**The FriYAY Podcast Series**

**Transcript for Episode 3:** Calming Techniques for Adults and Kids with Kimberly Blair

*(Introduction Music)*

It’s Fri-Yay, Fri-Yay, Fri-Yay, FriYAY! (woo!)

*(Fast guitar-picking music)*

**Narrator:**Welcome to the FriYAY Podcast Series from PPFL. Each week we interview interesting experts in a variety of disciplines from underwater basket-weaving to animal husbandry. On today’s podcast we’re talking to Kimberly Blair about calming techniques. Kristi Rugg conducted the interview.

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**Kristi Rugg, Byline:**Welcome, Kimberly! Thank you for joining us. Everyone is going through a really difficult and anxiety-provoking time right now, so I thought we could chat with you about calming techniques. Can you tell me a little bit about your background and how you got interested in yoga and meditation?

**Kimberly Blair**:  
I am an executive director at Mid-Ohio Psychological Services which is a community mental health agency in Central and Southeastern Ohio. My original training is being a mental health therapist. I became the director about five years ago and I realized I needed to find some balance in between being a parent, in my career, in my personal life. And so I started taking up yoga as a way of finding balance and allowing myself just to slow down.

My brain works faster than my mouth or then I can type. And so I needed something to slow myself down and not always being on that adrenaline rush.

**Kristi:**  
I think we can all relate to wanting and needing a little more peace right now. What are some techniques you use and recommend for calming?

**Kimberly:**What works for meis breathing. To calm myself down, to calm my anxious thoughts and my worries. Box breathing would be inhale, and sometimes it helps if you draw a box. So breath in, and then out, over. And then in, down, and then out, over.

Or saying a mantra or an affirmation really helps me in cueing my breath. Breath in, I feel calm. Breath out, I feel a peace. Breath in, I feel balanced. Breath out, I can relax.

So breathing, journaling, movement, meditation… there's all sorts of things that can be helpful. One thing I would say about meditation is people think you have to sit still and be quiet and be in this dark room. Typically when I sit down to meditate it's between 15 and 20 minutes, but if I can squeeze it in I might meditate for a minute and just reset myself.

**Kristi:**  
A lot of people are working from home and having their kids with them full time. You have two wonderful, rambunctious, hilarious children who sometimes need help when they're feeling overwhelmed and overstimulated. What do you do with your kids and young clients to help them recenter when they're feeling anxious?

**Kimberly:**  
Again, just like with adults, we all have different personalities. So that what I may do with my son is different than what I do with my daughter. I will focus mainly on my son because he has had the most struggle with anxiety but also feeling out of control.

One of the things that works for my children is touch. Touch is a really important thing. Hugs or pressure points can really calm the right child down. So I'm talking about a wanted touch of a hug and asking permission first.

For my son, he has special pressure points that he knows. He asks for us to touch his forehead and this is calm down spot.

Breathing works for both of my children. Whether we are playing in our rooms, or we’re outside, or in school, our breath is always with us. So we can teach our kids to use the tools that are there.

One technique is you can have them pretend they're holding up a candle, and pretend that they have a flame on top of their finger. So they can do a really powerful breath and they can make the flame dance. Kind of that distraction, but also teaching them to use their breath. When we use our breath we reduce our heart rate, we reduce the negative thoughts, we kind of balance out the chemicals in our brain and our body.

The other piece that I use with my kids is counted finger breaths. Having them hold up their five fingers, having them trace with one of the fingers. Breath in, I go all the way up my pinky, and breath out I go down the side of my pinky. Breath in, I go up my ring finger, breath out, I go down my ring finger. And then go on all the way through.

You can see kids do this in the school or when they get anxious. My son does it right before he takes a really important test or he has something that he's nervous about. That is definitely something that they have their hands and their breath with them and they're using the tools that are always there with them.

**Kristi:**I think we all feel a little hectic right now and sometimes we just need a couple minutes of peace. What's your go-to for three minutes of peace?

**Kimberly:**  
Being outside is my three minutes of peace, and just observing things that are larger than myself. That is a way for me to feel connected to the larger world and to realize, like, things are gonna be okay.

**Kristi:**  
What final thoughts do you have for us?

**Kimberly:**  
It's really important to ask for help and stay connected. So, no matter what your feelings are they are valid. It's okay if you're scared. It's okay if you're sad. It's okay if you feel just okay. Isolated as it may feel asking and staying connected will help us stay mentally healthy and balanced.

I think the other piece is that, I see a ton of resources out there and a ton of posts on social media, and emails, and we're getting flooded with all these things that we can be doing to fill our time. Whether it's doing workout classes or exercise classes online, or doing new project, or painting, or home improvement, or whatever it may be, we're putting all this pressure to perform and to be productive right now.

I don't think that's healthy for our mental health. And so, finding what works for you. Deep down, we know what keeps us grounded and it’s exploring those things. If [it’s] expressing yourself in cooking fancy meals, then go ahead and do that. If being out in nature helps, then go do that. If staying in and binge-watching Netflix, then do that. But just know when it feels good and it feels lousy. If it feels lousy or you feel all this pressure from social media… give yourself permission not to be productive.

**Kristi:**  
I'd like to thank Kimberly for taking the time to join us today and sharing with us her insights. We hope you're able to put these techniques into practice. To learn more about the FriYAY Series, visit the Common Learning Portal.