

Mindfulness: Practices For Children



Edition One - The Basics: 2015

[@mindfulpedagogy](https://twitter.com/mindfulpedagogy)
mindfulintheclassroom.wordpress.com

Introduction

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is concentrating on what is at the forefront of your mind, in the present moment, with insight & compassion. Mindfulness practices are often intentional and systemic ways of developing a compassionate and insightful presence to an activity.

Focus on the breath is a key facet of mindfulness practice. Neuroscience shows that this makes us aware of the subjectiveness and transient nature of thoughts and emotions, rather than them being something unmoveable and permanent.

It allows there to be space between day-to-day stimulus and automatic reaction.

Stimulus -> !!! -> Reaction
Stimulus -> Space/Time -> Response

How this resource should be used

The teaching of mindfulness practices to children is actually only a *small* aspect of what constitutes a 'mindful pedagogy' and bringing all the possible benefits of mindfulness to children.

Other important factors to consider are:

You as an educator having a practice. Children benefit most from mindfulness if their teacher practices it themselves. By having a mindfulness practice of your own you create a compassionate and nurturing environment for children to learn in. It also means you have a strong 'subject knowledge' for which to fall back on and not only rely on these type of resources (or pedagogical knowledge). The best teachers are the ones that have a combination of good subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and passion for what they teach. Mindfulness should be no different. There is nothing wrong with learning along with the children for a while but for more details on creating your own practice please visit my website. mindfulintheclassroom.wordpress.com

The school having a 'culture' of mindfulness. If this material is taught out of context in a school not based on an ethos of mindfulness and a school which doesn't hold the concepts of mindfulness in highest of regards - benefits of these activities will remain limited. Again, if you are looking to provide a 'mindful culture' in your school please visit my website for more details.

Continue your own CPD. Continue to be creative and look to develop your understanding of mindfulness. Create new ideas, research and look for the connections between mindfulness and subjects within the curriculum. Please share these and any other questions or experience on my website or via twitter [@mindfulpedagogy](https://twitter.com/mindfulpedagogy) or the hashtag [#mindfuledchat](https://twitter.com/mindfuledchat) for great ideas.

Finally enjoy yourself!

Mind In A Jar

Context

This activity will help demonstrate how our mind is subject to change. Children will visualize how their mind can be 'cloudy' and how mindful meditation can help bring clarity to our mind and help us see how things really are (Age 4-7).

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Collect jam jars from home.

Step 2: Children can choose from different colouring dyes, glitters or coloured sand to put in their jar. To represent emotions.

Step 3: Add water until 2/3s of the way full.

Step 4: Seal the lid tight. Use glue or tape to ensure longevity of the mind-jar.

Explain that our minds often become cloudy, unclear and occupied with past and future events. This stops us from being able to see what's really here in the present moment. We can say or do things that are unkind due to these strong feelings.

Step 5: Get the children to shake their jars and then watch the contents fall to the bottom.

Step 6: Explain that by practicing mindfulness through breathing meditation we can make our mind clear like the water. Emotions & thoughts have space to clear allow us to make better decisions and see things as they really are.

Step 7: Allow young children to use their jar as calming tool if things get too much or in a time-out situation. It can become a useful friend for them.



Inviting The Bell – During Class Time

Context

This activity will help children recognise that it's sometimes important to stop what we are doing and bring ourselves back to our breath - by enjoying the sound of the bell. (Ages 4-11)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Explain that when the bell is sounded it is an opportunity to stop what we are doing, put our hands in our laps and focus on our breathing.

Step 2: Always invite the bell and never simply hit it. This is particularly important if you are trying to use the bell to also get the children's attention or to bring down the noise in the classroom.

Step 3: To invite the bell simply tap it and hold the inviter against the bell. You will hear a dull tone. This gives the class a signal that the bell will soon be rung.

Step 4: Invite the bell with a full ringing sound, ensure the children see you taking a few breaths yourself before you begin speaking.

Step 5: Sometimes to add some variety, children can listen for the bell and raise their hand when they can no longer hear it ringing.

Inviting The Bell – Before Meditation

Step 1: Have the children take it in turns to be the bell inviter as a class-job. Ring the bell before any meditation you do as a class.

Step 2: Ensure the children learn to tap it first with a dull sound and take a couple of breaths before ringing it fully.

Step 3: Visualise breathing in and out by raising your hands up to your chest on the in breath and slowly down on the out breath.



Noticing: In Breath & Out Breath

Context

This activity will help children recognise the rising & falling of their breath. By feeling air coming in & out of their nose, watching their chest rise & fall and watching boats 'float' on their tummy. (Ages 4-7)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Explain to children why focusing on our breath can be a good friend for us. (See Mind In A Jar)

Step 2: Ask a child to invite the bell.

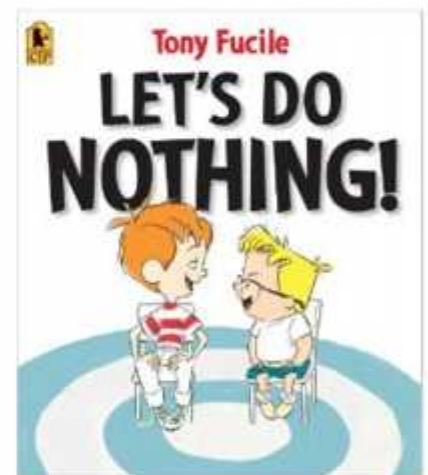
Step 3: Ask the children to notice what it feels like when we breathe. Place your index finger under your noses and will feel it. Discuss.



Step 4: Ask the children to watch their chest rise & fall as we breathe in & out – raising our hands to our chest when we breathe in and down to our laps when we breathe out.

Step 5: Get the children to try visualising breathing in one colour and out another.

Step 6: Make little boats (Maths cubes are great or through origami) and ask the children to lie down. Place the 'boats' on their tummies and ask them to observe them 'riding the waves' of their breath. See how long they can keep their boat 'afloat' without it falling down. – This can be done in conjunction with the book *Let's Do Nothing!* – Tony Fucile.



Counting The Breath

Context

This activity will help children focus solely on their breath for a period of a few minutes. It accompanies the practice of using a mindfulness bell. This is a good stepping stone to a more formal meditation practice with older children. (Ages 4-11)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Ask the children to sit up straight like they were a puppet with a string on the top of their head.

Step 2: Start by taking a few deep breaths. These should be *just* loud enough for the person next to you to hear them.

Step 3: Breath in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Step 4: Ask a child to invite the bell* (See inviting the bell).

Step 5: Start with your eyes open and count 10 out-breaths with the children.

Step 6: Try again, this time with eyes shut and children to glide their index finger over the fingers of their other hand – with each 'out-breath' and back again to make 10.

Step 7: Once well-practiced, ask the children to do a final 10 breaths solely in their head.



Hand Meditation

Context

This activity will help children focus on their breath for a period of a few minutes. It accompanies the practice of using a mindfulness bell. This is a good early stepping stone to a more formal meditation practice with older children. The use of clenching the hands and releasing is a powerful visualization for children to understand the feeling of 'letting go' and this sensation with the focus on the breath. It is also something children can return to when they are feeling strong emotions. (Ages 4-7)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Ask the children to sit up straight like they were a puppet with a string on the top of their head.

Step 2: Start by taking a few deep breaths. These should be *just* loud enough for the person next to you to hear them.

Step 3: Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Step 4: Ask a child to invite the bell* (See inviting the bell).

Step 5: Start with your eyes open and squeezing your hands together on the in breath and release on the tension on the out breath.

Step 6: Try again, this time with eyes shut. Some children find shutting their eyes uncomfortable. Take this into account.

Step 7: Once well-practiced, ask the children to do a final 10 breaths solely in their head.



Hoberman Sphere Meditation

Context

This activity will help children focus on their breath for a period of a few minutes. It accompanies the practice of using a mindfulness bell. This is a good early stepping stone to a more formal meditation practice with older children. The use of a Hoberman Sphere is a powerful visualization for children to understand their in-breath and out-breath. It is a particularly useful aid for children who traditionally struggle with meditative practice.

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Ask the children to sit up straight like they were a puppet with a string on the top of their head.

Step 2: Start by taking a few deep breaths. These should be *just* loud enough for the person next to you to hear them.

Step 3: Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Step 4: Ask a child to invite the bell* (See inviting the bell).

Step 5: Select a child or ask if a particular child would like to use the Hoberman Sphere to help them follow their breath.

Step 6: They simply open the sphere with their in-breath and close it on their out breath. They follow the same structure as the rest of the children.

Step 7: Once well-practiced, ask the children to do a final 10 breaths solely in their head.



Body Scan

Context

This activity will help children identify different parts of their body, focus on their body and its relationship to their surroundings and potentially make them feel more comfortable in closing their eyes in this and other meditations.

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Ask the children to sit up straight like they were a puppet with a string on the top of their head.

Step 2: Start by taking a few deep breaths. These should be *just* loud enough for the person next to you to hear them. Breath in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Step 4: Ask a child to invite the bell* (See inviting the bell) and shut their eyes.

Step 5: Ask children for a minute to focus on the sounds they can hear in and out of the classroom. Think about where they are sitting in relation to the classroom.

Step 6: Ask the children to physically rub their hands over the different parts of their bodies from the top of their head to the tip of their toes. Using key vocabulary. Think about places where they would have to apply sun-cream as not to get burnt.

Step 7: Try again, this time with their eyes shut and scanning their bodies in their minds.



Sun In The Centre


Context

This activity helps children identify things they appreciate in their peers and helps promote a positive learning environment (4-10+). This can also be conducted by staff in the occasional staff meeting!

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Get the children to sit in a circle and ask one child to be the 'sun in the center'.

Step 2: Children are to think about something they admire, like or are grateful for related to this person.

Step 3: The children are then to share verbally with the child in the center. It's good to get the children into a habit of saying 'I like you Tom I like you because...'.


Step 4: After they have shared a good quality, they can then share a memory they have with this person - if they would like.

Step 5: The sun in the center is then to say thank you and move around the circle – ensuring they are always facing the person who is sharing.

Step 6: Finally the sun in the center shares why they like being in the class.

Mindful Eating

Context

This activity helps children appreciate where their food comes from, enjoy their food more fully and focus the mind on the process of eating. – Also good to occasionally do in the staffroom too! (4-10+)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Give out a raisin or piece of fruit to the children. Ask them to simply hold onto it for the time being.

Step 2: Ask the bell-inviter to ring the bell before you continue each of the following steps.

Step 3: Children are to first smell and examine the piece of fruit.

Step 4: Children are to then to feel the fruit against their lips only.

Step 5: Children are then invited to shut their eyes and eat the piece of fruit slowly. Ask them to try at least 10 chews. You could then repeat and try 20 chews, 30 etc...

Step 6: Ring the bell to end the meditation and open their eyes. Ask them what they notice about eating in this way?

Step 7: Any birthday cake that is brought into school by friends is always cut in half. Half we eat in a mindful way and the other half in our normal way and we discuss the differences.

Taking Mindful Eating Further.

Step 1: On the next page you will find a 'Food Contemplation Poster'. Every-day it is someone's job to read out one of the contemplations before we enjoy our food.

Step 2: If you are feeling bold - Once children have been convinced of the benefits of eating mindfully you can try and begin lunch with a ringing of the bell and the first 5 minutes of lunch to be eaten in silence with focus on enjoying our food.

Thinking about our food.



1. This food is the gift of the whole universe; the earth, the sky, the rain and the sun.
2. We thank the people who have made this food, especially the farmers, the people at the market and the cooks.
3. We want to chew the food slowly so we can really enjoy it.
4. This food gives us energy to practice being more loving and understanding.
5. We eat this food silently to be healthy, happy and to love each other as a family.

Mindful Walking

Context

This activity helps children appreciate their surroundings (either outside or inside) and to find enjoyment in taking their time. (Ages 4-10+)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: A good start with mindful walking is to choose a transition point in the school day. E.g. going out for play, going to lunch, getting your coats on, lining up for the end of the day.

Step 2: Initially use role-play of animals to get children to focus on the ways in which they can walk.

Step 3: Ask children to visualise walking in autumn leaves or in the snow.

Step 4: Challenge children to work as a class undetected. Some children enjoy the concept of each step giving the floor kisses, or for every step a flower sprouts up behind them.

Step 5: Placing coloured stickers, paw prints or foot-prints on the floor which have to be stepped on around the school, stairs or class.



Random Acts Of Kindness

Context

This activity helps children appreciate each other and how doing little things for others can make a big difference. Highly recommended to be used in conjunction with the book *Have You Filled A Bucket Today?* – Carol McCloud (Ages 5-8)

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Read the book *Have you filled a bucket today?* Or asks the children to write a list of things people have done for them that has been kind.

Step 2: Explain that you are going to have a acts of kindness week. Take extra care to notice when people do something nice for us and look for opportunities to do things for others.

Step 3: You can create a display of 'mini' buckets. Where people can leave post-it notes of things children have done which has been kind to them. – Thus filling their bucket.

Step 4: Children can also identify a specific thing they could do for people and try to concentrate their mind on it. E.g. opening doors, sharpening a pencil, tidying up mess left behind by others.

Step 5: At the end of the week have the children share what is inside their buckets.

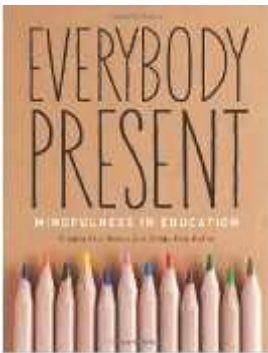


Essential Reading

Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness With Children



Everybody Present: Mindfulness In Education



Meditation & Mindfulness For Children By Children

www.meditationandmindfulnessforchildren.blogspot.co.uk

Meditation and Mindfulness for
children, by children.

The Mindfulness Pedagogy

www.mindfulintheclassroom.wordpress.com

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