

Mindfulness for Wellbeing

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Contents

Page	Content
	Introduction:
1	What is this Pack for?
	Meditation Guides:
2	The Body Scan
4	Mindfulness of Breathing
5	Body, Breath and Sound
6	Body, Breath, Sound and Thoughts
7	Developing Self-Compassion
9	Loving Kindness
	Breathing Guides
11	Sitting Breath Awareness
12	Breathing with a Pin Wheel
12	Additional

What is this Pack for?

This pack aims to introduce mindfulness and help parents/carers and professionals to help children and young people to gain an understanding of mindfulness and learn techniques. It is helpful to introduce mindfulness in a quiet setting that is free from distractions and noise. Once skills and techniques have been learned, children and young people are encouraged to practice mindfulness in all environments. The more techniques are practiced the quicker they will move through the meditations and the more effective they will be.

The pack contains 4 mindfulness meditations, each one builds on the learning from the one previous. As the children/young people become more confident the amount of guidance from parents/carers and professionals will lessen. So although the intended mindfulness time increases session by session, the guide reduces in content. The pack contains 2 additional mindfulness meditations; 'Developing Self-Compassion' and 'Loving Kindness'. These may not be relevant or beneficial for all children and young people. These may be suited more so for people with low mood or issues around self-esteem.

Meditation Guide: The Body Scan

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

Start by getting comfortable - on a chair or on the floor. Allow your back to be lengthened and straight (but not tensed). Feel a sense of calm and awareness at the same time, allowing the chair or floor to hold your weight. You may want to close your eyes.

For the following few minutes we are not trying to change anything in our bodies, instead we are just being aware of our bodies... tuning in to how our body feels.

I would like to start by taking a few deep breaths.... breathe in through your nose, hold it for a second.... and out through your mouth. Just take a moment to notice your breath.

Now bring your awareness to your feet... just noticing your feet. Notice what it feels like where your feet make contact with the floor... tune into any sensations you notice in the rest of your feet, your toes and your heels.

Moving up and noticing your ankles and lower legs. They may be tense or they may feel relaxed, but remember we don't want to change anything... we're just noticing how it feels.

Come up through your shins... become aware of your calves, your knees, and your upper legs.

At some point your mind may wander, it may be thinking or listening, or elsewhere, just allow it to come back to the present moment.

Moving your attention to your hands, begin to notice the palms of your hands... your knuckles... your fingers and thumbs. The sensation of them resting on yourself or the floor. They may feel heavy, they may feel light. Again, we aren't trying to change it. We just want to be aware.

Bringing your attention to your wrists and your arms... up through your elbows and into your shoulders. Noticing the sensations, feeling any tension... acknowledging that it's there. Again, we don't want to change it.

Moving your attention now to your stomach and your chest. Noticing what your body does as you breathe... in... and out. Your breath may be shallow, or it may be deeper and slow. Just notice your breath in your chest.

Noticing your back, being aware of the sensation as it makes contact with the chair, or the ground. Coming up to your neck, it may feel heavy, supporting your head, or it may be light as your head is supported by a chair or the ground.

Notice your head, and your face... being aware of your jaw... your cheeks... your eyes... and your forehead.

And then becoming aware of your body as a whole. Noticing what it feels like sat in your chair or laying on the ground.

Taking a couple of deep breaths. In through your nose... holding for a second... and out through the mouth.

Begin to notice the room around you... there may be sounds, or smells, when you're ready, allow your eyes to open.

Meditation Guide: The Mindfulness of Breathing

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

So you might like to sit, making yourself comfortable in your chair. Take a moment to check in with the body and the mind. Just being curious about what's happening there. Allowing things to be just as they are and bringing the attention to your breath.

Noticing the natural movement of your breath... just being genuinely interested in what it feels like to take each breath. At what point does the breath come in to your body.

I'm going to ask you to just count your breaths, starting at 1... and counting up to 10. And as we do this we'll notice that the attention wanders off from time to time... any moment that you notice your attention has wandered off from the breath, just gently bring it back, and start counting again from 1.

If you get to 10, come back to 1... see how gentle you can be. How patient you can be with yourself as you notice and simply count... become interested in the breath once again.

It's just about noticing when the mind wanders... giving ourselves permission for the mind to wander... accepting that it is just going to happen. As soon as we notice it has, we just gently bring it back... and do this as many times as we need to.

Anything we practise we get better at. So if we notice the mind has wandered, then gently bring it back.

If the mind wanders and we become critical or cross, then we focus on feeling critical. You might start to recognise that the easiest way to bring the attention back is simply to notice it has wandered and come back without any judgement or any self-criticism.

Noticing the effect on the body, on the mind, the overall effect on the meditation, on your moment to moment experience. And then whenever you're ready just allowing your eyes to open.

Meditation Guide: Body, Breath and Sound

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

Start by getting comfortable - on a chair or on the floor. Allow your back to be lengthened and straight (but not tensed). Feel a sense of calm and awareness on the at the same time, allowing the chair or floor to hold your weight. You may want to close your eyes.

I would like you to start by taking a few deep breaths... breathe in through your nose, hold it for a second... and out through your mouth. Just take a moment to notice your breath.

Beginning with a body scan, feel the sensation in your feet... be aware of your ankles and shins ... your calves... your knees. Any moment that you notice your attention has wandered, just bring it back.

And move your awareness to your hands... fingers... wrists. Come up through your arms. Noticing the feelings, not trying to change them. Notice your stomach and chest... and the rise and fall as you breathe... bring your attention to your back, noticing the contact with the chair or the floor. Notice your neck and head... your face. And your body as a whole.

Again if your mind has wandered just bring it back. Bringing your focus to your breath. Noticing where the breath enters your body. Noticing how heavy or shallow your breath is.

Begin to move your awareness to the sounds... you may hear your breath close by, there may be other sounds in the room or outside. Allow the sounds to come to you... becoming aware of the range of sounds around you. Noticing the sounds... and the space between the sounds. We aren't trying to change the sounds, just noticing them. Sounds come and go, and we allow them to come in and out.

Bring your focus back to the breath, and to the body. Feeling in contact with the chair or the floor. And when you're ready, allow your eyes to open.

Meditation Guide: Body, Breath, Sound and Thought

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Have the child/young person close their eyes and sit or lie comfortably. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

Start by making yourself comfortable. And taking a couple of deep breaths.

Take a moment to check in with the body and the mind. Just being curious about what's happening there... allowing things to be as they are. Noticing, but not judging, and not trying to change.

Beginning a body scan, starting with your feet, take some time to notice each of the different areas of the body as we have in previous weeks.

If your mind has started to wander, just bring your focus back to the body... if you need to start again with your feet, then do, or carry on from where you last were.

Moving your attention to your breath... noticing your breath, and beginning to count them. If at any time your mind has wandered just bring your focus back and start to count again from 1.

Bringing your attention to the sounds... the sound of your breath close by, and the other sounds in the room or outside. Noticing the range of sounds... the gaps in between the sounds... just allowing the sounds to come and go. If one sound is holding your attention just notice the sound and allow it to pass.

Come back again to your breath... is it shallow or deep?

Bring your attention to your thoughts... just noticing as they appear in the mind... not consciously thinking or looking for a particular thought... just becoming aware of them. They may be words, images, memories, judgements, some may be intense, some will bring emotion. You're not trying to control your thoughts, you're simply allowing them to come and go. Be aware of any spaces in between the thoughts.

And bring your attention back to the breath... and to the body... and the sounds

Meditation Guide: Developing Self-Compassion

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Have the child/young person close their eyes and sit or lie comfortably. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

This exercise is a little different to previous mindfulness techniques we have done; today we are going to bring to mind a difficult situation deliberately. So that we can explore using mindfulness and self-compassion to help us with that difficulty. Whatever it is.

[Check in with child/young person if they want to proceed].

Take a moment to become present... dropping into the body. Connecting with the senses. Noticing the breath.

And now bringing your mind a difficult situation, something that's very present, something which, the moment you start to think about it, creates a sense of discomfort in the body. Perhaps it's a conflict, perhaps it's a mistake that you've made, or some problem that you're facing, it may be something that you're afraid of.

Being aware of any story, any judgements, any thoughts that might be driving this difficulty. They will come and go. You're not trying to stop them or change them. Just noticing that they are present. That they come and go.

You might start to feel unpleasant sensations in the body... discomfort or tension. You might need to take a few moments to connect with the situation and notice what is happening in the body once you have brought to mind the difficulty.

Bringing your attention fully into the body. Feeling the sensations that are there. If there's a name for this emotion, then name it; you might say this is anger. This is fear. This is sadness. If there is no name for it, that's fine.

As you notice the feeling, breathing with the sensations, as well. As best you can, staying in touch with them from moment to moment. Allowing them to be there. Letting go of any judgement, any reaction to them. And instead being with them directly as they are.

There may be places in your body that you feel the sensation the strongest. Try to focus on those sensations and those parts of your body.

If your mind has wandered to the story of the difficulty, just bring it back to the feelings in your body.

You might create some space for this emotion to be there exactly as it is. Noticing what happens when you allow yourself to have this feeling.

The feeling may be sadness, or anger, or fear, and whatever it is, it is a normal human emotion. It is OK that you are feeling it.

Notice what happens in your body as you reassure yourself. Allow yourself to experience your feelings, without judging. Accept these emotions.

Just taking a few moments now to check back in with the body and the mind. Just to notice what's happening there.

Focus your attention back on your breath.

Hear the sounds around you and in the room.

And when you are ready, allow your eyes to open.

Meditation Guide: Loving Kindness

Parent/Carer or professional to read out to child or young person in a calming and quiet voice. Have the child/young person close their eyes and sit or lie comfortably. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

For about the next 10 minutes, we're going to practise loving kindness. Or 'sending kind thoughts'. We're going to explore what that's like to send them to ourselves and to others.

And so to begin, just take a few moments to drop into the body, into the present moment. Perhaps feeling the contact of the body in the chair or the feet on the floor. Perhaps noticing the breath. Just bringing the attention into the present.

[Body Scan optional]

In order to help us connect with feelings of friendliness, or love, or kindness, just bring to mind somebody who you have a good relationship with. Somebody who you love, who you care about, who loves and cares about you... picturing this person in front of you, sensing them there. Taking a few moments to feel the connection, that sense of love, of support. And noticing the effect that has on your body... noticing if you can feel anything.

Bringing that someone in to your mind, you will begin to send them kind wishes. You may wish them to be happy. You may wish them to be well. You may wish them to be safe. Notice what it feels like as you send them kind wishes. Notice the sensations in your body as you wish them to be content... and peaceful.

Bring your focus back to your breath and your sensations... you will begin to send yourself some kind wishes...

May I be happy.... may I be safe... may I like myself.

And if the mind begins to wander and thoughts come in, accept them and allow them to go again, gently bringing your focus back to kind wishes.

And if the mind begins to wander and thoughts come in, accept them and allow them to go again, gently bringing your focus back to kind wishes.

May I be content... may I be calm.

Noticing the effect this has on the body and on the mind. There's no right or wrong, just noticing what's happening in your body and your mind. Focus your attention back on your breath. Hear the sounds around you and in the room. And when you are ready, allow your eyes to open.

Breathing Exercises – Sitting Breath Awareness

Inviting a child/young person to sit comfortably, in a chair or on the floor. If they find it helpful they could place their hand on their stomach. Be mindful of pacing, trying not to read too fast:

We are going to focus on our breathing.

See if you can pay attention to absolutely everything about your breath.

Where in your body do you feel your breath the most?

Near your nose? Near your chest? Near your belly?

Is it fast?.... Is it slow?.... Is it cool?.... Is it warm? Is it smooth? Or rough?

Does anything happen in between the in and the out breath? Or between the out and in breaths?

See if you can notice the beginning and the end of each in-breath and out-breath.... and the pauses in between.

See if you can notice the very first moment of your next breath. What does the first moment feel like?

Do you notice your breath moving?

Can you follow the movement?

Can you notice as the breath moves through the body?

Noticing as it comes in... where it goes in the body... and as it comes out?

Breathing Exercises – Breathing with a Pinwheel

There are many variations on this activity, and this can be as playful as the child/young person wants it to be.

Encourage the young person to breathe with a pinwheel in front of them. Ask them to notice the differences as they change their breath.

Through their nose, through their mouth. Longer breaths, shorter breaths. Sharp blasts of breath.

Invite them to keep the pinwheel spinning for as long as possible.

All the while, young people are invited to notice their breathing, and the effects on their bodies, their thoughts, their mood. When breathing in short sharp blasts trying to get the pin wheel to spin as fast as they can what do they notice?

Breathing Exercises – Additional

There are lots of other breathing exercises:

- Breathing to a count (breathe in for 5, out for 7)
- Breathing with one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, making different hands rise and fall
- Breathing in continuously for as long as you can
- Momentarily stopping breathing altogether (only for a few seconds)
- Breathing with a feather / malteaser (similar to pinwheel)
- Conducting breath; ask a young person to breathe in when you raise your arm and out when you lower your arm, you can control the pace of breath.

Throughout all of the exercises, young people are invited to notice their breathing, and the effects on their bodies, their thoughts, their mood. The activities should be relaxed and playful. Encompassing mindfulness techniques learnt in the earlier parts of this pack.