

## Happy Me! Relax and Breathe

**Eileen Michele**

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*Happy Me! presents relaxation tools in a way that children can easily recall and look forward to doing.*

In *Happy Me!: Relax and Breathe*, Eileen Michele presents three breathing exercises as little stories accompanied by pictures to help children have fun while learning how to use breath to relax.

The first, "Blow Out the Candles," shows a new animal on each page blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Each time, the number sequence is increased, extending how long the breath is held, matched with a new rhyming stanza. In "Funny Tummy," Michele tells kids how to place their favorite bedtime stuffed animal on their bellies and then breathe in and out to try to raise and lower the toy without letting it fall. The third vignette, "Smell the Flowers," shows different animals smelling flowers and blowing away various things, such as bumblebees.

After reading the first few pages, it's clear that *Happy Me!* is not a traditional picture book of stories. An introduction before the three vignettes explaining that they are intended to introduce breathing techniques to children would have been helpful. An afterword at the end of the book states that the author became interested in such breathing exercises when she experienced her own daughter's difficulty with anxiety.

With very simple rhymes and cute illustrations, *Happy Me!* is best suited for only very young children, although the techniques can be practiced at any age. Children will delight in the sweet and funny illustrations, such as a monkey blowing over a birthday cake and a big-bellied bear balancing a toy on his tummy. By illustrating these breathing techniques with both cute rhyming verse and happy pictures, Michele presents relaxation tools in a way that children can easily recall and look forward to doing.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (May 8, 2017)

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