Mindful Moments Toolkit

Wellbeing support for children, young people and adults.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Contents

p08	Benefits of Mindfulness
p09	Whole School Integration
p10	Explaining Mindfulness to Children & Young People
p11	Creating a Supportive Mindfulness Environment
P12-13	Importance of Modelling Mindful Self-care
p14-15	Grounding Techniques
p16-29	Mindful Moments Through the Senses
p30-34	Breathing Practices
p35-37	Relaxation Techniques
p38	Awareness of Self & Others
p39-42	Resources & References



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

This toolkit has been developed by members of the Inclusion Advisory Team ©BELS 2026

Mindfulness



Mindfulness Definition:

Paying attention to what is happening in the present moment

- It may be what you're feeling, hearing, or anything else you notice.
- There's no special place of calm you have to reach
- It's not about clearing your mind
- It's just an honest and kind look at what you're experiencing in this moment.

From Mindfulness for Kids - Mindful

Introduction

About the Toolkit

The BELS Mindful Moments Toolkit is packed with simple, practical ideas to bring mindfulness into everyday life. It includes strategies for children, young people, and adults.

Using the Toolkit - 'Short Mindful Moments, Big Impact'

Adding quick breaks throughout the day to focus on what you and your students can see, hear, or feel in the present moment can all make a real difference. By pausing to notice thoughts, feelings, and sensations, we break free from autopilot-mode and create space for calm and presence.

Why use Mindfulness and how it can help - Dealing with Difficulty

Mindfulness can help us to flourish and thrive by teaching us to deal with challenges skilfully and compassionately.
It's not just about avoiding negative experiences but changing our relationship with them. Being more mindful in your daily life can help to build resilience for difficult times and increase awareness to notice the good.

Savouring the positive:

it can also encourage us to turn towards the positive, healthy, and nourishing experiences.

"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf."
Jon Kabat-Zinn

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Introduction – Foundational Principles

Start with the teacher

Teachers who practice mindfulness themselves are better able to model and teach it to their students, and they benefit from reduced stress and burnout.

Tie it to existing routines

Instead of adding another task to an already busy day, look at ways to weave mindful moments into transitions, mealtimes, and other regular activities.



Create a positive, non-judgmental atmosphere

Mindfulness is not about clearing your mind or succeeding at a task. Wandering thoughts are normal and the goal is simply to notice them and bring attention back to what you are focusing on during the mindful moment.

Routine & consistency

Getting into a habit of doing a short practice at the same time every day anchors the new practice into your schedule – think about which times of the day might work, such as after lunch, to help with focus.

Keep it short & simple

Mindfulness practices don't need to be long to be effective. Incorporating 3 to 5-minute activities can make a significant impact.

Make it age-appropriate

Practices can be adapted for different age groups or development stages, from using teddy bears for belly breathing with younger students to more reflective journaling for secondary-age students.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Introduction: Key Points for Introducing Mindfulness in Schools

The importance of giving choices

By following the choices and safety tips below, you will be creating a safe environment to have a go and have some fun with incorporating some mindful moments into your day!

- Not for Everyone: Mindfulness may benefit some students but not all. Participation should be voluntary and pressure-free.
- Beginner's Mind: Approach activities with curiosity and fun, encouraging students to "have a go" without judgment.
- Choice & Safety:
  - Offer options like eyes open or closed.
  - Allow students to choose seating and level of participation.
- Prioritise autonomy, especially for those with trauma histories.
- Consider Student Needs
  - Inclusivity: Ensure all students can participate in some way, regardless of physical or emotional needs.
  - Sensory Awareness: Be mindful of potential sensory triggers.
- Goal: Create a safe, supportive environment for exploring mindfulness.

Learning a new skill takes time

This toolkit is designed to help you take the first steps in understanding mindfulness—what it is, how it can help, and how to practice a few simple, informal techniques for yourself or with students.

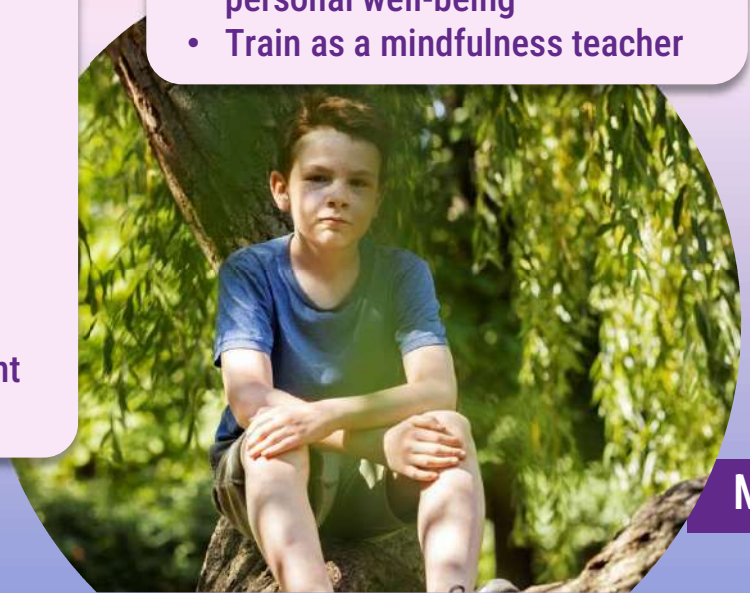
Important Note

This is not a replacement for formal mindfulness training and does not qualify school staff to lead formal practices, as that requires dedicated training.

Mindfulness is a skill

Like learning to ride a bike or playing the piano, it takes time and practice to develop if you want to:

- Start a longer daily practice
- Explore mindfulness for personal well-being
- Train as a mindfulness teacher



Next Steps – Mindful Moments Toolkit Training

will provide signposting to:

- Further training opportunities
- Mindfulness courses for students
- Options for inviting external trained teachers to your school.

Key Areas

- Benefits of Mindfulness
- Awareness of Self & Others
- Whole School Integration
- Breathing Exercises & Relaxation Techniques
- Explaining Mindfulness to Children & Young People
- Mindful Moments Through the Senses
- Creating a Supportive Mindfulness Environment
- Grounding Techniques
- Importance of Modelling Mindful Self-care



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Benefits of mindfulness for children and young people

Enhanced self-awareness and empathy

- Mindfulness helps children and young people to become more self-aware which in turn, can support relationship-building in school as well as with siblings and parents.

Focus and Concentration

- Helps children and young people quiet their minds and focus on one task at a time.
- Enhances concentration and supports learning.

Emotional Regulation

- Helps children and young people to notice their feelings without reacting immediately.
- It can create space between feeling and responding, aiding in managing anger or frustration.
- Over time, it can foster deeper understanding and better emotional management.



Increased resilience

- Helps children and young people build a buffer against adversity by fostering a resilient mindset.
- Regular practice enables them to bounce back from challenges with a more positive outlook.

Overall wellbeing

- Promotes calm, boosts focus, and enhances emotional regulation.
- It can lay a strong foundation for a balanced and positive life.

Stress Reduction

- Students can sometimes face stress from schoolwork, peer interactions or family dynamics.
- Mindfulness practices, such as mindful breathing, help promote a relaxed state of mind throughout daily experiences.

Improved Sleep

- Mindfulness helps calm the mind, making it easier to fall asleep.
- Mindful Practices can allow children and young people to unwind, clear worries, and prepare for restful sleep.

Whole-school approach for staff and students

Mindful mornings

The entire school could begin the day with a school-wide mindful moment over the intercom or led by a teacher or student within each classroom. They could lead a brief mindful moment exercise or offer a thought for the day.

A “calm corner" in each classroom

Create a designated quiet space with calming objects, such as a calm-down jar, books on mindfulness, or drawing materials for mindful art.



Movement Breaks

Incorporate short yoga poses, stretches, or mindful walking to release tension and refocus energy.

Professional development for teachers

Provide staff training on mindfulness so educators can learn the basics, model the practices, and share their own experiences with students.

Gratitude practices

Set aside time for a gratitude practice, such as encouraging students to keep gratitude journals or asking them to share one thing they are grateful for.

Transition Times

Use the moments between subjects or lining up time for short "centring" breaths or mindful listening exercises.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Explaining mindfulness to children and young people



Children generally, naturally live in the present moment, which makes explaining mindfulness easier. When introducing mindfulness to them, keep it simple and engaging, using practical examples and fun activities to help them understand and experience the concept. Here are a few tips…

Empower them

Let them know that practicing mindfulness can help children and young people to understand their feelings better and make school or home life feel easier.



Keep it fun

Make your mindfulness talks fun and engaging. Maybe have a 'mindful moment' together where you both sit and notice things around you. It doesn't have to be a serious conversation.

Engage them with questions or make comments about what you notice

e.g. "How did it feel when you bit into that apple?" or "What did you notice when you were playing outside?" 'I wonder if this orange will taste sweet!'.

Explain it simply

Explain mindfulness by describing it as paying full attention to what we're doing or feeling in the moment. Use concrete examples like noticing the warmth of the sun on the skin, the taste of food, or how the body feels while running.

Practice together

Children and young people learn well by doing. Practice mindful breathing or paying full attention to the sights, smells and sounds around you. These shared experiences can help convey the essence of mindfulness.

Use fun and engaging resources

There are so many fun resources available to help you explain mindfulness. E.g. Calm.com have an article on What Disney Princess characters can teach us about mindfulness. Such resources can help you relate mindfulness principles in a way that's fun and understandable for children and young people.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Creating a supportive mindfulness environment

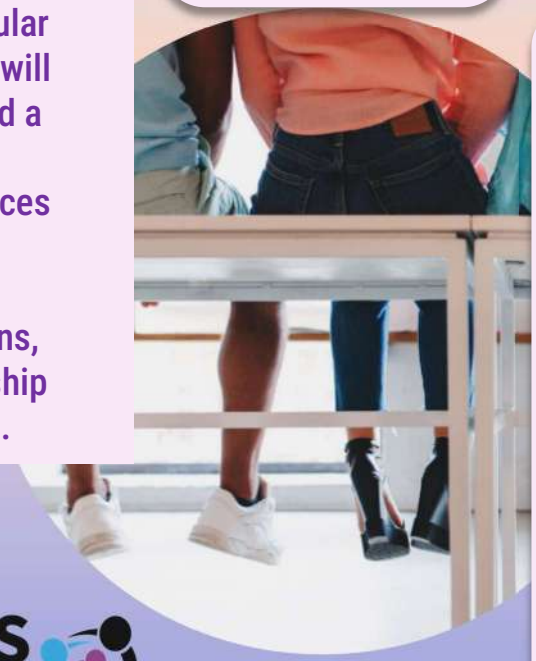
Engage in practices together

Encourage open discussions about your experiences and also your students' experiences.

This regular practice will help build a tool for experiences such as exams, transitions, relationship conflicts.

Be kind

There is no "wrong" way to do these exercises. If a student's mind wanders, that is normal. The goal is to simply notice and gently bring the focus back.



Make it a choice

Offer these as optional moments for students to use when they feel overwhelmed or need a break.

Keep it positive

Make mindfulness exercises a positive, enjoyable experience. Encourage them to enjoy the calm and clarity that comes with regular practice.

Be in your own bubble

Encourage children to create a sense of personal space during classroom mindfulness by sitting slightly apart, facing forward, with feet grounded on the floor. They should sit comfortably—upright and alert, yet relaxed and calm in the body.

Use resources

Resources like Calm, Headspace or books on mindfulness for children and young people can be a great starting place for exploring practices with students (see section on Resources).

Be patient

Mindfulness is a skill that develops over time. Encourage students to practice regularly and celebrate their efforts along the way.

Keep it calm

Have calming classroom decor, and ideally a calm down corner or safe space. Neither of these options has to be expensive. There are many free and cheap ideas. Make sure your classroom is free of visual clutter, as that can create the opposite of calm.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

The importance of modelling mindful self-care

Mindfulness Embodiment Checklist

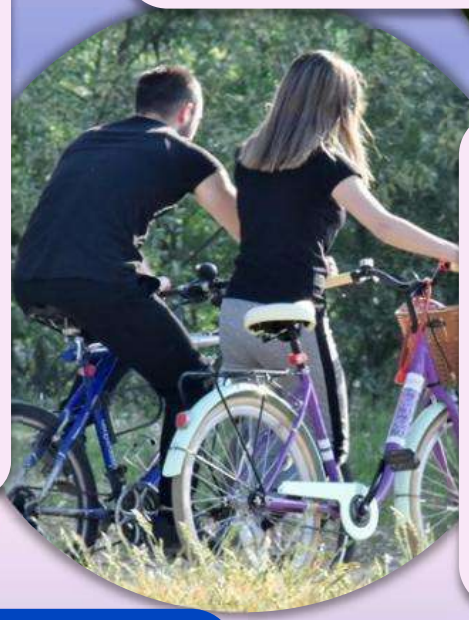
1. Pause Before Responding
   Take one slow breath before reacting in a challenging moment.
2. Model Calm Out Loud
   Say: *"I'm taking a moment to breathe before I answer."*
3. Use Transitions Wisely
   Incorporate mindful pauses during routine moments (e.g. before starting a lesson, after lunch).
4. Notice Your Own State
   Check in with yourself: *"How am I feeling right now?"* before engaging with students.
5. Respond, Don't React
   Step back and choose a thoughtful response rather than an impulsive one.
6. Create a Calm Atmosphere
   Keep tone gentle and non-judgmental.

Being Mode Versus Doing Mode – Functioning on 'automatic pilot' mode versus 'present moment awareness'.

e.g. Instead of being reactionary to incoming demands on your time, focus on a priority task – turn off notifications. Schedule a time to look at emails later – get the priority task done first. You will be more effective and efficient.

Noticing the good – this is an intentional effort to observe and savour positive moments, however small, to balance the brain's natural tendency to focus on the negative.





Marathon not a sprint – With health there is no quick fix – we all need quality sleep, enough water each day, healthy food and exercise. Taking breaks and putting pauses into your day are just as important to avoid burn out.

Tip! Consciously 'switching off work-mode'. What action will signal the 'transition from work to home?' e.g. Is it the door handle turning as you leave the classroom or the click of the car door opening? Is it the moment you take off your work shoes or run the bath / relax under the stream of a shower?

Mindful self-care for adults

Mindful self-care for adults

- Look at a beautiful flower
- Light a candle and watch the flame
- See some beautiful art in a book or on the internet
- Look at the view outside the window
- Watch nature around you
- Go out at night and watch the stars
- Walk in a pretty part of town
- Mix paints to make new colours

- Eat something you enjoy
- Have a favourite soothing drink such as tea or hot chocolate
- Suck on a peppermint
- Sample flavours in an ice-cream store
- Chew chewing gum
- Try something spicy or savoury



- Use your favourite perfume or spray
- Bake cookies, cake or bread
- Smell a flower, plant or tree
- Smell cinnamon or roasting coffee beans
- Walk in a green area or along the beach
- Light a scented candle

- Take a bubble bath
- Pet your dog or cat
- Put a cold cloth on your forehead
- Sink into a really comfortable chair
- Wear or touch things which are soft, silky, fluffy or rough
- Brush your hair
- Hug someone
- Walk barefoot on the grass

Tip: Make your own list of things that nourish and sustain you.

- Listen to beautiful or soothing music
- Listen to invigorating or exciting music
- Pay attention to sounds of nature
- Sing out loud to your favourite songs
- Hum a tune
- Listen to chat show or a podcast

Some Mindful Moments Ideas

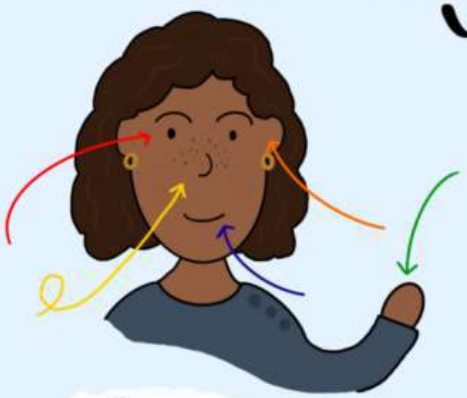
What is grounding and why is it helpful?

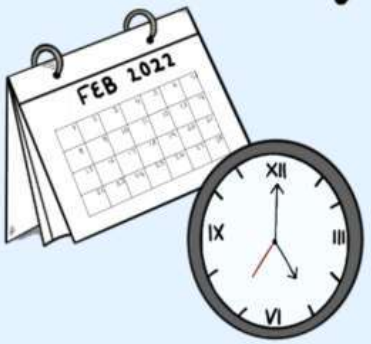
- Grounding is a mindfulness technique that reconnects you with the present moment by focusing on the physical world around you. It involves quick, simple exercises that can be used as coping strategies in various situations, especially when feeling worried, stressed, distracted, or overwhelmed.
- Grounding exercises are often used at the start of a mindfulness practice, to help people get into the right headspace, especially when they have a lot on their minds.
- Grounding exercises can also be helpful on their own.

Grounding Techniques

(Helpful tools to create a sense of safety & grounding to the present)

@bepsychminded







Senses

Name...

5 things you can see
4 things you can hear
3 things you can smell
2 things you can touch
1 things you can taste

Re-orient

- "I am..."
- "The date is..."
- "I am currently at..."
- "I am safe"

Physical

- Slow & deepen breathing
- Clench & relax your fists
- Press your feet into the floor
- Stretch

www.simplypsychology.org



Mental

- Play a categories game (e.g. name as many pets)
- Imagine a safe & calming place
- Count backwards



Soothe

- Offer yourself words of kindness:-
- "Gentle" "I'm not alone"
- "This will pass"

Grounding Technique - 'Five Senses Exercise'

Step 1

Notice **FIVE** things that you can **see.**

Look around you and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick out things that you wouldn't normally notice, like a small object, or the way a plug socket looks.



Step 2

Notice **FOUR** things that you can **feel.**

Try to bring your awareness to four things that you can feel. This might be the way that the wind feels against your skin, or how it feels to wear your glasses, or your t-shirt.

Step 3

Notice **THREE** things that you can **hear.**

Listen carefully and notice three things that you can hear. This might be children playing outside, or traffic in the distance.

Step 4

Notice **TWO** things that you can **smell.**

We are quite good at filtering out smells, so bring your attention to things that you can smell. It might be the smell of food cooking, or the smell of your washing powder.

Step 5

Notice **ONE** thing that you can **taste.**

Focus on one thing that you can taste right now or just notice the current taste in your mouth.



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Senses



"paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

Jon Kabat-Zinn

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Moments through the senses

Situations to be mindful

Out and About
Being on a plane, train, boat, fairground, farm.

Trips
Visiting Equine centres, swimming, adventure activities, rope parks, kayaking.



Going out in nature
At the park, at the beach, in the forest, Forest Schools.

Art lessons
Colours, textures, forms, shapes, moods, tones, contrasts sizes.



Malleable / sensory play
- Dough, Play Doh
- Rice, pasta
- Foam, cornflour etc

In the garden or outdoor area
- Sensory Garden / edible / herb garden
- Gardening club
- Schools in bloom
- Mud kitchen
- Water and sand play

Animals
Animals - working on emotions and kindness to animals – therapy dog, chickens, guinea pigs, fish, life-cycle creatures (tadpoles, chrysalis to butterflies)…

Noticing the feel of a dog's fur, the sounds of chicks, the colours of butterfly wings.

Sensory lifestyle
Sensory room, sensory circuits, sensory box, deep pressure exercises, weighted bean bag, trampette etc.

e.g. is this a calming or activating / energising activity? What will help you in this moment?

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Being mindful outside and in nature

A garden or outdoor space can be full of colours, shapes, scents, sounds, textures and tastes.

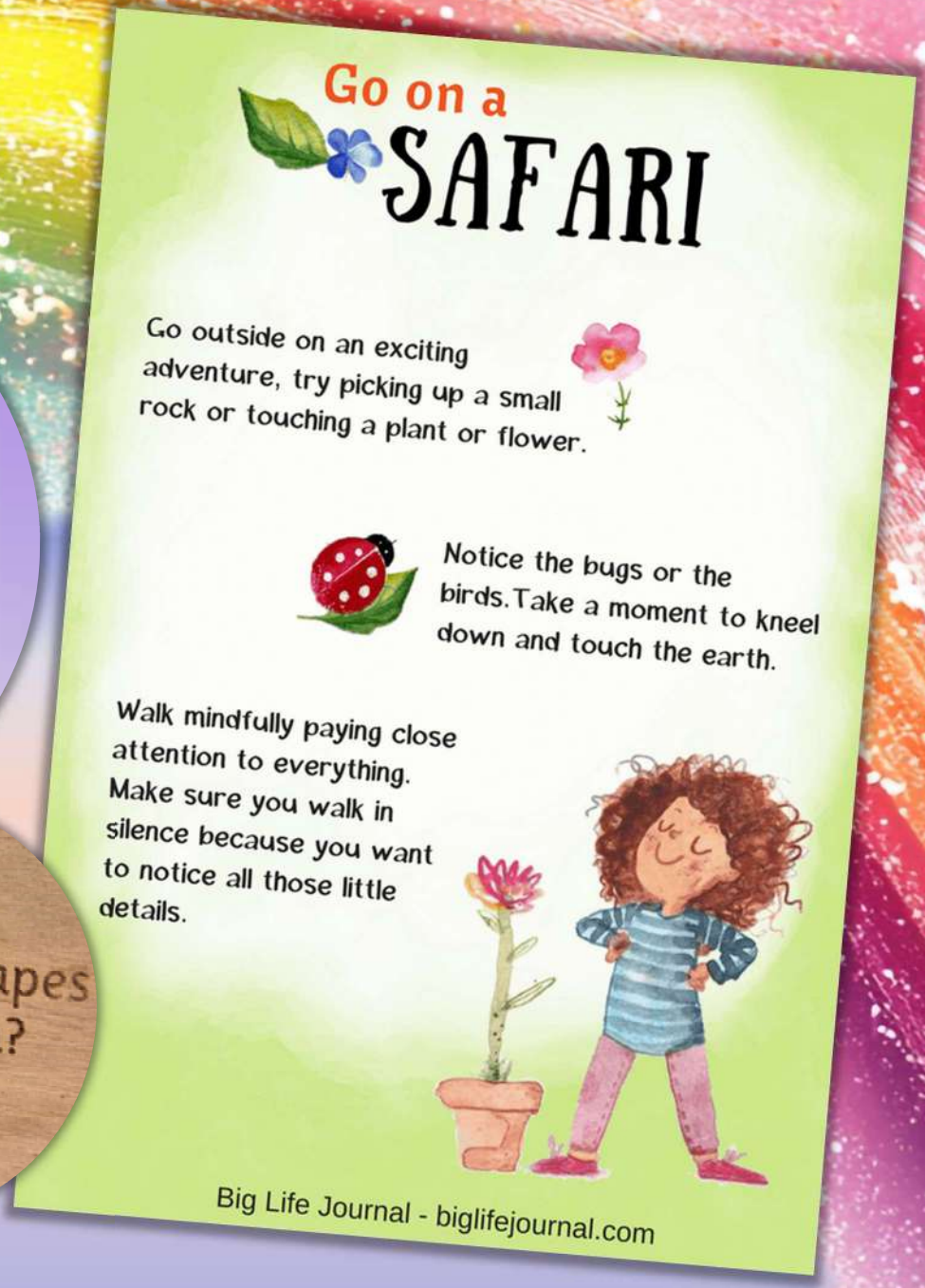
Each season heralds changes and new things to notice – take your senses on a journey!

Using our senses when we are outside can help us to connect with the joy and relaxation of nature.

Rainbow Walk

Go on a walk with your students and encourage them to find something red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet as a quick way to practice mindfulness.





BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Being mindful outside and in nature

Listen

Sounds can have a positive effect on our wellbeing and help us to de-stress. Studies show that natural sounds are more calming than urban sounds.

When listening mindfully, consider closing your eyes or looking down.
What sounds can you hear and how does it make you feel? E.g. Leaves rustling, water trickling or birds singing?

Taste

Could your outdoor spaces add more flavour to school life?

How do you feel when you pick a strawberry, or pop a garden pea onto your tongue?

Gardening together

Gardening can be a hands-on way to practice mindfulness, as it involves caring for plants and noticing their growth over time. Children and young people can learn to pay attention to the details of planting seeds, watering, and observing changes. This can also help them build a connection with the natural world and the cycle of life.



Touch

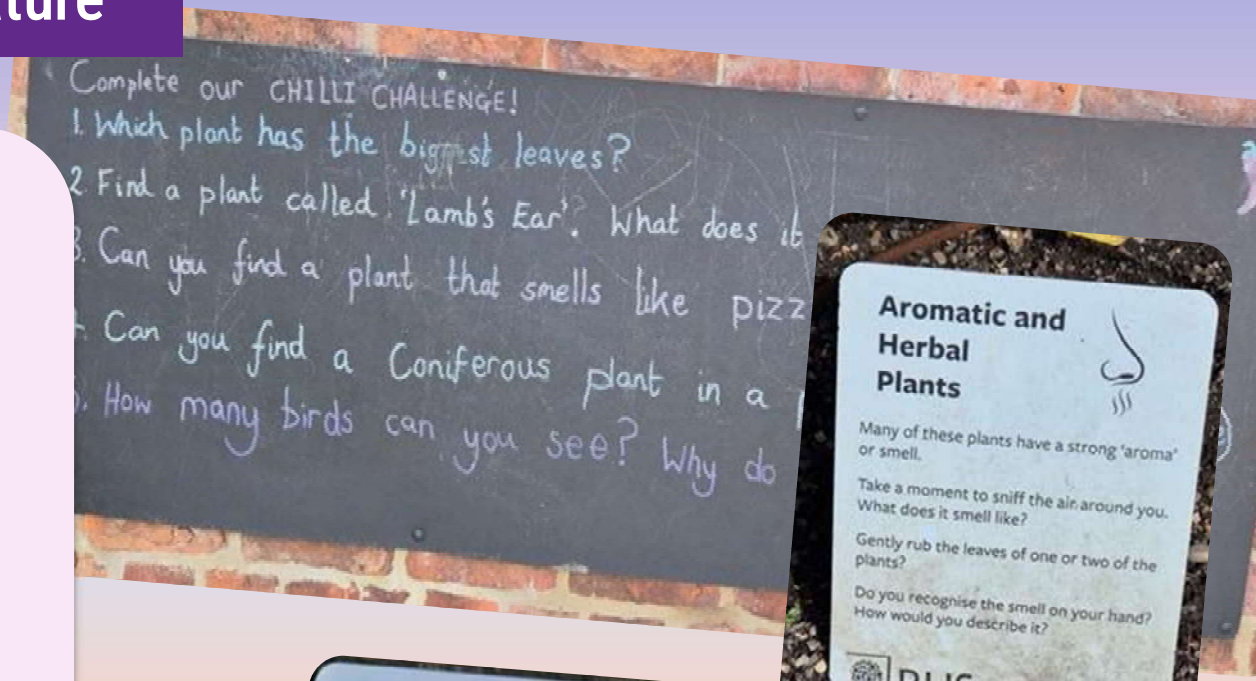
Touch can influence how we feel and respond to the world around us.

Plants can be furry, tickly, even prickly. Take a tactile tour through your sensory or wellbeing garden with plants that tempt you to touch them!

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Being mindful outside and in nature

For older children and young people, outdoor mindfulness involves engaging the senses in nature through activities like **mindful walking**, focusing on sounds, sights, and sensations; **sit spotting**, quietly observing one spot for a period; sensory exploration like touching bark or going barefoot; cloud watching, and mindful listening for birds; using nature items for art.









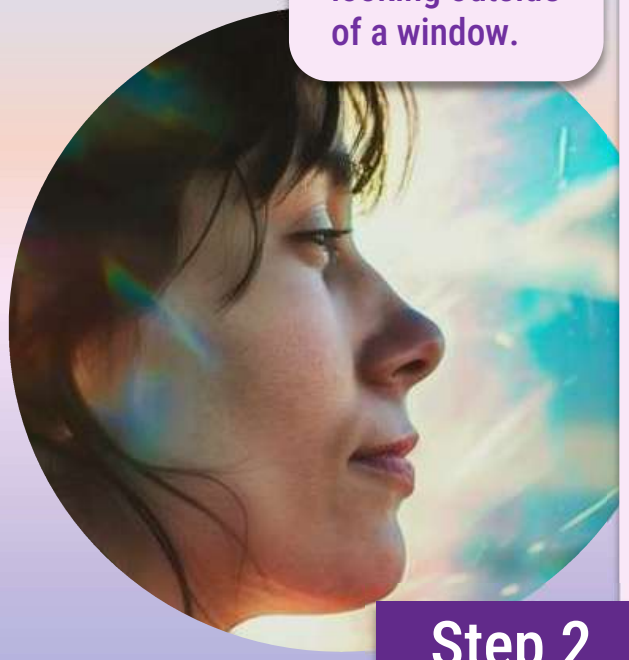


Mindful Seeing

For some people, not having something visual to focus on can be challenging. The activity of mindful seeing might be helpful for anyone who feels this way.

Step 1

Find a space where you can sit down and observe. This could be anywhere outdoors, such as a park bench or by looking outside of a window.



Step 2

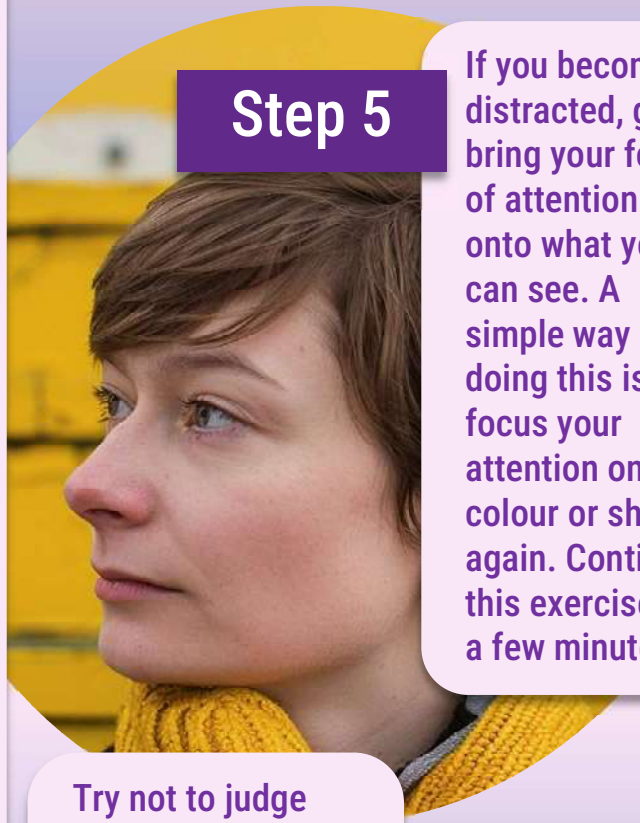
Consciously notice everything there is to see. Instead of listing objects in your head (e.g. “dog” or “car”) Try to notice the colours, patterns and textures. Try to notice the movement of things and the way they move. Try to notice the way that the sunlight or moonlight hits the object.

Step 3

Pay attention to the way that grass or leaves move and notice the different shapes present in the small part of the world that you can see. Look up at the sky and also look down on the ground. Notice shapes of all sizes. Try to do this as someone who might not be familiar with these sights, very much like you would if you were visiting a new county or place.

Step 4

Try not to judge what you see. The key is to be observant but not critical. Become aware, but try not to fixate on things.



Step 5

If you become distracted, gently bring your focus of attention back onto what you can see. A simple way of doing this is to focus your attention on a colour or shape again. Continue this exercise for a few minutes.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Smelling

Mindful smelling exercises for students involve engaging the sense of smell to promote focus and calm. These exercises support students to slow down, notice sensory details, and ground themselves in the present moment, reducing overwhelm.



Scent of the Day

Choose a routine smell (coffee, soap, fruit) and focus on its unique aroma and sensations as you inhale and exhale, noticing any feelings or memories.

Scented Creations

Make scented playdough or potpourri jars, discussing the aromas and feelings each ingredient brings.



Guess the Scent – 'Smell and Tell'

Place different scents (spices like cinnamon, coffee, vanilla, or essential oils on cotton balls) in covered jars.

Students sniff each one, describing the smell (sweet, spicy, earthy) and what it reminds them of, without saying what it is.

Repeat with different items like fresh herbs, citrus zest, or pine needles.

Tips for Success

- Be aware of any scent
- allergies pupils might have
- Be Gentle: Remind students to take gentle sniffs, as strong scents can overwhelm sensitive noses.
- No Judgment: Emphasise accepting all smells (pleasant or unpleasant) as part of the experience, noticing thoughts without getting caught up in them.
- Connect Senses: Link smell to other senses and emotions to deepen awareness.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Eating

- Grab yourself a raisin (or any other similar type of food you can easily hold in your hand) and pretend that you have never seen it before.
- Now, pay careful attention to:
  - The way the raisin looks
  - How it feels
  - How it responds if you manipulate it between your fingers
  - What it smells like
  - And finally, what it tastes like:
- Put the piece of food on your tongue, but don't chew on it yet. Just leave it on your tongue and notice how it feels in your mouth. Do you taste anything yet? What activity do you notice in your mouth?
- Start chewing it, very slowly, just one bite at a time. Notice how the tastes change as you chew.
- Try to notice when you swallow, and see how far you can feel the food into your body.

Spend about 2-3 minutes doing this practice, taking time on each of the bullet points above.

By focusing on the raisin and making a point to notice everything about it, you are also 'not focusing or paying attention' to other thoughts about other areas in your life that might be causing you anxiety or stress.

Places you can practice Mindful Eating

- Breakfast club
- Nurture group or hub – eating together around a table
- Snack time
- Meals at home

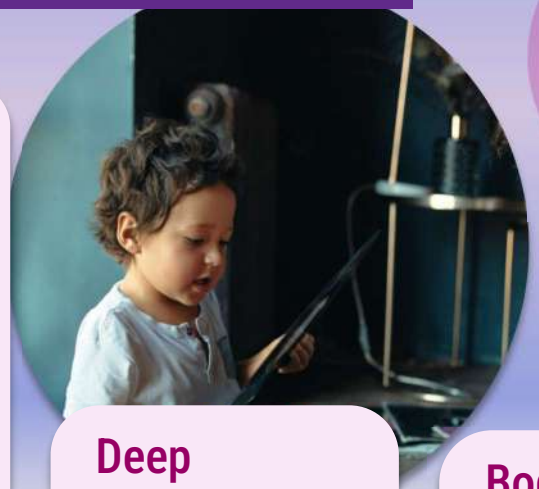
Daily informal practice…

- Once you have practiced with a raisin or a small piece of chocolate etc, you can consider having two or three mindful mouthfuls at the beginning of a meal, to put a 'mindful moment' into your daily mealtime routines.



Mindful Listening – 'sensing'

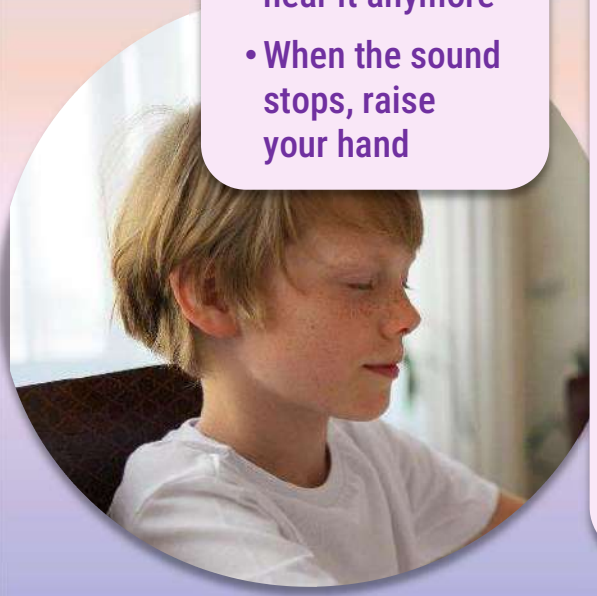
Mindful hearing (often referred to as mindful listening or sound meditation) is the practice of paying full, purposeful attention to the sounds in your environment in the present moment, without judging them as "good" or "bad".



Ringing the bell once

You can do this with eyes open or eyes closed.

- Ring the bell
- Listen to the sound it makes until you can't hear it anymore
- When the sound stops, raise your hand



Deep Breathing with music

Play calming music and guide children to take calm, slow breaths in sync with the music. Encourage them to focus on the sensations of their breath as they inhale and exhale slowly.

Body scan with music

Guide children through a body scan meditation while listening to soothing music. Encourage them to focus their attention on different parts of their body, noticing any tension or sensations, and then consciously relaxing each body part.

Musical Mindful Movement

Invite children to move their bodies mindfully to the rhythm of the music. They can engage in gentle stretching, swaying, or dancing, focusing on the sensations and movements of their bodies in the present moment.

Listening Meditation

Encourage children to listen mindfully to a piece of music, paying attention to the various instruments, melodies, and rhythms. Encourage them to notice how the music makes them feel emotionally and physically without judgment.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Listening – 'exploring'

Sound Exploration

Provide children with different musical instruments or objects that produce sounds (e.g. bells, chimes, drums). Encourage them to explore the sounds mindfully, noticing the pitch, volume, and duration of each sound they produce.

Creating Music

Allow children to express themselves creatively by creating their own music using instruments or their voices. Encourage them to focus on the process of making music rather than the end result, allowing for free expression and experimentation.



Guided Imagery with Music

Play calming music while guiding children through a guided imagery or visualisation exercise. Encourage them to imagine themselves in a peaceful, serene place, using the music to enhance the sensory experience.

Mindful Singing

Engage children in mindful singing by singing simple songs or chants together while focusing on the rhythm, melody, and lyrics. Encourage them to sing with intention and presence, using their voices as a tool for self-expression and connection.

Emotion Exploration

Use music to explore different emotions with children. Play a variety of songs with different emotional tones (e.g. happy, sad, calm) and discuss how the music makes them feel. Encourage them to notice how their bodies and minds respond to each type of music.

Gratitude Music Practice

Encourage children to reflect on things they are grateful for while listening to music. Create a playlist of uplifting or inspirational songs and invite children to think about the people, places, or experiences they appreciate as they listen.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Movement

Mindful movement, including walking, is a way to practice **'embodied' mindfulness** where mindful touch or physical sensations in our bodies, become a primary anchor for your awareness, bridging the gap between your mind and body's experience.

Mindful physical exercise can enhance attention and reduce mind-wandering, promoting a sense of calm and mental clarity.

It can also reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression while improving overall mood and emotional regulation.

Mindfulness can become part of many physical activities and sports...

Yoga for children and young people

Yoga is a great way for kids to practice mindfulness through movement. Simple poses and stretches can help them focus on their breath and how their body feels.



Walking

Be aware of your footsteps, aware of the body walking, your posture, shafts of light along the corridor, smell of floor polish etc.



PE – Sports, Dancing, Gymnastics

These practice balance and coordination (in-flow, focus)...

After School hobbies

- Jogging
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Climbing

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindfulness through the body – Mindful Poses

One easy way for children to dip their toes into mindfulness is through body poses.

To get your children excited, tell them that doing fun poses can help them feel strong, brave, and happy.

Have the children go somewhere quiet and familiar, a place they feel safe. Next, tell them to try one of the following poses:

1. The Superman: this pose is practiced by standing with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out to the sky, stretching the body as tall as possible.
2. The Wonder Woman: this pose is struck by standing tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips.

Ask the children how they feel after a few rounds of trying any of these poses and facilitate a discussion about the effects of mindful posing.



Mountain pose

These poses help to slow down your breath as well as your body, quiet the mind, and heighten your awareness. Hold each pose for ten seconds and cycle through the three poses a few times.



Tree pose



Warrior pose



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Stimming

Mindful stimming encourages awareness of repetitive behaviours, offering a pathway to self-soothing that is both familiar and beneficial.
Listen to your body
and stim when you need to. In fact, you can stim mindfully—pay attention to how the stim feels in your body, and what effect it's having (for example, are you less tense, or more alert)? You can try being mindful while pacing, swinging, rocking, flapping, or using stim toys. Sensory toys like slime and putty may be a good fit.

How to Make it Mindful

Intention
Choose an activity to help you feel better, not just as a reaction to overwhelm.

Choices
When working with a pupil, offer a choice menu of regulating activities to pre-empt dysregulation or overwhelm.

Focus
Pay attention to the sensory input (texture, sound, feeling) as you do it.

Self-Awareness
Use tools like journals to track triggers and patterns. 'My mind feels, my body feels'…

Affirmation
Gently notice the stim (e.g. "I see you're rocking, does that help?").

See next page for fun stimming ideas…

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Mindful Stimming

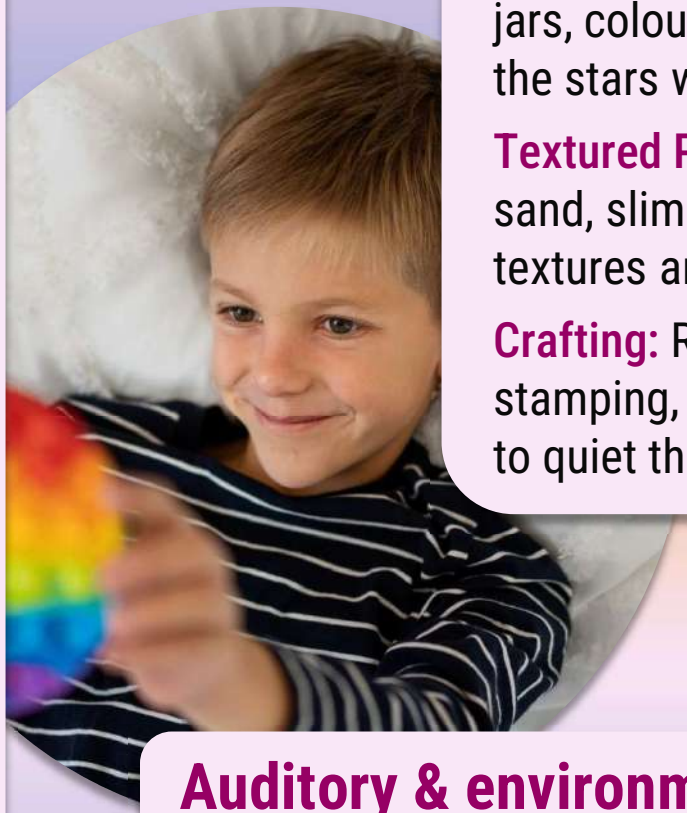
Body-focused mindful stims

Mindful Movement: Gentle swaying, rocking, or stretching while focusing on the physical sensations.

Controlled Fidgeting: Individually tapping fingers or wiggling toes in a patterned, deliberate way to improve focus.

Deep Pressure: Squeezing a stress ball or getting bear hugs to feel grounded. Where guided by Occupational Therapy for individual pupils, the use of weighted blankets.

Yoga & Stretching: Performing poses like Cat-Cow or gentle twists, paying attention to breath and body.



Object & sensory-focused mindful stims

Visual Play: Watching glitter tubes or jars, colourful bath bombs, or even the stars with focused attention.

Textured Play: Playing with kinetic sand, slime, or putty, noticing the textures and sounds.

Crafting: Repetitive actions like stamping, painting, or folding paper to quiet the mind.

Auditory & environmental mindful stims

Music & Sound: Listening to repetitive, rhythmic music or focusing on natural sounds like rain or birdsong.

Mindful Walks: Paying attention to the feeling of feet on the ground, wind, and smells during a walk.

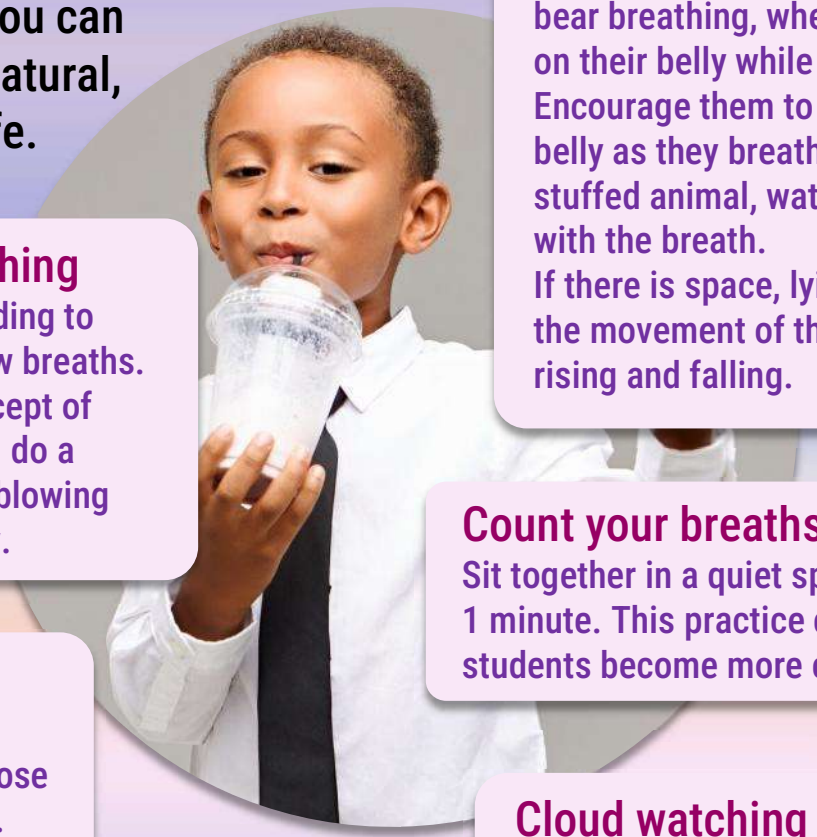
Breathe



BELS
Barnet Education
& Learning Service

Simple mindful breathing practices

Here are some simple practices you can use to help make mindfulness a natural, enjoyable part of a child's daily life.



Try 'teddy bear' breathing

Introduce students to the practice of mindful breathing. Teach them belly breathing or teddy bear breathing, where they hold a stuffed animal on their belly while taking deep breaths.
Encourage them to notice the rise and fall of their belly as they breathe in and out, and if they have a stuffed animal, watch as it moves up and down with the breath.
If there is space, lying down can help exaggerate the movement of the breath through the tummy rising and falling.

Practice 'cool the pizza' breathing

Make mindful breathing fun by pretending to cool down a hot pizza with gentle, slow breaths. It's a playful way to introduce the concept of mindful breathing to children. You can do a similar exercise by imagining you are blowing out birthday candles slowly and gently.

Count your breaths together for 1 minute!

Sit together in a quiet space and count your breaths for 1 minute. This practice can help both you and your students become more centred and calm.

Milkshake breathing

Fill a cup 1/3rd full with water.
Student breathes in deeply through their nose and breathes out slowly through the straw.
Encourage student to blow SMALL bubbles in the cup very gently
No spilling!

Cloud watching

Lie down together on a comfortable blanket and watch clouds go by. Ask your students to notice the shapes, sizes, and movements of the clouds, imagining what each one looks like. This simple activity encourages them to slow down and engage with the world in a peaceful, imaginative way.

Heartbeat exercise

As your students monitor their heartbeat and breathing after exercise, they'll learn to become mindful of how their body feels.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Simple mindful breathing practices

Mindfulness activities may help teenagers and students reduce stress and anxiety, manage their emotions, and pay attention to the present.

Mindfulness exercises may also help with mild depression in children and young people.

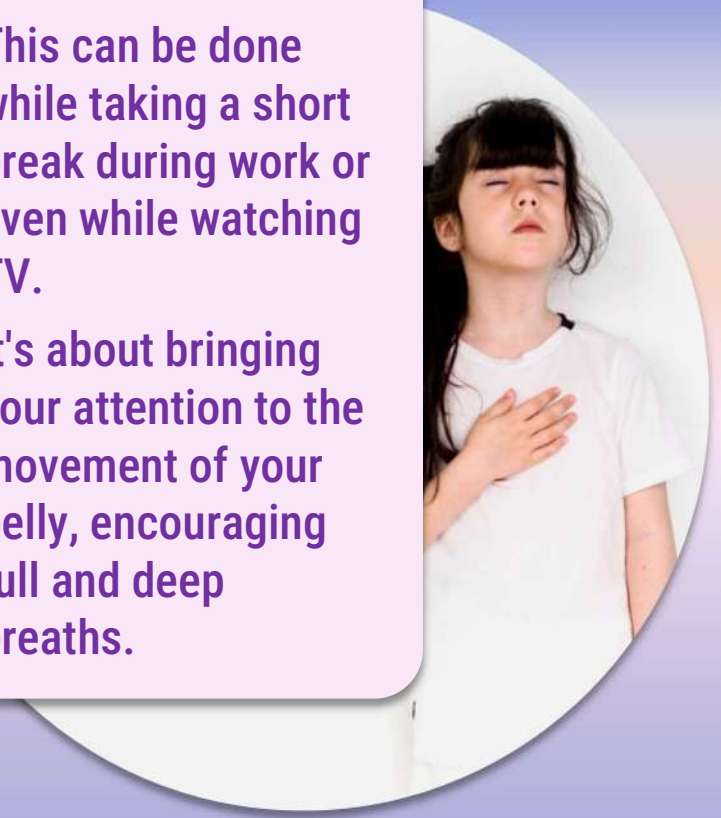


Three Breaths

- Take three deep, slow breaths in and out. This is helpful for grounding when you feel like you are lifting off with anxious thoughts or feelings.
- Focus on making your exhale longer than your inhale. Start by inhaling for a count of four, then exhale slowly for a count of six or more. You can do this while sitting in your chair or even lying in bed before you sleep. It can help to visualize your stress leaving your body with each extended exhale.

Practice Belly Breathing

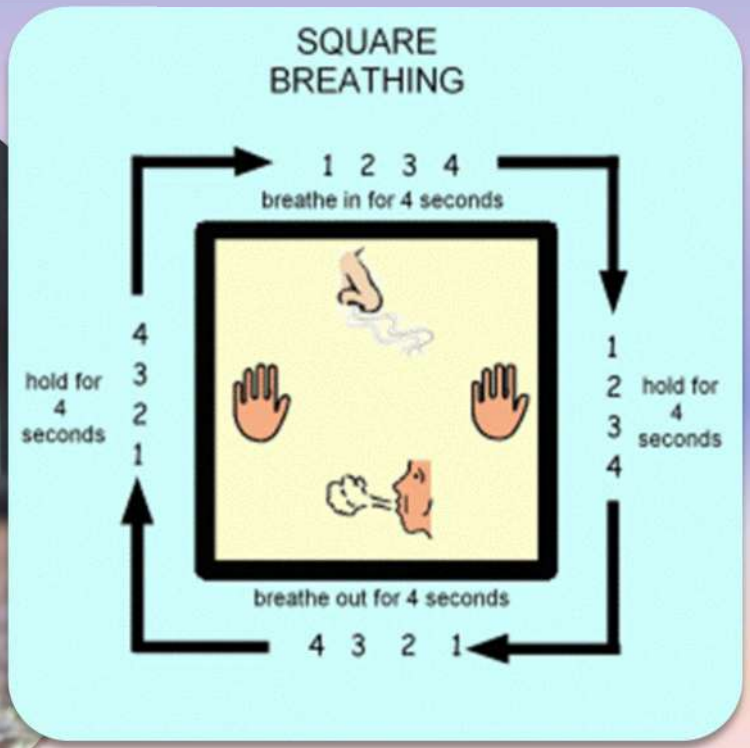
- Put your hand on your stomach and breathe deeply, feeling your abdomen rise and fall.
- This can be done while taking a short break during work or even while watching TV.
- It's about bringing your attention to the movement of your belly, encouraging full and deep breaths.



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

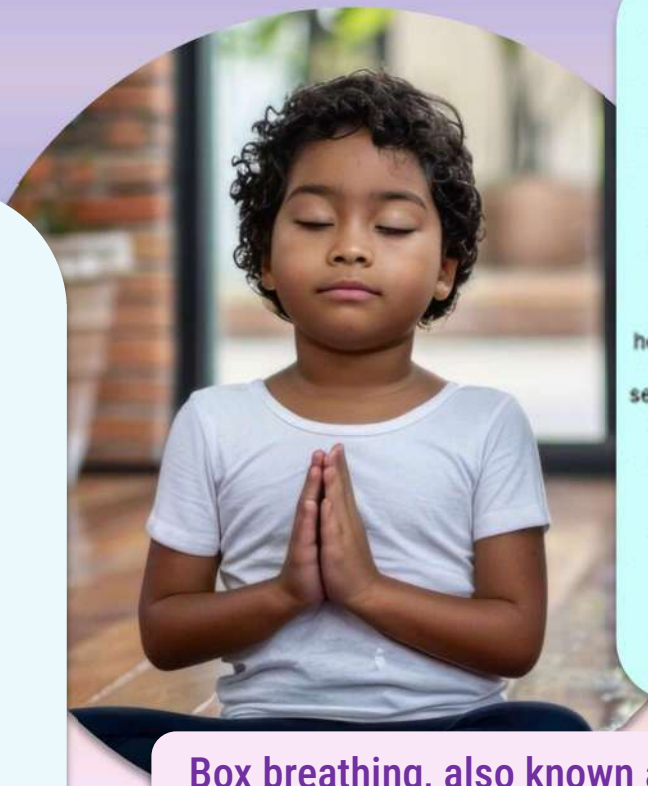
Simple mindful breathing practices

Square Breathing



5-Finger Breathing





Box breathing, also known as resetting the breath or four-square breathing,
is easy to do, quick to learn, and can be highly effective in stressful situations.

Ideally, a person can repeat the steps for a few minutes, or until calm returns. If they find the technique challenging, they can try counting to three instead of four. Once they are used to the technique, they may choose to count to five or six.

Simple mindful breathing practices

Each card includes a simple visual pattern or shape for your child to trace with their finger, encouraging slow, rhythmic movement and deep breathing. It's kind of like a fidget toy… but quiet, and printable.



[Link: 16 Free Finger Tracing Calming Cards]

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Relax



BELS
Barnet Education
& Learning Service

Relaxation Technique # 1

Teaching teenagers and students relaxation techniques equips them with valuable tools for managing stress

How often are we truly mindful of the muscles in our body? With this activity, children can start practicing mindfulness around how they tense or relax their muscles.

Find a peaceful and quiet place to do the exercise. Sit in a chair or lie down on the floor or on a bed. If it feels comfortable, close the eyes.

1. Keeping the mouth closed, inhale deeply and slowly through the nose. Exhale slowly through the mouth and imagine the tension leaving the body.
2. Repeat these deep breaths three or four more times. If it causes dizziness, breathe normally instead.
3. On the fifth inhale, squeeze the muscles in the toes and feet and count to four. Then exhale slowly through the mouth, gradually releasing tension from the feet.
4. Repeat step three, this time for the calf muscles. Tense the calf muscles while breathing in, then release when breathing out.

Continue to repeat a pattern of tensing muscles while inhaling and then relaxing them while exhaling for muscles all the way up the body.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Make sure to include:

- Toes & feet
- Calves & knees
- Thighs
- Hips / buttocks area
- Stomach
- Hands, by making fists
- Arms
- Shoulders, by shrugging them toward the ears
- Jaw, by clenching the teeth and releasing
- Face, by scrunching the facial muscles and releasing

After releasing tension from a body part, take a few deep breaths before moving on to the next part. Think about breathing out tension with each exhale.

At the end of the exercise, be still for a while and notice how it feels. If a person needs to get up, they can slowly open their eyes and gently move out of their position.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Relaxation Technique # 2

The STOP Acronym: What does STOP stand for?

The STOP Technique is a four-step process that interrupts habitual and reactive responses. Each letter in STOP stands for a specific action.

S Stop: Take a brief pause

T Take a Breath: Take a deliberate and mindful breath, focusing on inhalation and exhalation

O Observe: Acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and the environment without judgment

P Proceed Mindfully: Proceed with intentionality, choosing a response consciously



BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Active listening and Awareness: being present to ourselves and others

Observing within the self

Emotional awareness – tie this in with what you already use in class. E.g.
Use of Zones of Regulation / Mood Monsters / Colour Monster / Emotion Fans / Blob Tree
Being present to all of our emotions (all emotions are valid) – alongside Emotion coaching – empathise with the emotion, validate etc.

The "What's My Weather?" Check-in

Ask students to reflect on their internal state by describing their feelings using weather metaphors, such as "Cloudy with a chance of frustration" or "Sunny and clear." This helps them non-judgmentally label their emotions.



'Observing the other'

Active listening is a skill that benefits both teachers and students. Try a simple activity: Have students take turns listening to each other for a set amount of time and then summarise what they hear. This practice encourages focus and strengthens communication skills.

Mindfulness Jars

When students feel upset, they can shake a glitter-filled jar and watch the "storm" of glitter settle, observing how their own thoughts and emotions can settle in a similar way. This provides a visual anchor for finding calm.

Open discussion

Ending sessions by asking students what they noticed or how they feel, promoting reflection and self-awareness.

Regular self check-ins

'My mind feels / My body feels' on a post it (1-1, pair, small group or whole class, at start of day, after lunch, or before home time). Sometimes depositing our feelings outside of ourselves onto paper is enough to acknowledge and check-in with ourselves.

Gratitude Minute

At the end of the day or a difficult activity, ask students to silently or verbally name three things they are grateful for. This simple practice helps to shift focus toward positive experiences.

When we teach children self-awareness, how to respond to challenging emotions, and how to self-soothe, we're equipping them for success in life.

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Resources



& References

BELS
Barnet Education
& Learning Service

Resources to use with Children and Young People

Books

- Sitting Still Like A Frog Book - Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents):
- Sitting Still Like a Frog Activity Book by Eline Snel
- A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Breathe Like a Bear by Kira Willey (age 3-7)
- Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing by Christopher Willard and Daniel Rechtschaffen
- Mindful Me: Mindfulness and Meditation for Kids: Stewart, Whitney, Peterson, Stacy: 9780807551448: Amazon.com: Books
- Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Teen Anxiety

Apps & websites

- https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids
- https://www.smilingmind.com.au/
- https://cosmickids.com/

School Mindfulness Lessons and Training

Mindfulness in Schools Project (MISP)
http://mindfulnessinschools.org

Free taster lesson:
Train with us - Mindfulness in Schools Project

BELS
Barnet Education & Learning Service

Resources for adults who want to deepen their mindfulness learning

Organisations

Centre for Mindfulness Research & Practice (CMRP), Bangor, North Wales, UK.
Training for professionals and general public.
Free audios:
https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en

Oxford Mindfulness Centre, Oxford, UK.
Training for professional and general public.

In-person Courses (suggestions) –
8-week courses for adults

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

Books for Adults

- Happy Teachers – Change the World : A guide for cultivating mindfulness in education – Thich Nhat Hanh and Katherine Weare 2017
- The Miracle Of Mindfulness - Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991
- Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World. Mark Williams and Danny Penman, 2011 (Includes Free CD with Guided Meditations).
- The Mindful Way Through Depression Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2007 (Includes Free CD with Guided Meditations)
- Wherever You Go, There You are: Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2004
- Full Catastrophe Living Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2001
- Mindfulness in Plain English - Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, 2002

Guided Meditation Apps & Websites

- Headspace - https://www.headspace.com/
- Smiling Mind - https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app
- Insight Timer - https://insighttimer.com/
- Calm - https://www.calm.com/
- Breathe App
- Free meditations: http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/

Other authors to explore

- Self compassion - Dr. Kristin Neff - https://self-compassion.org/
  Christopher Germer PhD - https://chrisgermer.com/
- Loving Kindness - Sharon Salzberg https://www.sharonsalzberg.com/
- Radical Acceptance – Awakening the Love that Heals Fear and Shame - Tara Brach
- Trauma, stress and childhood development - Dr Gabor Mate - https://drgabormate.com/

References

- Quotes and Definition - from Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Definition of Mindfulness for Kids - Mindfulness for Kids - Mindful
- Mindful Seeing, Raisin Exercise and Five Senses Activity from – Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust – Mindfulness – A Self-help Guide
- Benefits of Mindfulness – Mindfulness in Schools Project (MISP)
- 7 benefits of mindfulness for children - Mindfulness for Kids - Mindful
- How to create a supportive mindfulness environment – Calm.com
- Activities for Kids - Mindfulness Exercises for Kids in the Classroom - Waterford.org
- Modelling self-care section - Mindfulness and Calming Activities from - Illawarra Shoalhaven School-Link | Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD)
- Calm.com - What Disney Princess characters can teach us about mindfulness