

The Nature of Mindfulness – Super Senses – 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 in to 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: Super Senses

This activity allows children to tune into their senses and the world around them. It also provides an opportunity to develop focus and attention.

Equipment needed:

- A space large enough for children (and adults) to sit or lie down (this works well inside, but outside is better!)
- A collection of flowers, leaves, stones, seed pods or other tactile natural materials (enough for one each).
- A small piece of fruit or something else edible for each child (berries, grapes, sultanas, herbs, cereal, etc). Be aware of food intolerance or allergies.

Instructions:

Ask the children to find a comfortable spot in the space you have chosen (inside or outside); they can sit, stand or lie down. Then read the



following script (a guided mindfulness exercise).

Script:

“Find a comfortable spot and take a couple of deep breaths, until you can be still and quiet on the inside

Imagine you are a super hero; your favourite super hero. Super heroes all have super senses and can tune into their senses and do amazing things

We are going to tune into your senses, one at a time until they are SUPER Senses ...

First, we are going to pay very close attention to the things you can HEAR. You will need to calm your mind and let go of all the noisy thoughts in your head so that they can not distract you from creating your super senses Take some nice deep breaths, relax your body and clear your mind and just be where you are at this moment ...

You can activate your own super senses, it just takes a bit of practice ...

The first super sense we are going to activate is your super hearing. Take a minute to listen to the sounds all around you. Notice the loud sounds, very quiet sounds, near sounds and far away sounds Notice the natural sounds and the man-made sounds. Notice all the sounds you can hear. You have now activated your super hearing powers!

- PAUSE -

Now we are going to activate your super seeing sense.

(Hand out the collection of flowers, leaves, stones, seed pods or other tactile natural materials.)

I am going to give you a special object to look at closely. Hold it gently in your hands. Look at the object very closely. Turn it over, what do



your super eyes notice?... You have now activated your super vision powers!

- PAUSE -

Now we are going to activate your super sense of touch. What does your special object feel like in your hands? It is heavy or light? Rough, smooth, furry, or prickly? Wet or Dry? What does it feel like if you touch it with your arm, leg or foot? Does it scratch or tickle? Great, you have now activated your super touch powers! Gently place your special object down next to you

- PAUSE -

(Hand out the small edible items you have chosen to each child.)

Next I am going to give you something we can use to activate our super senses of smell and taste.

First take your item and smell it carefully. Hold it to your nose and take a few deep breaths Can you smell it? Does it smell nice or bad? Is it a strong smell or a gentle smell? Can you smell anything else around you now that you have activated your super smelling powers? Like the grass, leaves, garden, someone cooking? ...

- PAUSE -

Now we are going to activate your super tasting sense. Put your item in your mouth, very slowly and gently. Notice how it feels on your lips and tongue. Now you can slowly chew it. See how slowly you can chew it. How does it taste? Is it sweet, salty, sour, tart? Gently swallow your food and notice how it feels as it goes down. Can you still taste it in your mouth after you swallow it?

You have now activated your super senses! Remember you need to practice to keep them sharp and activated. You have the power to activate your super senses whenever you want to calm down and focus



for a moment ...

Audio recording: The Nature of Mindfulness: Super Senses
(<https://soundcloud.com/cool-australia/the-nature-of-mindfulness-super-senses-early-learning>)

How to use this audio recording: Teachers may listen to the audio in preparation for this activity, as it provides a model for how they can run the session themselves. Alternatively, teachers may simply play the recording directly to students if they prefer (audio equipment required).

Hot Tip:

You can modify this activity to suit the children and your local environment. For example, for a shorter activity for younger children, choose only two of the senses and combine the sight and touch activity, or alternatively, the smell and taste activity.

Provocations:

- I wonder if I noticed new or different things when I switched on my super senses?
- I wonder if there is one super sense that is more important than the others? Which one would it be and why?
- I wonder what it would be like if I lost one of my super senses?
- I wonder what it would be like to gain an extra super sense? Which super sense would I love it to be and why?

Possible Lines of Development:

- Discuss which super sense children enjoyed using most. Why was this their favourite?
- Discuss how our body feels when we switch on our super senses.
- Discuss what our mind is thinking when we switch on our super



senses.

- Discuss some of the benefits of switching on our super senses every day.

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 into daily practice

Everyday activities can be enhanced by encouraging children to engage more mindfully in what they are seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. Regular practice will help children develop a heightened awareness of their sensory perceptions and make them more engaged and tuned into their own emotions, as well as the feelings of others.

The sense of smell and taste can be nurtured during meal times and can help children develop a greater sense of appreciation for the taste, quality and texture of the foods they are eating.

The sense of hearing and touch can be nurtured whenever children are in the outdoors - for example, by asking children to carefully listen for the sounds of birds, rustling leaves and whistling winds and to feel the texture of sand, mud or leaves when they are exploring the outdoor environment.



The sense of sight can be nurtured by asking children to focus on the changing shapes of clouds, the patterns they see recurring in nature, or by shadows created on the ground.