

Mindfulness

The practise of Mindfulness has seen a rise in popularity over recent years and is increasingly being used in mainstream education as a means of promoting good mental health in a turbulent, demanding and often stressful world.

At Allfarthing Primary School we actively promote the good mental health of all our pupils and staff, and recognise the importance of equipping young people with the tools to thrive both academically, and personally, in school and in the outside world.

Below is some information on Mindfulness, including what it means, how it may help your child, and some techniques that you may like to try at home.

Mindfulness can be defined as “a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.”

Benefits

A growing body of evidence suggests that Mindfulness can help to

- Mitigate the effects of **bullying**
- Enhance **focus** in children with ADHD
- Reduce **attention problems**
- Improve **mental health** and wellbeing including enhancing self-confidence
- Improve **social skills**

For more information on the research supporting Mindfulness, please visit

<https://mindfulnessinschools.org/research/>

Activities to try at home

1. The Bell Listening Exercise

Ring a bell and ask your child to listen closely to the vibration of the ringing sound. Tell them to remain silent and raise their hand when they no longer hear the bell. Then tell them to remain silent for one minute and pay close attention to the other sounds they hear once the ringing has stopped. Share ideas on what you heard and noticed during that minute. Did you hear any other sounds? Did your thoughts wander to other things? Did you notice any sensations in your body? This activity helps children to connect to the present moment and become more attuned to their senses and perceptions.

2. Breathing Buddies

Ask your child to choose a stuffed toy or another small object. Allow them to lie down on the floor and place the stuffed animals on their bellies. Tell them to breathe in silence for one minute and notice how their Breathing Buddy moves up and down, and any other sensations that they notice. Tell them to imagine that the thoughts that come into their minds turn into bubbles and float away.

The presence of the Breathing Buddy makes the meditation a little friendlier and allows children to see how a playful activity doesn't necessarily have to be rowdy.

3. The Squish & Relax Meditation

While lying down with their eyes closed, guide your child to squish and squeeze every muscle in their bodies as tightly as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, tighten the muscles in their legs all the way up to their hips, suck in their bellies, squeeze their hands into fists and raise their shoulders up to their heads. Have them hold themselves in their squished-up positions for a few seconds, and then fully release and relax. This is a great, fun activity for "loosening up" the body and mind and is an accessible way to get children to understand the art of "being present."

4. Smell & Tell

Pass something fragrant around, such as a piece of fresh orange peel, a sprig of lavender or a jasmine flower. Ask children to close their eyes and breathe in the scent, focusing all of their attention only on the smell of that object. Scent can really be a powerful tool for anxiety-relief.

5. The Art of Touch

Give your child an object to touch, such as a ball, a feather, a soft toy, a stone, etc. Ask them to close their eyes and describe what the object feels like. Both this exercise and the previous one are simple, but compelling ways to teach children the practice of isolating their senses from one another, and tuning into distinct experiences.

6. The Heartbeat Exercise

Encourage your child to jump up and down in place for one minute. Then have them sit back down and place their hands on their hearts. Tell them to close their eyes and feel their heartbeats, their breath, and see what else they notice about their bodies.

7. Heart-to-Heart

Sit down and casually, comfortably ask your child to tell you about their feelings. What feelings do they feel? How do they know they are feeling those feelings? Where do they feel them in their bodies? Ask them which feelings they like the best.

Then ask them what they can do to feel better when they aren't feeling the feelings they like best. Remind them that they can always practice turning their thoughts into bubbles if they are upset, they can do the Squish and Relax Meditation if they need to calm down, and they can take a few minutes to listen to their breath or feel their heartbeats if they want to relax.

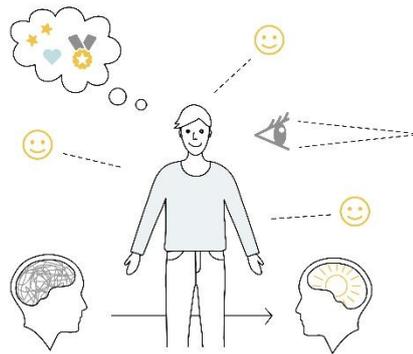
<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/#mindfulness-activities-children>



Mindfulness for Kids: Why and How?

Why?

- Mitigates the effects of bullying.
- Enhances focus in children with ADHD.
- Reduces attention problems.
- Improves mental health and well-being.
- Improves social skills.

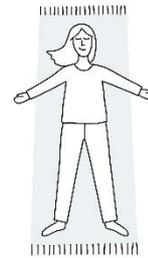


How?

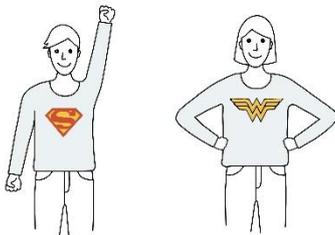
Mindful breathing. Focus on your breath, imagine a sail boat that rises and falls with each breath, envision your breath as a color, and pretend you're a fish breathing air for the first time!



Body Scan. Lie back, close your eyes, squeeze every muscle as tight as you can, relax all of your muscles, and think about how your body feels.



Heartbeat exercise. Jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute, sit down and put a hand over your heart, close your eyes and pay attention to your heartbeat and your breath.



Mindful posing. Try the superman or the Wonder Woman pose and pay attention to how it feels, both physically and emotionally.

Spidey senses. Use all of your "spidey senses" - smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch - to notice what is going on around you.



The mindful jar. Fill a jar with water, add a spoonful of glitter, shake the jar to make the glitter swirl, and think about how your mind is like the jar - sometimes it's crazy and chaotic and you can't see very well, but when it's settled, the glitter sinks and you can see clearly.

Safari. Go on an exciting adventure on your next walk, put all of your senses to work, and notice all the birds and bugs and creepy-crawlies, anything that walks or crawls or swims or flies.

