

MY MINDFULNESS WORKBOOK



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INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the act of paying purposeful attention to the present, in a non judgmental way. It is being fully present in the moment. This means that we notice our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and the environment around us, without labelling them as "good" or "bad". We simply accept our experience as it is. This can be very powerful, particularly when it comes to our thoughts and feelings, as it allows us to notice them without reacting rashly. When we simply allow these internal experiences to occur and become aware of them, rather than feeling controlled by them, we are better able to respond to situations and challenges in a thoughtful, measured way.

Benefits of mindfulness for children include:

- Increased self esteem
- Reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Improved sleep
- Improved impulse control
- Encouragement of positive behaviours such as empathy and optimism
- Increased emotional intelligence
- Reduced aggression and better conflict resolution
- Improved resilience
- Improved classroom learning



TIPS FOR USING THIS WORKBOOK

- The activities in this book are a fun and engaging way to introduce mindfulness to your child, and even very young children will get some benefit from them.
- They are designed to help children be more aware: of their bodies, their feelings, their thoughts, and their environment, and to live more fully in the present moment.
- You'll find that most of them can be completed just about anywhere, and are quite quick - perfect for young, busy minds and wiggly bodies.
- When introducing mindfulness to kids for the first time, use simple language. When I speak to children about mindfulness, I talk about "noticing". Explain that you will be noticing how your body feels, what is happening around you, or what your thoughts are doing.
- Keep it short! 5-10 minutes, max! Any longer than that and you may find kids get frustrated and switch off.
- Don't push it. If your child isn't really interested right now, that's ok. Waiting until they are eager to learn will bring them (and you!) better results anyway!
- Sometimes the best way to explain mindfulness to children is simply to show them. Jump in and do these exercises with the kids. You may even learn something yourself!



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is paying attention to what is happening right now. When we are mindful, we are noticing how our body feels, what we are thinking, and what is happening around us. We pay attention to things like sounds, smells, things we can see and things we can touch, as well as feelings inside our bodies, like rumbling tummies or racing hearts.

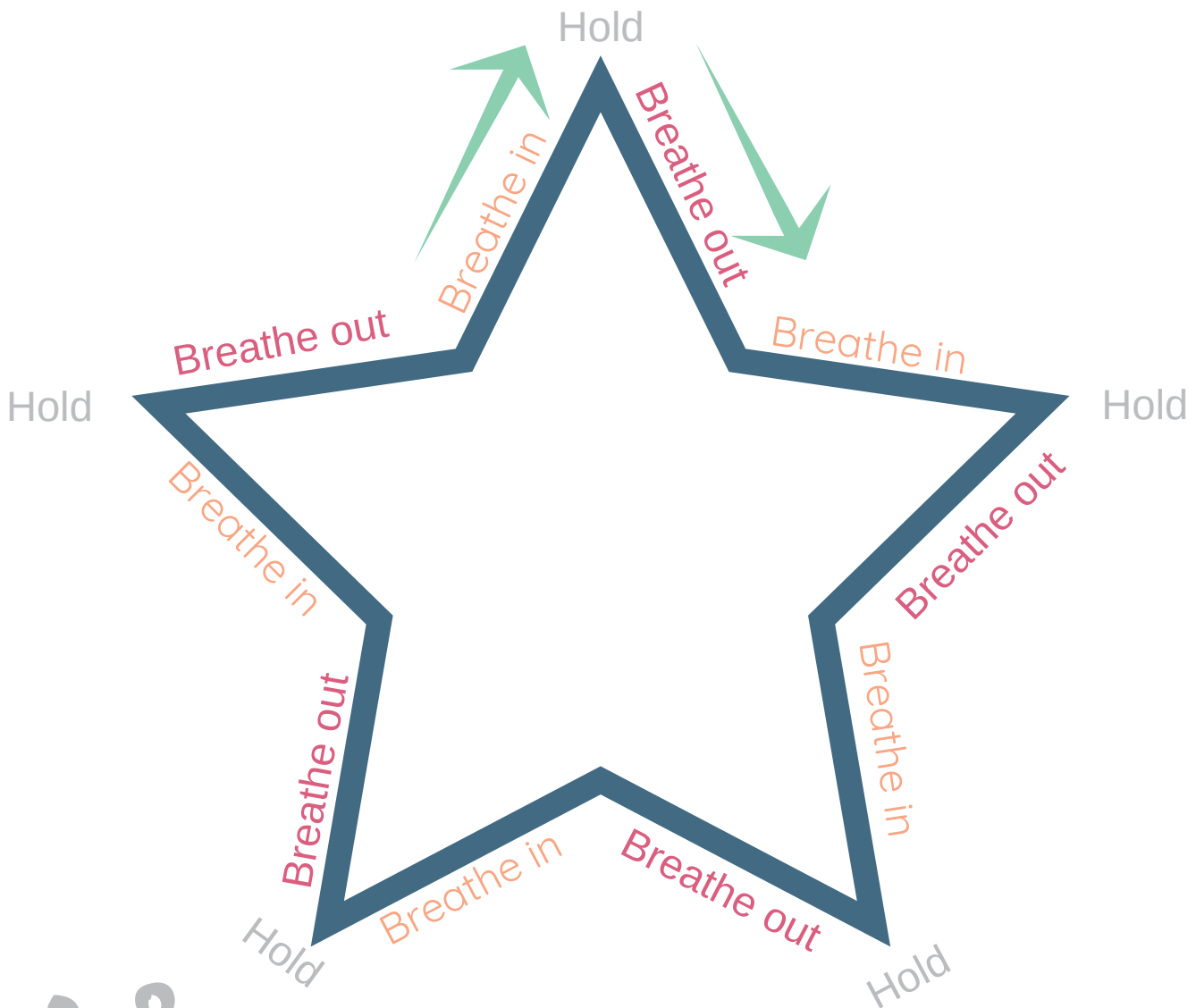
Sometimes while we're doing things, our minds get a bit distracted and wander off - do you sometimes start to daydream during class? Or do you get caught thinking about what you're going to have for lunch when your mum is asking you a question? Yep, me too! Oops!

That's ok though - minds can be a bit funny like that! When we notice that our mind is wandering, we're just going to give it a bit of a nudge and remind it to pay attention to what we're doing!

Mindfulness can be really helpful for us. It can help us feel calm, worry less, sleep better and pay attention in class. And, it's fun too! Let's try some activities now so you can see for yourself, ok?

STAR BREATHING

Paying attention to your breathing can help you calm down when you are feeling upset. Trace your finger slowly around the star, following the instructions. Breathe in through your nose and fill your belly with air, like a balloon. Hold your breath at the point of the star. Then breathe out through your mouth so your belly is flat again!





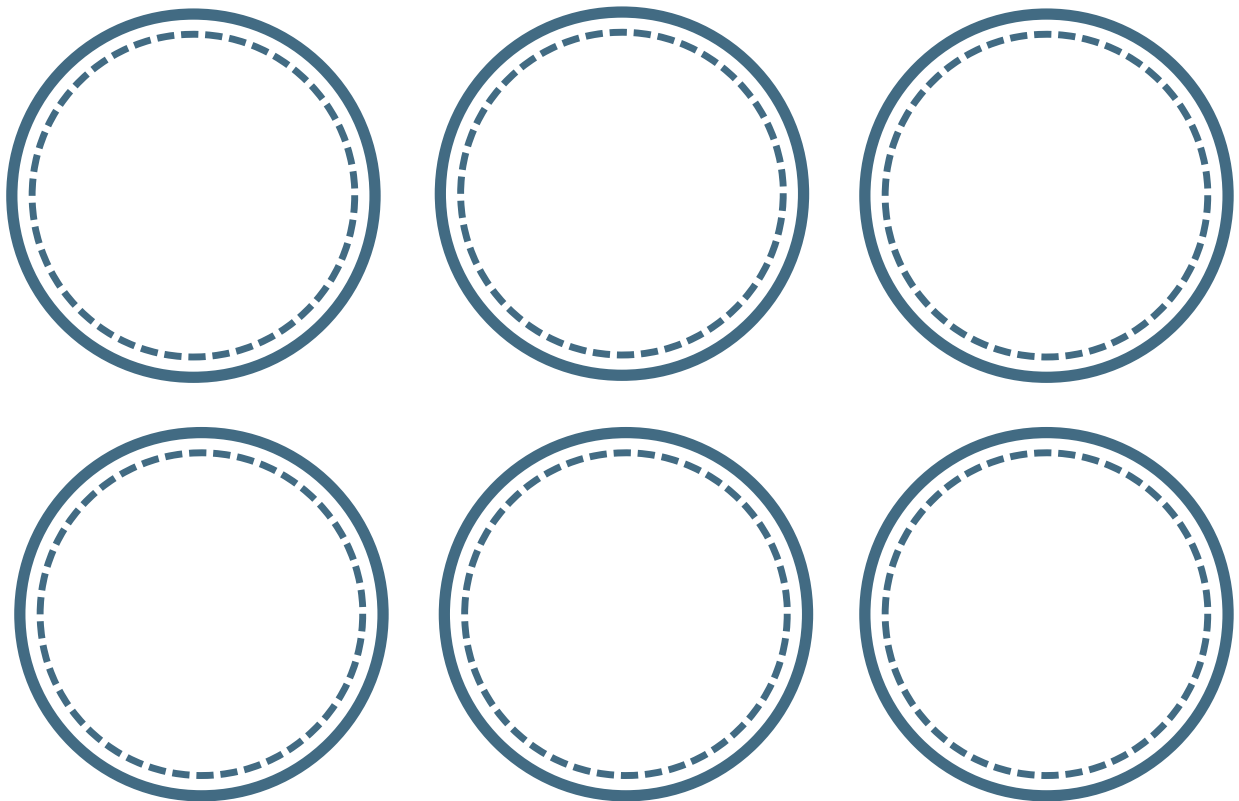
MINDFUL LISTENING

Sometimes paying attention to things we can hear is a bit easier than paying attention to our breathing. Let's try it now:

Sit down in a comfortable spot and be nice and still. Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Now listen.

I want you to pay attention to all the different sounds you can hear.

What did you hear? Can you write them down or draw them here?





MIND JAR

Mind jars are great at helping us calm down. Sometimes when we are upset, our thoughts swirl around in our heads, just like the glitter when we shake the jar. But if we sit quietly for a few moments, and just watch the glitter, it starts to settle and calm down, and so do our thoughts! Do you want to make one?

What you need:

Glass jar or plastic bottle with a lid

Glitter glue

Water

Hot glue gun

What to do:

Fill your jar or bottle most of the way with water

Add two big spoonfuls of glitter glue

Feel free to add extra glitter or sparkly sequins if you like!

Use the hot glue gun to glue the lid back on so it doesn't spill

Shake it all around!



MINDFUL COLOURING

When you do mindful colouring, you focus only on what you are doing. You may find it helpful to talk to yourself about what you're doing. You might say, "Now I am colouring with the red pencil." Don't worry about whether your colouring is "good" or "bad". Just colour!



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MINDFUL PLAY IDEAS

Mindfulness can be lots of fun! Here are some games for parents and kids to play together while they practice their mindfulness skills!

Blowing Bubbles: This is a fun way to practice mindful breathing! Breathe in deeply through your nose, and then breathe out slowly through your mouth as you form the bubbles. Focus your attention on the bubbles as they float away. {If your child is too young to blow bubbles, blow them yourself and have your child pay close attention to the bubbles being made, and then floating away}

Taste Test: Grab an assortment of yummy foods that you know your child will like. Blindfold them and have them explore the food using all their other senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing. See if they can guess the food!

Balloon Fun: Try to keep the balloon in the air! This is a great way to involve the whole body in a mindfulness activity, as well as the mind as you focus your attention on keeping the balloon afloat!

What am I: Grab a bag/box/bowl and a collection of items with different textures, like sticks, leaves, rocks, a soft toy, a washcloth etc. Without looking or removing them from the bag, have your child reach in and explore the objects with their hands. Ask them to describe the object and try to guess what it is!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SARAH CONWAY

Sarah is a psychologist, mama of 4 and founder of Mindful Little Minds: an online marketplace, blog and community of parents and educators dedicated to building resilient kids, calm homes and connected families.

She is passionate about the mental health of children and teenagers and has over 10 years of experience working with and helping, children and families affected by mental illness.

Sarah has been practicing mindfulness herself for almost 15 years now. This workbook is a collection of some of her favourite activities for children.

In her spare time Sarah enjoys hanging out with her kids, drinking coffee, and binge watching Brooklyn Nine-Nine on Netflix.



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