

Mindful
Senses



Mindful Listening

Mindful listening helps us to choose the sounds to focus our attention on and be thoughtful in the way we hear and respond to the words of others. Research shows that children become more responsive to their environment and become better able to choose what they focus on and respond to. This helps them to build self-awareness and self-management skills.



Mindful Listening Activity 01

Whisper Words

There are different variations of this game.

Game 1: Stand close together. Ask your child to close their eyes. Whisper a word. Can they hear you? How many steps away can you stand where they can still hear the word?

Game 2: With more people, pass a message around the circle by whispering in the next person's ear. Can everyone listen carefully and pass the message on correctly?



Mindful Listening Activity 02

Sound Walk

This is a great game to play on a walk or outside in your garden. Whilst outside, take a moment to stop and be still. Encourage your child to close their eyes and listen for 2 or 3 minutes. What can they hear?

Take a small piece of paper with you. Can they turn the sounds they hear into symbols to create a sound map?



Mindful Listening Activity 03

Mood Music

Find some different pieces of music. Classical works well, but any instrumental music is great for this activity. Ask your child to listen to the piece of music. Then, play the track again, this time asking your child to draw as they listen and respond to the music with mark making. This can also be linked to colours.



Mindful Listening Activity 04

I Went Shopping and I Bought...

This is a great game to encourage focus and concentration. Take it in turns to 'go shopping' to buy something. Start the phrase with: 'I went shopping and I bought...' each time. The next person says the phrase and repeats what the person before picks, then adds something of their own. How many items can you remember? Great for memory building too!



Mindful Seeing

Mindful Seeing enables us to better observe ourselves, other people and our surroundings to more fully enjoy and learn from them.

Supporting the children with mindful seeing enables children to sharpen their focus by calling on one sense to purposefully observe an object. It helps to develop curiosity about the world around them and to share their observations with other people. It can also supports social-emotional learning and builds children's ability to read social cues, facial expressions and body language.



Mindful Seeing Activity 01

Cloud Gazing

This is an activity for a dry day...

Go outside and lay down looking at the sky. How many clouds can you see? What shapes do they make? What can you 'see' in the clouds? Can you tell a cloud story? This can be played anywhere but is great to play at the beach on the soft sand, listening to the sound of the waves!



Mindful Seeing Activity 02

Spot the Difference

There are hundreds of spot the difference pictures on the internet or puzzle books that contain these types of puzzles. These are great to help concentration, determination and support children to really notice the world around them. There are also great books that set children challenges to find things on the page and of course, 'Where's Wally' is a must!



Mindful Seeing Activity 03

Amygdala Bottle

Why not have a go at making your very own Amygdala bottle. These are a great tool to have in a mindfulness toolkit and can be made fairly easily. These provide a visual representation of how our brain might 'look' when we are overwhelmed, frustrated, worried or cross. The act of shaking them is a great way to relieve tension and watching the glitter or contents settle has a lovely calming effect.



Mindful Seeing Activity 04

Find the Colour

This activity can be completed inside or outside in nature. A great way to do this easily is to use a paint colour chart or colour card that you can pick up in DIY stores. Choose some colours or give your child a colour matching card. Can they find the colours on the chart in the environment around them? Using shades/tones of the same colour is also a great challenge for older children.



Mindful Smelling

Mindful Smelling - using our sense of smell to be more aware of our environment - can help us to keenly observe our world and sharpen our memory. When we teach children about mindful smelling, they discover how memories and important information can be attached to and triggered by smells because the smell and memory centres in the brain are close together.



Mindful Smelling Activity 01

Herb Garden

Herbs are a safe way for children to explore smell and great fun to plant and grow themselves too! Why not create a herb pot or garden by planting a selection of different herbs. The children can then smell these and learn the scents of different herbs. They can rub the herb leaves between their fingers and smell them - what words might describe them? These could also be used for mindful tasting.



Mindful Smelling Activity 02

Potpourri

Making potpourri jars is a lovely way to engage your smelling senses. You can make small jars using different scents of potpourri. When focusing their smell sense, encourage your child to try and think of describing words as well as what the smell reminds them of (linked to memories). If you are feeling really brave you can have a go at making your own potpourri too!



Mindful Smelling Activity 03

Baking Bread

There is nothing quite like the smell of freshly baked bread to get the sense tingling! Children love to bake and baking bread combines not only a delicious smell when you are baking, but also engages other senses as well, including touch. Kneading is a great way to get rid of excess energy and tension; the soft, squidgy dough feels lovely to touch. Not to mention taste when you get to sample the end product! Pizza dough is a quick and easy recipe to make with children.



Mindful Smelling Activity 04

Smell and Tell

This is a great game that can be played using household items that are easy to get hold of. Use some kind of blindfold or ask the children to close their eyes - no cheating! Place a small amount of items with a strong scent into a paper cup. Can the children guess what's in the cup by only using their sense of smell?

Items include: mint, tea, coffee, orange peel, banana, orange peel, bread, vinegar, popcorn, toothpaste, cinnamon...



Mindful Tasting

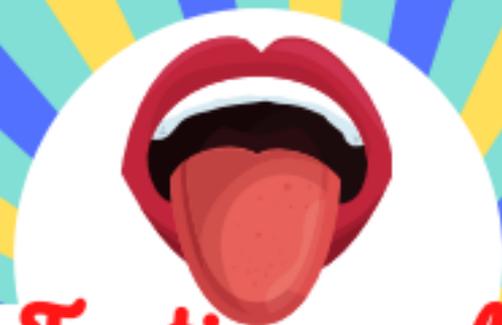
Mindful Tasting can be a valuable task for demonstrating mindful awareness. It can help the children to identify discrete taste sensations, build their descriptive skills and approach food with a healthy outlook. It also supports learning about the importance of eating a healthy diet and how this supports their thinking and learning.



Mindful Tasting Activity 01

The Raisin Challenge

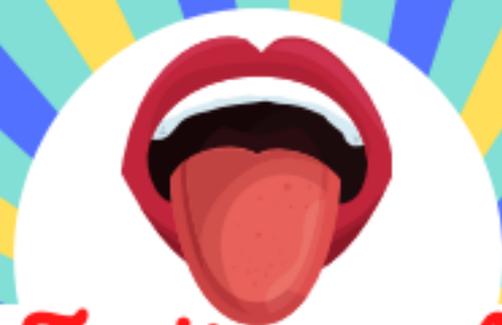
This takes practice and patience and, with younger children, you may want to try and focus on one step at a time rather than trying it altogether! It is a great activity to try to teach the children to take mindful bites and links to 'Activity 03' where the same process is followed with different foods. You can, of course, switch the raisin, but keep it simple. Follow the instructions on 'The Raisin Challenge' sheet.



Mindful Tasting - Activity 02

Taste and Tell

This game can be played with the 'Smell and Tell' activity on the **Mindful Smelling** cards. Be aware of any allergies and remind the children to only play this with an adult. Use some kind of blindfold or ask the children to close their eyes - no cheating! Give the children some small pieces of different food to try. Encourage them to really **taste** the food, as in 'The Raisin Challenge'. Can the children guess the food that they are tasting when you remove their sense of sight?



Mindful Tasting - Activity 03

Mindful Eating

This can be tricky and takes a little bit of practice but is well worth the challenge. Younger children may like to start with 'The Raisin Challenge'. Follow the instructions of the 'Mindful Bites' activity support sheet. Each stage is important; it slows your child down and encourages them to use all of their other senses to support their taste sense. One for the adults to try too!



Mindful Touching

Mindful Touch is another valuable task for demonstrating mindful awareness. It can help to create accurate sensory details that your brain receives and can help you to respond mindfully to the people and events around you. The practice of focused, mindful awareness through use of all our senses, enhances the ability of all young learners to direct their attention where needed.



Mindful Touching - Activity 01

Stress Ball

Using a stress toy is a great way for children to self-calm. Encourage them to use the toy mindfully and quietly to help calm and refocus their mind.

Making their own stress ball is also a great activity linked to the touch sense and the children will be proud of their end creation.

See the instruction cards for details on how to make your own stress ball.



Mindful Touching - Activity 02

Sensory Picture Collage

For this activity, you will need a range of materials and fabrics with different textures. Encourage your child to create a 'touch' picture; a great way to do this is by asking them to think of a journey through different landscapes (for younger children 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' is great for this!) Can they recreate the journey using different textures? **Items:** foil, sandpaper, bubble wrap, felt, cotton wool...



Mindful Touching - Activity 03

Touching Nature

This is a simple activity to do when out and about in nature, although be careful with stinging nettles and brambles! Encourage the children to feel the natural world around them - walk barefoot in the grass, feel the sand between their toes, water lapping on their feet; soft delicate petals between their fingertips and the rough bark of a tree. Can they describe the different textures?



Mindful Touching - Activity 03

Hug a Tree

This is a great game to play on a forest or woodland walk and trickier than you might think! Blindfold your child and carefully lead them from a starting spot to a tree. For larger trees, ask them to feel the bark/trunk of the tree and wrap their arms around the trunk, thinking about how far round they can stretch. Lead your child back to the starting spot. Ask them to find the tree they hugged. They may have to try several to find the right one!



Mindful Touching - Activity 04

Playdough or Modelling Clay

Any activities that encourage the children to use their hands and be creative is great for mindful touching activities. Modelling clay or playdough is great at encouraging creativity but also feels amazing! Try and challenge your child to make different things that include fine details as well as larger items. What textures, marks and shapes can they create?



*Mindful
Breathing*



Mindful Breathing

Focusing on our breathing can help to calm the body, slow our heart rate, lower our blood pressure and sharpen our focus. Mindful breathing can also lessen anxiety by over-riding the amygdala's 'fight, flight or freeze' response. Practising controlled breathing enables the children to develop and reinforce the habit of responding to anxiety with breathing, leading to reflective rather than reactive responses.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 01

Balloon Bubble

Give your child some different balloons to try and blow up. Once they have blown up the balloon, encourage them to try and keep the balloon afloat off the floor using their hands. The object is to avoid the balloon touching the floor for as long as possible or for a given length of time. This encourages focus and concentration; they have to watch the balloon to make sure it does not fall.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 02

I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles

Blowing bubbles is always a fun activity for children; it's always so satisfying to see the bubbles floating through the air. Encourage them to think about gentle breaths to create as many bubbles as they can. Alternatively, blow the bubbles for the children and ask them to watch until the last bubble has popped or to focus on one of the bubbles and watch it until it disappears.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 03

Blown Ink Pictures

This is a great rainy day activity that is not only fun, but is also an activity that helps the children to focus on their breathing. All you need is a drinking straw, paper and some ink or watered down poster paints. Put a spoonful of paint on the paper and ask your child to blow the ink to create different shapes and patterns. These can also be turned into characters by adding wiggly eyes and other features.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 04

Cotton Wool Ball Races

This can be done individually or siblings/friends can turn the activity into a race! All you need is a cotton wool ball and a drinking straw. If playing with a partner, create a starting line and race to a finish line. Alternatively, the children can create a maze or pathway for the cotton wool ball. They use their breath to blow it around the maze.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 05

Breathing Mazes

Why not have a go at one of the mindful breathing mazes. There are different shaped mazes to try and are a lovely way to encourage the children to slow down, pause, hold their breath and breath slowly in and out. It may be best to print these out (if you have a laminator you could create a set to use over and over again) and encourage your child to follow the maze with their finger.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 06

Teddy Bear Breaths

This is a great activity for younger children, but the older ones will love it too! Find a comfy place to lay flat on your back; this can be inside in a familiar or favourite place or it could be outside on a dry, sunny day. Ask the children to place their hands or a soft toy that is special to them on their tummy. Talk the children through taking slow, deep breaths and watch their teddy rise and fall.



Mindful Breathing - Activity 07

Chime Time

All the children at school will be familiar with 'Chime Time' and mindful breathing. It does help to have something that makes a continuous sound as it will help to focus your child's attention.

Simply follow the 'Chime Time Mindful Breathing' script.

Try and complete it following a busy activity, before bed or to create a sense of calm.