regularly
  - eyes closed, unfocused, looking straight ahead
18. "Do or not do. There is no try." - Yoda

## ***Technique #26      The Calm Technique***

### ***Introduction***

This technique is about mental control. The notion that people have preferences about their own thoughts, emotions and motives, and that there are things that they can do to influence these states is the basis for change. Mental control occurs when people suppress a thought, concentrate on a sensation, inhibit an emotion, maintain a mood, stir up a desire, squelch a craving, or otherwise influence their own mental states (Wegner, 1989; Wegner & Schneider, 1989).

Meditation is best explained [if not defined] in a word: 'being'. When you learn how to live only in the moment; when nothing distracts you; when you are not tied to the past or anxious about the future; when your mind and your emotions are your servant rather than your master, your consciousness [your awareness] is in the most perfect state possible. This state is simply 'being'. Meditation is about 'being', not about 'doing'.

Although meditation can be helpful for anyone, the technique here is oriented toward use with children who are having problems with inattentiveness, hyperactivity or impulsiveness. Such children have great difficulty in just 'being', and are often described as suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder with or without Hyperactivity. Most medical professionals, clinicians, and educators refer to the American Psychiatric Association's description of ADHD, which includes the discerning characteristics: *inattention*, *hyperactivity* and *impulsivity*. Children may have any or all of these attributes.

These primary characteristics show significant fluctuation across various settings and caregivers. Some of the variables in

determining this variation have been delineated. First, the degree of 'structure' - or more specifically, the extent to which caregivers make demands to restrict behavior - appears to affect the degree of deviance of the child's behavior from normal children. In free-play or low-demand settings, these children are less distinguishable from normal children than in highly restrictive settings. Second, these children appear to be more compliant and less disruptive with their fathers than with their mothers. Third, on task where instructions are repeated frequently, problems with sustained responding are lessened. Fourth, these children display fewer behavioral problems in novel or unfamiliar surroundings. Finally, settings or tasks that involve a high rate of immediate reinforcement for compliance or punishment for non-compliance to instructions result in significant reductions in, or in some cases, amelioration of, attentional deficits. [Russell A. Barkley, 1989]

The variation in the target behaviors suggest to many that these children *can* control such behavior, but find it hard to do so. The difficulty may be vastly escalated by the method of control used by the adults who are supervising them. While some evidence exists to support a neurological basis for the behavioral difficulties, this is not without question. What is known, however, is that calming techniques can be used to affect the way the person thinks and therefore reacts to stimuli.

### ***Symptom Effectiveness***

Since the presenting problem is one which makes mental control difficult, it is imperative that the clinician establish at least two earlier mental states with the child. The first is to teach the child to relax using Technique #04. The child's mastery of this technique will make success at meditation possible. The second state is to gain the child's intent to gain control. Using Technique

#30, one can help the child articulate goals which may motivate him/her to seek greater mental control. Once a goal is articulated which indicates a desire to acquire mental control and an ability to relax to some level exists, the Calm technique becomes potentially quite valuable. A goal statement, for example, might be: *"I want to learn how to live only in the moment; have nothing distract me; not be tied to the past or anxious about the future; and make my emotions my servant rather than my master"*.

Any system based on feedback needs three kinds of information.

1. What is the desired state [the *goal*]?
2. What is the difference between the current state and the desired state [the *error*]?
3. What actions will reduce the difference between the current state and the goal state [the *response*]?

The feedback system adjusts the response according to the error, to achieve the goal. You will be supplying immediate feedback to the child on the performance towards attaining his/her own goal. You, the helper, are the primary feedback response operator, providing prompts, reminders and encouragement in the process. Always remember to bring the child back to the goal statement at times of frustration.

Remember as well, attainment is not YOUR goal. You are helping the child reach his/her goal. If the goal is attained, the symptoms of inattentiveness and the brain wave patterns as well will disappear.

### ***Time For Mastery***

As a full technique the diet, attitude, exercise and mediation can easily be spread over four to six months. The skill of the clinician

will be to moderate sufficient input to maintain interest, while not pushing too hard. If the child only learns the language and concepts of the diet and attitude, that is progress. If the child also learns to exercise and uses it, that is more progress. If the child is able to do breathing meditation, that is greater progress still. And finally, if the child is able to do the Calm Technique only once for a full twenty minutes, the child has attained a level of mental control that few of us can claim. Mastery of the Calm Technique in the sense of total mind control, like any meditation is a life long process. However, if mastery of the technique as a practice is learned, it becomes available to the child and/or emerging adult throughout life.

### ***Learning the Hard Way***

***The son of a master thief asked his father to teach him the secrets of the trade. The old thief agreed and that night took his son to burglarize a large house. While the family was asleep, he silently led his young apprentice into a room that contained a clothes closet. The father told his son to go into the closet to pick out some clothes. When he did, his father quickly shut the door and locked him in. Then he went back outside, knocked loudly on the front door, thereby waking the family, and quickly slipped away before anyone saw him. Hours later, his son returned home, bedraggled and exhausted. "Father," he cried angrily, "Why did you lock me in that closet? If I hadn't been made desperate by my fear of getting caught, I never would have escaped. It took all my ingenuity to get out!" The old thief smiled. "Son, you have had your first lesson in the art of burglary."***

As the story indicates, the process of learning is not always easy. However, if the desire is great enough, the skill can be acquired.

## ***Calm Diet***

With motivation established, the first area to address with the child is that of *diet*. If there is one thing that affects the state of mind as much as meditation, it is what is eaten. It is common enough knowledge that diet affects the emotional and mental state as much as it does the body. Moderation in diet is the basic principle. Moderation in selection of food is more important than quantity. The clinician can suggest to the child/family that calm foods are central to all yogic diets. They are easily digested, cleansing, provide plenty of energy, and most importantly encourage a calm state of mind.

*Calm* foods include:

- all kinds of fruit
- most vegetables [with as little cooking as possible]
- nuts and seeds in their natural state
- beans
- grains
- milk and milk products

*Stimulating* food includes:

- excessive spices
- vinegar
- coffee, tea and cola
- all foods with preservatives
- most canned and packaged foods

*Lazy* foods include:

- meat and poultry
- seafood

- refined foods [e.g., white sugar, bread and flour]
- alcohol

This is not an extensive list, nor is it expected that the child/family will change all eating habits on the spot. It may prove to be more costly to eat only foods in the Calm category. Nonetheless, it is important that the clinician help the child/family learn and understand the *concept* of the importance of diet, and to place it in the hierarchy of thoughts. Teach the language and concept. It is at this level that the responsibility ends.

***Time to Learn***

***A young but earnest Zen student approached his teacher, and asked the Zen Master:***

***"If I work very hard and diligent how long will it take for me to find Zen."***

***The Master thought about this, then replied, "Ten years."***

***The student then said, "But what if I work very, very hard and really apply myself to learn fast -- How long then ?"***

***Replied the Master, "Well, twenty years."***

***"But, if I really, really work at it. How long then ?" asked the student.***

***"Thirty years," replied the Master.***

***"But, I do not understand," said the disappointed student. "At each time that I say I will work harder, you say it will take me longer. Why do you say that ?"***

***Replied the Master, " When you have one eye on the goal, you only have one eye on the path."***

## ***Calm Attitude***

Attitude is every bit as important to overall well being as diet and exercise. A bitter, negative outlook will have a negative affect on health and happiness. An optimistic, enthusiastic attitude enhances them. Optimism should be a most important consideration. "Optimism, the conviction that you *can* change, is a necessary first step in the process of all change" [Seligman - 1994].

There is no secret formula for developing a positive outlook. Simply being aware that such an attitude is desirable is positive in itself. Use of Techniques #01, #02, & #03, can help to rid the child of negative automatic thoughts and should be used if negative thinking about self and others is a major problem. The clinician's role here, however, is twofold: 1) to encourage the child to learn to recognize negative thoughts and feelings so that s/he can replace them with positive thoughts, and 2) to place high positive expectations [belief, not 'ought'] that the child can succeed. While this may sound glib and oversimplified, it is the easiest and most successful way of developing optimism. Because a positive frame of mind is so much more powerful than a negative one; negative thoughts and emotions cannot long survive a positive effort to change them.

Along with optimism, the child should learn and understand the concept of the *Calm Principle*, which essentially makes every act of the day an act of meditation. All it demands is that each thing you do, you do completely and to the best of your ability. While you are doing that one thing, you ignore distractions and concentrate all your attention on that one moment. You approach even the most unexciting or most trivial task as if it were the most important thing that had ever happened in your life. Again,

it is important to get this thought into the hierarchy of thoughts. Because of the difficulty the child is having with inattentiveness, it is not likely to happen easily, but the *belief* that it can happen is significant, and the reminder of the principle is less frustrating than punishment for inattentiveness.

Either at this point or some other before you get to the meditation, ask the child to think about an egg. Nothing more. Not about hens or reptiles, just an egg. Ask him/her to close their eyes and for *two minutes* think only of that egg. With no other thought coming into mind.

S/he will find this almost impossible. [As will you.] The human mind finds it almost impossible to concentrate on only one thought for any length of time. Unless it is trained. Athletes understand this. The athlete repeats the same actions over and over again for hours on end so that s/he will no longer be distracted by pain and exhaustion. If the child practices the Calm Technique everyday of his/her life so s/he never has to think about thinking, s/he can focus his/her consciousness on 'being'.

Life exists only in the present. 'Future' and 'Past' are nothing more than abstract concepts; yet they dominate our lives and are at the root of almost every emotional disorder. The Calm Principle helps to overcome regrets about the past and concerns for the future by concentrating on life in the present and living each moment to the fullest.

Such an attitude will probably be difficult for the target population to attain. Yet the very establishment of the thought is relevant to the process. As the child believes that this attitude is, and can be, a way of life, it becomes empowering. Teach the language and concept. As the meditation process proceeds, the reality can be considered.

## ***Calm Exercise***

Exercise has an impact on the way the person meditates. However, the target child probably gets sufficient exercise. The *Calming Exercises* are quite different than what we usually consider as exercises, and are precisely oriented to helping the child to learn control. These exercises are derived from Tai Chi. Although promoted as a *physical* exercise, Tai Chi is an excellent way of meditation. The complex moves demand total attention which contains the makings of meditation.

What the child will find difficult about the Calm Exercises is curbing impatience. The exercises must be done extremely slowly; they gain in effectiveness the slower they can be performed. Again, this goes against the grain of the target population and will require patience on the part of the clinician. Each exercise is accompanied by a slow intake of breath, followed by a slow exhalation. The slowness of the movement is governed by the slowness of the breathing. The object is to slow the movement and breathing as much as the child comfortably can *without strain*. Each attempt is a step toward mental control. The complete set of exercises should take about fifteen minutes to complete.

As you introduce the Calm Exercises, you must attend to a calm countenance, a calm stance, and calm breathing. It is important that the clinician model the behaviors. Explain the meaning of countenance, and try out the steps below. The child may giggle and make faces. Laugh with the child and remind him/her of the goal and implementation plan. If you can get the countenance right, move on. If not, move on after several tries, and you will come back to it the next time. Repetition becomes habit. Try to have the child approximate all of the movements, and reward

such approximations with praise and perhaps other reinforcements.

To relax the **countenance**

- **Push the tongue against the roof of the mouth just behind the front teeth.** This relaxes and unclamps the jaw.
- **Lift the eyebrows very slightly as if you are wide awake.** This is to relax the muscles in your eyes and forehead.
- **Have a hint of a smile on the face.** This relaxes all the facial muscles.

When the child achieves some approximation, praise with an internal attribution: e.g., "I knew you could do this because you are so adept at learning new things.". See Technique #24 in regard to attribution training. Again, this is not the clinician's goal, it is the child's goal, or the technique should be abandoned for it will be much too difficult for the child. In proceeding, we recognize that the child has difficulties in this area and are therefore very patient about lack of attendance as long as the attitude of attendance is maintained. The use of positive internal attributions will be an important part of creating an optimistic outlook that the child *can* achieve mental control.

Think of the Karate Kid movies for your own proper training demeanor. Practice the exercises yourself beforehand so that you can demonstrate the stance and the actions. Do the modeling intentionally. It is not a problem to smile or even laugh if something happens, but keep the focus on the fact that this is a serious endeavor with serious outcomes for the child.

### ***Two Words***

***There once was a monastery that was very strict. Following a vow of silence, no one was allowed to speak at all. But there was one exception to this rule. Every ten years, the monks were permitted to speak just two words. After spending his first ten years at the monastery, one monk went to the head monk. "It has been ten years," said the head monk. "What are the two words you would like to speak?"***

***"Bed... hard..." said the monk.***

***"I see," replied the head monk.***

***Ten years later, the monk returned to the head monk's office. "It has been ten more years," said the head monk. "What are the two words you would like to speak?"***

***"Food... stinks..." said the monk.***

***"I see," replied the head monk.***

***Yet another ten years passed and the monk again met with the head monk who asked, "What are your two words now, after these ten years?"***

***"I...quit!" said the monk.***

***"Well, I can see why," replied the head monk. "All you ever do is complain."***

To relax the **stance**

- **Both feet should point straight ahead, a comfortable shoulder width apart.**
- **All joints should be 'unlocked': knees bent ever so slightly, a slight kink in the elbows, arms not quite touching the body [a little space under the armpits], fingers separated and hands hanging loosely [they will feel limp and heavy], neck relaxed, head up and looking straight ahead. Back *straight*.**
- **Slowly concentrate all weight down through the feet into the floor. Feel the feet becoming heavier and heavier. Feel your weight sinking through your feet, down into the floor.**

Again, the target child might get fun out of the process. Laugh while remaining serious about the intentions. Reference to the ancients may add a solemnity to the occasion. Model the behavior and be serious about your actions.

Breathing is one of the most important elements of meditation and therefore is consistent throughout the technique. Consider how breathing changes when you are frightened or angry. If you could train yourself to breath slowly during those events, you could no longer maintain fear and anger. Stop and Think! could just as well be Stop and Breathe - *slowly*.

***Without Fear***

***During the civil wars in feudal Japan, an invading army would quickly sweep into a town and take control. In one***

*particular village, everyone fled just before the army arrived - everyone except the Zen master. Curious about this old fellow, the general went to the temple to see for himself what kind of man this master was. When he wasn't treated with the deference and submissiveness to which he was accustomed, the general burst into anger. "You fool," he shouted as he reached for his sword, "don't you realize you are standing before a man who could run you through without blinking an eye!" But despite the threat, the master seemed unmoved. "And do you realize," the master replied calmly, "that you are standing before a man who can be run through without blinking an eye?"*

### **Breathing**

- Place your fingers gently on the stomach about four centimeters below the navel.
- Inhale deeply through the nose, slowly and evenly until you can feel the abdomen swell under the fingertips [the Chinese call this your *tan tien*]. Don't strain. Don't allow the chest to rise. You want a natural, effortless flow of breath into your *tan tien*.
- Exhale slowly and evenly until you feel the abdomen fall.
- Breathe in and out, in and out, five times.

Help the child understand the language and concepts of breathing as articulated above. The child needs to know why it is valuable to do these things.

These things will be carried forward as you move to the exercises. Keep the Karate Kid demeanor, start calling the child 'grasshopper'. Add in stories and aphorisms as needed.

### ***Obedience***

***The master Bankei's talks were attended not only by Zen students but by persons of all ranks and sects. He never quoted sutras nor indulged in scholastic dissertations. Instead, his words were spoken directly from his heart to the hearts of his listeners.***

***His large audience angered a priest of the Nichiren sect because the adherents had left to hear about Zen. The self-centered Nichiren priest came to the temple, determined to have a debate with Bankei.***

***"Hey, Zen teacher!" he called out. "Wait a minute. Whoever respects you will obey what you say, but a man like myself does not respect you. Can you make me obey you?"***

***"Come up beside me and I will show you," said Bankei.***

***Proudly the priest pushed his way through the crowd to the teacher.***

***Bankei smiled. "Come over to my left side."***

***The priest obeyed.***

***"No," said Bankei, "we may talk better if you are on the right side. Step over here."***

***The priest proudly stepped over to the right.***

***"You see," observed Bankei, "you are obeying me and I think you are a very gentle person. Now sit down and***

***listen."***

Obviously, the target child will have difficulty staying still for too many of these experiences. Take it slow. If you get through only one exercise, that is fine. Intersperse the Calm Exercises with other events as necessary. It may be necessary to allow the child to run around the room or building [depending on the size] between events. The idea is to demonstrate to the child that s/he can do something very slow and calming, and to gradually build on that experience. Depending on the age of the child, the mastering of the technique may take years. If you have been able to 1) teach the language and concepts and these are accepted as valid, and 2) teach the methods of exercise and meditation, the practice can be used for a lifetime.

If this is too difficult for the child now, it may become something attractive in the future. What is important is that the child learn how to do the exercises and do them each at least once very *slowly*. This will give a sense of mastery which is a building block for future growth and development. DO NOT TRY TO SELL OR COERCE THE CHILD TO CONFORM. If the child does not want to do it, simply accept that and move on - pointing out that it is his/her choice, but that this is a valuable lesson. The child needs to believe that mastery is in his/her own best interest and that it will help to meet the established goal. Refer to the goal statement often.

***When you can do nothing. What can you do?***

### **Calm Exercise One**

- Countenance and stance as specified.
- Let the arms hang loose until they feel heavy and relaxed.
- Keep feet, legs and waist very steady while you swing the top half of your body to the left. Your arms will wrap loosely around you body as you do so. Then repeat the action to the right. Develop this swinging motion one way, then the other. The arms will follow the upper part of the body as you pivot from the waist; they will wrap around one way, then swing back the other - always swinging loosely, fingers relaxed.
- Swing one way, then the next, until the weight of the arms is sufficient to turn the body.
- *Optional:* As one arm passes in front of the body [the other arm will be behind], you can bend the knees a few centimeters to create a 'pumping' action as well as a 'swinging' motion. This improves circulation to the lower part of the body.
- Continue for two minutes.
- Gradually slow down the movement until the arms hang loosely by your side again.
- Relax

Obviously, children in the target population may find that swinging in this manner can be a lot of fun if done quickly. The clinician should not get too concerned about this. After allowing for some fun, remind the child of the goal [mental control] and the implementation plan [meditation] and try to get the exercise

done slowly, even if for as little as fifteen seconds at first. What is important is that the child try to maintain a slow exercise, gradually increasing his/her concentration and performance.

The second exercise is very simple and should also be done *as slowly as possible*. This exercise may need to be done in three separate parts, almost as if it were three separate exercises. If the child has completed the first exercise *as slowly as possible*, this becomes a mantra - 'you can do it, you did the prior one!'. Refer to successes, not failures.

### **Calm Exercise Two**

#### *Part 1:*

- Countenance and stance as specified, arms hanging loosely at the sides.
- Look straight ahead, breathe in.
- Slowly turn your head to look back over your left shoulder as you breathe out.
- Breathe in as you bring your head back slowly to face the front.
- Slowly turn your head to look back over your right shoulder as you breathe out.

***What is the color of wind?***

*Part 2:*

- Looking straight ahead, breathe in.
- Exhale as your head is lowered slowly on to the chest.
- Breathe in as your head comes up straight.
- Exhale as your head is lowered slowly back [so you are looking toward the ceiling].
- Repeat three times forward and backward.

***While leading a book discussion, the Zen Librarian commented that one of the characters felt trapped as a stereotype in the novel. "You can't say that," a member of the group said. "You can't see into the character's mind."***

***"And you are able to see into my mind to know what I can and cannot see?" replied the Zen Librarian.***

*Part 3:*

- Looking straight ahead, breathe in.
- Exhale as you slowly incline your head to the left [facing forward].
- Breathe in as you bring your head back to the upright position.
- Exhale as you slowly incline your head to the right [still facing forward].
- Repeat about three times to either side.
- Relax

Exercise three is a simple exercise where the arms describe a large circular movement as you rise up on your toes. You breathe in as your arms and your lungs are at their widest. There is nothing tricky about the exercise; if you move your arms in a large circle, your breathing will coordinate naturally. Perform *as slowly as possible*.

If the child is caught up in the challenge of learning the oriental martial arts, you may have him/her struggling to do the exercises correctly, probably with some success. Others, may find it much too tedious. You may need to point out to this child, that you are not expecting that s/he will practice these exercises every day now, but that you want him/her to learn to do them correctly once, so that they will be available to them in the future when they are ready. Emphasize the idea that they will become ready - they will improve in their mental control - and that they will then want to know how to do these exercises.

***Unmon said: "I do not ask you about fifteen days ago. But what about fifteen days hence? Come, say a word about this" Since none of the monks answered, he answered for them: "Every day is a good day."***

### **Calm Exercise Three**

- Countenance and stance as specified.
- Bend knees slightly until almost bow-legged. Elbows bent, wrists crossed about navel level, palms facing upwards [see Figure 2].
- As arms move upward in wide circular motion, breathe in, straightening the legs and rise on to the toes as arms reach the highest part of their arc [see Figure 3].

- Continue the circular movement as you exhale and let knees bend again [back to Figure 2].
- Repeat this movement five times.
- Relax.

Exercise four is slightly more complex, but the most relaxing of all. Essentially it is a variation of Exercise three where the breathing flows just as naturally. The child can work his/her own breathing pattern for this exercise. If the child has a large lung capacity, s/he can do the whole movement in one breath. Most people will find it easier to do in two breaths: in and out as the hands rise; in and out as the hands fall. Remember to make the hands/arms movement *as slow as possible*.

You should make sure that you have practiced this one and can demonstrate the movements. It is unlikely that you will want to show the pictures to the child, but rather will model the behavior.

***Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said, "The flag moves." The other said, "The wind moves." They argued back and forth but could not agree. Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch, said, "Gentlemen! It is not the flag that moves. It is not the wind that moves. It is your mind that moves." The two monks were struck with awe.***

### **Calm Exercise Four**

- Countenance and stance as specified.
- Bend knees slightly until almost bow-legged. Fingers entwined, arms straight down, palms upward [see Figure 4.]
- Breathe in and raise cupped hands [as if drawing water from a well] to mouth.
- As hands pass face [rising upward], turn cupped hands away from you so palms face out [see Figure 5] and begin to exhale.
- Rising on the toes, continue hands upwards until *palms face ceiling* and arms are fully extended upward.
- Breathe in as you reverse the actions, bringing hands past face level [see Figure 6].
- Exhale as you sink back into the bow-legged stance with arms [fingers still entwined] lowered in front of you [see figure three].
- Repeat exercise at least five times until breathing is deep and regular.
- Relax.

These exercises will certainly test the strength of your relationship to the child and his/her resolve to meet the goal. Your relationship will have to demonstrate that you are perfectly serious about the exercises and meditation, and that you believe in it. If you treat the process insincerely, do not expect the child to take any of it seriously nor expend the energy to learn it. Playing the martial arts guru, therefore, needs to be in your personality and fit with the child. If it comes off as silly, it probably

won't work. On the other hand, if done well, it can make the whole process more interesting. Tai Chi does provide a basis for the *martial* arts. If the child is interested in the martial arts [karate, kung fu, etc.], you may want to discuss with the parents their willingness to provide them lessons, *after the child learns the calming technique [exercises and meditation]*. That would provide real incentive as well as preparing the child for success in the martial arts lessons. NOTE: help the parents understand that if martial arts lessons are to be given, they should seek out a teacher who understands and teaches the *philosophy* as well as the skill.

### ***Meditation***

If the child has been able to achieve some level of success in the exercises, s/he is ready to begin the process of meditating. The one thing that almost all meditation techniques and practices have in common is single-mindedness, where the objective is to center your attention on doing just one thing at a time with all your effort. This is the core of the difficulty for the target child. This is not an easy outcome for anyone. At some point in the prior relationship with the child - discussion of goals, attitude or exercises - you have asked the child to think about an egg. Nothing more for *two minutes*. With no other thought in mind.

S/he learned that the human mind finds it almost impossible to concentrate on only one thought for any length of time. Unless it is trained. This is the time to reiterate that if you practice the Calm Technique everyday of your life so you never have to think about thinking, you can focus your consciousness on 'being'. This is an opportunity to train their mind, just as an athlete or singer trains him/herself to concentrate only on performance, s/he will be training him/herself to concentrate only on 'being'.

Many people have the desire to improve, but lack the willingness

to persevere. As meditation in itself has no goal, it can have no end. But as with all training, mastery will make the possibility available, even if it is not continued. If the child can learn to sit properly, quietly, and attempt to concentrate on a singularity for five or more minutes, the process can be considered successful. If I learn to read, I do not need to be a reader for it to be valuable to me. If the child can do the meditation for five minutes, s/he can do it for six. It then becomes a matter of motivation. How badly does s/he want to reach the goal s/he articulated at the beginning. Many people want to lose weight, but do not want to eat less and exercise which is required for weight loss. It is not a question of 'I can't', but rather 'I won't'. If the child has been able to do the exercises, even once, s/he can, if s/he wants.

*Preparation*

- have a special calm place
- lower the lights
- use a straight back comfortable chair
- place a clock or timer nearby

There is no difficult posture required. However, if your child would like to learn the lotus position, this certainly can be taught. You don't have to be able to do it to teach it, but failure to do so may diminish your guru status. However, as long as the back is reasonably straight and the head up, sitting elsewhere will work fine. Obviously, for some young people this is a new posture and they will need direction and monitoring.

Make sure the child is wearing comfortable clothing. Loose garments with no tight belts and no shoes.

The child should be relaxed before s/he starts, so you may want to use either the Relaxation Technique #4, or the Calm Exercises to lead up to the meditation.

Before doing anything, have the child sit for a minute or so, slowing his/her breathing. Instruct him/her to forget about everything and just relax. Have him/her close her eyes with face straight ahead. Point out that during meditation, trivial annoyances may take on greater significance than they deserve and should be ignored. Suggest that the child use the Calm Exercises upon arising in the morning and before going to bed, if at all possible. Have him/her keep a journal in which s/he records how often and how long s/he exercised, and how s/he feels about the practice. The morning may be particularly difficult since so many children with problems in living get up late and rush off to school. If this is the case, there may be a way to do the exercises in private at school [or, lead the class in the Calm Exercises], or s/he may want to do them when s/he arrives home. Once there is either an established routine for the exercises OR the child is unwilling to continue to exercise, you may wish to move on. If the child is exercising, this should be combined with the meditation, not replaced.

### ***The Moon Cannot Be Stolen***

***Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing to steal.***

***Ryokan returned and caught him. "You have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift."***

***The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away.***

***Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could have given him this beautiful moon."***

### ***The Breathing Meditation***

The child should begin with a simplified Zen breathing meditation before experimenting with the Calm Meditation, at least for the first couple of days. S/he should stay with it as long as it feels comfortable. If s/he really finds it worthwhile, perhaps you should leave well enough alone and stay with it indefinitely. The object of the breathing technique is to be as aware of your breathing as you can be. Totally aware. Be aware of nothing else - the fact that you are meditating or whether you are doing it correctly - just be aware of your breathing. *Remember, this is not an exercise in enforced concentration.* While the child should approach it with determination, s/he is not meant to force him/herself to concentrate. That would not be a relaxing meditation, and the child would end up feeling frustrated.

Tell the child that you are going to ask him/her to 'visualize' his/her own breathing. The child should gradually turn his/her attention inward to listen to his/her own breathing. Being completely aware of the air streaming through the nostrils, filling the lungs, and then being expelled through the lips. Don't try any great feats of lung filling here or the child can hyperventilate. The child should just visualize that stream of fresh air being drawn in through the nostrils, 'see' it being drawn down, deep into the lungs, and then being expelled.

After preparing the environment, the child should sit in what ever

posture has been chosen, close the eyes, and begin. You may want to begin by having the child tell you in a whisper, what s/he is thinking about breathing and any distractions that come up. Tell the child to ignore the distractions, and always go back to focus on the breathing. Once the child is able to tell you a whole cycle of breathing without interruption, have the child begin to tell him/herself mentally. The intent is to fade the thoughts and to forget and simply breathe and not think about it. This is the start of the meditation.

Now the child should silently count each breath as it leaves the body, when s/he comes to 'four', start again with 'one'. Concentrate on the silent count. *Hear* the count as it echoes in the head. Count until s/he becomes aware only of the counting. Continue for fifteen or twenty minutes if s/he can.

This breaks down into six [06] steps:

- talking about the breathing process & distractions
- talking about the breathing process
- internal talk about the breathing process
- visualizing the breathing process
- counting the breaths
- counting

Again, you do only what the child can tolerate, all the while asking the child to seek to do marginally more. The more seconds the child is able to sit, quietly, while thinking about less and less, the more mastery s/he is achieving. All the while the clinician is reiterating how impressive the achievements and how powerful the technique will be on the child's problems in living.

In the distraction phase, point out to the child that this is normal and all s/he has to do is to return to the concentration to

breathing. Starting with the internal talk, s/he should try to not even note the distraction.

It is easy for a child who is used to being hyperactive to get frustrated with these exercises. Remember that it is not that s/he cannot do it, simply that it takes at this point, psychic energy to do it. Therefore the beginning will probably be quite short, particularly since you have done the exercises first, which also uses psychic energy. Remember the skill of the clinician is to moderate sufficient input to maintain interest, while not pushing too hard. If the child only learns the language and concepts of the diet and attitude, that is progress. If the child also learn to exercise and uses it, that is more progress. If the child is able to do breathing meditation, that is greater progress still.

It won't be long before the child's mind starts wandering and s/he will begin thinking of various things. S/he may become aware of the fact that his/her breathing has slowed to less than s/he would have previously considered normal. This may be true and is a good sign, but should be dismissed as irrelevant and nothing as a distraction. What do we do with distractions? Return to the concentration point.

S/he may become aware of the fact that s/he feels very relaxed and peaceful, this is a distraction, return to the meditation. S/he may think of various things. S/he will probably find that after a while s/he notices that s/he is no longer counting - redirect the thinking to the counting. Don't treat the wandering mind too seriously, simply return to the counting. S/he may then become 'one with the counting', noticing that there are no distractions - which may be a distraction.

At the end of the meditation, no matter how long or short it has been, have the child simply sit quietly and reflect. Gradually ask

about the experience and reassure that s/he will be able to focus and be calm.

Give the child a card with the process and suggest that the child practice the Breathing Meditation each morning and evening after the Calm Exercises. The child should be asked to keep a journal in which s/he notes how long s/he was able to meditate, what distractions s/he dealt with, and how s/he feels about his/her progress.

### **The Breathing Meditation**

- prepare the environment
- check posture
- close eyes & relax
- talk about the breathing process & distractions
- talk about the breathing process
- internal talk about the breathing process
- visualizing the breathing process
- counting the breaths
- counting

Note to the child that s/he can eliminate the talking as s/he is comfortable to do so. The talking focuses the attention on the process and distractions and then consciously stops this focus, so it can be done even though there is no one to listen.

The child may stay with the Breathing Meditation as long as s/he is comfortable with it.

## **Egotism**

***The Prime Minister of the Tang Dynasty was a national hero for his success as both a statesman and military leader. But despite his fame, power, and wealth, he considered himself a humble and devout Buddhist. Often he visited his favorite Zen master to study under him, and they seemed to get along very well. The fact that he was prime minister apparently had no effect on their relationship, which seemed to be simply one of a revered master and respectful student.***

***One day, during his usual visit, the Prime Minister asked the master, "Your Reverence, what is egotism according to Buddhism?" The master's face turned red, and in a very condescending and insulting tone of voice, he shot back, "What kind of stupid question is that!?"***

***This unexpected response so shocked the Prime Minister that he became sullen and angry. The Zen master then smiled and said, "THIS, Your Excellency, is egotism."***

## **The Calm Meditation**

Like the Breathing Meditation, this is a 'structured' technique and this means there is a set procedure to follow and that it requires a moderate amount of determination and discipline to be successful. The structure in this technique is the **mantra**. This is the use of as single word or phrase, which in the tradition of India was called the mantra. Although it was permissible for this mantra to be *any* sound or phrase, it was often a Sanskrit<sup>1</sup> word or words from the Vedic hymns which form the basis of Hindu scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit is a sacred language that was used in north-west India about 1500 BC.

This is the classic application of the mantra. The mantra *type* of meditation [also known as 'Japa' or 'Japam'] has been in constant use throughout the centuries by communities and sects who knew nothing of Sanskrit. Catholic children may recall reciting the Rosary, which is often used as a type of mantra meditation. The mantra type of meditation is widely used today. It is recognized in all schools as being one of the more effective methods available.

Choosing a mantra to use should not be overly problematic since any word can be used, even a nonsense word such as *wosh*. What is important about the mantra is that you choose a word or phrase and stick to it. After one is adopted - regardless of its origin - there is no reason to change it. The child might well stay with it forever. However, since it will become something that is repeated over and over until it become totally habitual and nonconscious, the clinician may want to explore making it a positive internal attribution [See Technique #24] which may be useful to both the child and the emerging adult. A phrase such as 'I can do this', for example seems available to cover any test that might come up. [However, close your eyes and say 'I can do this' several times. I find that it has a hurrying rythmn, like a train picking up speed. Think about and try out for yourself, whatever phrase you choose.] If a positive internal attribution is chosen, some thought should be given to it and discussion with the Clinical Supervisor about its reinforcing application might be appropriate. Obviously if a phrase can be found that is uniquely suited to the child, it can have additional meaning. It also follows the tradition of teacher [guru] selected special phrases.

Mr. Wilson, on the other hand, recommends a word without meaning, so this can be considered as well. The child needn't be concerned with what others will think of it, because s/he never needs to tell another human being. This is his/her special word or phrase. Mr. Wilson suggests that if you cannot find another

word, that you use the word *calm-ing*. Even ignoring the meaning, it has a calm sound. If you think that your client would like and be impressed by a Sanskrit word you can seek out a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita* at the library or book store for a list of Sanskrit words to choose from.

Ask the child to imagine his/her Calm Center which is the very core of being. To the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans in turn, it was the heart or liver. In India, it sits directly behind where many ancient orders claim the 'third eye' is located. The 'third eye' is an 'eye' which metaphorically opens during certain kinds of meditation when the real eyes are closed. This is visualized as a point in the middle of the forehead [where the Hindu dot is painted] and back about two or three inches. The child should think of this place as his/her Calm Center which is the junction of emotions, thought and decisions; and where you can experience true calm and peace. This is the place of the '*me that watches me*'.

From this place, the meditation manifests itself as the repetition of the personal mantra. The child might think that the repetition of a single word or phrase for twenty minutes or more sounds frighteningly boring. However, s/he must be reminded that she will not be *thinking* about it, even though s/he will be *conscious* of it. After a short while, s/he will cease to take any notice of the word(s) at all, except that s/he is saying it in his/her mind.

***A monk asked Tozan, "How can we escape the cold and heat?" Tozan replied, "Why not go where there is no cold and heat?" "Is there such a place?" the monk asked. Tozan commented, "When cold, be thoroughly cold; when hot, be hot through and through."***

Putting the mantra meditation into action:

### **The Environment**

- go to the special place
- lower lights; perhaps use a warm colored globe
- use a straight backed comfortable chair or sit in the lotus position on the floor
- place a clock or timer nearby

### **The Posture**

- back straight, head up
- wear comfortable clothes, no shoes
- be relaxed
- sit for a few moments, breathe regularly
- eyes closed, unfocused, looking straight ahead

When the child is perfectly relaxed, s/he should begin to listen to the sound of his/her own breathing. Start the Breathing Meditation. Before s/he starts counting, s/he should begin to 'hear' the mantra in his/her own (unspoken) voice, sounding like it is coming from the Calm Center. This imagining of the Calm Center and the voice echoing around in the space is something that the clinician should focus the child on. As the child is

repeating the mantra, s/he will more and more try to focus his/her attention on the center of the self and no where else, while the repetitious mantra become an automatic occurrence.

Again, remind the child to simply refocus as distractions occur. You are not trying to get the child to reach 'emptiness' of the mind, only to focus on a single thought - *listening* to the mantra. Notice we did not say to concentrate on *saying* the mantra, but rather listening to it as it speaks to him/her. What s/he is trying to achieve is the absence of random and unnecessary thought by centering attention on one thing, and only one thing, at a time. This is directly addressing the *problem* of inattention.

Please remember this is not an exercise in self discipline. The child does not have to force him/herself to concentrate, nor does s/he have to go to great lengths to 'hear' the mantra. S/he can be passive. Go with the flow. If the mind begins to wander, calmly redirect it. When distractions come, ignore them and go back to 'hearing' the mantra. S/he will be distracted by uninvited thoughts and concepts. The mind will wander. This is completely natural and expected. The increasing discipline of meditation is that when it happens, the mind is trained to redirect itself back to the mantra and let that one word or phrase soothe all the distractions and anxieties.

The child will wonder whether s/he is 'doing it right'. If s/he forgets about wondering and only focuses on the mantra, s/he will be doing it right. S/he may even begin to wonder that the meditation is not going to work. Once again, simply stop wondering and focus on the mantra. If s/he begins to think that there must be more to meditation than this, return to the meditation.

S/he will also be discomforted by every little itch, twitch and urge

under the sun. S/he will hear things, smell things and feel things that s/he would normally never notice. They are completely natural and happen to everyone.

The constant repetition of all thoughts and distractions finally brings about a moment when the mind is still. Of course, at that stage, s/he will think, 'Hey, I've done it', at which point s/he will need to redirect the mind.

If at any stage, s/he finds it absolutely impossible to keep the mantra in mind, don't let it bother you. Most people will only succeed for a few seconds in the early stages. Just have him/her listen to the breathing and enjoy the peace of doing nothing, until ready to resume.

As can be seen, the Calm Technique is incredibly simple to perform. The paradox is that its simplicity is also its difficulty. Ironically, the principal problems the child will experience is just accepting how simple it really is. The human mind thrives on distraction and drama, it convinces you that there is no such thing as a 'simple' experience.

The goal of the clinician is to develop a 'trend' of sitting. If the child can sit for fifteen seconds more than s/he was able to sit, this is improvement. There is no target other than 'sitting' [*being*]. Each day the child is testing the ability to simply sit. Perfect practice makes perfect. If the child is simply not able to sit, let it go. Try the Calm Exercises again. Always remember that the *object is to teach yourself how to center your attention, not to force yourself to attend*. The most effective results are gained when the child is able to guide his/her wandering mind away from distractions by applying the mantra, not by sublimating his or her thoughts.

***The Secrets of Heaven & Hell***

***The old monk sat by the side of the road. With his eyes closed, his legs crossed and his hands folded in his lap, he sat. In deep meditation, he sat.***

***Suddenly his zazen was interrupted by the harsh and demanding voice of a samurai warrior. "Old man! Teach me about heaven and hell!"***

***At first, as though he had not heard, there was no perceptible response from the monk. But gradually he began to open his eyes, the faintest hint of a smile playing around the corners of his mouth as the samurai stood there, waiting impatiently, growing more and more agitated with each passing second.***

***"You wish to know the secrets of heaven and hell?" replied the monk at last. "You who are so unkempt. You whose hands and feet are covered with dirt. You whose hair is uncombed, whose breath is foul, whose sword is all rusty and neglected. You who are ugly and whose mother dresses you funny. You would ask me of heaven and hell?"***

***The samurai uttered a vile curse. He drew his sword and raised it high above his head. His face turned to crimson and the veins on his neck stood out in bold relief as he prepared to sever the monk's head from its shoulders.***

***"That is hell," said the old monk gently, just as the sword began its descent. In that fraction of a second, the samurai was overcome with amazement, awe, compassion and love for this gentle being who had dared to risk his very life to give him such a teaching. He stopped his sword in mid-flight and his eyes filled with grateful tears.***

***"And that," said the monk, "is heaven."***

Or perhaps heaven is the serenity of mental control and hell is impulsivity and inattention. The obstacles to serenity are unwanted thoughts and impatience. The last is a characteristic of the child that is hoped to be overcome. The prize of meditation is the *absence* of undivided thoughts, imagination and sensory perceptions. And it is toward this end that the Calm Technique is devoted. It is not the posture or the frame of mind that produces this wonderful calm, it is the absence of unrelated thought brought about by centering attention.

The purpose of the Calm Technique is to expand awareness beyond the boundaries of the conventional way of thinking and imagination. But first you have to learn to control your thought processes, to train the mind, to elevate consciousness.

As a relaxed, peaceful and non-urgent activity, the Calm Technique is a natural target for impatience. As the target child is extremely stress affected, impatience will probably be present early and often in the meditation process. S/he will complain that things are not happening fast enough. The clinicians must point out that s/he is succumbing to one of the maladies s/he had hoped to correct. The Calm Technique will triumph over impatience; the issue is how long it will take.

If the child has successfully learned the language and concepts of the Calm Technique and has practiced the exercises and meditation sufficiently to be able to carry on him or herself, this may be all s/he can handle at this time in his/her life. The clinician also has a tool to come back to when the child has had a 'bad' day. Mastery of the Calm Technique like any meditation in the sense of total mind control is a life long process. However, if mastery of the technique as a practice is learned, it becomes available to the child and/or emerging adult throughout life.

***What of all things most yielding [water]  
Can overwhelm that which is of all things most hard  
[rock].  
Being substanceless it can enter even where there is  
no space.  
That is how I know the value of action that is  
actionless.  
But that there can be teaching without words.  
Value in action that is actionless.  
Few indeed can understand. Tao Te Ching***

NOTE: the clinician can certainly be free to use any of the stories or aphorisms when they feel comfortable that they fit, or to add others with which they are familiar. They are not a part of the technique, per se, but have the merit perhaps of setting a tone that may be helpful. If not, enjoy them for what they are.