Focusing on the Positives.
As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the young people in their care as they grapple with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and appropriate response to the sense of overwhelm many of us are currently feeling.

Mindfulness has been practised for centuries and in many different cultures around the world. 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 including higher self-awareness, higher emotional regulation and reduced stress. It can also be a very useful tool that allows us to focus on the positive elements of life as they happen.

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

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:

— Taking in the Good – Savouring and Gratitude

— Optimism

— Growth Mindset

These three topics combine to deliver a comprehensive toolkit to assist in supporting and boosting the emotional wellbeing of your child.
Here is a step by step guide to get the best out of this module designed specifically for 5–7 year olds:

1. **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. **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. **Ask your child to select one of the activities at the back of the book.**
   - Use the activity to collaborate and continue the conversation.
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. They help us get full bang for buck from the good stuff.

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.

Gratitude and savouring 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 parents, carers and teachers, 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. The more we savour and practise gratitude, the happier we tend to be.

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.

Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build awareness. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 5–7 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we encourage conversation and collaboration.
Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Gratitude

App Location:
- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year olds
- Mindfulness 207 – Gratitude
- Gratitude


Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Gratitude Tree
This activity presents an ongoing gratitude project which can be added to over time. It will encourage children to actively look for moments to be grateful for so they can be added to the tree.

Savouring Chain
This activity encourages children to build a savouring routine, actively noticing and recording positive moments in the past, present and future. Doing this regularly can cultivate greater awareness of the good.

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?
Optimism

When we think optimistically, we 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. When we are optimistic, we expect good things to happen to us, 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 and learn to consider the same positively oriented actions in their own lives.

Cultivating an optimistic outlook begins 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 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.

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

App Location:
- All Programs
- Classroom
- Primary Year 2 – The Mindfulness Curriculum
- Lesson 9 – Optimism
- PRACTISE – Catching Butterflies 2


Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Catching Butterfly Moments
This activity encourages children to mindfully look around them and catch the lovely and hopeful moments in life. It can assist in teaching children how to look for the good.

Unhook and Swim On
Helping children to see that whilst every day has challenges, we can mindfully move towards the positive moments, is very important. This activity builds a strategy of changing direction when we get stuck in our thoughts.

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?
Growth Mindset

Growth Mindset is the belief that with effort, we can train our brains to grow and develop. We can build the neural connections in our brains because they 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 is one of the essential elements of mindfulness. Mindfulness is all about paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgement.

As parents, carers and teachers, 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. Always aiming to do our best, is a key attitude to model. This can be particularly important if you have a tendency towards needing perfection.

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.

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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.

App Location:
→ All Programs
→ Kids & Youth
→ 07 – 09 Year Olds
→ Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
→ Activity – Rock the Boat

Web App Link:

Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Origami Mindfulness
This activity is designed to be completed together and will assist children to persevere and see a challenge through to completion. Origami requires slow and careful attention. This is useful in building mindfulness.

Growth Mindset Heart
This activity is designed to be completed together and will assist children to persevere and see a challenge through to completion. It is also useful in helping children to identify those people in their lives who help them to grow.

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?
Gratitude tree.

Think of all the wonderful people, places and things that make you feel happy inside. Use these leaves to write and draw some of them. Then go outside and find a dead branch to bring inside (with your parent’s permission) to tie them onto. You can add more each week.
Savouring Chain.

When we think of beautiful times, we call this savouring. We can do it anytime, about anytime, even if the special thing has not happened yet. Using these coloured strips, write and draw some happy moments and then make a chain. You will need a glue stick to make your loops. You can add to your chain each week.
Catching butterfly moments.

When we see a butterfly, it is often a joyful experience. Butterflies dance and weave in the sunlight, making the most of every moment. Create your own butterflies with art materials and hang them up in your room to remind you to look for beautiful moments each and every day.

Art Materials you may need:
— Plain or coloured paper
— Ribbons
— Glue
— Cardboard
— Pencils & colouring materials
Unhook and swim on.

Imagine you are a colourful fish in the deep blue ocean. A hook means danger and it’s important to keep swimming if you see one nearby. Draw yourself swimming towards all that makes you happy and far away from the hook.
Origami mindfulness.

Have you ever tried making origami? You will need an A4 piece of paper to make this little boat shaped origami with an adult and then do the Rock The Boat meditation together. Then make more little boats together and decorate them with many colours.

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!
Think of someone who is always there for you and helps you to learn and grow by helping you to keep trying even when things are tricky. Using a square piece of paper, 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 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.

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smilingmind.com.au