

Fun Activities for Parents and Children to promote wellbeing

Mindful Posing

One easy way for children to dip their toes into **mindfulness** is through the simple method of **body poses**. To get your kids interested, tell them that doing fun poses can help them feel strong, brave, and happy.

Have them go somewhere quiet and familiar, a place they feel safe. Next, tell them to try one of the following two poses:

1. The Superman: this pose is practiced by standing with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out, stretching the body out as long as possible.
2. The Wonder Woman: this pose is struck by standing tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips (Karen Young, 2017).

Spidey Senses

While you're on the subject of superheroes, there is a fun and easy way to introduce your kids to paying attention to the present.

Instruct your kids to turn on their "Spidey senses", the super-focused senses of smell, sight, hearing, taste, and touch that Spiderman uses to keep tabs on the world around him. This will encourage them to pause and focus their attention on the present, opening their awareness to the information their senses bring in (Karen Young, 2017).

This is a classic **mindfulness exercise**, packaged in a fun and easy to understand format that kids will find no difficulty in trying out

The Mindful Jar

This activity can teach children about how **strong emotions** can take hold, and how to find peace when these **strong emotions** come up.

- First, get a clear jar, like a Mason jar, and fill it almost all the way with water. Next, add a big spoonful of glitter glue or glue and dry glitter to the jar. Put the lid back on the jar and shake it to make the glitter swirl.

- Finally, use the following script or take inspiration from it to form your own mini-lesson:

"Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when you're upset - because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too).

[Now put the jar down in front of them.]

Now watch what happens when you're still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you're calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer" (Karen Young, 2017).

This exercise not only helps children learn about how their emotions can cloud their thoughts, it also facilitates the practice of mindfulness while focusing on the swirling glitter in the jar.

Safari

The **Safari exercise** is another fun way to help kids learn mindfulness. This activity turns an average, everyday walk outside into an exciting new adventure.

Tell your kids that you will be going on a safari, and their goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as they can. Anything that walks, crawls, swims, or flies is of interest, and they'll need to focus all of their senses to find them, especially the little ones (Karen Young, 2017).

A similar exercise for adults is the **mindfulness walk**. This exercise provokes the same response in children that the mindful walk brings out in adults: a state of **awareness** and grounding in the present.

Mindfulness Games for Kids

If you want to try to get children interested in practicing mindfulness with fun and interactive games, try these ideas:

1. Blowing bubbles. Have your children focus on taking in a deep, slow breath, and exhaling steadily to fill the bubble. Encourage them to pay close attention to the bubbles as they form, detach, and pop or float away.
2. Pinwheels. Use the same tactics from blowing bubbles to encourage mindful attention on the pinwheels.
3. Playing with balloons. Tell your kids that the aim of this game is to keep the balloon off the ground, but have them move slowly and gently. You can tell them to pretend the balloon is very fragile if that helps.
4. Texture bag. Place several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects in a bag, and have each child reach in to touch an object, one at a time, and describe what they are touching. Make sure they don't take the object out of the bag, forcing them to use only their sense of touch to explore the object.
5. Blindfolded taste tests. Use a blindfold for each child and have them experience eating a small food, like a raisin or a cranberry, as if it was their first time eating it.

If you want to know about more games you can play with children to teach them about mindfulness, check out the book *Mindful Games: Sharing Mindfulness and Meditation with Children, Teens, and Families* by Susan Kaiser Greenland.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing is a staple of practicing mindfulness and is often the foundation of other exercises. To help kids learn how to engage in mindful breathing, you can use this video on YouTube :

<https://youtu.be/CvF9AEe-ozc>

This video guides children through a **breathing meditation** by instructing them to imagine a sailboat that rises and falls as they breathe; with each inhale and exhale, the boat moves gently on top of the water. They also get an opportunity to envision their breath as a color and focus on the experience of their breath moving through their nostrils.

Finally, the video ends with the exercise of the children pretending they used to be a fish and paying attention to how it would feel to breathe through their lungs for the first time.

Body Scan

The body scan is one of the basic practices in mindfulness, and it is an easy one to teach to children.

- Have your child lie down on their back on a comfortable surface and close their eyes.
- Then, tell them to squeeze every single muscle in their body as tight as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, squeeze their hands into fists, and make their legs and arms as hard as stone.
- After a few seconds, have them release all their muscles and relax for a few minutes.
- Encourage them to think about how their body is feeling throughout the activity (Roman, 2015).

This simple exercise gets kids to be more aware of their bodies and helps them find a way to be present in the moment.

Heartbeat Exercise

Paying attention to one's heartbeat has a role in many mindfulness exercises and activities. Children can learn how to apply this mindfulness practice to their own lives as well.

Tell your child to jump up and down in place or do jumping jacks for one minute. When they have finished, have them sit down and put a hand over their heart. Instruct them to close their eyes and pay attention only to their heartbeat and, perhaps, their breath as well (Roman, 2015).

This easy exercise shows children how to notice their heartbeat and helps them practice their focus. These skills will come in handy as they start engaging in more advanced mindfulness activities.