**Appendix I**

**Breathing, Relaxation, & Imagination (BRI)**

**Techniques for Children with ASD**

***Introduction***

For children with autism who are fairly solid at *Functional Developmental Level V* or above, the use of simple breathing, relaxation, and imagination (BRI), when used with other coping techniques (See Dr. Rick’s 20 Transition Tricks and The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly) can be very effective in helping reduce anger, sadness, worry, and upsets.

For several years when I was working at Michigan State University in the Department of Pediatrics, I worked in the oncology unit as a developmental and behavioral pediatrician with children who had cancer and had to undergo painful procedures (spinal taps and bone marrow aspirations). I taught them how to use BRI as a form of pain control and, in the process, learned a few ‘tricks of the trade’.

***Procedure for BRI***

1. The child must be a willing partner. Always tell your child what you want to do, namely, *teach them how to calm down when they get upset*. Telling them sets the ‘suggestion process’ in motion. “When you get mad or sad or worried, it’s not fun is it? I have a fun way to help you *stay calm and be happy* (positive suggestion). It’s easy. Tonight when you get ready for bed, I’ll teach it to you.” Don’t ask for permission; assume that they *will* do it and *can* do it. Use *positive* suggestions. Don’t use “don’t,” i.e., ‘We don’t want you to worry.’ Instead make positive suggestions to *stay calm and be happy*.
2. It is best to teach your children these techniques when they are going to bed. They are already relaxed, in a comfortable place, and laying down all of which make it easy.
3. During bedtime say again: “I’m going to teach you how to *stay calm and be happy* when you start to get mad or sad or worried. I have a really fun trick to teach you called the *‘Loose, loose, loose trick’*. First you will breathe three times and then you will tighten your arms and then you will make them loose loose loose. It’s fun!”
4. Then ask (never force) the child to take *3 slow deep breaths and you count them*. Deep breathing uncouples breathing from its normal unconscious pattern and can help the child gain more control over the relaxation process. This technique alone can be helpful in stressful situations. If you want to go for even more relaxation read on. . .
5. As the child breathes and you count to 3 then *time your talk exactly to the outbreath*. This is very relaxing for the child. “Just enjoy. . .relaxing. . .your whole body. . .as you breath. . .in and (this is on the in breath). . . out. Relax. . .relax. . .more. . .more. And now. . .I want to teach you. . .the loose, loose, loose trick.”
6. *Loose, loose, loose trick*. As the child is laying on the bed, ask him/her to tighten his/her arms *on the in-breath* while you say “Tight, tight, tight” and then, on the out breath, you say, “When you breathe out, let your arms go loose, loose, loose.” Do this with the legs too. Suggest, on the out breath, that it “feels good to be relaxed”. You can repeat this if the child is enjoying it.
7. *Then give a suggestion (on the out breath) for the future*. “When you feel mad. . .or sad. . .or worried. . .you can use your new tricks. . .to stay calm and happy.”
8. Lastly, suggest that the child will ‘return to normal’ and feel good and calm and happy. The whole process should take no more than 15 minutes.