



The Nature of Mindfulness – Your Mind in a Jar – Early Learning

Background information

Content information for educators (also suitable for parents): These activities encourage children to tune into their inner thoughts and feelings and how these can affect their body. It also provides an opportunity to develop social and emotional skills particularly with regards to emotional intelligence and emotional and body regulation.



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way of life which involves paying attention to the present moment, non-judgmentally. It is a state of awareness that provides an opportunity to tune into your thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, the environment and other people. Research has shown mindfulness can help develop resilience, kindness, empathy and compassion.

VIDEO: Traci Childress, co-founder of the Children's Community School in Philadelphia, talks about the mindfulness practices at their centre. (<https://youtu.be/RYWUtNiIV-U>)

Want to learn more?

- Cool Australia - [The Benefits of Mindfulness](#)
- Cool Australia - [The Importance of Mindfulness for Young](#)



Children

Hot tips:

- **Have a go** at these practices and feel the benefits for yourself.
- **Try these activities outside** where all the senses are 'awake'.
- **Practice.** You can do anything mindfully: eating, showering or walking. You don't have to do more, just do what you do mindfully!
- **Don't give up.** Mindfulness is a life skill that can be difficult to master, but will allow you and your family to be more resilient, kind, content and empowered. Important attributes for happy and healthy people of all ages.

Mindfulness Activity: Your Mind In A Jar

Discuss with the children that we are going to make some glitter jars that symbolise our feelings and thoughts. Sometimes we feel calm or relaxed, and other times we can feel upset or angry (shake your example jar to demonstrate this).

'Let the waters settle. You will see stars and moon mirrored in your being.' - Rumi

Equipment needed:

- A container with a screw-on lid (a jar or small bottle would work well)
- Hot water
- Glitter glue
- Glitter - for a natural alternative, you can replace glitter with



bottlebrush flowers, fine sawdust, sweet wattle leaves, lilly pillly flowers or anything else suitable from your garden

- Clear dishwashing soap
- Glycerine
- An old spoon or stick for stirring
- Super glue or a hot glue gun



Preparation:

- If you have the time, prepare an example of a glitter jar before this activity so you can use it to explain the instructions to the children.
- Ask parents and other educators to collect jars or small bottles (with a wide neck) for this activity.

Instructions:

The making of Mind Jars is best undertaken with one adult working with

a small group of children.

Step 1. Distribute an empty jar or wide-necked bottle to each child, ensuring that each container has a matching lid.

Step 2. Fill up each container about half way with hot water (not boiling, just hot from the tap). Remind children to be very careful with their jar so that they do not knock it over.

Step 3. Squeeze in some glitter glue into every jar. Ask children to give their jar a careful stir until the glue is dissolved. They could use an old spoon or a short, strong twig to stir the contents of their jar.

Step 4. Distribute a variety of glitter, leaves, seeds or sawdust to the children. Distribute these in small, open containers and ask children to add them to their jars.

Step 5. Add a few drops of clear dishwashing liquid to each child's jar.

Step 5. Add some glycerine to each child's jar (this will also slow down the settling of the glittery materials).

Step 6. Examine each child's jar and check the consistency of the liquid - not too thick, not too thin, but just right ! Fill it up with a little more water if it is not yet to the top.

Step 7. Once the desired consistency is reached, ask each child to carefully put the lid on their jar. Offer assistance if required.

Step 8. Secure the lid of each child's jar with superglue or a hot glue gun so that it cannot be opened by children, and do not touch the jars again until the glue has fully dried.

You may wish to identify each child's jar by writing their name with a permanent marker on the base of each jar. However, you could also encourage children to share the jars amongst themselves.



Using the Mind Jar with children:

Ask children to shake up their Mind Jar; this represents their brain when they are feeling cross, angry, frustrated or upset.

Talk to children about what they see. Discuss how it's hard to see clearly, as it is all mixed up and spinning around. But, if they wait, take some deep breaths and focus on the glitter as it settles at the bottom of the jar, it becomes clearer and everything feels much calmer.

Ask children to sit with the Mind Jar until the glitter settles on the bottom, focusing on their breathing. Ask children to focus on the regular pattern of their inhalations (breathing in) and exhalations (breathing out) as they watch the glitter settle. Ask them to think about how they can use the regular patterns of their breathing to help them feel calmer.

Hot Tip: This activity is helpful for children (or adults!) with busy brains, who would like to clear their mind in order to either focus on a task, or if they are having trouble getting to sleep. This activity can be done at any time and it can be helpful for children to take a moment when they are dealing with big emotions.

Provocations:



- I wonder how I can focus when I have lots of thoughts swirling through our heads?
- I wonder how our I can use my breathing to feel calmer?
- I wonder how I might be able to guess how my friends are feeling?

Possible Lines of Development:

- Discuss how our bodies feel when we get cross, angry, excited, frustrated, happy, sad, lonely, tired, or upset. Is it the same for everyone?
- Talk with the children about body language - how can we tell if someone is getting cross, angry or frustrated?
- What are some other ways we can calm down our big feelings when we are angry or very excited?

Evaluation

Complete an analysis of learning, listing evidence about:

Belonging	Finding something of interest
Communication	Expressing an idea or feeling
Exploration	Engaging with challenges and persisting when difficulties arise
Well being	Being involved

Embedding mindfulness into daily practice

The Mind Jars can be placed around the room for children to use in a variety of ways on a daily basis:

- To help children calm down whenever they are feeling frustrated



or upset.

- To help children focus their attention inwards after they return from outside or from physically energetic activities.
- To help children settle themselves down and relax in preparation for afternoon sleep-time.