

## How do we know these techniques work?

Pediatric pain psychologists specialize in reducing pain in children through simple psychological interventions, and there is a ton of research on what does work and what doesn't. All techniques in this handout have been extensively researched.

### What doesn't work?

It might seem counterintuitive, but **pain and distress is actually worse when children are only told what is going to happen right before or during the needle.** Instead of talking them through it, take their focus off the needle by using the techniques on the other side of this page.

**Pain and distress is also worse when children are told that the needle is being done to help them.** Again, it is better to take focus off the procedure, instead re-focusing on something else, using the techniques on the other side of this page.

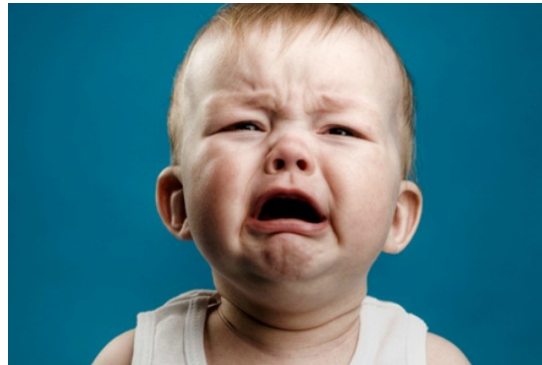
**Don't reassure, instead, distract and re-focus.**

*Note: These tips are true for acute procedural pain/distress. Different strategies may be useful for chronic pain and distress.*

## It doesn't have to hurt

### Reducing procedural pain in children

Seeing your child hurt is among the most difficult parts of parenting. As pediatric healthcare providers, we hate it too. This handout is meant to give you some easy tips on what you can do to make painful procedures like injections or inserting IVs hurt as little as possible.



All of these tips are *psychological* interventions. They are things you can do in addition to any medical interventions your doctor may prescribe to reduce procedural anxiety and pain. Psychological interventions are great because they do not have side effects, and, in most cases, have no medical risk. But, know that they only *reduce*, not *eliminate* distress or pain.

## What does work?

- Distraction
  - Reading
  - Watching a movie
  - Listening to music
  - Playing video games
  - Virtual reality
  - Basically any distractor works!
- Hypnosis
  - Deep relaxation and imagery
  - Usually taught by a professional
- Specific breathing
  - Blowing bubbles
  - Relaxed breathing
- Combination of the above

### How to practice

You can practice at home. Starting about a week before the procedure, practice with your child everyday by having them hold a piece of ice while using the above techniques to manage the pain. Practice for about 5 minutes at a time.