

# Mindfulness Matters

## Ways to Practice Mindfulness



Pausing to observe what's happening in the present is an effective way to practice mindfulness, but sometimes kids need a specific technique to get into the groove. Try any or all of these strategies to teach children how to practice mindfulness.

### DEEP BREATHING

Sit or lie down with your eyes closed and notice what it feels like to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice your chest and stomach rise as you inhale, pushing air into your belly. Then watch how your belly and chest drop back toward your body as you exhale. You can even place your hand on your belly to see it rise and fall as you breathe in and out. Slowly breathe in, and slowly breathe out—don't force it. Take a few rounds of breath.

### TAKE 5

Raise your non-dominant hand, and slowly trace it with a finger from the other hand. Start with your thumb. Move the tracing finger up your thumb as you breathe in, then move the tracing finger down the other side as you breathe out. Go slowly, giving each finger the same amount of time. Do the same for all five fingers, moving at an even pace. When you're done, you will have taken five slow, evenly paced breaths.



### CALMING COUNTDOWN

You'll use each of your 5 senses to make yourself more mindful. Start wherever you are. First, notice 5 things that you can see in that space. Then find 4 things you can feel. Next, listen for 3 things you can hear and notice 2 things you can smell. Then focus on 1 thing you can taste. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...and you're practicing mindfulness.



### RAINBOW GROUNDING

Enjoy this visual—and colorful—way to practice mindfulness. Start by taking a deep breath and looking around for an item around you that is red. Think about what the item is, what it does, how it may feel if you touch it or where it came from. Then take another breath and move on to the next color in the rainbow and repeat. If you can't find an object of one of the colors, move on to the next color. The colors of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.



### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

This mindfulness technique can relieve stress and boost body awareness. Breathe in and tighten a group of muscles in one area of your body (like your hands) and hold it for at least 3 to 5 seconds, then relax the muscles as you breathe out. Do the same for your arms, legs, shoulders, eyes, mouth, stomach and feet—giving each body part the same amount of time to tighten and release. Notice how you feel every time you release the tension in a specific muscle group. For some kids it might be helpful to pretend to help them tense their muscles; for example, pretending they are squeezing a stress ball with their hands or pressing their foot in sand.



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