

Note

Never force a student to do a mindfulness exercise. Always start and stop an exercise by using chimes.

Below you find 14 mindfulness exercises for children. You can use them as you wish but read through them before you use them. At the bottom you will find a list of resources ie. web pages and apps (with more exercises and recordings) that you can use as well.

1. Breathing

Instructions for the pupils:

Tell the pupils that they can use breathing whenever they feel they need to be more aware, or when they have been upset, etc. Breathing is a way to get in contact with yourself, to become grounded.

Sit or lie down comfortably.

Take a breath, and breathe out again.

Take a deeper breath, and breathe out again.

Take a breath and concentrate on your breathing. Where is the air coming in and where is it going out? Feel the air in your lungs. Put your hand on your stomach, can you feel your stomach breathing? When you breathe in, your stomach widens, and when you breathe out your stomach flattens.

Now lie still for a while and just concentrate on your breathing. Let your thoughts come and go, try not to pay attention to them, just lie and breathe and concentrate on your breathing.

After this exercise is over, you can tell the pupils again that they can use breathing whenever they feel they need to be more aware, or when they have been upset, etc. Breathing is a way to get in contact with yourself, to become grounded.

2. Breathing

Instructions for the pupils

This is a breathing exercise which will help you to focus on and control your breathing. I want you to sit down and make sure you are comfortable. When we breathe, cool air enters the nose and warm air goes out through the mouth. As you breathe in through your nose count "one". As thou breathe out through your mouth count "one" again. Now let's do another one. Breathe in and count "two". Breathe out

again and count “two” again. Try not to force your breathing but just focus on your natural breathing.

If the children find it difficult to focus, they can say “in” and “out” instead of counting. They may also put their hands on their belly to observe how it goes in and out when they are breathing.

3. Secret things

Have the children sit in a circle. One child at a time closes his or her eyes. Give each child an object to have in their hand behind their back for a little while.

Take the object and let the child describe it without saying what it is.

They shall describe its texture, shape, form, size, how they think it smells, how it feels, the surface, and so on.

After the child has described “his” object, let the other children guess what it is he was holding in his hand. The child can also guess, but will be the last one to do so. Let all children see the object. Then, continue until all the children have described an object.

4. Relaxing

Instructions for the pupils:

Sit down or lie down comfortably.

Take a few breaths and feel how your breathing gets calmer. Feel the air coming in through your nose, filling your head with air, and also how it goes out.

With your next breath feel how your whole body is breathing. Breathe for a little while and let the breathing make you feel relaxed.

Now pretend that you are in a place you like, a place that is comfortable. It can be a bed, or on a beach, or in a room. You are completely relaxed in your place. What does it look like? Are there any smells? Do you experience anything else in this particular place?

When you are in this particular place, turn your attention to your body.

You see a light coming. What colour is the light? The light comes down and sweeps you into it. You are embedded in the light, and the light helps you feel relaxed and calm. You are relaxed and aware of everything.

Are there any particular feelings in your body? Do you note anything particular? Whatever you notice, or don't notice, say to yourself: this is how it is right now and it is OK.

If your head is full of thoughts, that is also OK. Think of your thoughts as clouds passing in the sky. The sky is like your mind; it is always there and the thoughts come and go just like the clouds do. As soon as a new thought comes, note it and let it go. When a new one

comes along, do the same, just like noting the clouds in the sky. (Let the students lie and breathe for a while.)

End the exercise by telling the children to take a few breaths, and that whenever they feel ready they can open their eyes.

5. Body scanning

Ask the children to sit or (preferably) lie down comfortably with their hands and arms alongside their body.

Instruction to the pupils:

Take a few breaths and concentrate on the breathing. Feel how your stomach widens and flattens. Concentrate on your head. First, focus on the forehead. Do you feel anything, any tensions or sensations?

It is OK not to feel anything, and whatever you feel is also OK. Now you go to your eyes, any particular feelings or tensions?

Go on to your ears and your mouth. Now take in your whole head and neck; are you relaxed or do you have any other sensations?

Now move to your chest and stomach while you are still breathing, how does it feel?

Move your attention to your shoulders and your back, any feelings or sensations? Let your thoughts come and go just like clouds in the sky, your mind is the sky, and the clouds are your thoughts, note them and let them pass.

Concentrate on your stomach and lower back, and breathe. Feel your arms resting, feel both of them at the same time. Feel your hands and all your fingers.

Feel your bottom against the chair or the floor. Move your awareness to your thighs and knees, and to your lower legs.

Move on to both your feet and your toes. Do you have any feelings or sensations in them? Do you have tension anywhere? If so, you can try to breathe with that particular part of the body. For example, if your shoulders are tense you can pretend you are breathing in and out of your shoulders, and note if anything else happens.

Before we stop this body scan, let your hands come alive, move your fingers and your toes, and wrinkle your face. Take a few breaths and open your eyes.

6. Loving kindness

Instructions to the pupils:

Lie down or sit comfortably. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. You will now repeat some sentences over and over again. I will say them aloud and you repeat them silently to yourself.

May I be happy. May I have a peaceful mind. May I be healthy. May I succeed with things in life.

May I be happy. May I have a peaceful mind. May I be healthy. May I succeed with things in life

May I be happy. May I have a peaceful mind. May I be healthy. May I succeed with things in life.

Now you wish the same thing for your friend sitting next to you.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

Now think of all your classmates and wish the same to them.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

Now you can wish the same for your family at home or somebody else who is important to you. Say the sentences to yourself and think of the ones you want to say them to.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

May you be happy, May you have a peaceful mind, May you be healthy, May you succeed with things in life.

This exercise can be varied in many ways; you can, for example, think of a friend who is ill, of an animal, and so on. You can also do one wish at a time.

Here is another one, you can divide it into parts, i.e. you start by only doing it for the child then after some time add the section of people around them and so on.

7. Loving kindness

Instructions to the pupils:

This meditation is called loving kindness

It is a meditation with the goal to nurture quality, inner caring and wisdom, which are already there within us all. At the same time as we are aware of all the thoughts and feelings that occur without valuating.

Sit or lie down comfortably. Try to allow yourself to feel whatever there is in your body or mind right now. Maybe tiredness, worry or a feeling of wellbeing.

Let there be space in your mind and your heart.

Draw your attention to your breathing. Feel how the air is going in and out of your nose, without having to change anything. Just let it be as it is.

Remember that you at any time during the meditation can draw attention to your breathing in case the experience may be too strong. Stay as long as you wish with the breathing and when you are ready, listen to the instructions again.

In this form of meditation we repeat 4 phrases silently to ourselves again and again. You can change the phrases for something else that will make it easier to feel loving kindness.

This may feel a bit awkward in the beginning and a bit mechanical or you may feel nothing. You can also feel frustrated or withheld. Whatever it is, have patience and be kind to yourself. See if you can accept yourself as it is right now.

Feel the breath around your heart in the breast and listen inwards. When you are ready, focus on somebody where it is easy to feel loving kindness. It could be somebody from the past or somebody who has inspired you or given you unconditional love. Allow yourself to concentrate on this person. Now say this silently

May you feel safe

May you be healthy in body and mind

May you be happy

May you have a peaceful mind.

When you are ready, leave this person and draw attention to yourself and feel that you are worth love and say these phrases to yourself

May I feel safe

May I be healthy in body and mind

May I be happy

May I have a peaceful mind.

Be aware that whatever you feel is OK. Your intention is to feel loving kindness. Being aware that this can change over time and with practice. Try once more, and note if you feel any resistance.

May I feel safe

May I be healthy in body and mind

May I be happy

May I have a peaceful mind.

Now draw your attention to somebody who is close to you. This can be a family member, brother, aunt and so on. Focus on positive things in this person. See the person in front of you and with the same intention as you had for yourself. Direct these wishes silently

May you feel safe

May you be healthy in body and mind

May you be happy

May you have a peaceful mind.

In each moment there is a chance to deepen our relationship with others. If your mind is going elsewhere, just note where it went and try to use the loving kindness to yourself and now draw your attention to a neutral person (somebody you neither like or dislike) somebody you may have met only once. This can be difficult for some. Try not to judge. Just reflect on this person's wish to be as happy as you.

May you feel safe

May you be healthy in body and mind

May you be happy

May you have a peaceful mind.

Being aware of what pops up right now without expectation of feeling love. Your heart has got its own seasons. Give yourself the right to feel what you feel.

Now focus on every living creature in the world. Start with the ones around you. People you know, then go on to other people in other cultures in many ways so similar and also different. They have, just like you, been born and sometimes they will die. See them in front of you. Go on to include every living creature on land, in the sea, in heaven all over the world.

May all feel safe

May all be healthy in body and mind

May all be happy

May all have a peaceful mind.

Being aware of how it is for you right now and note what happens when you have these wishes

May all feel safe

May all be healthy in body and mind

May all be happy

May all have a peaceful mind.

Finish off by going back to yourself. Feel the contact with your body on the surface

May I feel safe

May I be healthy in body and mind

May I be happy

May I have a peaceful mind.

Note if you feel different now, regardless of whatever you feel.

When you are ready draw your attention to this moment and allow yourself to be exactly what you are, that is showing loving kindness to yourself. By doing this step by step, you

will learn to feel loving kindness. It may be difficult in the beginning but note where it is easier for you to feel loving kindness and gather strength from it.

8. Tension and relaxation

Note that the children should not do exercises that are painful or be in postures that are painful or that require endurance.

Instructions for pupils:

Stretch and take full breaths. Shake the body and make sounds, for example sighing, groaning, growling.

Cross your arms around the body, cross your legs and hold everything tight. Now release everything at once and run on the spot, shaking any tension out of the limbs and make sounds. Repeat several times.

Close your eyes tightly, take a breath and hold it. Now release your face. Open your eyes and open them wide, keep your head still and make large circular movements with your eyeballs.

Stand with your feet approximately 30 cm apart, bend your knees and rest your hands lightly on your lower back. Gently lean backwards until your eyes are facing towards the ceiling. Do not let your head fall back. Take a deep breath and hold it for a few minutes, then relax. Feel the difference in your body, do this three or four times.

9. The present moment, here and now

This exercise aims to focus on the present without trying to give explanations for things

Instructions to the pupils

You can do this exercise when you are sitting but after a bit of training you can do it anywhere. You can have your eyes open but if you want to close them do so.

Sit on a chair, let your feet touch the surface of the floor, have your back and shoulders relaxed

First be aware of your breath. Be aware of the air that enters through your nostrils, entering your trachea and inflating your lungs ..

Focus on the simple fact that the air is coming into your system with each breath.... This is your normal, regular breathing...

Focus on your breathing without trying to change it and let it naturally go to its regular slow quiet pace...

Be aware of your relaxed position, the position of your hands, their contact with your body and your clothes Be aware of your two forearms and your two arms...

your shoulders.....

your face.....

the neck.....

the top of your back.....

the lower back..... and the chest

Focus on your breath during three breaths..... you become aware of your breath, calm, regular and quiet.....Focus on the present moment most importantly things on your breathing and your body..... Pay attention to the thoughts that may cross your mind..... Identify them if they occur Do not judge or try to follow them even if they have no connection with the present moment.....Accept them and let them leave just as they came. Think about them as passing clouds in the sky, your mind is the sky and the thoughts are passing clouds.

Again, focus on your breathing, your chest movements and your belly.....

Every part of your body that you scan quickly. You are aware of the present, here and now right in this moment where nothing or no one can change the awareness of this particular moment.....

You are fully aware of this moment without judging or interpreting things outside or inside you, things that are just there and not there to disturb the sensation and joy of the present moment in each breath you takein each movement of your chest and your stomach..... Focus on the feeling of fresh air that enters through your nostrils .

Focus on the simple fact that you breathe in this moment and let the thoughts pass through your mind like clouds in the sky.....without trying to change them or drive them out.

Gradually come back, at your own pace, to things around you.

10. Focus on surrounding noises

Instructions to the pupils

Sit on a chair with your feet on the floor. Do not lean too much on the backrest of your chair, your back is straight and your shoulders are relaxed. Be aware of your position and your body, quickly scanning different parts of your body as you have learnt to do.

Now, be aware of your breathing, the air that enters through your nostrils. It enters your trachea, inflates your lungs and then it will come out through your nostrils. Focus on the air that enters with each breath,

Focus on your breathing without trying to change it and let it naturally come at its own pace, slow, steady and quiet.

Now focus on this moment, just thinking about the position of your body and your breath

While your attention is focused on your breathing you will now expand your consciousness and be attentive to the noises in the surroundings.. Those that are close and those that are distant from outside. Let these sounds enter your consciousness with patience.

Distinguish the noises, the different nature of these sounds without trying to interpret them. Identify them without seeking their meaning and if thoughts and images come to your mind, let them leave and center your attention on these external sounds.

While centering your attention on the surroundings, you stay focused on your breath.....While becoming aware of your breathing you are aware of your body

Your consciousness has expanded and you can move your attention at your will to the outside sounds to which you are attentive.

You identify the noises without interpreting the meanings; you just pay your attention to the place where they came from. Let them start and stop if they are continuous noises. Your consciousness reveals some barely perceptible noise, simply paying them attention and letting them come to you.

You feel that your consciousness is more and more open and not limited to sensations close to you, but you are both aware of your breathing and your body. At the same time, you remain open to outside noise.

Be aware for a few seconds of your body and your breathing and then finally come in contact with your daily activities refocusing your attention on the present moment, the world around you.....remaining open to outside noise for a few seconds.

11. Using the nose instead of the eyes

Prepare three bowl of smelling herbs for each small group, for example, cloves, bay leaves, curry, basil. Have quiet, relaxing music in the background. Get the children to sit in circles of 3 or 4.

Instructions to the pupils

Close your eyes while I am putting a bowl in the middle of each group. Tune into your bodies and take a few deep breaths.

Let your hand reach out to the bowl and take a few herbs from it. Crush the herb between your fingers. Breathe in the aroma. Let your entire self sink into the world of the smell. How does it make you feel? Does it bring an “Oh yes” or a “No”? Is it a comfortable or uncomfortable smell?

Take another breath. Let the aroma come to you. Let the aroma come to you. Keep your eyes closed so that you can concentrate on the smell. Be still and quiet now. Is it exciting? Is it boring?

What happens in your mind? Does the smell remind you of anything? Are you trying to guess what the herb is? What happens in your body as the smell comes? Do you like it? Can you stay with the smell and let it be your whole world for a moment? Simply be very still and quiet and use your nose.

Let the smell inspire your imagination. What sort of landscape would go with the smell? Inland? Coastal? Desert? Rainforest? Another planet? Is it a place you know or a place where you would like to go? Do any particular words come with this smell or experience? Are there three words that sum up how you respond to the smell?

Stay a few seconds and when you are ready open your eyes.

Let each child share their experience.

12. Relaxing and tensing like a star

This is a simple exercise to release deep tension and is good to do before quiet work. It uses over-stressing to assist a deeper letting-go.

Instructions to the pupils

Lie on the floor and stretch out your limbs, contract and expand your bodies a few times. Picture yourselves as a five-pointed star, with each limb and the head as a point. Picture yourselves floating, twinkling in a clear night sky.

Now tense your right hand and right arm, hold a moment and then let go.

Tense your right foot, right leg and hold for a moment, let go.

Tense your left foot, left leg and hold for a moment, let go.

Tense your left hand, left arm and hold for a moment, let go.

Tense your face, trunk and hold for a moment, let go.

Establish a steady rhythm (Tense! tense! Hold! Relax!) Clap or use drumbeats to help establish the rhythm. Give children time to lie still and prompt them to feel themselves twinkling, pulsating as this star, with lots of quiet energy. Ask them to stay like this for a time, while being aware of any pictures that come into their mind's eye.

13. Finding my animal power

Make a sort of "canoe" for example with bean bags, cushions, chairs or simply a space marked out on a carpeted floor. Children sit or kneel in this place.

Instructions to the pupils:

We are going to take an imaginary canoe ride to a mysterious island.

First we must build the canoe. Gather those cushions, chairs etc, and figure out how to make a canoe. Good now all get in and we push off. (At the same time, close your eyes.) Feel the canoe move on the waves. Let us all row together across the ocean. Now we are at the island. Wait quietly for a moment; you will see an animal appear.

There are many friendly animals on this island. One of them has been waiting just for you. It will come to you soon. Be very still and relaxed now.

See it coming. Look at every detail of it. Make friends with your animal, pat it.

Let it be close to you. It is a special animal, a safe animal.

Now the animal is giving you its power.

Feel the animal's strength coming inside you.

Now it says good bye. It tells you that it will always be with you, inside you.

Now, let yourself move like the animal. Think about how it sounds. Now make that sound. Allow it to make its sound with your voice.

Now, come back to the canoe. It is time to go home. Push the canoe off the beach. Feel it rise over the waves again. Now we go home.

Ask the children to talk about their animal and to recall the animal's strength.

14. Bubbles

Instructions for the children:

Ask the children to sit down comfortably and close their eyes. Imagine bubbles appearing in front of you. They are floating on top of your heads and each one of them contains a thought, a feeling or a perception. Look at the first bubble rising up. What does it say? Note the thought, observe it and let it go. Now observe another bubble rising up. What does this one say? Note it and then slowly let it float away.

Allow the children some time to continue noting their thoughts on their own and then tell them to open their eyes and see how they feel.

Useful websites:

<http://kidsrelaxation.com/all-relaxation-activities/freeze-and-feel/>

<http://kidsrelaxation.com/uncategorized/walking-with-mindfulness-the-fox-walk/#stash.qBpX9Arv.dpuf>

You will find a lot of mindfulness exercises if you search on the internet.