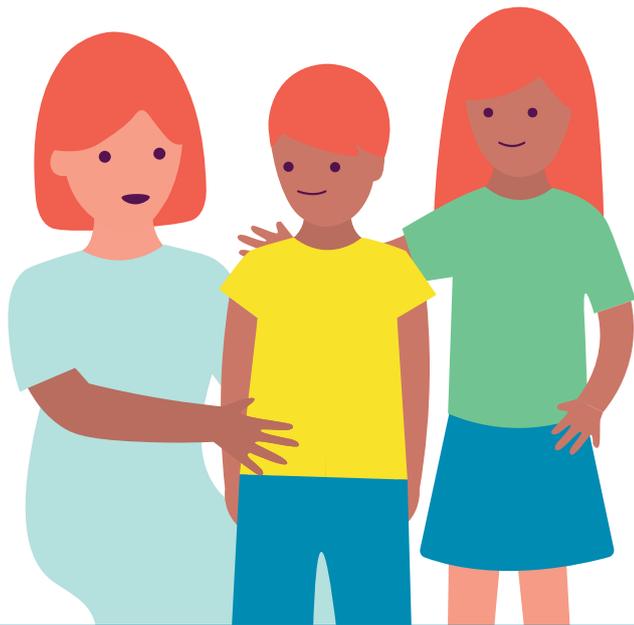


Supporting Children aged 8–10 years' Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness.



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:

Children are developing abstract thinking and are better able to think about how adverse events will affect them. Children become focused on areas of interest so it can be difficult for them if they are restricted from engaging in activities they enjoy. Children become more conscious of their capability so difficulties keeping up with school work can be frustrating.

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:

Discuss your child's challenges with them in a 'matter of fact' way, using simple and easy-to-understand language. Provide as much support as possible to enable children to keep up with schoolwork (of course this isn't always easy when homeschooling). Try 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. These include:



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 8–10 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: Daily Mindfulness Guide.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 103 – Awareness and Sounds
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – 5 Minutes

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/4/3/3/>



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

How am I feeling in this moment

This activity is all about bringing awareness to how feelings show up inside us each and every day.

I can see clearly now, the rain has gone

This activity will explore the concept of internal weather. Remember that your emotional storm clouds will pass and the sun comes out again.



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 ask yourself "how am I feeling right now?"

How do you experience the mind and the body communicating with one another?

How am I feeling in this moment?

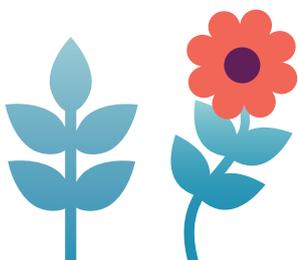


When we are fully aware, we are less caught up in our thoughts and more connected to where we are and what we are doing. Draw yourself during a recent time when your whole body felt alive and in the present moment. Draw what you were doing and write about how you felt.

I can see clearly now, the rain has gone.

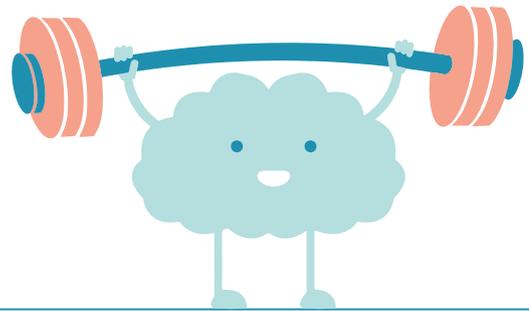


When our minds are full of difficult emotions and worries it can feel cloudy, even stormy. It can be very hard to be aware of the present moment. Create a landscape and place yourself within it, feeling focused and aware. Write words and phrases around the landscape describing how it feels to be fully in the moment.



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 hardwired 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
– Body Scan.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 201 – Curiosity
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Body Scan

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/10/150/>



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

Coming back to the present moment

This activity is great for identifying and exploring some ways in which you can return to the present moment.

The Present Moment

Mindful walking as a way to pay attention to the present moment. This activity introduces the concept and encourages you to reflect on what helps you pay attention to the present moment.

Shining A Torch

This activity is about considering the link between a torch beam and attention, it helps you to think about how to be fully attentive.



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

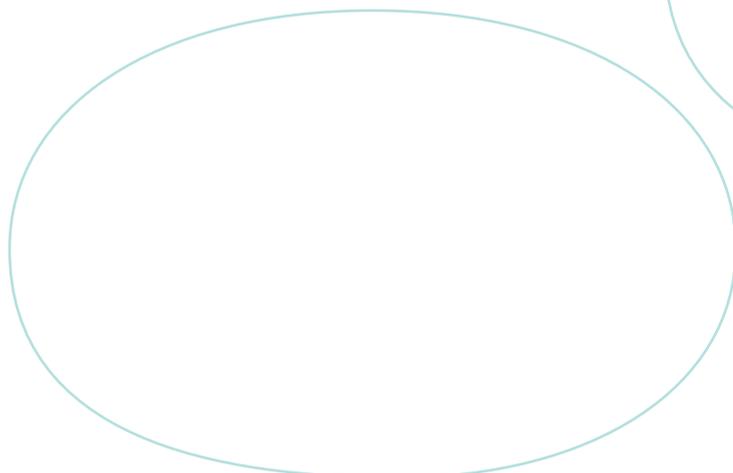
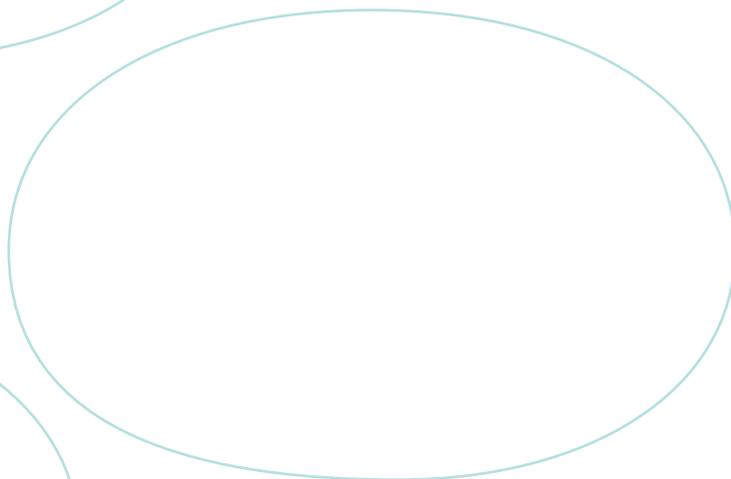
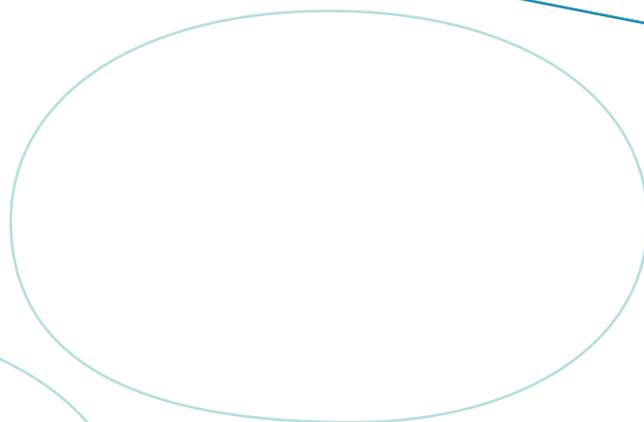
What really works for you when it is time to pay attention very closely?

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

What is the best thing about really deep breaths for you?

Coming back to the present moment.

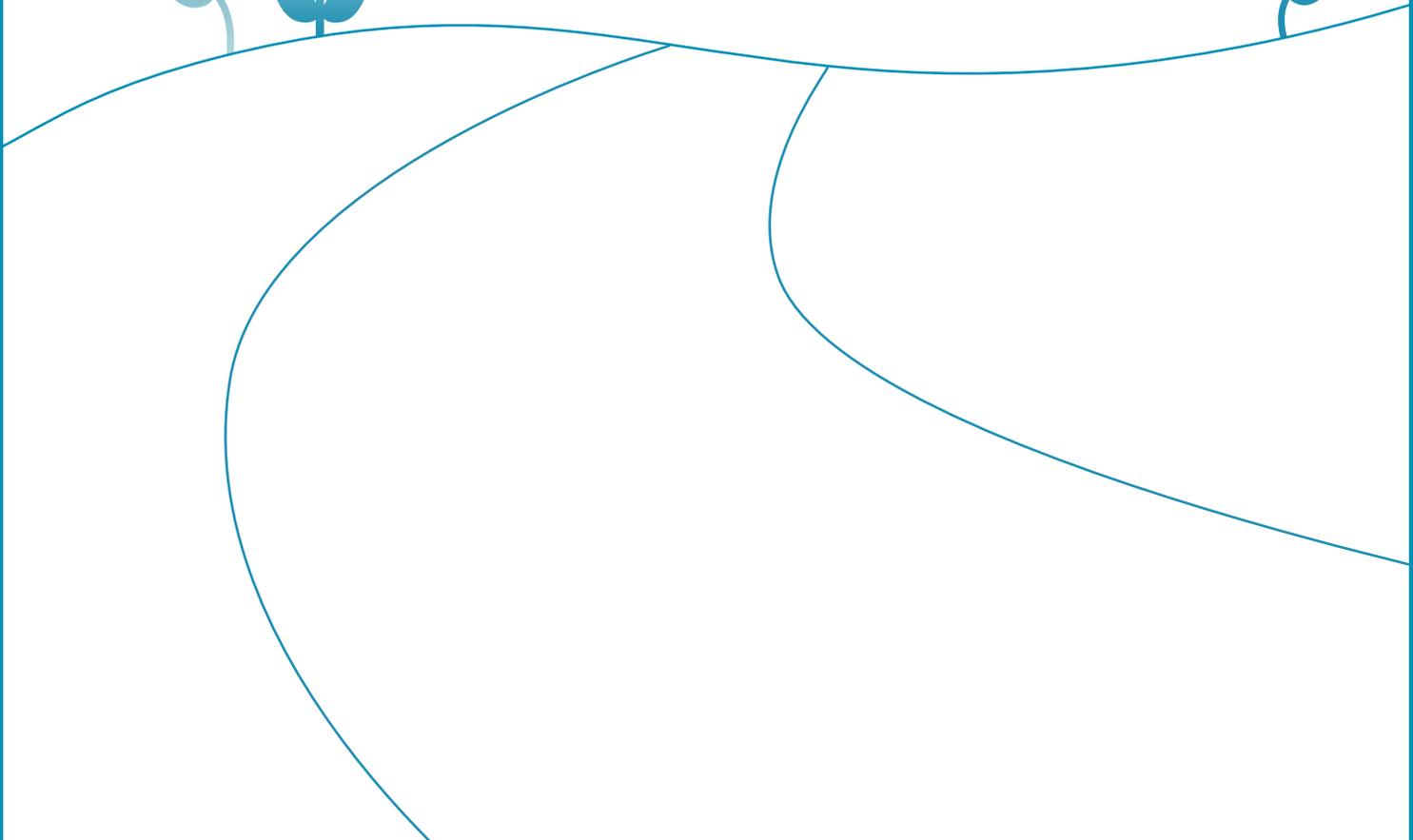
Remember a time you got distracted and forgot where you were and what you were doing. This can happen easily to us all. Write and draw what you do to come back to the present moment, when your mind wanders away.



The Present Moment.



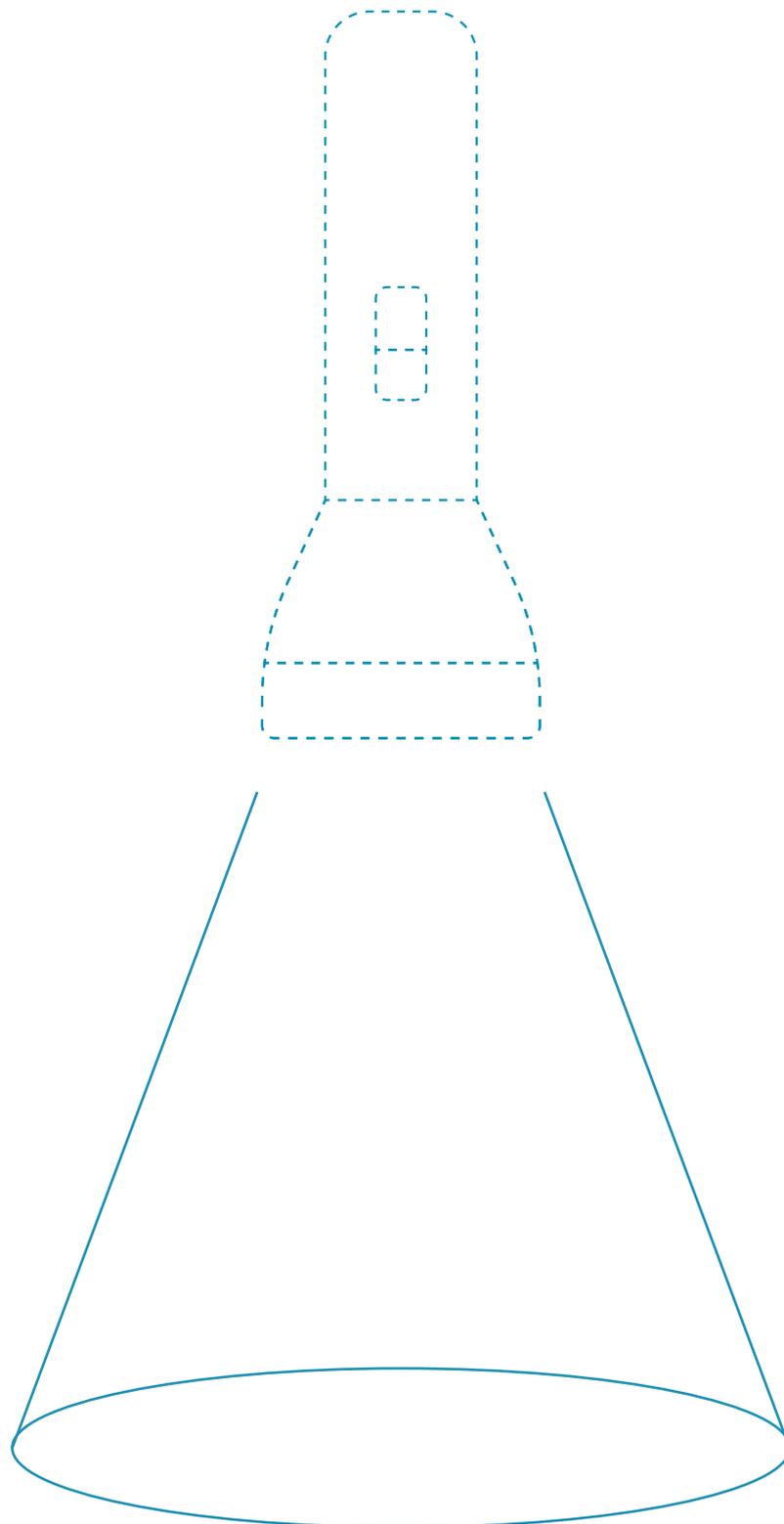
When our mind wanders, we can find ourselves a long way from the present moment. Draw yourself on a wandering walk and reflect on what signs in your mind and body help you to pay attention and return to the here and now.



Shining a Torch.

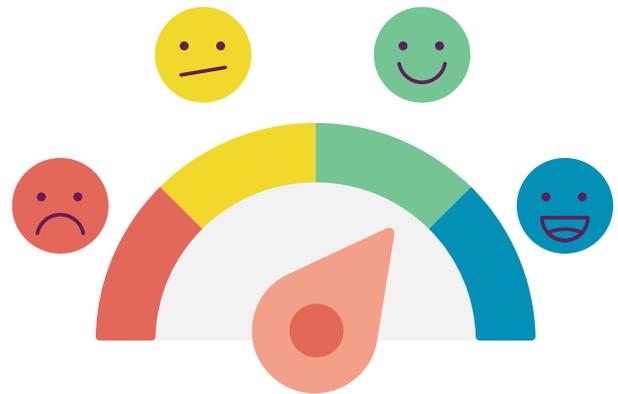


When we shine a torch, we can see something clearly. Draw a magical torch and shine it on the present moment. Draw yourself in the torch beam and write some words in the beam of light to describe how it feels to be in the present moment, fully attending to what you are doing.



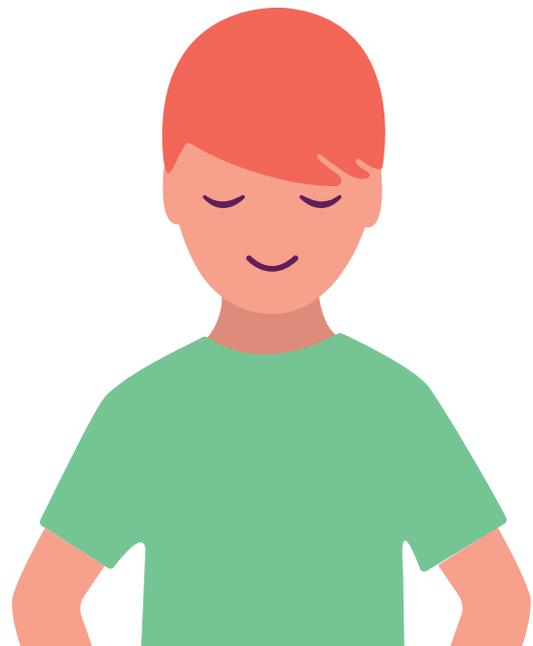
Recognising and Managing Our Emotions

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 – Breath & Sounds

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 208 – Self Compassion
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/17/154/154/>



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

Our Internal Weather

This activity encourages you to consider thinking about your emotions as weather, sometimes sunny, sometimes stormy and cloudy. Remember, the weather will always change, and after the rain comes the sun.

Many Emotions

This activity is about reflecting on the emotions you felt today. Have a go at naming and describing them, this can be helpful in building your emotional vocabulary.



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

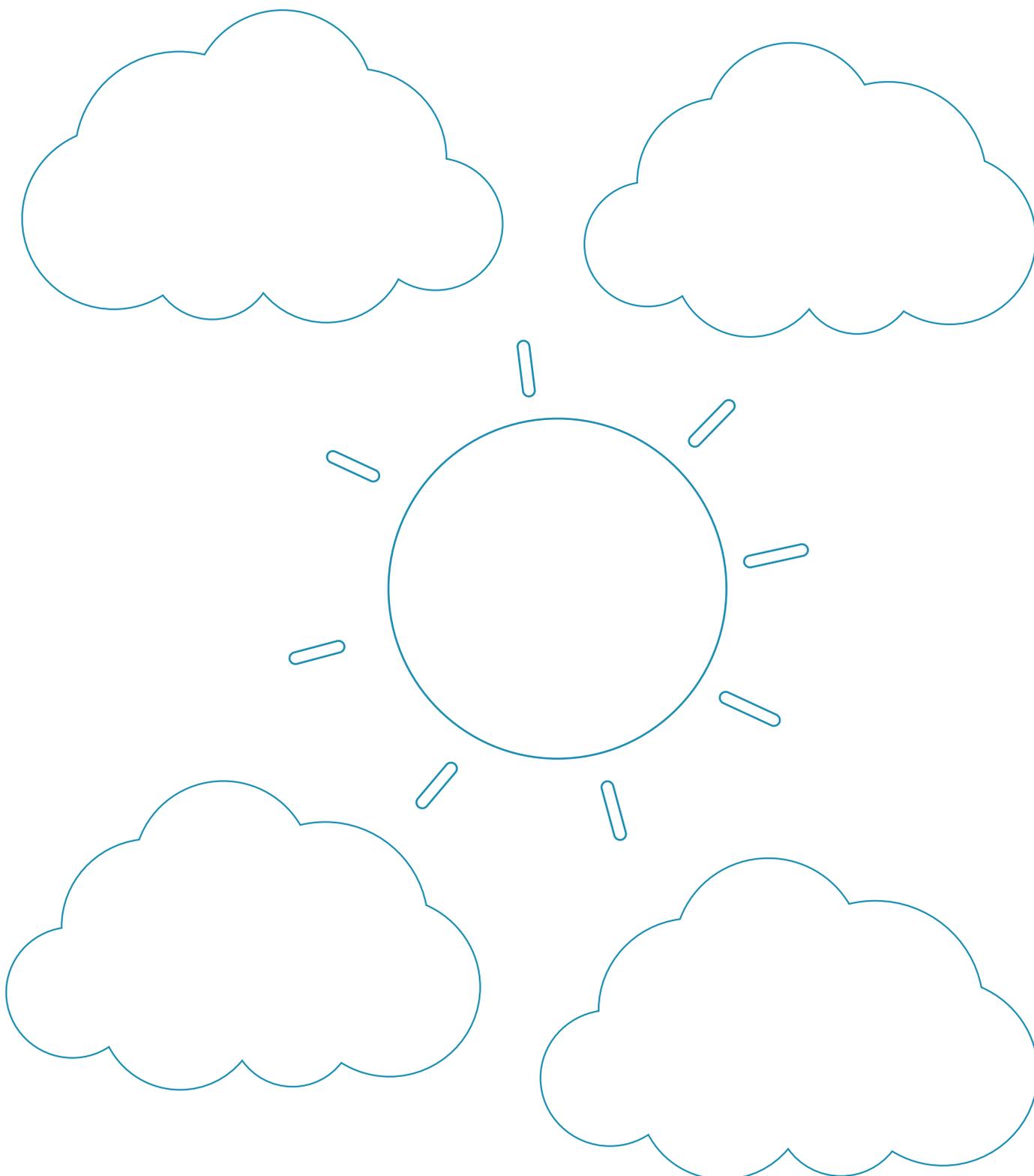
Can you think of a recent time when you felt many feelings and emotions all at once? I would love you to share with me what that felt like.

Do you ever think about all the feelings you have inside you? Where might they live in your body?

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

Many Emotions.

Emotions turn up in our minds and our bodies every day. Some are like warm, sunny weather; others can feel more like cold, stormy weather. We can notice and name them. Draw four emotions you have felt today. Can you name them and write about them?



The Senses

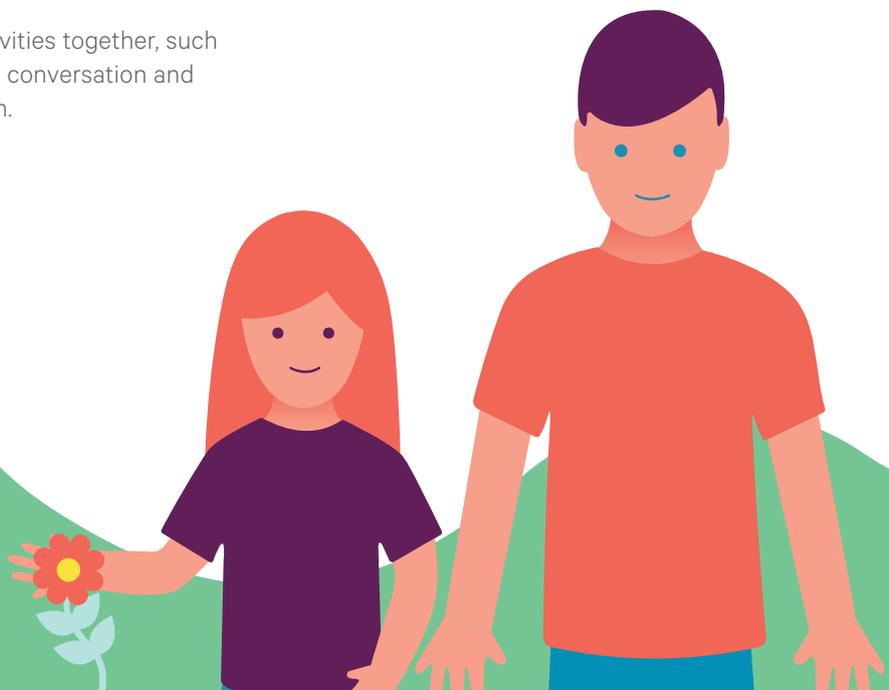
We have five primary senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Our senses are the way in which we interact with the world and learn about what is happening around us. Mindfulness gives us a pathway back to the present moment through our senses. For the children in our care, the senses are a wonderful 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 – 5 Minutes.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 104 – The Senses
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – 5 Minutes

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/5/3/3/>



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

Seeing and Sensing

This activity encourages you to imagine being at the beach and tap into the range of sensory experiences there.

Musical Sensing Journey

With the help of an adult, select a piece of music for this activity. It encourages you to activate your sense of hearing and consider how sound influences your emotions.



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

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

Tell me about a recent time when your senses really showed up all at once?

When we are very quiet and calm, what might our senses be doing?

Seeing and Sensing.



Going to the beach switches on our senses. They come alive as the waves roll in. Imagine you are at the beach. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste? Write and draw about all that you sense at the beach.



Musical Sensing Journey.



Draw yourself in this photo frame doing something that switches on your five senses. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?



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 mindful movement. Think about the connections between movement and feeling engaged.

Mind – Body Connect

This activity gently introduces the concept of feeling disconnected from our bodies at times, especially when we have a busy mind. It encourages you to imagine a totally connected mind and body.



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?

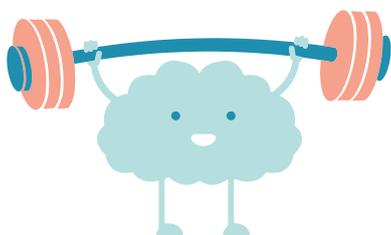
How do you feel in your mind when you are very active and moving your body freely?

Do you ever wonder how your body just knows so much about how to help you in every moment?

Moving Mindfully.



Think of a time when you were using your whole body and feeling fantastic. Perhaps you were swimming or running or participating in a sports match. Draw yourself feeling great, moving mindfully and in the zone. Write some of the feelings you felt at the time.



Mind-body Connect.



Sometimes we get so busy inside our heads, we forget that our bodies are attached. Have you ever felt this way? Draw yourself at a time when your head and body are working in partnership. What are you doing and how are you feeling? Think of some emotion words to add to your drawing.



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

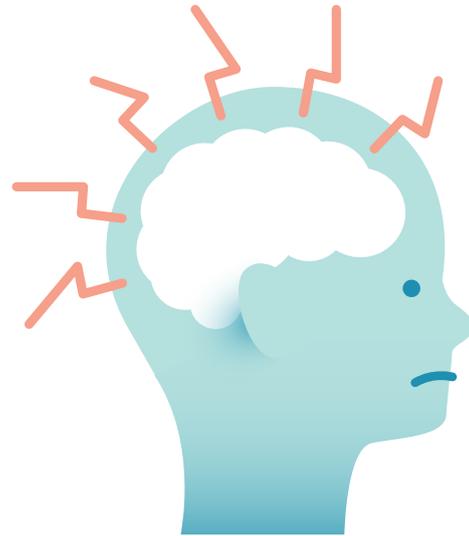
We invite you to practise the following meditations with your child as a way of cultivating the ability to turn towards one's own experiences with care and kindness. Doing this together, and discussing the experience, is especially important if your child is struggling. Children thrive on caring and 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: The Wish Tree.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 107 – A Wish For Me
- The Wish Tree

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/24/144/144/>



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

My Magical Climbing Tree

Imagining the strength and stability of a tree in this activity assists you to think about being like a tree when feeling impacted by unhelpful thoughts and negative emotions.

Float Away

This activity gives children an opportunity to explore the concept of a leaf floating past as a useful strategy for letting worries go once they have acknowledged them.



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

How can we help each other to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have happened in the past?

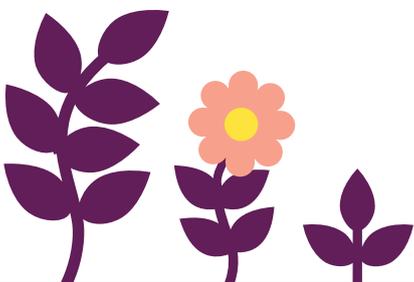
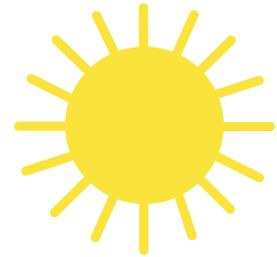
How can we help each other to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have not happened yet and might not even happen?

When we think of thoughts and feelings that upset us, what are some great ways you help them to gently move on so you can get back to what you were doing?

My Magical Climbing Tree



Have you ever climbed a tree? Trees can feel so strong and stable as they hold us. Imagine an old and majestic tree filled with beautiful leaves and colourful birds. Draw your beautiful tree, fill it with colour and joy. Write about what you wish for as you sit up in your tree, calmly feeling its strength and stability.



Float Away.



Imagine sitting beside a beautiful creek. The sun is shining, the birds are singing and the cool fresh water is flowing past you gently and calmly. Pop any worries you may have on leaves that are floating past and just let them go. Draw and write what you are imagining right now. If you'd like to, draw the leaves and write the worry words on them that you are letting go.



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
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 106 – Thoughts & Feeling
- My Internal Weather

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/7/17/17/>



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

Inside And Out

The concept of our emotions changing like the weather can be a useful comparison. This activity helps you to notice the many varieties of our internal weather and consider ways to be with your emotions at these times.

My Internal Weather Report

This activity gives you an opportunity to think about how your own internal weather can change without warning just like the real weather can. What can you learn in these moments?



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

How do things feel in your body when you are worried and uncertain?

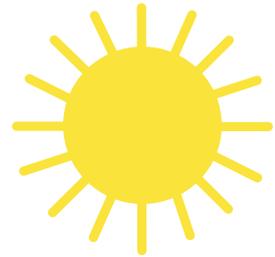
Who and what can help you when worries show up and won't easily dissolve and move on?

How does it feel when you hand your worries to a trusted adult and you can happily get on with being a kid?

Inside and Out



Have you ever been out playing on a beautiful day and the weather suddenly changes making you rush inside for shelter? The weather can change outside and we can too on the inside when things are challenging and difficult. Draw yourself and use weather symbols such as sun, rain, rainbows and clouds to show the many feelings you have.



My Internal Weather Report



When we are finding things difficult, we can feel stormy on the inside. When things are going well, we can feel full of sunshine. Our internal weather report gives us important information. Write about a time when your internal weather helped you to understand your thoughts and emotions a little more clearly. Draw some of the weather you felt on the inside.



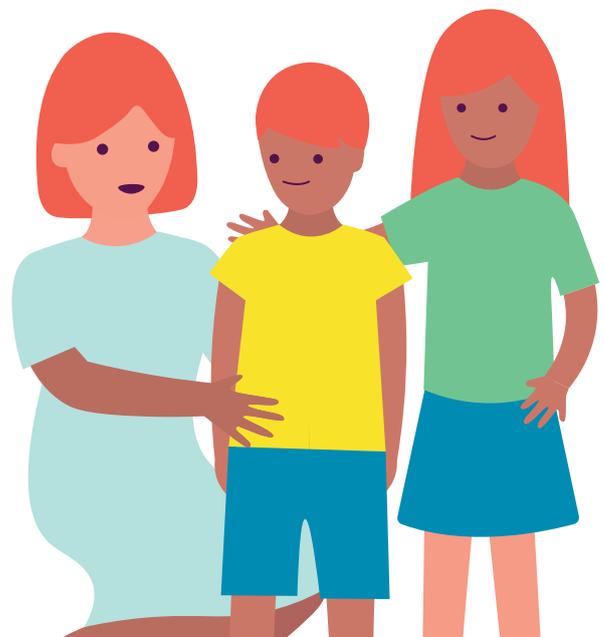
Bouncing Back

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:

My Up and Down Learning Moments

This activity invites you to bring together words, drawings, colours and shapes to express the up and down moments in life and the learning that comes from these common experiences.

A Not So Great Day

Having difficult days is completely normal – everyone has them from time to time. This activity invites you to brainstorm a list of ideas to call upon when things are not going very well.



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

How do humans and other animals bounce back after a challenge so that they can keep going and enjoy the rest of their day?

Can you remember a time when things have been hard and you have learned an important lesson? (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 keep going and stay calm?

My Up and Down Learning Moments



Sometimes, when things don't go our way, we can find important messages in the experience and ideas for what we might do next time. Think of a recent time when you experienced a challenge. What was the learning for you? Write about it, reflecting on your emotions at the time. Illustrate with colours, patterns and shapes that describe the emotions.

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My Up and Down Learning Moments

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A Not So Great Day



Sometimes, we have one of those days where everything seems to fall apart. Getting through these days, understanding that everyone has them from time to time can help. Make a list of things you like to do to make yourself feel better after a not so great day. Who helps you on the way to feeling better?

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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



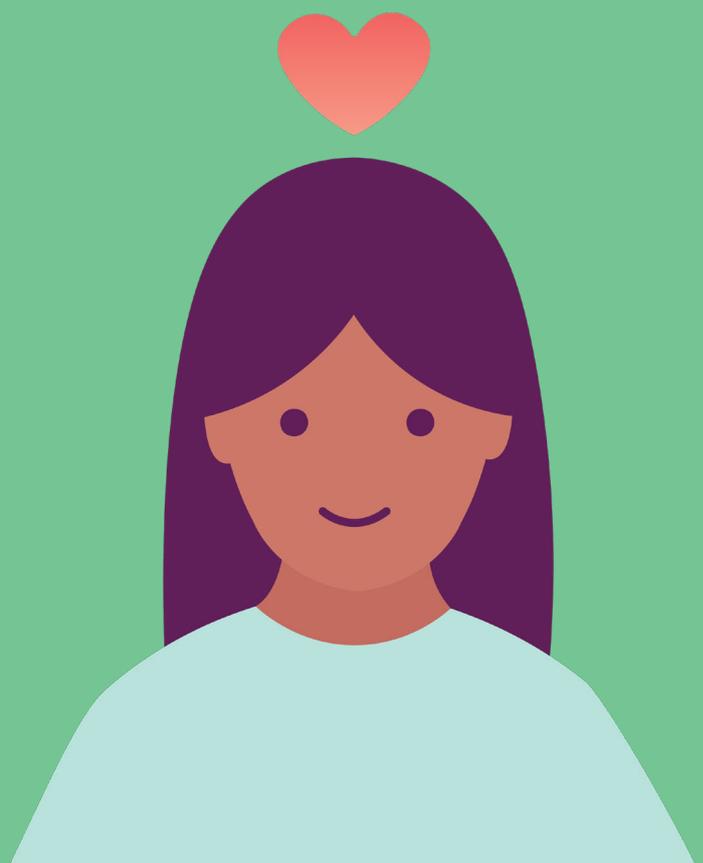
3 meditations



6 activities

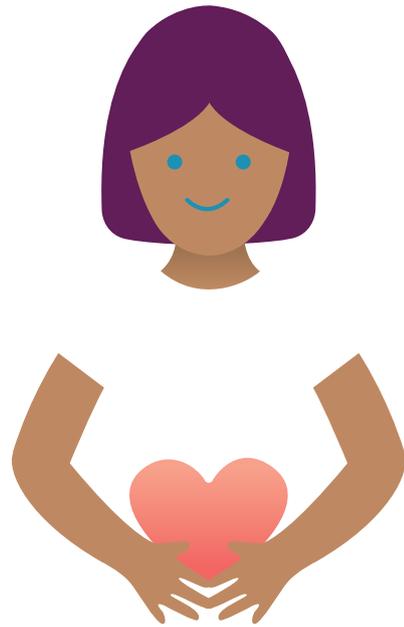
Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. Doing this together, and holding further discussions of your experience, is especially important because children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others.

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
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 207 – Gratitude
- Gratitude

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/16/97/97/>



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

Savouring and Gratitude ABC

This activity encourages you to think about all of the ways in which we can be grateful. This is an ideal way to build a bank of ideas that you can tap into at any time.

Creating A Chain Of Gratitude

This activity helps you to see that when you focus on gratitude, you are more able to see it in your life every day.



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

Tell me about what it feels like to really look forward to something?

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

How does it feel inside when we are thankful and happy?

Savouring and Gratitude ABC.



—
List something you are grateful for OR love to savour for every letter of the alphabet. If you get stuck, just get a dictionary out to give you some ideas.

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.



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A large rectangular box with a dashed red border, intended for writing and drawing.

A large rectangular box with a dashed yellow border, intended for writing and drawing.

A large rectangular box with a dashed blue border, intended for writing and drawing.

A large rectangular box with a dashed purple border, intended for writing and drawing.

A large rectangular box with a dashed green border, intended for writing and drawing.

Choosing Optimism

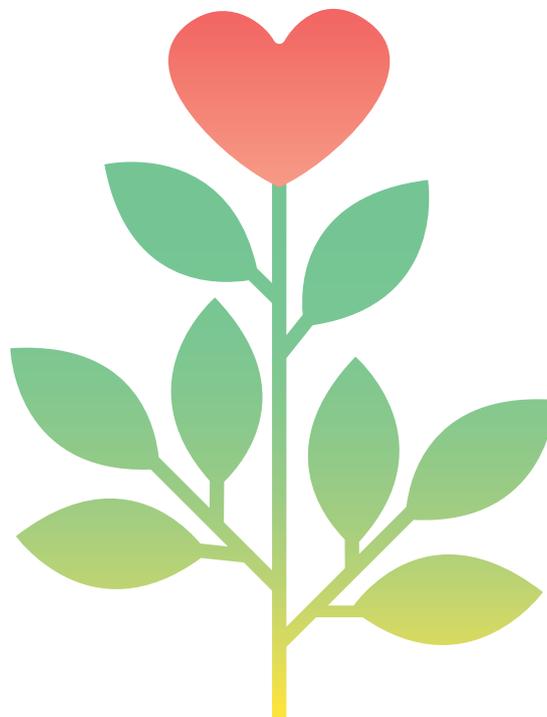
When we think optimistically, we feel hopeful and confident and often positively place ourselves in the future. Optimism is a future minded emotion that assists us to build a positive perspective about something that is yet to happen, even when we face challenges.



Research shows that when we are optimistic, we are more able to cope with stressful happenings in life. We tend to take a problem-solving approach and mindfully plan our way forward. Alongside this behaviour, we begin to see the best in a situation and move towards the positive in our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Optimism is a strength we can build and practise from early childhood onwards. Children in our care look to trusted adults and model what they see, hear and experience. Being aware of our own thoughts and emotions is therefore very important. When we model a positive outlook, we demonstrate an ability to mindfully navigate challenges effectively without becoming stuck in the negative implications. Children witness this perspective taking place and learn to consider the same positively oriented actions in their own lives.

Cultivating an optimistic outlook can begin with mindfulness. Through awareness and attention, we can begin to notice our thinking patterns. Acknowledging and supporting positive thoughts and acknowledging and then letting go of negative thoughts is a great place to start. This does not mean that we pay no attention to the negative or challenging aspects of life. Rather it is about gently unhooking ourselves from negative thought patterns in order to provide room for a more optimistic outlook.





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

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Classroom
- Primary Year 3 – The Mindfulness Curriculum
- Lesson 9 – Optimism
- PRACTISE – Catching Butterflies 3

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/310/698/>



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

Flip Side Optimism

Things don't always go our way – but that is okay! This activity looks at turning a negative experience around with optimistic thinking.

Looking For The Lesson

This activity helps us to see that when we have challenges, there are lessons to be learnt and remembered for next time. Let's encourage some optimistic thinking.



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

How can we move towards positive thinking when we get stuck with a problem?

How do you think positive thoughts help us to learn and grow?

Can you think of a time when you were feeling negative and then were able to change direction?

Flip Side Optimism.



Can you think of a recent time with things did not go your way? What happened and how did you cope? Sometimes, we can flip our thinking like a pancake, to the positive and find solutions. Write and draw about a time when you were able to do this. Add thoughts and emotions to your drawing.



Looking For The Lesson.



Optimistic thinkers find lessons in difficult times and do things differently next time. Can you think of a recent time when you got stuck in a negative place in your mind. Maybe you had a fight with a friend. Maybe you did not do as you were asked by a parent or teacher. What lessons can we learn for next time when this happens? Write and draw about your example.



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.

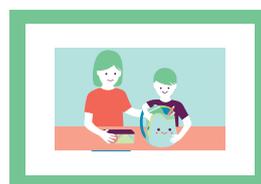
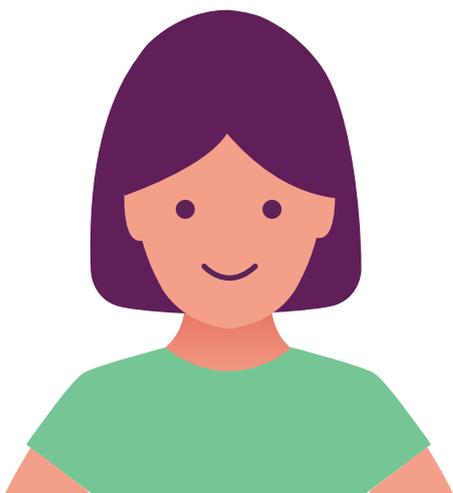


When we practise mindfulness, we create much needed space within our minds to learn and grow. Combining mindfulness and growth mindset helps us to be open to possibilities and challenges. It enables us to cultivate what's referred to as a 'beginner's mind', a mind that is willing to see everything as 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!

Growth Mindset Heart

This activity helps you remember that there are people around you who encourage and support your efforts. The origami heart folding will assist you in perseverance and mindful focus.



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

When things get tricky, what do you say to yourself to keep trying?

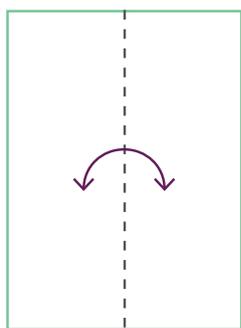
How can we be our own best friend when we are struggling with something difficult?

Who encourages you at home and school when you are working on a task that is difficult?

Origami Mindfulness.

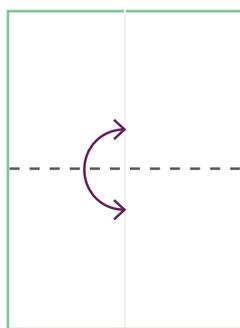


Have you ever tried making origami? Origami is a wonderful growth mindset activity. You will need an A4 piece of paper to make this little boat shaped origami and may need an adult's help. Then do the Rock The Boat meditation together. Make more little boats together and see if they can float in water. Keep trying if they don't, you'll get there!



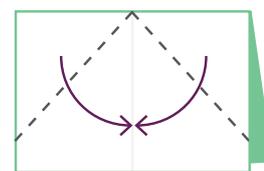
1.

Fold in half



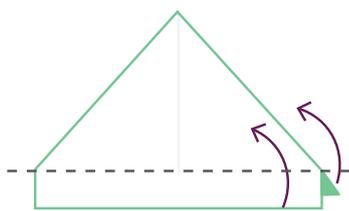
2.

Fold in half again



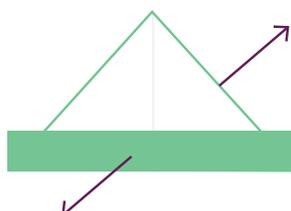
3.

Fold in corners



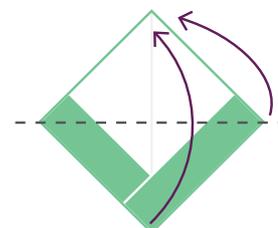
4.

Fold up edges on both sides



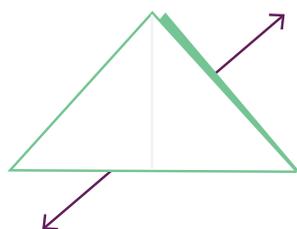
5.

Pull the sides out and flatten



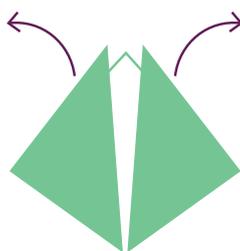
6.

Fold front and back layers up



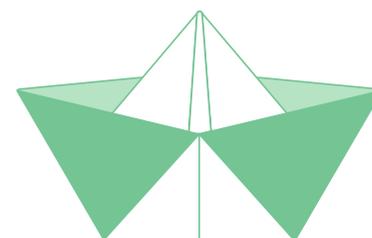
4.

Pull sides apart and flatten



5.

Pull top flaps outwards

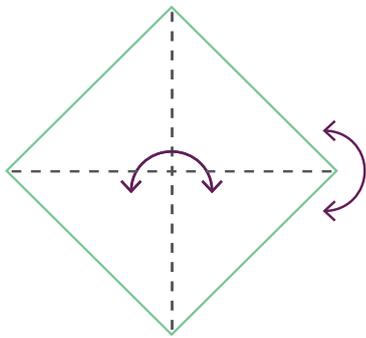


6.

Squish the bottom and pull the sides up. Tada!

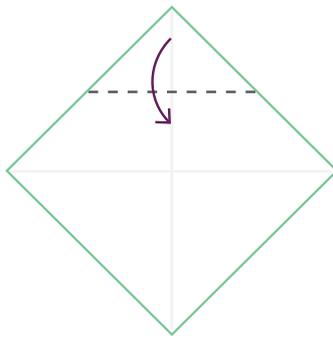
Open Mind, Open Heart.

Think of recent times when you have done your very best and felt proud of your efforts. Using a square piece of paper, make an origami heart for each time. Reflect on how it feels to try hard and keep going even when things are tough. Write some encouragement words you say to yourself on each heart, make an origami heart for this person.



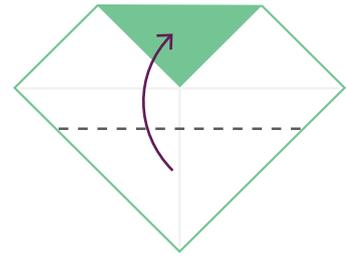
1.

Fold in half in both directions



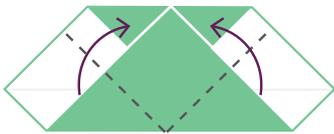
2.

Fold the top corner down



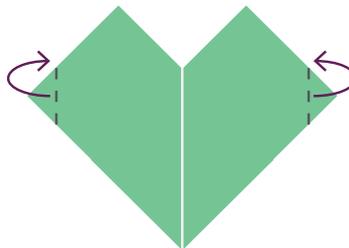
3.

Fold the bottom corner up



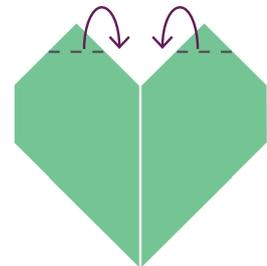
4.

Fold each edge inwards



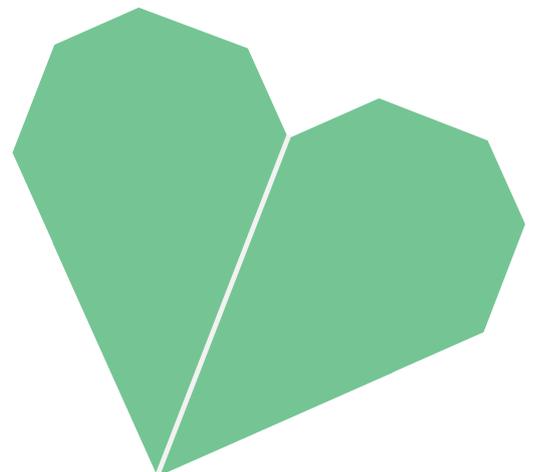
5.

Fold the corners on the side



6.

Fold the corners on the top





Smiling Mind

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