

Mindfulness Exercises

Mindfulness exercises are ways of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing, and yoga. Training helps people to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and body sensations so that instead of being overwhelmed by them, they are better able to manage them (www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/mindfulness)

Mindful breathing thought clouds

A useful way to calm when strong emotions are overwhelming by concentrating on the breathing it moves the focus from thoughts and emotions.

1. Encourage the child to sit in a comfortable position and close their eyes
2. Ask them to notice and feel how the breathing feels as they breathe in and breathe out
3. Ask them to put their hand on their tummy and feel it rise and fall as they breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth
4. Slowly repeat for 5 times
5. Tell them as they breathe in to imagine their thoughts are forming little clouds above their head
6. Then as they breathe out imagine the clouds floating away taking the thoughts as they go
7. Encourage them to keep breathing slow, strong breaths and let the thoughts come and go on the floating clouds
8. Continue breathing in this manner until feeling calmer and settled

Breathing Buddy

This is a similar exercise but uses a favourite soft toy

1. Encourage the child to lie down comfortably and place their hands on their tummy (if using a soft toy, they can hold it on top of the tummy)
2. Ask them to slowly breathe in deeply through the nose to a count of three, filling their tummy as they breathe in, it should get bigger and bigger and bigger. The soft toy should rise up as the tummy fills with air
3. Then ask them to breathe out slowly to a count of 4 and the soft toy should fall as the tummy shrinks
4. Try doing this 5 to 10 times
5. To help keep the child focussed they could silently say “up” each time the toy rises and “down” as the toy moves down
6. Afterwards, ask the child how the breathing felt and is there any difference in how they feel now?

Go for a mindful walk

The idea is to be in the moment and experience all the senses

1. Go outdoors together with your child for a short walk and walk at a natural pace
2. With each step pay attention to the rise and fall of the foot and the movement of the legs, notice how the body moves
3. Now pay attention to the sounds around you, just simply listen to what you can hear
4. Move your awareness to what you can smell, simply discover the sense of smell around you
5. Shift to your sense of vision, the colours, and objects around and about
6. Keep the awareness of everything around you as you walk. Don't fix on anything in particular just be in the moment

Have a mindful snack

1. Encourage your child to pick a small healthy snack
2. The idea is to slow down the eating of it to sense things you don't usually notice
3. What does the food feel like to touch, what about its shape and colour?
4. How does it smell?
5. What happens if you squish it, what does it feel like?
6. Take a bite and chew slowly, notice how your mouth feels moving up and down as you chew
7. Can you feel the food against your tongue and teeth, what does it taste like
8. Focus on the sensations of taste – sweet, sour, salty, bitter
9. Keep chewing slowly for 20 seconds
10. Notice what the food feels like as you swallow and it moves down your throat to your belly