



The Muddy Puddle Teacher



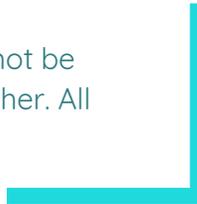
Muddy Mindfulness

BEE GREEN AND ONLY PRINT IF YOU HIVE TO :)

USE THE ATTACHED HANDBOOK TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH SAFETY
WHEN USING OUR APPROACH

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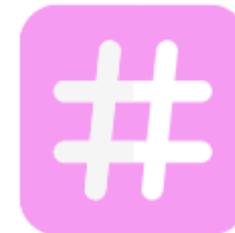
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Sharing the Muddy Love :)

Welcome



Message from our Founder - Sarah Seaman

Welcome :)

This pack will help restore purpose to your teaching and show you how getting a little messy can make outdoor learning more memorable for your students. If you're unfamiliar with the Muddy Puddle Teacher Approach then please refer to our handbook which will guide you through our Muddy ways. On this page you'll see the three Muddy Ms. These are our core values that remind us to give children the outdoor experience that they deserve. It can be very tricky at times not to let your indoor traits spread to the outdoors. We encourage you to use our tips and the attached handbook as these will help keep you focused and shed light when you need it. Have fun and enjoy getting Muddy!

Sarah :)



Muddy active



On cold days you'll want to keep the children even more active so don't be afraid to have little breaks where necessary. At Muddy HQ we call this 'dispensing'. We let the children go for a jog around the yard or jump on the spot and do star jumps if space is limited. This gets children warmed up and gives them that burst of energy they sometimes need to focus on more challenging work.

Some of the activities below require asking the children to sit down and do work on the floor. Get them to run around while they search and collect items such as sticks, leaves and mud. You can ask them to run, hop, skip or jump. Make it more challenging and increase the pace by putting a timer on how long they have to collect the items.

Muddy nature



We believe in BALANCE and while our goal is to promote the use of natural resources, we understand that this may be restrictive at times and not always possible in every lesson. But we do want to encourage you to use natural resources and most of our ideas will make this very easy for you. Why is this so important? Because it gives children the chance to experience and touch nature, all while getting good bacteria into their systems. It's also a much better sensory experience for children if they use natural resources rather than plastic. And above all, it encourages sustainability and teaches the future generation to respect the environment.

Muddy well-being



The Muddy Puddle Approach is passionate about school being a happy and safe space for children. Learning is such a gift and should always be fun for children of all ages. So try to distinguish between indoor and outdoor activities. Avoid using indoor practices that can often segregate groups, such as differentiating, grouping by ability or gender, competitions or stars of the day. Instead, let the children be children. Give them the chance to simply enjoy learning and achieve together without rewards. It will take some time to shift your mindset and teaching style, but don't worry. It will be worth it once you see the results!

Before you start

Summary

So why is the outdoors so good for us? How can the outdoors impact our state of mind? There are simply too many reasons to list but here are a few to get you started. Just listening to the rustles of nature or the birds chirping can brighten up your day. Feeling the wind on your cheeks and the rain against your coat can make you relax. Simply smelling the natural outdoor smells can help you unwind. Being outside is like a whole body massage that rejuvenates you! So doesn't it make absolute sense to take your learning outdoors? We think so, but we know there are people that are more sceptical about outdoor learning. Use these activities to show others why outdoor learning is so important.

The weather

Weather changes can be spontaneous and hard to plan for. We know how disheartening and demotivating it is planning a day of activities only to find out you can't do them. It's enough to put any educator off teaching outdoors. But instead of throwing your plans out the window, just change your mind-set. Teaching outside means that you have to start planning in the moment and being responsive to whatever card the weather deals you. This will take some practice but you'll soon find that you adapt and have plenty of tricks up your sleeve.

In this pack, you'll find activities on mindfulness which will help you get your children in tune with their thoughts. What's more? This pack will help you prepare activities for pretty much any type of weather. Even if it's very cold, rainy or hot. However, you'll just need to spend less time outside in such weather. The only times we can't prepare you for is when there are thunderstorms and high winds. In such weather, safety always comes first!

Supporting children

With childhood mental health issues on the rise, we need to start supporting children so that they're able to disconnect from their busy lives. We need to encourage them to spend more time with their own thoughts so that they're able to recognise what they're thinking and feeling. You may have already noticed that some children in your class are displaying signs of mental health issues: anxiety, bed wetting, stomach pains, headaches, reluctance to go to school, routine issues, refusing to talk, running out of class and hiding under tables.

The important thing to keep in mind is that there's no such thing as 'bad behaviour'. No child wants to act out. They're simply communicating in the only way that they know how to. So it's our job to try to interpret their behaviour and support them the best way we can. We know this isn't always straightforward or easy, so we've created this pack to help you teach children about how they can practise mindfulness in their technology-filled world. This pack can be used to teach small or large groups.

It's important that you remember that some of these methods might not work on your first attempt. Don't get disheartened! Each child is different. This means that some children may respond to certain activities better than others. You'll find that children will communicate their own preferences so listen carefully and tailor activities accordingly. This may take up to a few months so be extra patient! It'll be worth it once you see the impact that our Muddy activities have on mindfulness.

The Muddy space

Mindfulness can be done in any environment but it's important that children get the opportunity to connect with nature. In this mindfulness pack, silence and nature are two key factors that are important. If you have access to a stream, quiet forest or small nature area, use it! If you don't have these available, don't worry. Just try to bring some of those natural elements into your space. For example, an area surrounded by traffic noise can be improved by using a speaker to play sounds of a stream. How will this help? It's simple. Children will feel the ambience of a natural outdoor space and experience the benefits of nature on their mind and thoughts.

**“CHANGE IS THE END RESULT OF
ALL TRUE LEARNING.” —LEO
BUSCAGLIA**

Health and safety

Picking off the floor

At Muddy HQ, we're sticklers for safety. But we do know that sometimes safety can be compromised even if you've covered all your bases. Things might happen overnight in your setting that you can't control. Dogs, badgers and other animals might excrete within your grounds. The general public might throw glass or other harmful items into your setting. So it's important to always have a check before the lessons start to mitigate risk. Involve children in this task so they become more conscious of safety. But make sure you lead these activities with "feet first, then hands" instructions so that children know how to retrieve items off the floor safely.

Washing hands

Talking to children about washing their hands after playing outdoors is important. But there's an important balance to strike here. We want children to enjoy getting muddy and move away from washing their hands obsessively after outdoor activities. But we also want to make sure that they spend an appropriate amount of time washing their hands. Particularly as it's impossible to predict what children might touch. The last thing anyone wants is children getting ill from touching bird or animal excrement! So make sure your children wash their hands thoroughly after eventful outdoor activities.

Upset children

If a child becomes distressed, upset or panicky at any point while you're doing any of these activities, please don't ignore it! Stop the activity immediately and give the child some space. You may want to revert to using worry leaves to help resolve the problem before the child continues any other activity. Remember that some children may need some time to get used to this sort of activity.

Reluctant children

Never force a child to participate in these activities. If a child doesn't want to join in, let them sit back and watch their peers. It may take a few weeks of them watching others before they feel ready to join in themselves. But don't give up! It will be so much more rewarding when your child has built the mental strength to participate in this activity all by themselves.

Using natural resources

Using natural resources is relatively low risk but children still need to be made aware about how to use these appropriately. Make it easy for them to remember and get them to repeat this phrase: "sticks need to stay low, they tickle your toe". When carrying rocks, encourage children to treat them like babies and hug them tightly with both hands. If they're picking up and putting down rocks, get them to bend their knees and take their hands out very slowly.

Behaviour

These types of activities will feel very different to the children. Many of them won't have done this before so it's a good idea to over the Muddy promise. Get the children to stick their finger in the mud, raise it in the air and say "we promise to be quiet so people can think and be calm. We promise to listen to the teacher so we can learn to be mindful".

Mindful leaves

Mood leaves

Before starting your journey into mindfulness, it's important that children are in tune with their feelings. To get children started on their Muddy journey, use our leaf mood activities. Get the children to draw different emotions on the leaves: sad, confused, cross, happy etc. Hide the leaves in the bushes and ask the children to sort them into piles. Then get the children to draw their own faces onto the leaves and put them onto sticks. Use our 'mental strength leaves' activity to identify how children are feeling. Get children to use this scale to rate their feelings:

- One leaf is for if they need a mental strength booster.
- Two leaves means they need a mental strength top up.
- Three leaves indicates that their strength is great today.

Then ask children to go out and collect the number of leaves needed to reflect their own mental strength. Role-play with them so that they can put different moods into different contexts. You may need to model this so that children get the hang of what they need to do. For example, show them two happy sticks playing with a toy and one sad stick feeling left out of the group. Explain what is happening and how all the stick-leaf characters feel. Don't worry if it takes some time before children get used to it. If you're working with older children, you can make more gauges and use more leaves. This is a great exercise to open and end a session with.



Worry leaves

This is a great activity to try with children that are dealing with:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Issues at home or at school
- Childhood trauma

It's also a great way to get children to let go of all of those negative feelings that might be weighing them down.

Get the children outside and ask them to collect lots of evergreen leaves. Children can have lots of fun with this activity and you can make it even more educational by getting them to write and draw on the leaves.

Spend some time talking to the child about their worries and encourage them to write or draw their feelings on the leaves. Then ask the children to put their worries in a line. Or get them to rank their worries, from largest to the smallest. Ask the children to spend some time touching each leaf and tearing it up into tiny pieces. Then get them to take a deep breath and blow the worry away. Encourage them to watch as their worry blows away.

Do this with each and every worry. You may need to do this several times a day if you have children with severe anxiety. For such children, slow down the pace so that they get used to this activity.

Scenario

A child says: "When my mum leaves me in the morning I don't like it".

Educator's response: Have a small discussion with the child that's appropriate to this context. Depending on the age of the child, write or draw a picture of the worry on a leaf. Then together tear it into pieces and blow the worry away.

A mindful mind

Clearing cloudy minds

This is a great activity to do with large groups but also works really well in one-to-one settings or with small nurture groups. Before starting, make sure that children are clear on what they need to do for this to work. In the health and safety section of this pack, you'll find a section on how to support different behaviour.

Start by getting children to make some Muddy promises. For example, get them to make a Muddy promise to be quiet and lie still while they think about themselves and don't disturb others. Get children to lie on their backs and keep their eyes open. You can choose whether you want to space them out or have them lie next to one another. Experiment and see what works best.

Encourage them to stay quiet and just think. Then get them to place their hands on their tummy and feel the sensation of their body breathing while they look up at the clouds in the sky. What noises can they hear? What can they see in the clouds? Are they still thinking? Do any of the clouds look like anything familiar?

Get the children to focus on what they can hear and feel around them. Can they feel their heart? What about the grass or mud beneath them?

Then ask the children to sit up and talk about what they felt and saw. Make sure you relay all the instructions slowly to children, leaving a few seconds in-between each instruction. As your children get used to these activities, make the gap between instructions bigger. This will encourage children to remain in silence for longer periods of time while they observe their surroundings.

Puddle pondering

Research shows that the sound of water can have a calming effect on the mind. So get your Muddy Puddlers to do some pondering! Start by assessing your class. How do they look? What are their moods like? Then get the children to find a puddle.

Don't have a puddle? Make one! Look for a dip in the ground and pour water all around your space. Alternatively place lots of pans, pots and buckets of water around your area. Then give each child a stick and let them splash it in the water.

Encourage the children to have a play and a chat before they start the activity so that they have enough time to explore once they start. Make sure the children make a Muddy promise to keep quiet, think and concentrate on their own water. This will help them listen to the noises made by the water.

To get the children focusing on the beauty of puddles, ask them lots of questions while they play. Can they see their reflection in the puddle and how it ripples and makes waves? What colours do they see? How do the puddles make them feel?

Encourage the children to take nice deep breaths every now and again. Get them to breathe into their tummies and then let go. Finally, get the children to come together as a group. Note down any changes you see in them and share your observations at the end of the activity.



Mindful nature

Mindful mud

Mud is amazing and we love it! Why? Because apart from being incredibly fun, it can help children build their immune system and help reduce allergies.

Most children also love mud. But we know that some aren't instantly drawn to mud, nor are they ready to touch it. It can take time for some children to do this, especially if the children are frequently told to wash their hands or use germ gel at home. This is where it's important to engage parents and make sure they know all about the benefits of mud as well!

It doesn't matter what type of mud you use for this activity. It can be from a grassy field or you can buy your own compost. But the simplest solution is using the mud from your own space.

Ask the children to find something in the mud and just play with it while they sit or stand. Remember to ask children to use "feet first, then hands" when finding mud. Get the children to squeeze the mud and squish it in-between their fingers. Then encourage them to inhale and open their hands, while they run their finger over the palm of their hand and draw different shapes. Draw their attention to the slippery and smooth texture of mud. Then ask them to place both of their hands together, pressing the mud between both hands and rubbing them together. Get the children to take a breath and then cross their fingers over one another. Encourage them to talk about how it feels.

Then get children to focus on the colours they see. What light can they see shining off the mud? Encourage the children to use their imagination to make things and play in the mud. Allow them to talk and share plenty of smiles. End the session by drawing a smile in the mud or on their hands.

Relaxing in the rain

Rather than keeping your class inside on a rainy day, why not take the opportunity to do some Muddy mindfulness?

As we've already mentioned, water has a soothing and calming effect on the mind and soul. Falling rain can be a magical sensory experience for children. Again, remember that some children might find this activity unusual and be apprehensive about participating. Let them join in at their own pace. This is also a super activity to get your parents to try at home!

Prepare your children before you go outside. Children don't often get to go out in the rain so when they do, it can cause a lot of excitement! You want children to observe the rain, feel the sensation on their skin and take in the wonders around them. We know this can be tricky particularly with younger children; so again, we recommend being patient! Practice makes perfect and they'll soon get into the routine.

Invite the children outside and ask them to just stand and feel the raindrops falling on them. Then ask them to put their hands out and try to catch the rain while they listen to the sounds. How does the rain feel in the palm of their hands? Encourage the children to stick their tongue out and taste the rain. Does it tickle when it runs down their nose or their cheeks? Get them to try and make a cup shape using their hands. How much rain can they hold in their hands? What colours and lights can they see reflecting off the rain drops? Then get them to release the water and watch it flow across the ground. Encourage them to follow the rain and watch where it goes. Finish with the children jumping in the puddles, rolling in the rain and enjoying the simple pleasures in life!



Mindful nature

Leaf love

At the Muddy Puddle Teacher, we talk a lot about nature deficits and how children are unaware of the nature around them. Use our leaf love activity to get children to pay attention to nature once again!

Ask each child to find a leaf. At Muddy HQ, we believe that picking a leaf from a tree is fine as long as doing so will serve a purpose and we're not simply being destructive.

Then get the children to sit down and look carefully at the leaves that have been picked. Encourage the children to focus on the colours of the leaves and turn them over, observing the texts closely. Draw their attention to the lines running through the leaf. How does the leaf feel? Is it waxy or is it rough?

Get the children to swap leaves and notice any differences. Then ask the children to carefully brush their leaf against their face before moving onto their hands and feet. Ask the children to lift the leaf up into the sunlight and observe the light shining through it. Finish this activity by asking the children to take a deep breath, have a good smell of the leaf and smile.

Petal power

As children we played with petals a lot more because we spent more time outside, usually without parents watching. These days there are a lot more rules for children to follow. Don't get us wrong – rules are great! But they shouldn't mean that our children lose their connection with nature. This activity is a great throwback down memory lane! It will allow your children to use their sense of smell to connect with nature.

For this activity you'll need some petals. You can buy some petals at a shop but we recommend getting children to pick them from your area. Get children to work in groups of 4 or 5 and pick one petal each. You can make this a seasonal activity by picking flowers relevant to each season. Ask the children to silently enjoy the smell of petals. What colours are the petals? How do the petals feel in their hands?

Get the children to rub the petals together and watch as the water seeps out of them. Encourage the children to focus their minds on the change of colour, shape and texture of the petal when they squeeze it. Hand the children a bowl and let them put the petals into it. Then give the children some time to play with them and make perfumes or potions. Finish this activity with a deep breath and a smile!

"The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it." - Thich Nhat Hanh



Engaging the senses

Stone serenity

You may be familiar with hot stone massages. For many years, stones have been used to soothe muscle aches and pains. They're a fabulous conductor of heat and are great for soaking up any anxiety or clammy feelings that a child is keeping bottled up.

For this activity we recommend buying river pebbles from Baker Ross. You can also buy larger pebble stones from Wickes however these will need to be washed. Make sure that your children know how to use stones safely before doing this activity. Model safe behaviour by practising the 'stone babies' activity. Also make sure you monitor any children that have temperamental behaviour issues. You may want to provide such children with an alternative object, such as a pine cone, to ensure safety.

Ask the children to hold the stone with both hands and feel its temperature. The stone may feel cold but the child's hand will soon start to warm it up. Encourage the children to be calm and quiet so that they can focus on their sense of touch.

Start this activity by describing how the stone feels to the children. Get the children to move their hands around the stone, feeling it in different positions. Encourage them to focus on warming up all of the cool bits or cooling down all of the hot bits. Ask the children to feel how smooth or rough the pebble is. What shapes or colours do they see? Do the stones have any small details, such as holes or ridges?

Then ask the children to place the pebble on their cheek. Does it feel cooler, hotter, smoother or rougher? Get children to close their eyes and focus on their sense of touch while they breathe. If you have time, take the children's shoes and socks off. Encourage them to rub the pebble on their little toes and the arch of the foot while breathing in deeply.

Finish this activity by sitting in a circle and getting the children to place the rocks in front of them. Then ask the children to stand up, hold hands and turn the circle before sitting down to hold somebody else's rock. What differences do they see?

Stick scraping

So far we've explored activities that rely on the sense of touch and smell, but what about sound? Sound and music can be very therapeutic for children. Try this activity to find out just how powerful they can be!

Ask each child to find a stick that's strong enough to tap without breaking. Gather the children around in a circle and get them to experiment with their stick. Get a child to tap their stick on the floor while the rest of the class stays quiet and listens to the sound of the stick on the floor. What sound can they hear? Get them to listen really carefully and focus on the sound.

Then ask the child to repeat this again, but this time changing the sound. Get the child to create this beat: tap, tap, scrape and repeat! Then encourage the children to try tapping and scraping on different surfaces, like trees or benches. Repetition can be very soothing so make sure they repeat the beat over and over again.

Allow the children some time to play and create their own sounds with their friends. Finish off with a deep breath and a smile.



Mindful weather

Shade slumbers

Shade is vital to animals and human beings during the heat of the day, and in nature it's normally the trees that provide us with shade. This activity will encourage your children to be creative and create their own shade!

Ask the children to find a shaded spot to lie in and discuss what shade is. Why do we need it? What happens in the shade? Then ask them to close their eyes and relax without speaking. Whilst the children relax, draw their minds to the here and now by speaking in a calm and low voice. What sounds can they hear? Can they smell anything around them? Get them to focus on these sounds as they relax.

Then encourage them to place their hand in the ground and feel the earth and grass below them. How does it feel? Does it tickle? Is it rough or smooth? Encourage the children to take a deep breath. Allow several minutes where the children relax and repeat.

Finish this activity with a deep breath and a smile. Make sure you give the children enough time to come around and that they don't rush to get up too quickly. It's especially important that they sit up slowly and have some water first on hot days.



Weather angels

As you may have gathered by now, this package offers more to children than merely sitting down in silence. It connects children with nature and reminds them to enjoy the simple joys of life.

This activity is great for doing in both snow and rain. Just make sure your children have the right clothing. If you have snow, great! If not, use a muddy field.

Ask the children to lie on their back and feel the coldness underneath them. Let the sensation sink in and get the children to take in a deep breath while they look at the clouds. What shapes and colours can they see in the clouds? Then get the children to stand and find a new place to lie in and repeat the activity. Give the children some time to play and communicate afterwards. Finish with a smile and a deep breath.

"Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more." - Mother Teresa

Simple mindfulness

Silent walking

There are lots of articles out there about the benefits of going on a simple walk. But what about the importance of going on a silent walk? Sometimes we need to be at peace with our own thoughts. Children also need this too.

Take your class on a silent walk. Again, it might take some time for children to get used to this activity before they completely relax and let their mind wander and think. But it's a simple activity. All children have to do is go for a silent walk and observe the world around them.

This activity is suitable for all seasons and is great for home learning.

Serene sitting

As we already know, children have busy schedules. Many are often rushed for time, with clubs and play dates at the end of the school day. But are they getting enough quiet time to themselves?

Start this activity by asking the children to find a comfy spot to sit in. Then ask them to keep their eyes open and place their palms on their lap. Make sure they spend some time getting comfortable and focusing on what's around them. Encourage them to look at different buildings, trees, plants and surroundings.

Get them to pay attention to the sensation of their breathing as they put their hands on their tummies. Then ask them to focus on the weather and what kind of day it is. What colours and shapes do they see? Encourage them to take a deep breath and end with a big smile!

“What day is it?” asked Pooh. “It’s today,” squeaked Piglet. “My favourite day,” said Pooh. - A. A. Milne



Ready to become a Muddy Puddle Teacher? Enrol with us for as little as £80!

Guess what?

Nature makes us calm!

This is an information pack of activities and ideas that you can apply at home or within any educational setting. All activities are designed to bring calm and peace to groups of children or individuals. Muddy mindfulness aims to connect each child with the present by simply encouraging them to use their senses and accepting a helping hand from nature. The activities are also designed to help children develop coping mechanisms to deal with their busy worlds and focus on the present.

Practising mindfulness takes some time. So don't expect your child to get this right in their first go. Eventually you'll start to see how these activities are improving their behaviour, mood swings and tantrums.

Why not try these activities yourself? There are plenty Muddy benefits in store for you too! All of our ideas are best done outdoors but avoid if there's heavy rain or wind.

Your Muddy task :)

Clearing cloudy minds

Children rarely have brain breaks anymore and spend hardly any time with their own thoughts. The next time it's a nice day, take your child out to your local park or garden. Lie down on your backs and gaze at the clouds. We bet this is something you definitely did growing up, but how often does your child get to do this? Spend a few minutes just thinking and looking at the clouds. What do they look like?

Finish with a deep breath and a smile. Spend some time slowly getting up and make sure you have a refreshing glass of water. This will help keep your mind fresh.

If your child struggles to relax while doing this, don't panic! Teaching your child to relax will take some time so don't give up! It's a vital skill that all modern children need more than ever.

Did you know?

Studies have shown that children who play out are smarter! Use this link to read more.
<https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>

“Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.”—
John Muir



Congratulations!



To

.....



You have been awarded the
Muddy Mindfulness Award !

SignedDate.....

“LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.” -RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Message for parents!
If your child likes to learn outside then
check out our parent packs at:
www.themuddypuddleteacher.co.uk