



The Nature of Mindfulness – Mindful Bodies – 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: Mindful Bodies

There are two activities presented below. The first is called 'Breathing Buddies Forever' and the second is called 'Smiling on the Inside'. These activities can be done indoors or outside but you will need to find a quiet spot with minimal distractions. If you decide to remain indoors, you might want to turn off the lights and diffuse some essential oils in order to create a calmer and quieter atmosphere.

Activity 1: Breathing Buddies Forever (BBF)

Equipment needed: Each child will need a soft toy/animal/something special to use as a breathing buddy.

This is a mindful breathing exercise which helps children bring attention to the way they breathe and the benefits of taking a few deep breaths. This activity is ideal for children who have difficulties in settling down or relaxing. Once children are familiar with the activity, then can use their



breathing buddy whenever they are feeling stressed or anxious to help them return to a calmer state.

First, ask the children to find a comfortable place to lie down. Once they are settled, ask them to place their breathing buddy on their tummy. Then read the following script (a guided mindfulness exercise).

Script:

“Take a few normal breaths ... Can you see your buddy moving as you breathe?”

Focus on your buddy. See if you can take some deeper breaths and watch it move up and down ...

Now take a few deeper breaths As you breathe slowly and deeply you might see your buddy is looking calmer and more relaxed How do you feel? How many breaths does it take to make you feel calmer and more relaxed?

How many times in a row can you make your breathing buddy go up and down?

Can you breathe in right down to the bottom of your tummy without your buddy falling off? The slower you go the longer your buddy will stay on.

Now go back to breathing normally Give your buddy a big hug.

Remember you can breathe with your buddy any time you want to calm down and focus for a moment”

Audio recording: The Nature of Mindfulness: Breathing Buddies Forever



(<https://soundcloud.com/cool-australia/the-nature-of-mindfulness-breathing-buddies-forever-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).

Activity 2: Smiling on the Inside

This is a mindfulness exercise that helps children ease any muscle tension or tightness in their bodies, and which helps them to relax and adopt a more positive outlook. Begin by asking the children to find a comfortable place to lie down. Then read the following script (a guided mindfulness exercise).

Script:

“Lie down and take a few deep breaths until you can be still and quiet on the inside.

Imagine you are lying on a soft fluffy cloud or floating in a giant bubble just above the ground.

You feel warm, happy, cozy and safe

Now think about your wiggly toes ... how do they feel? Are they warm or cold, are they still or are they trying to wriggle? Wriggle your toes ... Scrunch them up and then let them relax How do they feel now? Send your wiggly toes a smile Are they smiling?

Now think about your knobbly knees ... how do they feel? Bend them up to your chest and give them a hug Now let them relax, moving your feet out until your legs are straight on the ground How do your knees feel now? Send your knees a smile Are they smiling?



Now think about your wiggly hips ... how do they feel lying here on your cloud or in your bubble? Give them a little wiggle and then let them be still and relax How do they feel now? Send your hips a smile Are they smiling?

Now think about your rumbly tummy ... how does it feel? Is it full or empty? Is it tight or squishy? Tighten your tummy muscles, pulling your belly button towards your back as you breathe in Now let it go and breathe out ... How does it feel now? Send your tummy a smile ... Is it smiling?

Now think about your strong neck and shoulders. They can get very tired holding up your clever head all day How do they feel? Do they feel tight or stiff, or calm and comfortable? Breathe in and scrunch your shoulders up towards your ears ... breathe out and relax your shoulders How do your neck and shoulders feel now? ... Send your neck and shoulders a smile Are they smiling?

Now think about your funny face ... how does it feel? Is it frowny and tight or happy and relaxed? Breathe in and scrunch up your face as tight as you can ... now breathe out and let it relax How does it feel now? Send your face a smile ... Is it smiling?

Now that you have a smile on your face, your neck and shoulders, your tummy, your hips, knees and toes, remember you can send any part of your body a smile if it starts to feel tight, frustrated, or cross at any time ...

Now you can come back off your cloud or out of your bubble and into the room. Let's see how long we can keep our smiles

Audio recording: The Nature of Mindfulness: Smiling on the Inside
(<https://soundcloud.com/cool-australia/the-nature-of-mindfulness->



[smiling-on-the-inside-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).

Provocations:

- I wonder how I can use my breathing to feel calmer?
- I wonder how I can focus when I have lots of thoughts swirling through my head?
- I wonder how it feels when my muscles get tight? I wonder how I can help my muscles relax?

Possible Lines of Development:

- Discuss whether there are any muscles or areas of our body that feel tight or tense when we get upset or angry. Encourage children to focus their breathing on these areas.
- Discuss whether we can notice any changes in the way our bodies feel and in our inner emotions before, during and after these activities. On what other occasions could we use our breathing buddy?
- Are there any other ways we can calm down our big feelings when we are feeling 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

Educators can run these activities with children on a daily basis.

- The 'Smiling on the Inside' activity is a wonderful way to start the day.
- The 'Breathing Buddies Forever' activity is ideal just before afternoon sleep-time to help children wind down and relax.
- Either of these activities are also a great way to finish the day.