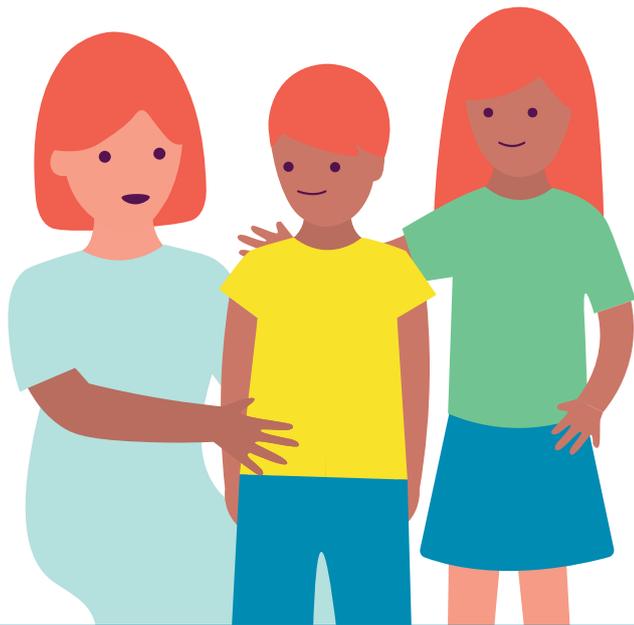


Supporting Children aged 11–12 years' Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness.



Introduction

As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the children in their care to deal with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and helpful tool to help adults and children alike manage the challenges many of us are currently facing.



Typical development and challenges:

At this age abilities and skill level have a strong influence on self-image so limitations to developing strengths and skills can be frustrating. Early or late onset of puberty can lead to feelings of awkwardness and impact confidence.

Signs of distress:

Changes of mood, impacting on social relationships and learning feeling overwhelming emotions difficulty concentrating changes in weight, appetite, or sleep onset of headaches, stomach aches or other bodily symptoms withdrawal from previously valued activities.

How to support them:

Support children process strong emotions by listening to their concerns and validating their experience in a non-judgemental way. Connecting children with others of a similar age who have had similar experiences can help normalise the emotions being experienced. Talk to children about change being a part of life and help them differentiate between what they can and can't control. Endeavour to maintain as much routine and social connection as possible.

(Emerging Minds, 2020)

Integrating mindfulness into everyday life with the children in our care can have profound benefits for both adult and child.

Academic research shows that when we pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, with openness and curiosity, and without judgement, we activate many wellbeing benefits.



Higher self awareness



Higher emotional regulation



Reduced stress

Through regular mindfulness practice we can also improve our:



Focus



Concentration



Creativity

—

This Care Pack contains three sections with 11 foundational mindfulness topics to progress through with your child:



1. Recognising and Managing Emotions

- From Autopilot to Awareness
- Paying Attention to the Present Moment
- Recognising and Managing our Emotions
- The Senses
- Mindful Movement



2. Looking After Worry and Anxiety

- Handling Unhelpful Thoughts
- Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body
- Bouncing Back



3. Focusing on the Positives

- Gratitude and Savouring
- Choosing Optimism
- Growth Mindset

These three sections combine to deliver a comprehensive toolkit to assist in supporting emotional wellbeing with your child.

How to use this Care Pack

Children look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance to help them manage their reactions during challenging times. The best way to support children in your care is to provide comfort, reassurance and emotional support; and allow the time and space for children to talk or ask questions (without forcing them). A calm and steady presence is a powerful source of comfort and reassurance for children. It helps them gain a sense of emotional and physical safety which supports them process their reactions.

Of course, it's likely that you're struggling with your own feelings of overwhelm and distress. It's important to recognise if you are struggling with your own reactions and find ways to take care of yourself. Seek support as needed, personal and/or professional, so that you are in the best possible position to support the children you care for. It's not about being perfect; it's about being kind to yourself and recognising what you need in order to support the children in your care as best you can. Just like in an aeroplane – it's about putting your own oxygen mask on first!

Here is a step by step guide to get the best out of this Pack designed specifically for 11–12 year olds:



1. Learn

Take a few minutes to read the topic overview written for parents, carers and teachers.

- This will orient you to the purpose and intention of each topic and set up some background for conversations with your child.

2. Practice

Listen to the mindfulness meditation with your child in a quiet place without distraction.

- Spend a few minutes afterwards inviting your child to share their experience and their thoughts and feelings following the meditation.
- Share your own experience, thoughts and feelings with your child.

3. Explore

Ask your child to select one of the activities at the back of the book, and discuss their experience.

- Invite your child to choose an activity, they can be printed or completed on an electronic device.
- While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration with your child as they complete them.
- Use the activity to collaborate and continue the conversation.

Smiling Mind offers a range of engaging evidence based experiences and activities designed by wellbeing educators.

You are encouraged to experiment and explore the wide range of meditations and activities with your child to find out what works best.

Recognising and Managing Emotions

This first module, Recognising and Managing Emotions, contains five foundational mindfulness topics to progress through with your child:



5 topics

- From Autopilot to Awareness
- Paying Attention to the Present Moment
- Recognising and Managing Our Emotions
- The Senses
- Mindful Movement



5 meditations



11 activities

We invite you to practise the following meditations with your child as a way of cultivating the ability to turn towards one's own experiences with care and kindness. Doing this together, and discussing the experience, is especially important if your child is struggling. Children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others and you as their parent, carer or teacher have a vital role to play.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to recognise and manage our emotions. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to complete. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



From Autopilot to Awareness

—

In the midst of a global pandemic, it can be a significant challenge to stay in the moment and pay attention. Awareness of our thoughts and emotions, and how they are impacting our behaviour, is especially important in times like these. Developing the ability to observe our thoughts and emotions more objectively allows us to access a calmer and more mindful place.



Have you ever noticed your mind has wandered? Sometimes we find ourselves in a tangle of thoughts and emotions about the past or the future, not really knowing how we got there. Practising mindfulness helps us become more focused and aware, and better able to direct our attention to where we want and need it to be. Awareness of how we spend our time thinking and tuning into the emotions that come along with this, is an important first step to creating a mindful life. Awareness enables us to see our thoughts and emotions more objectively and to be less pushed around by them. In this way, we can choose how we respond to different situations as opposed to simply reacting as if on autopilot. In doing so we get to live more in line with who we want to be and usually feel better.

Awareness connects our minds and our bodies in a way that brings us back to the present moment. The first step in awareness is tuning into how we are feeling right now. Asking ourselves “How am I feeling at this moment?” can help. By cultivating greater awareness of our own emotional landscape, we get better at noticing what is showing up for us as we traverse daily life, including our interactions with the children in our lives.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: The Bubble Journey.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- The Bubble Journey

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/18/125/125/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Awareness of each and every moment

This activity encourages you to consider mindful awareness as a way to move forward and experience life fully. It may assist in your own reflections of how you mindfully show up each day.

Awareness as a gateway to mindfulness

This exploration links mindful awareness to your growth and development. The activity encourages you to understand that when your mind and body are connected, you can really move forward with purpose.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do you make sure that thoughts and feelings don't push you around and be the boss of you?

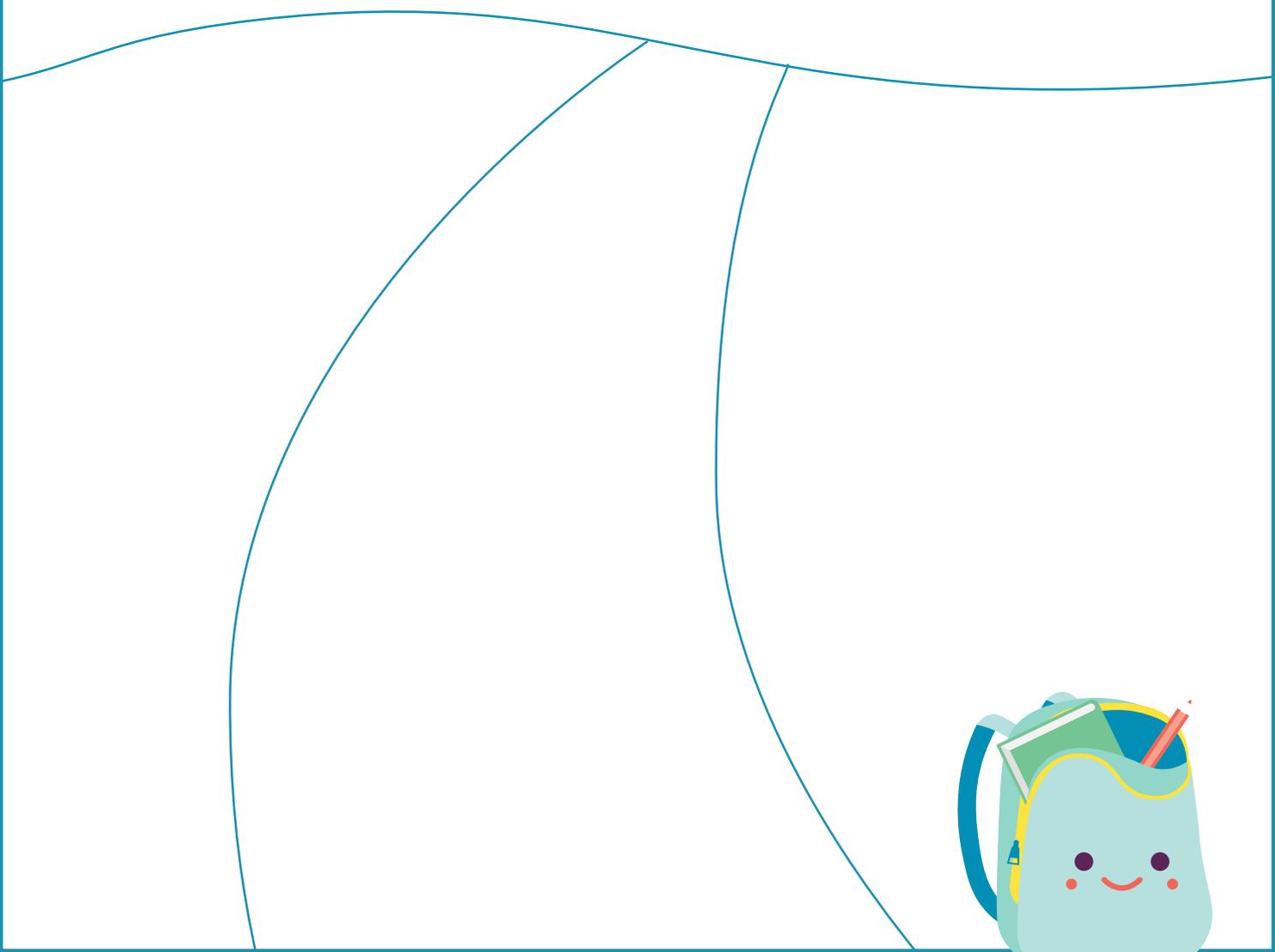
Do you sometimes remember to ask yourself "how am I feeling right now?"

How do you know when the mind and the body are communicating very well with one another?

Awareness of each and every moment.



Being aware is a wonderful way to notice thoughts and emotions that may be clouding our way forward. Draw a pathway and write how it feels to be in the moment, aware and focused on where you are and what you're doing. Pack lightly as you head into each moment of each day.



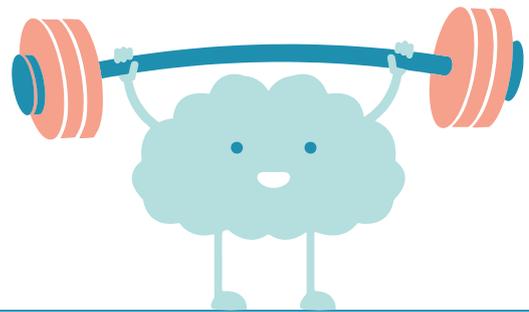
Awareness as a gateway to mindfulness.



Imagine being able to design and create your own gateway to mindfulness. As you walk through your gateway, you are aware of your mind and body, and connected to where you are and what you are doing. As you draw yourself stepping forward, write about what it means to you to be more aware as you move mindfully through each day.

Paying attention to the present moment

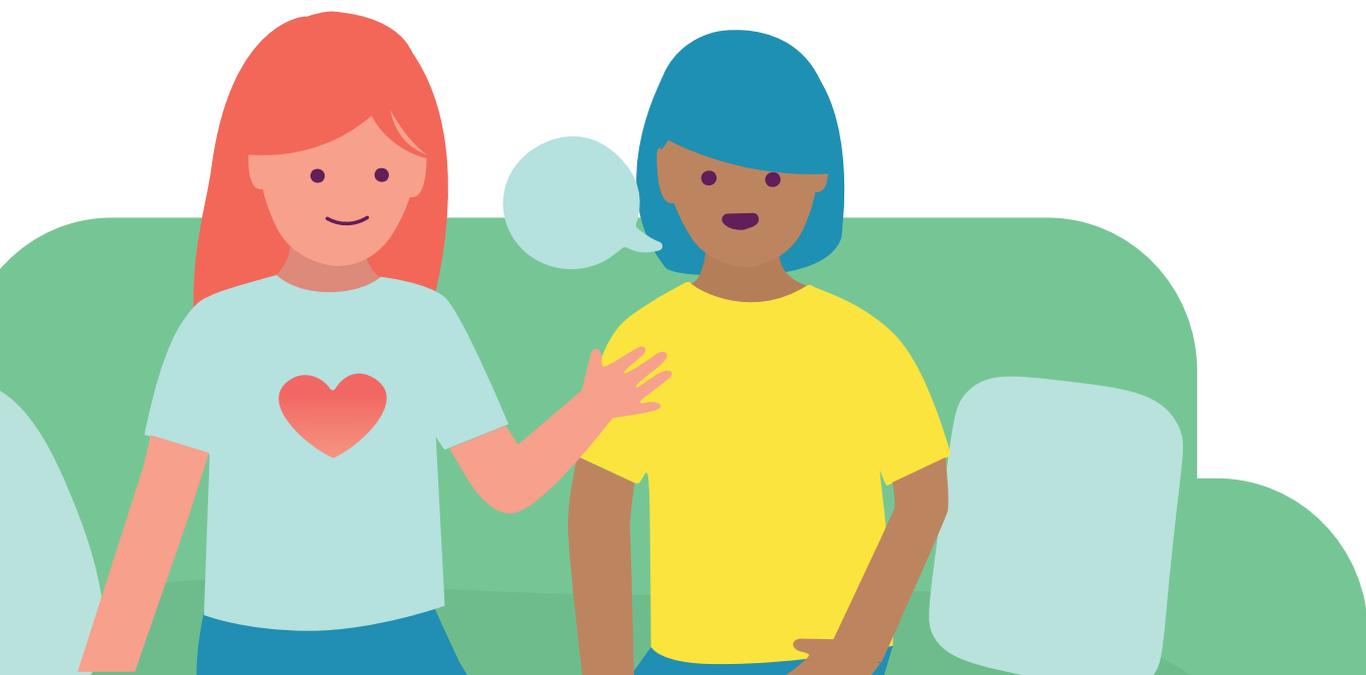
Mindfulness helps us to attend to the present moment and the task at hand. This is especially useful in times of global uncertainty when our focus can be pulled in many directions, and often into the past or towards an uncertain future.



Children are often asked to pay attention. This can be hard to do because our minds are very curious and hard-wired to wander. Mindfulness is about paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgment. Given that our body is always present, focusing our attention on our breath is one of the most effective ways to return to what is happening right now.

The breath is a natural process with which we can all engage. It is always with us and each new breath offers an opportunity to become more self-aware and focused. When we attend to the present moment, we are more aware of how we are feeling and what we are doing. For children, their ability to learn and grow depends upon being able to develop this important skill.

When big and uncertain events happen close by or around the world, our minds can quickly latch on to any information available. We usually do this in the hope of finding some certainty and reassurance that all will be okay. As role models, children will look to us for guidance. Focusing our own attention on the present moment can help us to be better placed as a source of reassurance and balanced information for children.





 Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Daily Mindfulness Guide – 5 Minutes.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 103 – Awareness and Sounds
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – 5 Minutes

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/20/3/3/>

 Continue the conversation using the activity sheets on the following pages:

In the Moment

Think about the phrase ‘being in the zone’. This activity encourages you to consider how powerful we can become when we truly pay attention.

Returning to the Present Moment

This is a practical activity encouraging you to compile a list of strategies for paying attention that you can draw upon later.

 Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

What really works for you when it is time to be completely focused and pay attention very closely?

How do you feel the breath assists you to be in the present moment?

What is the biggest advantage of regularly taking really deep breaths, do you feel?

In the Moment.



We know that what we focus on becomes the centre of our attention. Have you ever felt so in the moment that you got completely absorbed in the task? It feels pretty good. Write and draw about a recent time when you were truly in the moment. What were you doing and how did you feel? What did you learn about yourself in this moment?

A recent time when you were truly in the moment?

What were you doing and how did you feel?

What did you learn about yourself in this moment?

Returning to the Present Moment.



What helps you to return to the present moment when the mind wanders? Create a list of go-to strategies to bring you back when it is important to focus and pay attention.

A large, vertical, rounded rectangular frame with a scroll-like top and bottom edge. The interior of the frame is filled with horizontal lines, providing space for writing a list of strategies. The frame is outlined in a light blue color.

Recognising and Managing Our Emotions

We each experience a whole range of emotions every day; some are pleasant and some are not so pleasant. Most of us spend a great deal of time caught up in our emotions, particularly difficult ones. When this happens, our behaviour is on autopilot and we can feel stressed and overwhelmed. We may miss important information and find it hard to see situations clearly. When we practise mindfulness, we tune into our bodies and become aware of how we are feeling and how those feelings are impacting us. We also learn that emotions come and go and will not last forever. This assists us to feel less overwhelmed in the present moment and role model effective ways to manage emotions as they arise.



As children grow and develop, their awareness of feelings and emotions expands. Children communicate to us how they are feeling through facial expressions, gestures, actions, behaviours and words. For us all, when we are able to notice and express how we feel, we can begin to make decisions about how we might manage our emotions effectively.

Mindfulness helps us to develop the ability to observe our emotions with more openness and curiosity, and with less judgement. By being able to observe them more objectively, we tend to be less pushed around by them. We are also better placed to be there for those still learning to understand what a wide range of emotions feels like for them. Mindfulness allows us to switch off autopilot and get back into the driver's seat. It also enables us to see our emotions are more like passengers in the back seat rather than the one driving.





 Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Daily Mindfulness Guide – Body Scan

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 204 – Emotions
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Body Scan

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/29/150/>

 Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Reading My Emotions

This activity gives you an opportunity to reflect on the wide range of human emotions and write about what you are learning about yourself.

An Emotional Time

This activity encourages you to explore and better understand the complexity of feeling many emotions at the same time, building your emotional awareness. We all have our own unique way of responding to this - and that's okay!

 Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Can you think of a recent time when you felt many feelings and emotions all at once? I would love you to share with me what that felt like and how you responded.

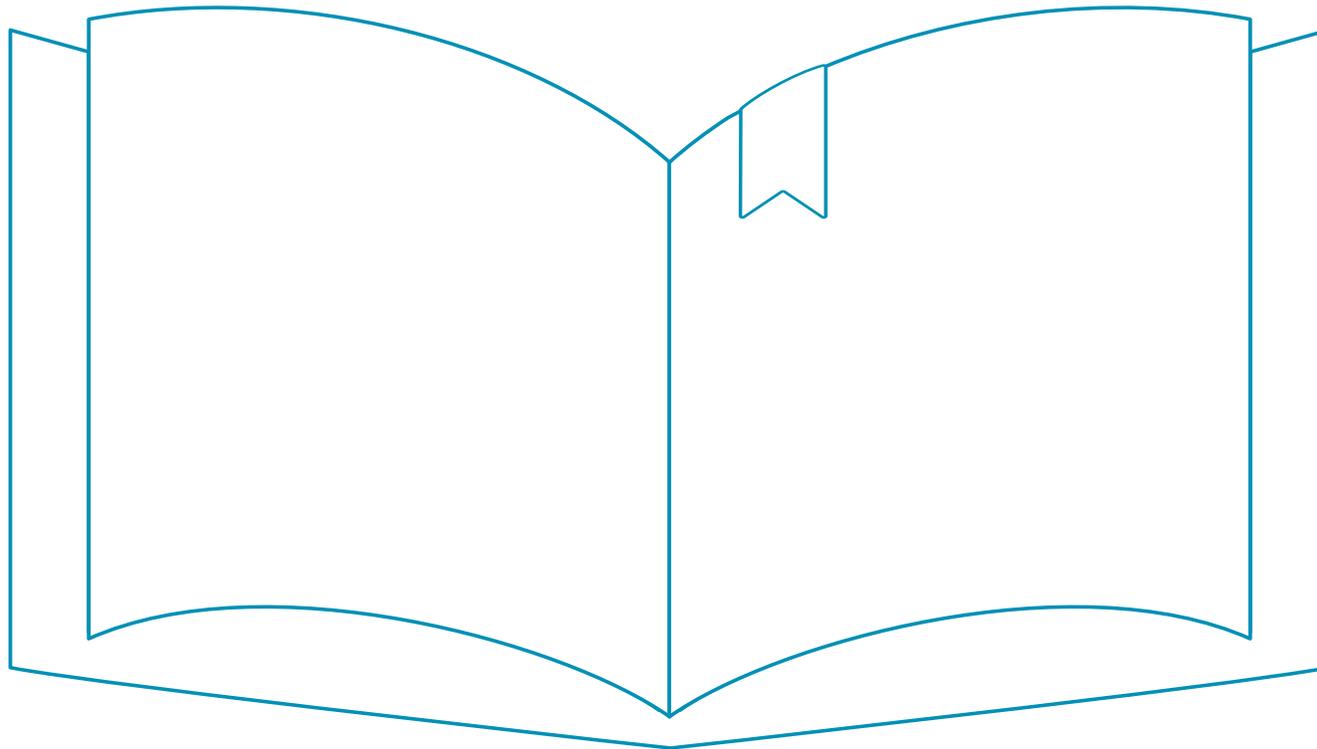
Do you ever think about all the emotions you are capable of feeling? How might they be changing as you get older?

In what ways do you like to express your feelings and emotions (think of voice, gesture, movement and other ways)?

Reading My Emotions.



Life brings so many experiences from every direction. As we dive into each experience, we feel a wide range of emotions. Being able to identify them and gently hold them in our awareness is an important skill to practise. Creatively record in this open book, using both words and images, the many emotions you have felt so far this year.



What am I learning about myself?

The Senses

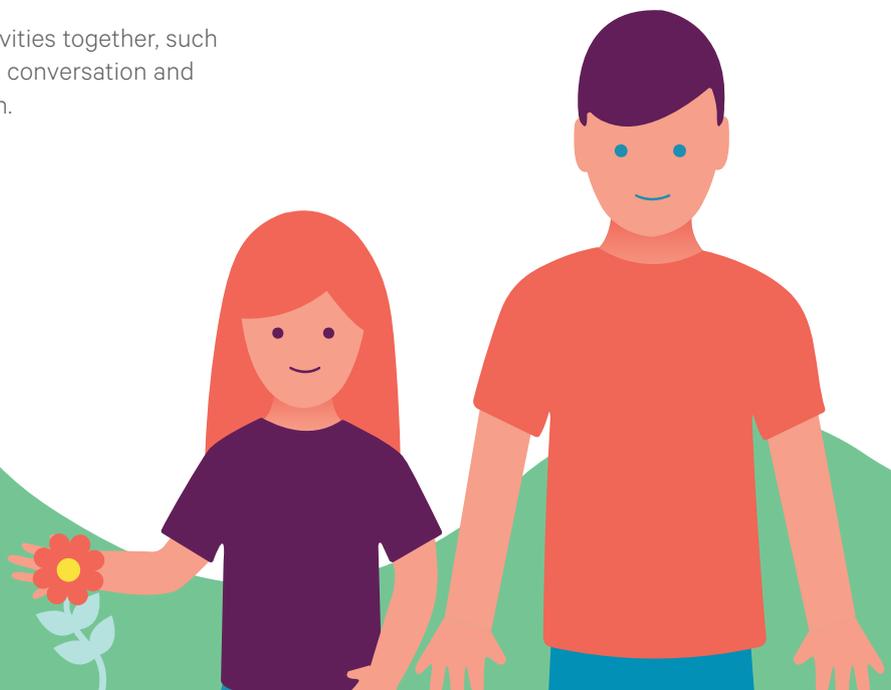
We have five primary senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Our senses are the way in which we interact with the world and learn about what is happening around us. Mindfulness gives us a pathway back to the present moment through our senses. For the children in our care, the senses are a wonderful way to feel grounded and in the here and now. We can model this for them by tuning into our own senses and engaging with the world in the present.



In the midst of a global pandemic, our senses are being over stimulated. We are literally bombarded with sensory information as we move through each day and many of us, and many of our children are feeling the effects of this overload.

Mindfulness helps us to focus on one thing at a time. When we do this via our senses, two important things happen: we develop our sensory awareness and we increase our capacity to pay attention. When we pay close attention, we are able to calm our mind and let go of distracting thoughts. We then have an opportunity to open ourselves up to the world around us without getting too caught up in our thoughts and emotions.

Having time to experience sensory activities together, such as a mindful walk outside can stimulate conversation and appreciation in both adults and children.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 202 – Mindful Listening
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/27/154/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Sensory Journey – Dadirri

This activity encourages you to take a mindful walk, disconnected from technology and tuned into your senses. What can you see/hear/smell/feel?

Sit Spot

Developing a sit spot is helpful in building mindfulness. This activity suggests finding a place outside to sit silently and activate sensory awareness. You might consider doing this regularly if you find it useful and calming.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Tell me about how you feel your senses help you to learn and grow?

Tell me about a recent time when your senses really showed up all at once. What was that like for you?

When you feel very quiet and calm, how are your senses behaving in these moments?

Sensory Journey – Dadirri.



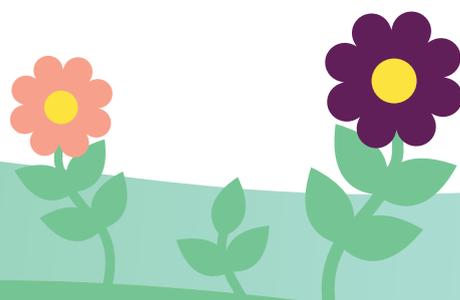
Indigenous Australians have a whole-body mindful walking practice called Dadirri. Dadirri means inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Imagine taking a Dadirri walk in nature, switching on all of your senses. Write and draw what you might experience.



Sit Spot.



Sometimes we just need to slow down to allow our senses to come to life. Find a sit spot outside and sit for five or ten minutes in silence. Just notice what is happening around you. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste? Write and draw your observations.



Mindful Movement

For adults and children, one of the ways in which we can manage our emotions is to mindfully drop down out of our heads and begin to pay attention to the sensations in our bodies. Our bodies are multi-sensory and provide us with so much ‘present moment’ information. We feel better when we move because it is what we’ve been engineered to do. Young children are especially at ease when moving and being active.



Sometimes, we may find ourselves very caught up in our heads. It is especially at these times that mindful movement can help us to reconnect with our bodies and activate some of the wisdom they contain. Being in the present and paying attention to the felt sensations in our body is an ideal gateway to mindfulness.

COVID19 represents a new and uncertain challenge to us all and one which has possibly seen us do a lot of mental work. As we grapple with the rapid changes to our way of life, the restrictions to our movements and the palpable sense of loss around the world, it is not surprising many of us are experiencing a wide range of emotions.

Children look to us as role models and guides on how to navigate change and handle new and possibly unsettling experiences. It is important to remember that humans learn the most through observing what others humans do. Children intuitively know that trusted and caring adults are a source of wisdom. Getting out and about and moving together can be a highly effective way to create feelings of calm and connection. We have this unique and powerful opportunity to show the children in our care a positively oriented approach to change and uncertainty through mindful movement.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Let's Go On Safari

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 205 – Mindful Movement
- Mindful Movement: 07–09 years

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/14/77/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets on the
following pages:

Moving Mindfully

This activity encourages you to reflect on a time when you were enjoying whole body movement and you felt engaged and connected. Think about how good it feels to connect your mind and body!

Drop Down: Mind – Body Connect

This activity reminds you to notice when you are caught up in your thoughts and emotions which makes your mind and body feel disconnected. Dropping down into your body is a useful way to come back to the here and now.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

What are your thoughts about how our mind and body communicate with each other?

How do you feel in your mind when you are very active and moving your body freely?

Do you ever wonder about the inner wisdom your body holds and what it can teach us about our emotional wellbeing?

Moving Mindfully.



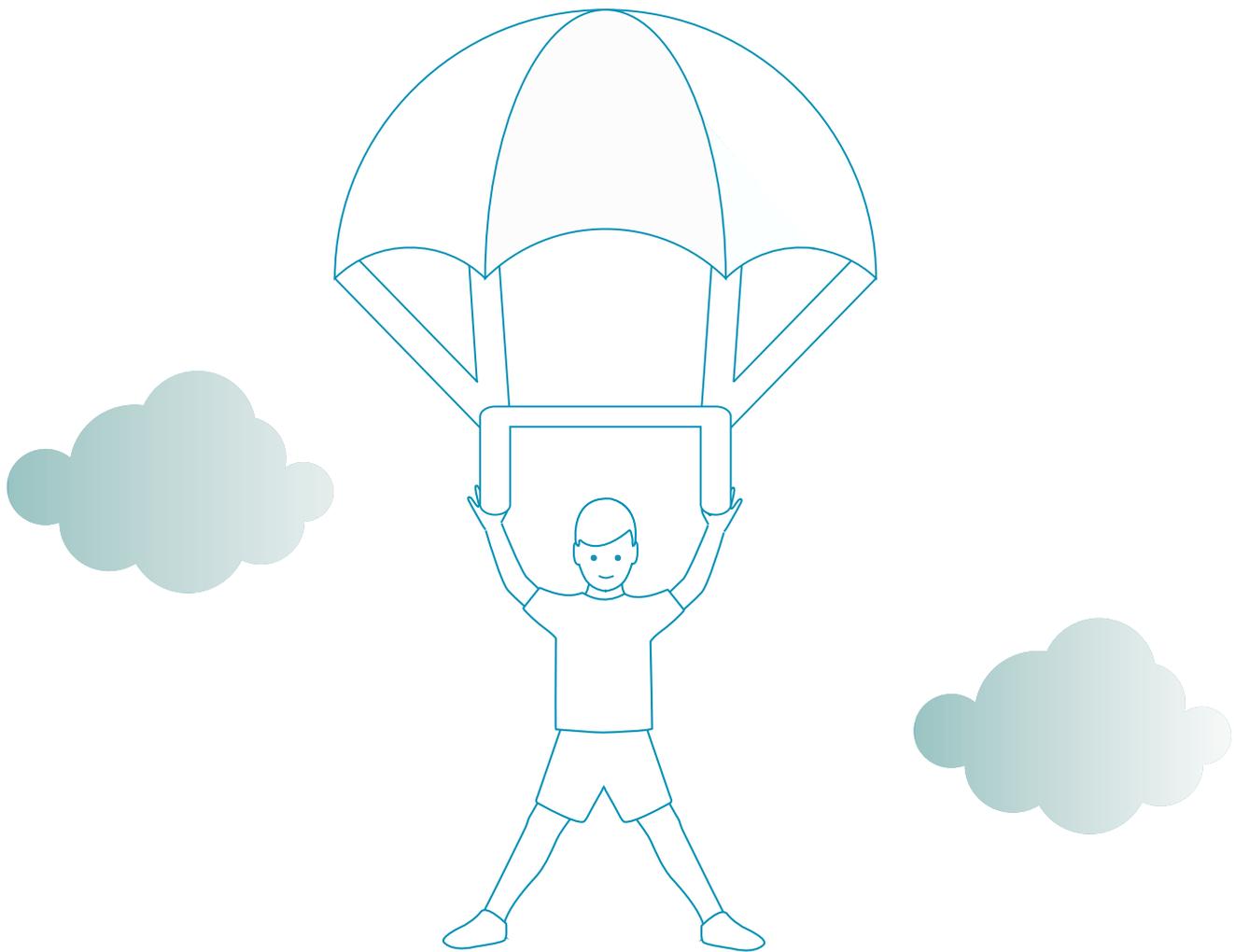
Think of a time when you were using your whole body and feeling fantastic. Perhaps you were swimming or running or actively engaged in sport. Draw your body feeling great and moving mindfully and write some of the feelings you felt as you moved and engaged.



Drop Down: Mind – Body Connect.



One of the ways in which we can manage our emotions is to mindfully drop down, out of our heads and begin to pay attention to the sensations in our bodies. Our bodies are multi-sensory and provide us with so much 'moment to moment' information. Write and draw about a time when you felt that your senses were fully alive. What were you doing and how did you feel?



Looking After Worry and Anxiety

This second section, Looking After Worry and Anxiety, contains three specific mindfulness topics to progress through with your child to assist them to turn towards the positive, especially in times of challenge:



3 topics

- Handling Unhelpful Thoughts
- Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body
- Bouncing Back



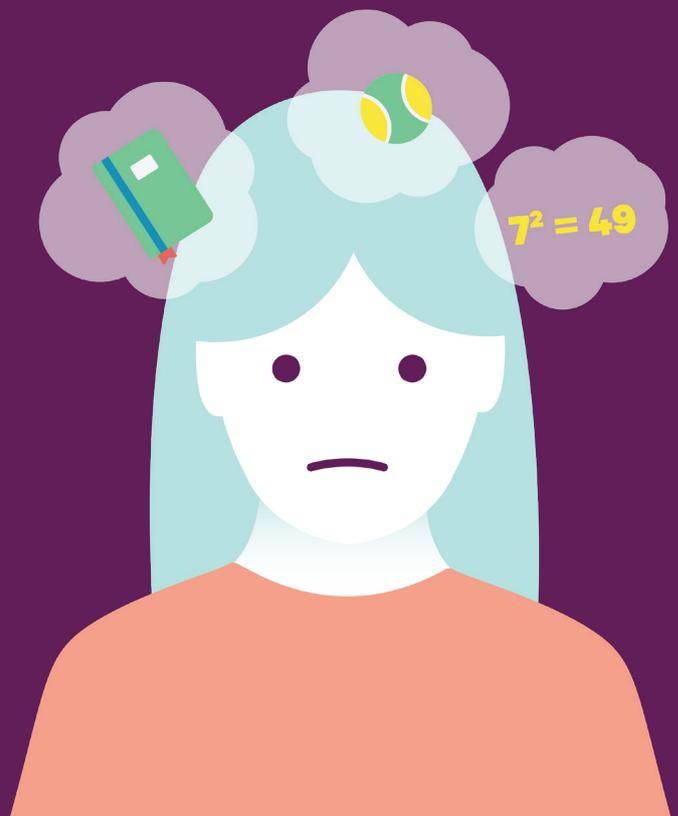
3 meditations



6 activities

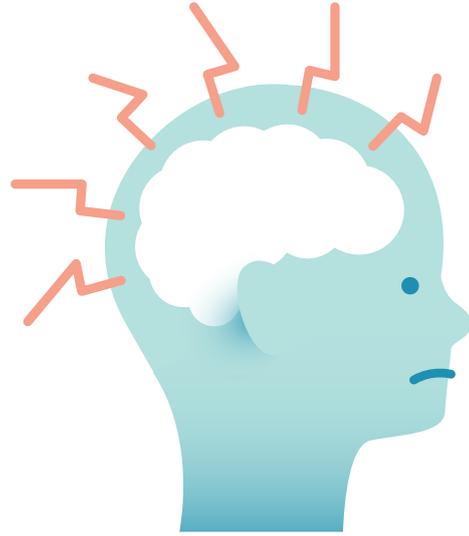
We invite you to practise the following meditations with your child as a way of cultivating the ability to turn towards one's own experiences with care and kindness. Doing this together, and discussing the experience, is especially important if your child is struggling. Children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others and you as their parent, carer or teacher have a vital role to play.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to manage anxious feelings. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to complete. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



Handling Unhelpful Thoughts

Acknowledging that feeling fearful and anxious at a time such as this is not only normal but appropriate. Given the nature of the threat we are facing, fear and anxiety are adaptive responses as they alert us to the fact that we need to be taking appropriate action to keep ourselves and others as safe and healthy as possible. It's also important to recognise that fear and anxiety can quickly escalate and reach a tipping point beyond which they are no longer particularly helpful and can affect our thinking in negative ways.



When the acute stress response is activated we're less able to think clearly or make good decisions. We become more reactive and less responsive. Our thinking can quickly spiral, becoming increasingly negative and unhelpful and difficult to unhook from.

Mindfulness helps us get better at recognising and understanding our own personal signals that tell us we're close to our tipping point. It gives us the opportunity to respond by taking steps to settle and soothe our nervous system which in turn enables us to think more clearly, make better decisions and respond as opposed to react.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 208 – Self Compassion
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/33/154/154/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Out With The Tide

This activity encourages you to consider the outgoing tide as a metaphor for letting unhelpful thoughts go so that you can continue on with your day with mindful awareness.

Unhelpful Thoughts Unhooked

Using a natural concept such as passing clouds, you are encouraged to let unhelpful thoughts pass by. This activity encourages non-attachment to worries so that you can get on with the rest of your day mindfully.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do you try to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have happened in the past?

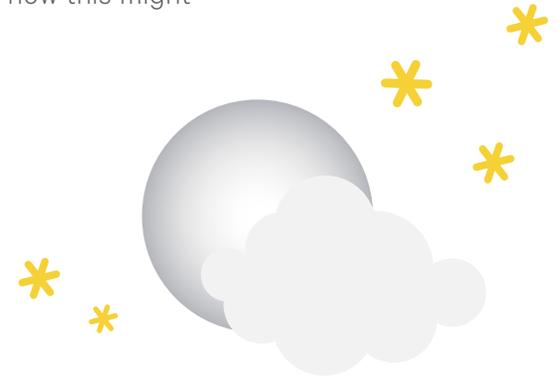
How do you try to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have not happened yet and might not even happen?

When we experience thoughts and feelings that upset us, what can we do to gently move them on so we can get back to what we were doing?

Out With The Tide



Have you ever been to the beach and noticed that the tide is going out? As the sand becomes more exposed, the water calmly heads back out to the deep ocean. Changing tides are governed by the moon as she uses her gravitational pull twice a day, every day. Imagine being able to drop unhelpful thoughts into the ocean and let the moon take care of the rest? Write and draw how this might help on days when worries are playing on our minds.



Unhelpful Thoughts Unhooked



Sometimes we can find ourselves very attached to unhelpful thoughts. Allowing them to pass you by takes practice but is worth it. Imagine them as clouds and let them go, floating away in a blue sky. Write and draw how this might help you to engage with life here and now.



Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body

Humans have worried for millennia. Our brains have evolved over thousands of years, tossing thoughts, ideas, worries and emotions around, sometimes all at the same time! Worries are often about the future and how it might unfold for us. Sometimes these worries become more deeply seeded and are harder to ignore. Mindfulness can help with this. It helps us get better at noticing where our attention is and choosing where we would like it to be.



For many children, worries manifest in their bodies. For example, a tummy ache can be an indicator that children are worried about something. They may not have the language to fully express what is on their minds, but unpleasant, felt sensations in the body can be a sign. Feeling anxious for much of the time can be very tiring and lead to poor sleep. Mindfulness is a way to regularly tune in and become aware of how thoughts and emotions are impacting us physically.

As parents, carers and teachers, we can model this by focusing our own attention on the present moment and not allowing ourselves to be drawn into unhelpful thinking. Through gentle conversations, children can be warmly encouraged to share their worries with a trusted adult rather than carry them alone. A conversation with a caring adult can help them to make sense of their worries and then let them go, knowing an adult is there as a source of support and reassurance.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: My Internal Weather

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 106 – Thoughts & Feelings
- My Internal Weather

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/23/141/141/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Caught in a Storm

This activity acknowledges that we can all experience an emotional storm of thoughts and feelings and it can be helpful to have some strategies in our tool-kits in readiness for these times. Remember, the storm will always pass.

My Internal Weather Report

Using weather as a metaphor, this activity encourages you to match up your emotions to weather words and make connections between the two. This activity can help build your wellbeing literacy.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do things feel in your body when you are very worried and experiencing uncertainty?

Who and what can help you when persistent worries won't easily dissolve and move on?

How does it feel when you share your worries with a trusted adult and you can begin to engage with the present moment?

Caught in a Storm

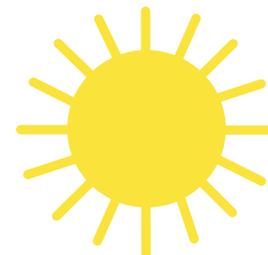
Imagine being caught in a sudden storm. What is happening around you? How are you feeling and what might you do? This can happen inside our bodies from time to time. Draw an 'inside' storm approaching and write a list of things you might do to weather the storm and turn towards the sun once it passes. Write some emotions words for both the storm and the sun coming out again..



My Internal Weather Report



When things are not going well, it can feel quite stormy on the inside. When things are going well, we can feel full of sunshine. Our internal weather report gives us important information about our emotions. Make a list of emotions you feel from time to time and match them up with weather words. Illustrate your list.



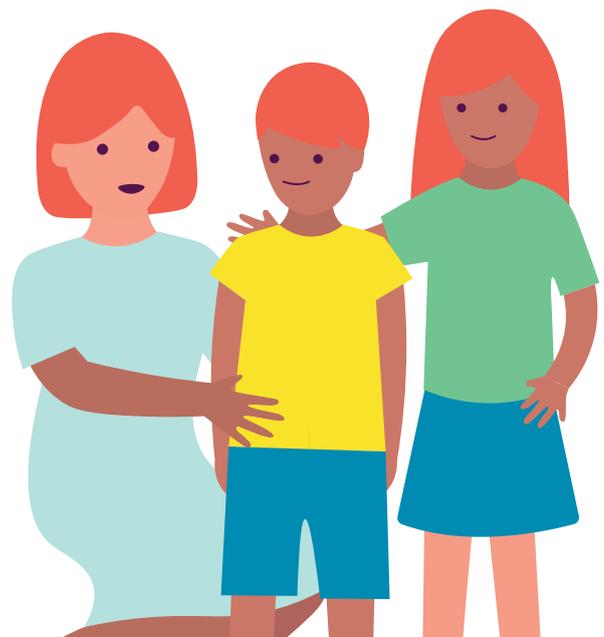
Bouncing Back

Resilience is the ability to bounce back when we experience challenges or things don't go the way we planned. Resilient people find ways to cope when life gets tricky and uncertain. As adults, we already know that life is full of ups and downs and the importance of having tools to manage this. Children need help to develop resilience, especially in the midst of so much uncertainty and stress. Mindfulness is one such valuable tool that we can use to build resilience, lower stress and support our wellbeing.



Mindfulness is especially important when we experience setbacks and failures. Having things go in unexpected or undesirable ways can be a learning opportunity. It is in these moments that we can let go of old ways of doing things and find new ways to overcome challenges. Mindful awareness of the present moment helps us do this by enabling us to assess challenges calmly and with a clear head. When children see adults doing this, it can be a powerful learning experience.

Positive self-talk at these times can also help, and we can model this behaviour to children. When we tell ourselves that we'll be okay, that we are strong enough to deal with a situation and that there are better times ahead, we begin to build positive patterns of thinking that strengthen with practice. This positive process allows our minds to think more flexibly and creatively providing access to a broader range of possible strategies and solutions.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Letting Go of the Day.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Families
- After School
- Letting Go of the Day

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/483/1377/2809/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Up and Down Days

Activating positive self-talk, especially when we are finding things challenging is an important skill. You can build a supply of affirming words and ideas in this activity to assist you when your internal voice is unhelpful.

'You've Got This' Letter

This letter writing activity encourages you to write a supportive letter to yourself for a time in the future when you might need a boost. This letter is not for anyone else and can be stored away until needed.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do people you admire and look up to after a challenge so that they can keep going?

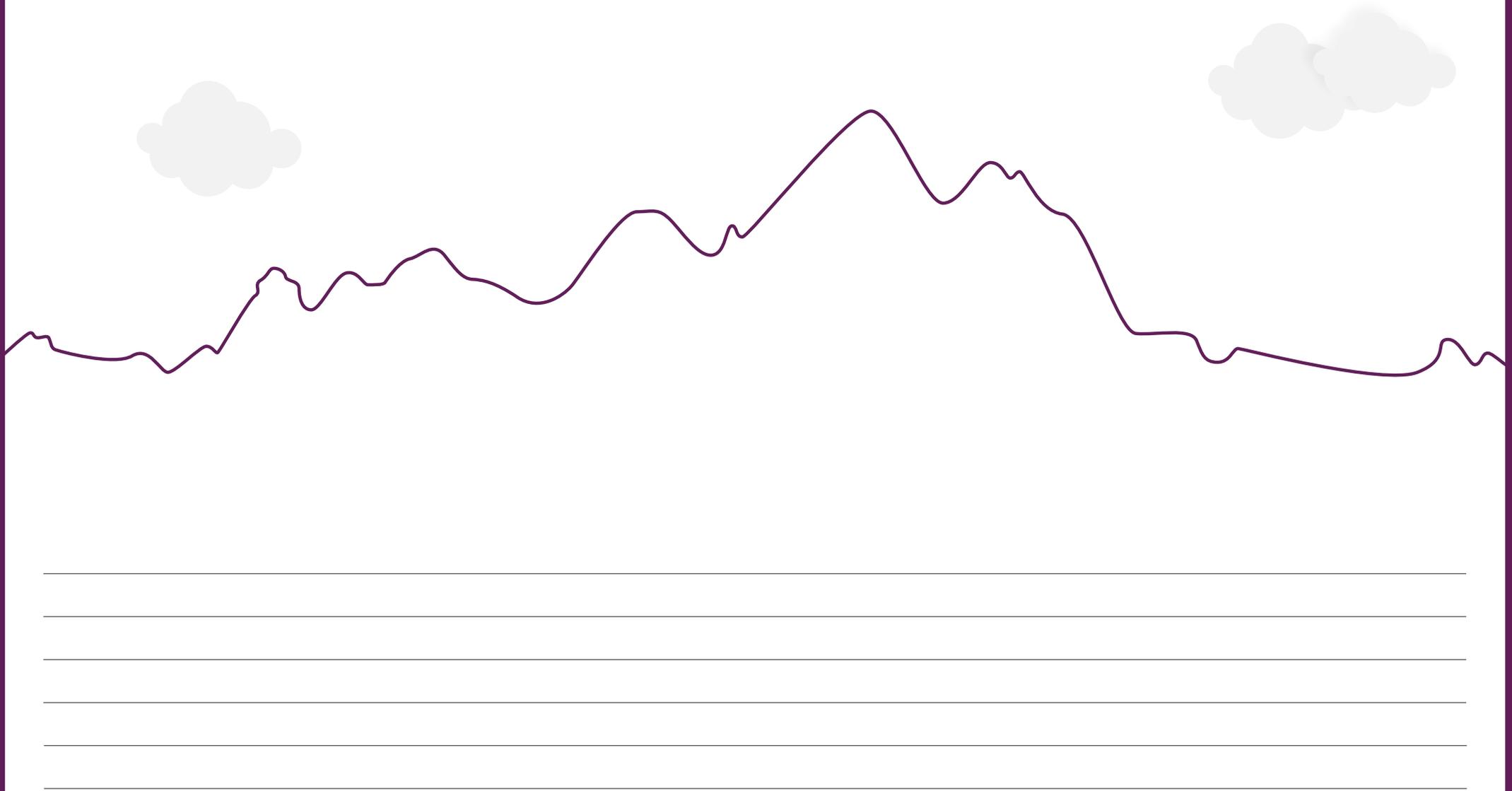
Can you remember a time when things have been hard and you have learned an important lesson through the experience? (if you can share a childhood experience of your own, this can be very helpful)

When your day is a bit up and down, what do you like to do to stay positive and keep going?

Up and Down Days



Life is full of ups and downs. When we tell ourselves that we are strong enough to deal with a difficult situation and there are better times ahead, we begin to open the door to ideas that help us to see more clearly. Write and draw what you like to say and do when things feel cloudy.



Focusing on the Positives

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This third module, Focusing on the Positives, contains three specific mindfulness topics to progress through with your child to assist them to turn towards the positive, especially in times of challenge:



3 topics

- Gratitude and Savouring
- Choosing Optimism
- Growth Mindset



3 meditations



6 activities

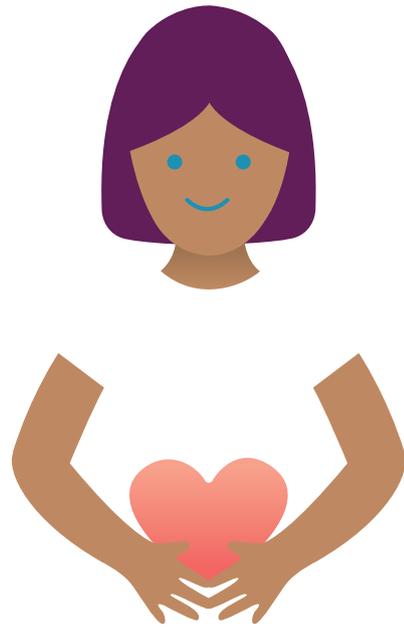
Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. Doing this together, and holding further discussions of your experience, is especially important because children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to focus on the positives. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to engage with. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



Gratitude and Savouring

Taking in the good doesn't always come naturally. The human brain is wired like velcro for negative experiences and teflon (non-stick) for positive (that negativity bias again!). The stickiness of negative experiences was adaptive and has helped ensure our survival as a species. However, we no longer need to be on the constant look out for threats and danger, yet the hardwiring of our brains remains the same.



Gratitude is being thankful for the good things in our lives. When we appreciate people, places and experiences, we begin to pay more attention to what brings us joy.

Savouring is all about deliberately focusing on enjoyable experiences by tuning into them mindfully and with appreciation. We can savour looking forward to a special experience, as it is unfolding in the moment, or later as we recall it in our minds.

Cultivating gratitude and savouring are ways to velcro the positive. They can serve as an antidote to the natural tendency to take the positives in our lives for granted, and are essential elements of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to train our ability to focus on one thing at a time. This present moment awareness is a way to tune into our minds and bodies and become more aware of positive experiences in our lives. When we focus on feeling grateful, our bodies may fill with warm and happy emotions. Areas of the brain associated with connection and building relationships are activated. Savouring helps us to take in and really absorb the positive details of an experience.

As care-givers, we can model this by focusing our own attention on the positives in our lives. When we are grateful, feelings of joy can increase both within us, and in our immediate environment.

Children can be gently encouraged to practise gratitude and savouring on a daily basis. As they do this, they begin to take in the good and notice the little moments of joy that can be easy to miss.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Gratitude

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 207 – Gratitude
- Gratitude

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/32/173/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Creating A Chain Of Gratitude

Once we begin to turn our attention to being thankful, we begin to see many examples. This activity encourages you to tune into the good.

The Savouring Jar

Developing an ability to savour experiences creates both positive emotions and happy memories. This activity encourages you to keep a record of the many good moments in each week. These can be taken out and read whenever you feel like it.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Tell me about a recent time when you really looked forward to something. What did that feel like?

How can we make sure we notice the many little moments in each day that make us feel good?

How might keeping a record of moments of gratitude in life be useful for our wellbeing?

Creating A Chain Of Gratitude.



Gratitude is a social emotion that builds relationships. With your family, begin a chain of gratitude. Using these coloured strips, invite your family to write and draw some things you feel grateful for and then make a chain of gratitude. You will need a glue stick to join each loop. You can add to your chain each week. Add colour and hang it up where all can enjoy it.

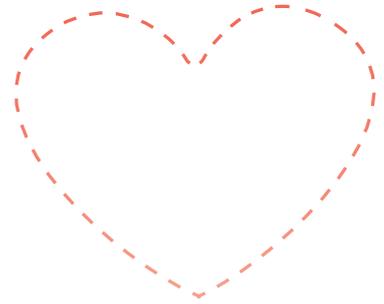
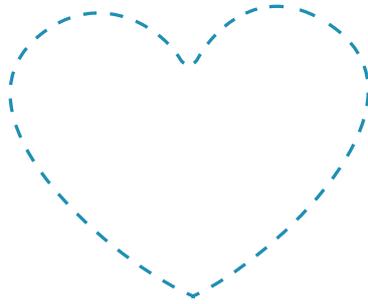
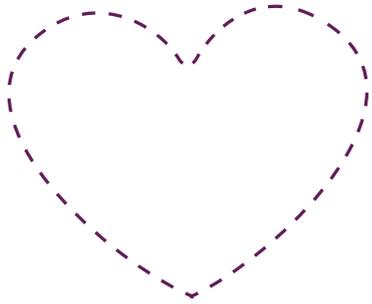
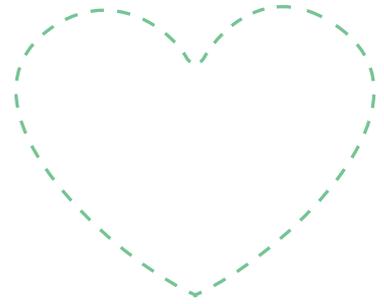
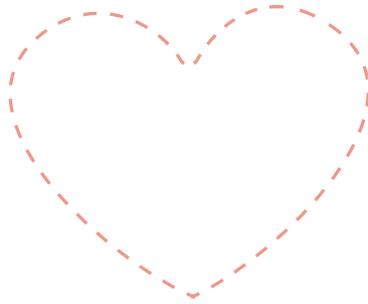
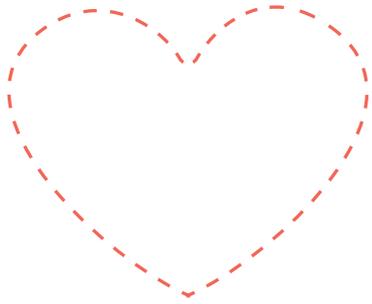
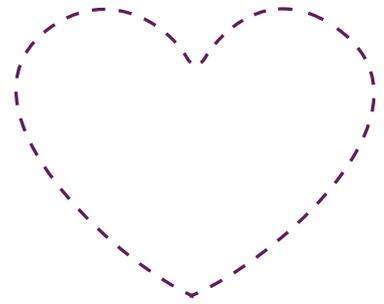
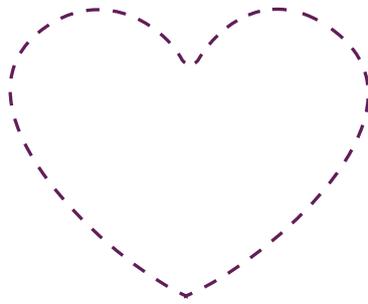


A series of seven horizontal rectangular boxes, each outlined with a dashed line. The boxes are arranged vertically and are intended for writing and drawing. The colors of the dashed lines are: red (top), red, yellow, blue, purple, purple, and green (bottom).

The Savouring Jar.



When something happens that brings you positive emotion and joy, write and draw it on a heart shape. Cut out the hearts and find a small jar with a lid. Decorate your jar with art/craft materials and label it. Each completed heart can be folded and popped inside. Later, when you are wanting to savour, just get your jar out and enjoy a second boost of positive emotion as you read each little heart.



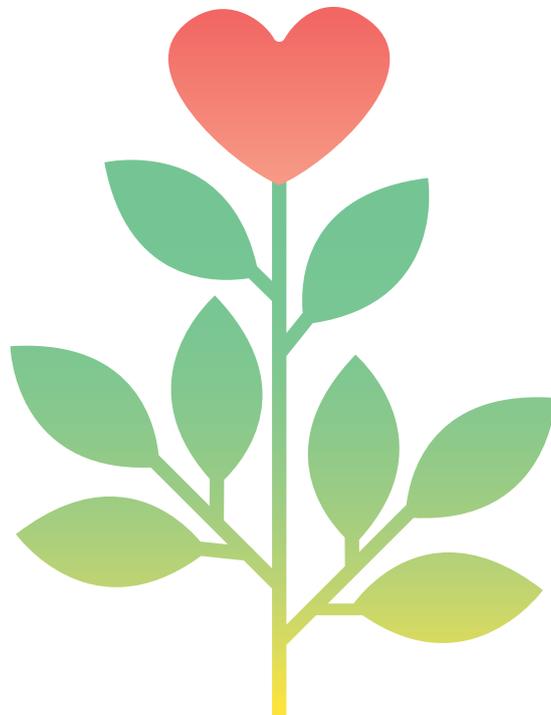
Choosing Optimism

—

When we think optimistically, we feel hopeful and confident and often positively place ourselves in the future. Optimism is a future minded emotion that assists us to build a positive perspective about something that is yet to happen, even when we face challenges.



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Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Catching Butterflies

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Classroom
- Primary Year 5 – The Mindfulness Curriculum
- Lesson 9 – Optimism
- PRACTISE – Catching Butterflies 5

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/308/738/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Flip Side Optimism

Things don't always go our way – and that is okay! Even when things do not go well for us, there are lessons to be learnt and ways to manage our emotions so that solutions can be found.

Optimistic Self-Talk

Speaking to ourselves as we would to a good friend is especially important when we experience challenges. This activity encourages you to reflect, practise positive and open hearted self talk, and hopefully lead you to solution focused thinking.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How can we be our own best friend when things are not going so well for us?

When we think optimistically what happens to our ability to come up with solutions?

When things get really challenging in life, what do you like to say to yourself to be supportive and positive?

Flip Side Optimism.



Can you think of a recent time when things did not go your way but turned out okay in the end? What happened and how did you turn things around? Optimistic people can flip their thinking to the positive and find workable solutions. Write and draw about a time when you were able to do this. Add thoughts and emotions to your drawing.

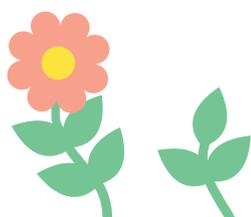


Optimistic Self-Talk.



Can you think of a time when you were dreading something and it all turned out okay? Perhaps you had a big test to complete, had to give a presentation to the class or maybe you were going on a challenging school camp and felt worried. When things turn out better than we expected, we learn to think more optimistically for next time. Fill out the chart below adding positive and optimistic self-talk for each event.

| The event I dreaded | How it all turned out | My optimistic self-talk for next time |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |



Growth Mindset

Growth Mindset is the belief that with effort, we can train our brains to grow and develop. Our brains are neuroplastic – able to develop and change across our lifespans. The more we challenge our brains, the more neural connections we make, leading to a smarter and stronger brain. Growth mindset helps create a love of learning and a resilience that supports positive development and wellbeing, and is an essential element of mindfulness.

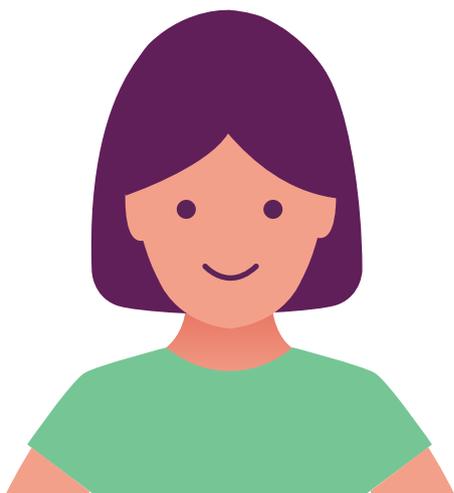


When we practise mindfulness, we create much needed space within our minds to learn and grow. Combining mindfulness and growth mindset helps us to be open to possibilities and challenges. It enables us to cultivate what's referred to as a 'beginner's mind', a mind that is willing to see everything as if it was for the first time and is completely available to the moment. Think of a scientist making a new discovery, or a child examining a new insect or playing in puddles for the first time.

Focusing on what we don't know or can't do can become an unhelpful pattern of thinking. We may also find it challenging to do things in a new way. We call this a fixed mindset. Building a growth mindset does the opposite, expanding our awareness to how we can try things out and improve through learning, even if we make mistakes along the way.

We can model a growth mindset by focusing our own attention on the possibilities for growth and development in our own lives. When we demonstrate that we are able to learn from our mistakes and challenges, we show the children in our care that giving up is not productive and things improve with effort and persistence. A key attitude to model is to always aim to do our best.

Children can be gently encouraged to have an open mind on a daily basis. As they do this, they are more likely to persist and believe in themselves. Cultivating a growth mindset begins with mindfulness as we pay attention to the present moment with curiosity, tuning in to all it has to offer us.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Rock the Boat

There are boat-building instructions
in the Origami Mindfulness Activity.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- Activity – Rock the Boat

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/18/127/1195/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets on the
following pages:

Origami Mindfulness

Origami takes perseverance and time. This activity encourages you to carefully and mindfully work through a series of steps and keep going even when it gets tricky. You can do it!

Open Mind, Open Heart

When we support ourselves to stay with a task and keep a growth mindset, challenges are less overwhelming. This activity encourages you to develop some 'go-to' phrases when challenged.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

What can we say inside our heads when things are getting difficult and we feel like giving up?

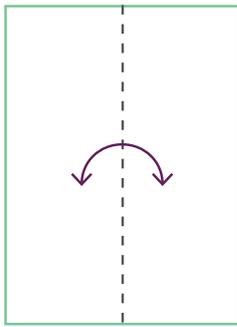
How do we stay with challenging tasks?

When was a recent time when you were able to encourage yourself through something difficult?

Origami Mindfulness.

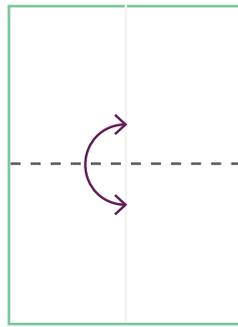


Have you ever tried making origami? Origami is a wonderful growth mindset activity. You will need an A4 piece of paper to make this little boat shaped origami and practise until it is just right. Origami takes time and practice. Then do the Rock The Boat meditation. Make more little boats of different sizes together and see if they can float in water!



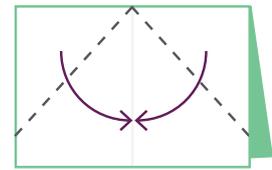
1.

Fold in half



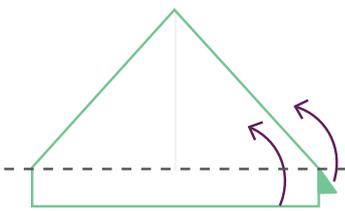
2.

Fold in half again



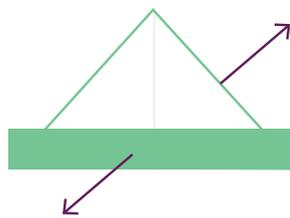
3.

Fold in corners



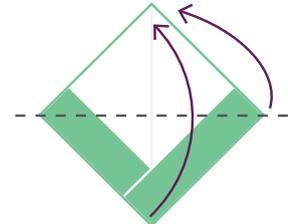
4.

Fold up edges on both sides



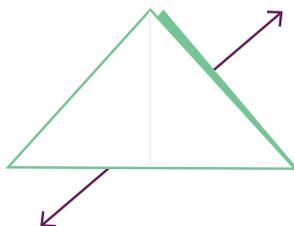
5.

Pull the sides out and flatten



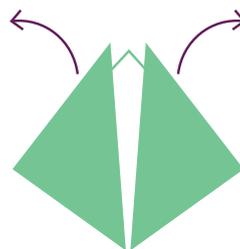
6.

Fold front and back layers up



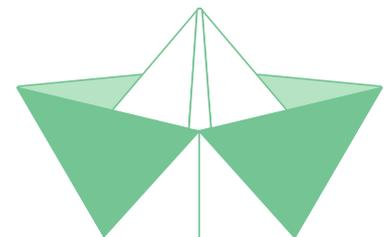
4.

Pull sides apart and flatten



5.

Pull top flaps outwards



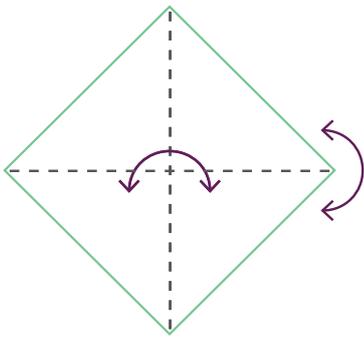
6.

Squish the bottom and pull the sides up. Tada!

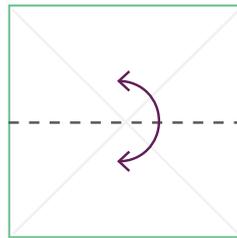
Open Mind, Open Heart.



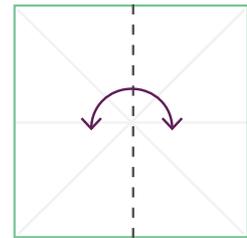
Think of recent times when you have done your very best and felt proud of your efforts even when the 'going got tough'. Make an origami heart envelope using a square piece of paper. Reflect on how it feels to try hard and keep going even when things are tough. On little squares, write some encouraging self-talk you say to yourself and pop them inside your heart.



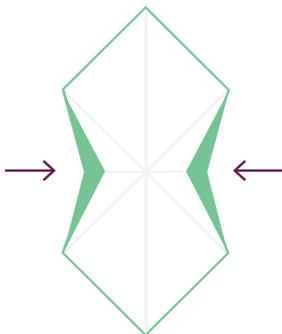
1.
Fold in half in both directions



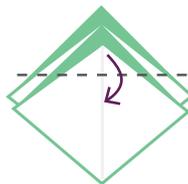
2.
Fold in half horizontally



3.
Fold in half vertically



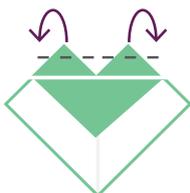
4.
Pinch corners inwards



5.
Fold the first top flap downwards on both sides



6.
Fold the inside corners down



4.
Fold the top edges down



5.
Fold side edges inwards



6.
Tada! You did it!



Smiling Mind

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Smiling Mind is a not-for-profit organisation that works to make mindfulness meditation accessible to all.

Visit us online or download the free app to get started.

