

Mindfulness Activities for Children and Young People

Please note, though these activities have been written with children and young people in mind, adults may wish to practice some of the activities provided.

Notice Five Things

It's time to get your child to bring Spiderman's powers to the fore - like a spider, Spiderman has heightened senses, he is able to smell and see things from a distance, and able to hear things far away. He is hyper alert! Try to encourage your child to activate these 'powers'.

By asking your child to do this, they will actively be noticing and paying attention to what is happening around them. This helps with bringing your child back to the present, especially when they are stressed or overwhelmed by emotion.

You can help your child activate their own 'powers' or senses by playing this game. Firstly, explain to your child that you would like to play the "Notice Five Things" game with them. You then look around and tell them five things you can see. Then let your child have a turn, but you may need to prompt them to notice their senses with the following questions:

- What can you hear?
- What can you see?
- What can you taste?
- What can you smell?
- What can you feel?

This activity should only last around five minutes and can be performed while sitting with your child or while letting them explore the space they are in.

Regularly take part in this activity to feel the long-term benefits and ensure your child knows that they can play this game on their own if they are ever feeling stressed or overwhelmed by emotions.

Variation of Notice Five Things

Play the "Notice Five Things" game during your daily exercise - go for a walk and ask your child the five questions above. Spend short periods of time moving from one sense to the next, e.g. look at any surrounding trees, butterflies and bugs, listen out for birds and lawnmowers, feel the weather on your clothes and skin and how it makes your body feel, and smell the flowers, freshly cut grass or the dampness in the rain. It is important that you allow for moments of silence during this activity.

Take Ten Deep Breaths

Mindful breathing can be useful to calm us and to help us experience what is happening now, rather than thinking about what has already happened or may occur in the future.

With your child, find a comfortable place to sit and ask them to close their eyes or if preferred, to look down at the floor. Once they have done this, ask them to focus on their breathing by taking a deep breath in, holding for a couple of seconds and then breathing out slowly. Take these deep breaths with your child to show them the technique. It is suggested that deep breathing is repeated for ten breaths. You may find this [breathing bubble](#) helpful in relation to the speed and how often to breathe in and out.

The first time you try this exercise with your child, if taking ten deep breaths is seeming like too much then from them, start with five and work up to ten with more practice. Some people may prefer to set a time instead, e.g. a timer could be set for 1-2 minutes.

Whilst doing this breathing exercise, some people may wish to lie down and place their hands on their stomach so that they feel their lungs fill as they breathe in and out.

Others may prefer to have their eyes closed and hold their thumb and middle finger together in each hand, while pretending to hold a balloon, butterfly or feather. If using this method, imagine the balloon you are holding to float away into the sky on each breath out, or the butterfly or feather to flutter gently each time you exhale.

Some people may prefer to close their eyes and hold a physical item, e.g. a flower from the garden, whilst they do this breathing exercise. With this method, upon opening their eyes again, the physical item they hold can be examined to notice its colours, smell, intricate lines, details, textures and the overall shape.

There are lots of ways to make mindful breathing fun for children so just experiment to see what makes it enjoyable for your child.

What should I do if a thought or feeling pops into my child's head during this exercise?

Encourage them to accept it, but allow it to float on by. People have different ways to help them do this - for example imagining they are pinning their thought or feeling to a cloud, or perhaps visualising it being placed on a leaf and allowing it to float down a river.

It is important that your child focuses their attention on the rise and fall of their chest, feeling the air entering and leaving their body.

Drawing Emotions

Mindfulness is about the awareness of our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes children may have difficulties putting their feelings into words but physically drawing emotions can be a great visual way for a child to express their thoughts. This will also provide you with an opportunity to see what they are feeling at a given moment, without the need for words. Try this activity at varying times of day and not just when your child is upset.

To begin this exercise, ask your child to sit down, close their eyes or to look at the floor if preferred, and think about how they are feeling emotionally. You may need to support your child to gather their thoughts. The next step is to ask them to draw this feeling down on paper; they may want to draw a picture and/or write the named emotion within this picture. Either way is correct.

You could model the exercise by drawing how you are feeling at that current moment too. This may open up a conversation with your child. Once these pictures are drawn, you could perhaps store them in a jar for future reference.

Mindful Colouring

This activity can be completed in silence or with background music playing in the room. Your child could either design their own colouring sheets or there are resources available online to download and print. For example, [Twinkl](#) offers educational resources and bumper packs on their website. Look at our [Educational Resources](#) to find more information about using Twinkl.

Some people may choose to colour in their picture with the hand that they don't normally write with, to see if they can do it as well as they would if they were using their predominant hand.

While colouring in, try to be mindful of how much concentration the exercise requires. You may wish to ask your child to consider what feelings they are experiencing while colouring in – how do their arms and hands feel? Does it affect their shoulders, neck and head? They may also wish to be mindful of the way they are sitting and so on.

My Favourite Place

To help your child relax, ask your child to participate in this exercise by thinking of their favourite place. This may be somewhere that they cannot visit at the moment. They can either write down the place they have in mind or create a picture of that place on a piece of paper.

Once this picture is created or the name is written on a piece of paper, your child may wish to put it in a jar to keep. This jar could hold contents of all the things you hope to do and look forward to once the current situation passes. They could also go back to the picture at another time and talk about their image with you, while practicing the 'Take Ten Deep Breaths' exercise. This will help them visualise their favourite place in their mind, when their eyes are closed.

Whilst envisaging their favourite place in their mind, ask your child to think about how they feel when they are in that place, considering all the detail of it like what they can see, smell, hear and touch.

What's In The Bag or Box?

This activity is about being aware of our bodies and our breathing, while also considering our emotions.

Within a bag or box, place a number of small, interestingly shaped or textured objects. Before your child handles the bag or box, ask them what they think could be inside. Be encouraging by making suggestions to try to stimulate their imagination. Ask them how they feel about putting their hand inside the bag or box in time.

You should then guide your child through the following simple steps:

- Ask your child to close their eyes and to focus on their breathing – remind them of the ‘Take Ten Deep Breaths’ exercise which encourages mindful breathing.
- Ask them to place their attention on their hand and to put their hand inside the bag or box.
- Have your child pick up an object and to describe what they are touching. You could encourage this with questions like “How does that feel in your hand?”
- Discuss with your child how they are handling the object, and encourage them to touch and explore the object. You could also ask your child what emotions the object makes them feel.
- Ask your child what the object feels like, e.g. “Is it heavy/soft/cold/sticky, etc.?”
- Once they have explored the object, ask them to move their attention away from their hand and back to the sounds of the room around them.
- Finally, ask your child to open their eyes.

It is important that during this exercise, your child doesn't take the objects out of the bag or box as this activity aims to rely on their sense of touch.

What to do about thoughts and feelings that pop into your child's head during this exercise and they find it difficult to move on?

Like the ‘Take Ten Deep Breaths’ exercise, encourage them to accept the thought or feeling, but allow it to float on by. People have different ways to help them do this - for example imagining they are pinning their thought or feeling to a cloud, or perhaps visualising it being placed on a leaf and allowing it to float down a river.

Further Resources

Books:

- [Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids \(and their parents\) by Eline Snel](#)
- [Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia](#)
- [I am Peace by Susan Verde](#)
- [The Mindful Dragon by Steve Herman](#)

Apps:

- [Dreamy Kid](#)
- [Stop, Breathe, Think](#)