

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN
THE APPLIED USE OF
MINDFULNESS FOR 7 - 11
YEAR OLDS

Mindfulness Institute

Professional Training in the Applied Use of Mindfulness for 7 - 11 year olds

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Introduction

The vast majority of people don't start a course in Mindfulness because they have just fallen in love, won the lotto or received a job promotion. Rather, people become interested in this growing science-backed topic when they want to find a pathway to a life of greater happiness, reduced stress and better relationships alongside understanding the causes of our physical and psychological suffering in order to prevent future recurrence.

Mindfulness practices can provide this pathway and this is increasingly borne out and validated by science.

Examples of how our Mindfulness courses have helped previous participants include a banker who apart from going to work had become housebound through ever-increasing panic attacks. Over time he found that the Mindfulness practice of learning about, and accepting his fear in a new way he was once again able to lead a normal life, free of panic attacks.

Mindfulness practices also helped an IT professional whose love of sport was curtailed by severe back pain to return to a sporting life by showing her how to live with the pain in a new way. Also Karen, a high powered company executive learned to use Mindfulness practices to transform the impulses and emotions of loneliness that caused her to drink excessively.

We all spend so much time lost in thoughts about the past and/or worries or fantasies about the future that we never fully experience the moment that we are in right now. Take a moment and ask "Where is my mind right now?". You may well find that you are not simply digesting this course information. Instead, you may be already imagining whether this course will lead to pleasure and increased happiness in the future. You may be

questioning whether Mindfulness really does succeed in providing all of the benefits that are backed by science.

There is also a type of Mindlessness that is about trying to get through things quickly to get to the exciting stuff. We might see this when we eat, we rush the soup to get to the main course or to get to the dessert. We want to rush through the traffic so we can get to the gym. When we start to look at what is happening in our minds, we are trying to do away with this present moment in the pursuit of some future moment which we think holds greater gratification or pleasure.

This is a tendency of the untrained mind - to wish away a large proportion of life to get to the good stuff.

Life can be difficult at times for all of us and life challenges can appear unexpectedly for everybody, not just you. Some reasons for this are as follows:-

1: Change is constant and loss is inevitable. We spend a huge proportion of time trying keep hold of the good times. We seek out pleasure and strive to avoid pain.

2: We are hard-wired to compare ourselves to others. We are constantly trying to enhance our self-esteem. For some people this is about who is wealthier, or who has the best looking kids, or who is more intelligent, or who can run a marathon faster. It has been said that among Mindfulness practitioners, it is who is more selfless, who has a smaller ego that experiences deeper levels of mindfulness. You can see now the pertinence of this statement from the field of Neuroscience - "The default setting of the brain is "Velcro for Pain, Teflon for Pleasure"

So Mindfulness practices can help us with this. It helps us to see and accept things as they currently are as opposed to trying to change them. It helps us to reduce our preoccupations with ourselves. These practices also help us to get along better with others. Mindfulness practices helps us see other people more clearly, and helps us not to condemn or judge them because they have upset us. It helps us to understand that another person's behaviour much of the time is not about us. It reflects the other persons difficulties and day to day struggles at that moment in time and all of the factors that have made them who they are. This is essential when it comes to empathy. While Mindfulness does not promote the acceptance of intolerable behaviour it allows us a space to choose our response as opposed to reacting from our habitual thought programmes.

How to use this book

The tools provided in this book are organized to provide you with the background and instructions for teaching mindfulness skills, provide you with guidelines for helping both you and your students. The material is organised in a logical progression but is also designed to be used independently.

It must be stressed yet again that it is very important for teachers to embody the practice of mindfulness. This can only come about by maintaining a regular daily practice. There is no set length of time but it is recommended to start off with 15 minutes a day and slowly build this up over time. The real benefits from Mindfulness come about from regular practice. You will begin to notice these changes appearing in yourself and soon after, others will begin to notice these changes in you.

Parental Involvement

Learning Objective

To encourage parents to become involved in their child's mindfulness practice

Subject

An important aspect of teaching mindfulness to children is parental involvement. Research on Mindfulness in children has generally included parental involvement. Parents act as a key motivator in their children's education and can be very influential when it comes to practicing mindfulness in the home. Very often what happens is that the parents themselves engage in their own Mindfulness practice and this in itself can be very motivational when it comes to encouraging the children to practice. It is not always possible for parents to become involved in their own children's mindfulness practice for a variety of reasons. However, the involvement of the parents will help the child's practice become more regular. In cases where it is not possible for the parents to become involved, all you can do is accept this and work as best as you can with the child.

What to do

If possible attempt to include the parent(s) in the child's mindfulness practice. Use the following guideline as a means for parents to become involved:

- Explain what mindfulness is
- Talk to the parents about the benefits you expect the children to gain from a regular practice. These benefits are listed in the introduction section of this module

- Encourage home practice for parents. This might be in the form of encouraging the parents to participate in an 8 week Mindfulness and Meditation course
- Update them when new skills are being taught

Many children can learn specific mindfulness skills and use them straight away at home and school without any parental involvement. Others will only practice while in the classroom but many gradually start using the skills on their own. Encourage children to share what they are learning with their parent. Follow the appropriate ethical practice by getting specific consent from parents so that it is clear that teaching mindfulness to their child doesn't conflict with religious or other belief systems that the parents may have.

Inquiry

How responsive were the parents to your request that they be involved in their child's mindfulness practice? Was the child interested in having their parent(s) involved? In what ways can the child benefit from mindfulness even if their parent for whatever reason cannot get involved?

Guidelines for Adapting Mindfulness for Kids

Learning Objective

To show how adult mindfulness techniques can be adapted for children



Subject

Teaching mindfulness to children is not hugely different from teaching the techniques and practices to adults. Generally speaking, children will require more specific instructions. When adapting adult mindfulness techniques for

children it is very important to use play and introduce games.

What to do

Use the bullet points below when adapting an adult Mindfulness technique for kids.

- Shorten duration - Start with 30 seconds and gradually increase time
- Keep it SIMPLE
- Use language kids understand
- Demonstrate each skill, do it with them, fine-tune their practice
- Use repetition
- Use Play, activities and movement skills
- Have FUN
- Use humor
- Improvise as you see fit
- Use a gradual process
- Teach inner awareness, outer awareness, self-reflection and compassion
- Use 3-step progression

1. Begin with the more concrete attention to the external environment
2. Then move to the experience of the body
3. Finally, introduce attention to the mind and meditation exercises

Progression of Mindfulness Skills

1. Awareness of Surroundings
2. Awareness of Breath
3. Awareness of Sensory

4. Awareness of Mind
5. Awareness of Others
6. Awareness of Everything

Inquiry

Pay attention to how the children respond during the various mindfulness activities. Was the length of the activity too long or too short? Over time, were you able to notice an improvement in the child'd ability to practice the techniques?

Explaining Mindfulness in Kids Language

Learning Objective

Learning to explain what Mindfulness is in a way that is digestible for children.

Subject

An often cited definition of mindfulness is "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally (Kabat-zinn, 1994), embodies the three axioms of mindfulness - Intention, Attention and Attitude.

Mindfulness?

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: **on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **non-judgmentally**."



1. 'On purpose' or INTENTION
2. 'Paying attention' or ATTENTION
3. 'In a particular way' or ATTITUDE

These axioms are the fundamental building blocks out of which other things

emerge and are all covered in this weeks module.



Most kids have no real understanding of what mindfulness is and how it can help them. Their parents and families generally speaking will not know too much about it either. We will use a basic definition to introduce the concept. However, as the children begin to use more of the techniques in this course, they will develop their own definition and what it means to them.

Many kids especially teenagers will be put off by the use of the word meditation. For them, it could be considered a boring activity. For this reason we will start small and introduce the process gradually. Most of the techniques used in this course do not require sitting still for long.

What to do

Start by asking the kids what they think Mindfulness is. Then take Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition. Break the definition down as follows and go over each component:

Start with "paying attention to something" - this can be anything you

choose. It could be your breath, your eating, drinking water, how you kick a football or walk down a street. Then go over "in a particular way". Discuss what this means? For example looking at something, sensing something in a particular way. Next talk about "on purpose". This means that you set the intention and try to pay attention to that something. "in the present moment" means right now. It is not about something that happened yesterday or in the past. It is not about something that may or may not happen in the future. It is about deciding to pay attention to what is happening 'right now'. When we say "non judgementally", we mean without comparing it to something or judging or criticising it. We merely accept it for what it is. We just label it, accept it and do not get caught up in the story behind it.

Inquiry

Initiate a discussion with the students on this definition. What do they think about it? Do they have any questions? For example, ask them to choose something to pay attention to. Ask them how they will bring their attention to it. Is it something they will taste, see, touch or hear? Discuss how once they've set their intention to focus on something of their choosing they can then focus "on purpose". Ask whether it is difficult to stay in the present moment. Discuss how commonly we all judge and criticise, and what it feels like not to do it. Give them examples of being critical or judgmental. Ask them to write down what they think mindfulness means to them.

Busy vs Calm Mind

Learning Objective

This is an excellent tool to help children who experience intense feelings of anger, sadness and stress. It provides a mechanism for them to turn down their anger and stress.

Subject

We have approximately 60,000 thoughts a day and with the associated emotions that these thoughts can invoke, it is very easy to understand how your mind can become overwhelmed. The following exercise will help kids visualise Mindfulness.



What to do

- 1: Place water in a clear glass bowl
- 2: Place a small toy or object behind the bowl and move the bowl a few meters from the kids
- 3: Can they see the object behind the bowl?
- 4: Now sprinkle some baking soda into the water and watch it get cloudy
- 5: Ask them if they can see the object behind the bowl now
- 6: Explain that this is what happens in their minds when they are worried, sad, stressed and angry etc
- 7: Stop stirring. Allow them to keep watching the bowl to see what happens as the baking soda settles at the bottom.
- 8: Explain to them that this is what Mindfulness breathing does for their mind. It clears and calms their mind. It helps them to feel more relaxed and better able to concentrate
- 9: Ask them to move their bodies fast to get their mind excited again while stirring the water or adding more baking soda to the water
- 10: Show them how cloudy the water is again, just like their mind when it is busy
- 11: Ask them to breathe slowly as they watch the water clear. Explain that by breathing slowly and steadily, their thoughts and feelings settle and their minds become calm and clear

Note: the baking soda can be replaced with glitter.

Inquiry

Ask the children, how they felt as they watched the baking soda swirling around and making the water cloudy. Ask them, what they noticed as they watched the water clear. Did they feel calmer in their body? Could they relate to the comparison of cloudy versus clear water to a cloudy versus clear mind? Ask them to tell you about a time when their mind was cloudy?

Do you know how to breath

Learning Objective

Teaching children how to focus on the breath in a fun way

Subject

Here we begin to analyse the breath and work on focusing on the breath by looking at it in a fun way.

What to do

Use the handout to engage in a discussion about breath and breathing with the kids. Ask the questions in the handout and then discuss their answers. Make it fun and help them think about and play with different ways of breathing.



Inquiry

Ask the kids if they have ever thought about their breath before. Discuss what happened their breathing when they paid attention to it.

Do you know how to breath-Handout

How many of you know (or do you) know how to breathe?

How did you learn?

Was it like learning to walk?

Do you have to think about breathing?

Can you hold your breath?

Can you breathe fast?

Can you breathe slowly?

Can you blow hard?

Can you blow softly?

Can you breathe in quickly?

Can you breathe out slowly?

Can you breathe in through your nose?

Can you breathe in through your mouth?

Can you breathe out through your mouth?

How do you blow a bubble?

What happens if you blow too fast?

How do you get the biggest bubble?

How do you blow out a candle?

How do you smell a flower? Fast or slow? Do you use your nose or mouth?

How do you smell popcorn?

Put your hand on your belly and pretend there is a balloon in your belly.

Take a breath in through your nose to the count of 4 and fill that balloon in your belly with air.

Blow out gently through your mouth to the count of 8 like blowing a huge bubble and empty out your belly balloon.

Do it again.

What does that feel like?

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Can you feel your belly balloon get bigger?

Did you run out of air or have some left over?

What did you notice when you were breathing?

How to breathe in

Learning Objective

Teaching kids how to inhale breath through their nose and mouth.

Subject

In order to practice Mindfulness of breath, one needs to be able to inhale at will. Younger children need to learn how to do this consciously.

What to do

Use the two methods described in the handout in the resources section to help kids understand how to breathe in through their nose and mouth. Try and be playful with them and turn it into a game. Observe them and make sure that they are breathing in through their noses and mouths when they say they are.

Inquiry

Were they able to breath in on command? Ask them if they could slow down their in-breath. Discuss what was different about the smell of flowers when they breathed through their nose versus their mouth. Find out if they had problems breathing in.

How to breathe in - Handout

Learning Objective

The intention of this task is to teach young kids how to breathe in on command, preferably through their nose.

What to do

1: Get a small bouquet of fragrant flowers (or walk to a garden) and ask the kids to smell the flowers.

Tell them to show you how to smell the flowers.

Ask them what the flowers smell like.

Ask them if they like the way the flowers smell.

Do they know anything else that smells like these flowers?

Observe them and see if they are actually smelling them with their nose or if they are breathing in through their mouth.

Demonstrate how you smell flowers by breathing in through your nose.

Breathe in and out through your nose a few times and ask them to try it.

Put your hand over your mouth so you can't breathe through your mouth and ask them if they can put their hand over their mouth like you.

Ask them to smell the flowers with their hand over their mouth.

Be playful with them. Do it with them.

Ask them to breathe in quickly, then slowly, then with their mouth, then nose.

Watch them do it.

Ask them to listen to see if they make funny noises when they breathe in through their nose, or through their mouth.

Ask them to try and see if they can smell the flowers when they breathe in

through their mouth instead of their nose.

2. Put something fragrant in a paper cup and ask the kids to smell it and tell you what it smells like. Use the process described in 1.

Good smells to use:

- Oranges
- Coffee
- Soap

How to breathe out

Learning Objective

Learn how to teach children how to breath out

Subject

Being able to breathe in and out at will are basic activities in order to do Mindfulness of the Breath. Use the games and activities handout in the resources section to teach children how to breathe out

Inquiry

Were they able to master breathing out through the mouth? Were they able to slow down their breath, purse their lips? Did they have fun blowing bubbles? Were they able to slow down how fast they blew in order to get bigger bubbles? Ask them which is easier blowing a bubble or blowing up a balloon?

How to breathe out - Handout

Blow Up Balloons (8 years +)

Ask the children to blow up a small balloon. This provides a way to contrast gentle versus forceful breaths. Ask them how hard they have to blow to get it going, then how hard after it is partially blown up. Let them play with it and let the air out quickly as it flies around the room. Ask them to pay attention to the balloon as it fills and relate this to their belly when they breathe.

Blow Out Candles (11 years +)

Most kids learn to blow out the candles on their birthday cake pretty young. But for safety reasons, limit the use of this activity to older kids and teens. Light a candle and ask them to blow it out. Light it again and ask them to blow gently to make the flame dance. How hard can they blow before it blows out?

Do these activities with the children and make them fun.

Journal about Breathing

Learning Objective

To teach children how to process and integrate their experiences by journaling.

Subject

Journaling is an effective way for children to process and integrate their experiences while learning mindfulness. Some children will love to journal, some will hate it. Many children might prefer to draw, so ask them to draw a picture that represents something about their experience with mindfulness of breathing.

What to do

Ask the children to respond to the journal prompts in the handout in the resources section about how the breathing exercises you gave them have affected their life.

Inquiry

Ask the children if they want to share their journal entries. Discuss what they write and draw.

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Journal about breathing - Handout

Journal Prompts:

- What happened when you practiced breathing meditations?
- What did you think about?
- How did you feel?
- Was it hard or easy to pay attention to breathing?
- Did you teach anyone else to breathe?
- How did you feel when you focused on breathing?
- What did you notice about your breathing?
- Did you notice your mind wandering?
- How did you bring your attention back to breathing?
- Which breathing skills do you like the best and why?
- When have you used the mindfulness of breathing skills?
- When could you have used them?
- How has practicing these breathing exercises changed your day?
- What did you like most about breathing exercises?
- What did you like least about breathing exercises?
- Have you noticed any changes in your stress level?
- Have you noticed any changes in your ability to concentrate?
- Has anything changed for you?

Picture Prompts

- Draw a picture of you breathing
- Draw a picture of your brain before and after you practice breathing

Neurobiology of Mindfulness - Neuroplasticity

Learning Objective

To understand the concept of Neuroplasticity and why it is important.

Subject



Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change itself. MRI studies, SPECT scan studies and EEG studies have shown the ability of mindfulness to change brain structure and brain functioning. Hebb's axiom states that neurons that fire together wire together (Hebb 2009). It also states that dendrites increase in size and efficiency when tasks are repeated over and over. The analogy that is often used here is that of a path or a ski slope. As the path on the ski slope becomes more developed with use, it becomes the default

path.

What to do

Explain to the children that the brain's ability to change itself is called neuroplasticity. Write the word on the blackboard and ask them to say it with you. Have a discussion with the kids about learning to cycle a bicycle or learning a new song and how this gets easier the more they do them. Map this back to how the brain changes and how they will get better and better at something the more that it is repeated. Perform the paper folding exercise to illustrate how neural pathways are made in the brain. Ask them how they learnt to tie their shoelaces. Again, map this back to how the brain learns how to do things and gets better with practice. Discuss with the kids how this may be helpful when they wish to learn something new. Also discuss with the kids how it might be harmful when the brain gets stuck in a negative pattern such as anxiety or depression. Use the handout to explore how doing something a different way starts to change the pathway which can be helpful when shifting out of negative states.

Inquiry

Help the children look at how the process of neuroplasticity may be helping them or even holding them back by asking "What positive or negative things do you do every day that may have worn a pathway in your brain? Ask them whether they notice themselves responding automatically to things without stopping to think and choosing a response?"

Neuroplasticity-Handout

Give the children a piece of heavy paper.

- Ask them to fold the paper in half, then fold it again, and then again.
- Do it with them. Guide them to press down on the fold to sharpen it.
- Encourage them to notice how difficult or easy it is to fold the paper each time.
- Have them unfold it and fold it again where it was already folded.
- Ask them if refolding is faster and easier than folding the paper in the first place.
- Relate this to moving information along a well-travelled path of neurons.
- Discuss whether it is easier for your brain to think something new or the same thought.
- Ask them if it is easier to learn something new or do something you have done before.

Prefrontal Cortex

Learning Objective

To learn how the prefrontal cortex (PFC) can be viewed as the football soccer manager of the brain as it orchestrates thoughts and actions according to internal desires or wishes.

Subject



The prefrontal cortex links the limbic areas, the brain stem and the cortex and carries out executive functions. A study by (Holzel et al 2007b) described how a mindful breathing practice increased PFC activation which may lead to greater processing of distractions and emotions.

What to do

Explain to the children that the prefrontal cortex is located in the brain's frontal lobe. Show the children where the PFC is by placing your hand on your forehead. Ask the children to do the same and repeat the word prefrontal cortex a couple of times. Explain to the children that it acts like a football manager, controlling the activities of backs, forwards and mid-fielders as it controls the activities of their brain. It plays a role in paying attention, planning, organising and decision making. Practice the two exercises in the handout below with them.

Inquiry

Have a look at the location and function of the PFC. Look at some examples of difficulties that occur if the PFC isn't working as it should. Some issues are poor planning, poor mood regulation and ADHD. Ask the children what their PFC does for them and how they know whether it is working well for them.

Functions of the PFC

The following executive functions are performed by the PFC:

- Planning
- Organizing time, activity and space
- Regulating Attention
- Decision Making
- Moderating Behavior
- Personality Expression
- Motivation
- Mood Regulation

Soccer Team Manager

What to do

Ask the kids to pretend that they are managing a soccer team. (Do it with them). Ask them to pick a team that they like. Ask them how they will position the backs, midfielders and forwards? What formation will they use? Will they use 4-4-2, 4-3-3, 4-2-3-1, 4-5-1 or 3-5-2. In cases, where soccer formations is not an option, some mindfulness trainers use the idea of the conductor of an orchestra. The conductor waves a baton and asks the percussion or the brass section, or string section to come in and out, become louder and softer. The essential idea here, is to convey that the pre-frontal cortex serves the role of manager. You may find other examples that can convey this concept to your group.

Now relate this back to the PFC in each of the children's brains. Use this imaginary manager to tell their brain's to concentrate a little more over there; calm down a bit over there; speed up; slow down; turn down that worry .. etc.

Possible questions to ask:

- What does a manager do?
- Ask the kids to list things they have trouble with that are controlled by the PFC.
- List things they do well that are controlled by the PFC.
- Practice strengthening PFC processing by practicing mindfulness skills.
- What might happen if the PFC is offline and not working well?

The Amygdala - Security Guard

Learning objective

To learn that the amygdala plays a key role in the processing of emotions and is central to survival.

Subject



The amygdala is made up of two almond shaped brain structures. It plays an important role in the processing of emotions and is key to survival. It plays a role in fear responses, emotional memory and the secretion of hormones. In neuroscience it is often called the 'fear centre' and performs the role of the 'protector or guardian' in our brains. A study conducted by Hotzel, Lazar et al shows that reductions in stress (which can be achieved with mindfulness) can decrease the grey matter density of the Amygdala.

What to do

Explain to the children that the amygdala acts like a protector. Mindfulness calms the activity of the amygdala and increases feelings of calm. Ask the kids what a protector does. Use the activity in the resource section to explore how the amygdala helps to keep children safe.

Amygdala-Handout

Exercise

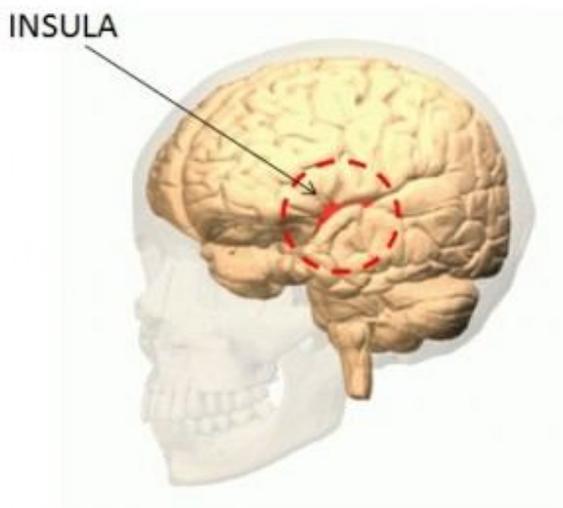
- What does the amygdala do for you?
- Draw a picture of where the amygdala is in your head
- What might happen if you didn't have the amygdala?
- List 2 or 3 times when you think your amygdala kept you safe.
- Where there any times you were actually safe but your amygdala thought you were in danger?
- Use belly breathing to calm your amygdala.

The Insula - what's happening

Learning objective

To teach children that practicing Mindfulness changes the structure of the brain in positive ways.

Subject



The right anterior insula is involved in (among other things) interoception—the sensing of body states such as the state of the gut, the heart, and pain. Studies show that mindfulness changes the structure of the insula—specifically, the right anterior insula (Hölzel et al., 2007a).

Greater right anterior insular gray matter volume correlates with increased accuracy in the subjective sense of the body and with negative emotional experience as well as with increased sustained attention. Knowing that mindfulness actually changes brain structure in positive ways helps older kids and teens understand the benefits and improves the chances they will practice mindfulness.

What to do

Use the handout in the resources section to introduce the insula, where it is in the brain (one on each side), and what it does for us. Explain that practicing mindfulness changes the actual structure of the insula, specifically the right insula which makes it work even better. Together with the children follow the steps shown to take one's own pulse in the handout. This is one of the things that the insula senses.

Inquiry

Explain to the children what the insula does. Give specific examples which they can relate to such as sensing when they have to use the bathroom, or increasing their heart rate and blood pressure when they exercise.

What your Insula does for you

The insula is involved in:

- Interoception (sensing body states such as the state of the gut, heart, pain, etc.)
- Helping you know when you have to go to the toilet
- Sensations of warmth or coldness on skin
- Body movement
- Self-awareness
- Vocalization and music
- Emotional awareness
- Risk, uncertainty, and anticipation
- Feelings of disgust
- Visual and auditory awareness of movement
- Time perception
- Attention
- Perceptual decision making
- Cognitive control and performance monitoring
- Blood pressure and heart beat regulation

How to take your pulse

Interoception is one important job of the insula and includes the awareness of body states including the heartbeat. A simple way to understand this concept is to take your pulse. When our heart beats, we can feel it pumping blood. The way and rate at which the heart pumps blood is our pulse.

There are two places where we can feel our pulse.

First, we can take our first two fingers and place them on our wrist on the palm side of our arm. (Demonstrate this.) If you put your fingers there very gently and don't press down, you may feel as if something is lightly tapping on your fingers. Move your fingers around a little and sit quietly until you can feel it.

The second place is on our neck. Take your first two fingers and place them on the front of your neck below your jaw and above your chest. Gently place them there and move them around until you feel the pulse.

Let's make it easier to feel your pulse. Stand up. Now run in place.

- Now put your finger lightly on the side of your neck. Can you feel your pulse now? Can you count the beats?
- When you are angry, scared, stressed, or you have been exercising, your heart beats faster and it makes it easier to feel your pulse.
- Now sit back down. Breathe in slowly through your nose and gently blow out like you are blowing a huge bubble.
- Breathe in and out slowly again.
- Now take your pulse again. Can you feel it? Is it slower? Is it harder to

feel?

- Now that you know how to take your pulse, you can tell if you need to calm down by taking it. You know how to calm down by paying attention to your breathing and taking a slow, deep belly breath and blowing it out slowly. Notice how your pulse slows as you become calm.

Journal about your Protector and Manager

Learning objective

To help children with the aid of prompting questions to think about their amygdala and prefrontal cortex and what might happen if these weren't working properly.

What to do



Review with the children what roles their amygdala and prefrontal cortex play. Use the questions in the handout as a prompt.

Inquiry

Review the children's answers and use these answers if necessary to promote further discussion.

Some Journaling prompts

Some Prompts:

- What job does your prefrontal cortex do?
- Why do we call the prefrontal cortex the "manager"?
- List some times when your "manager" was managing.
- What happens when your "manager" takes a break?

Can't pay attention

Can't make good decisions

Impulsivity

No motivation

Poor choices

Bad mood

Losing things

- What happens to your "manager" when your "protector" warns DANGER?
- What job does your amygdala do?
- Why do we call the amygdala the "protector"?
- List some times when your "protector" was on duty.
- Name a time when your amygdala kept you safe.
- What would happen if you were in danger but your "protector" was off duty?

Picture Prompts

- Draw a picture of your prefrontal cortex.
- Draw a picture of your "manager".

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- Draw a picture of your "manager" helping you pay attention.
- Draw a picture of your amygdala.
- Draw a picture of your "protector".
- Draw a picture of your "protector" keeping you safe.

Hand Model of the Brain

Learning Objectives

How a hand model of the brain helps kids visualise the structure and function of the brain.

What to do

Have a look at the following video to learn how to make a hand model of the brain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

Core Tools - Intention

Learning Objective

Helping children with the process of building intention at the beginning of mindfulness practice (i.e paying attention and concentrating).

Subject

Intention is the goal that you wish to achieve by pursuing an action. In mindfulness, intention refers to what you are going to pay attention to. Most of the time it will be your breath, but it could also be paying attention to the act of drinking water or eating food or listening to somebody in a conversation. In Mindfulness we try to bring our attention back to our "intention" again and again.

What to do

1. Before each mindfulness task, help the children decide what their intention is for that particular task. In setting the intention in this way it will help them to bring their attention back over and over again. As mentioned previously the intention maybe to focus on the breath or it may be to focus on their surroundings etc.
2. Explain to the children what an intention is and discuss the intention they have chosen.
3. Explain that by choosing to pay attention to something and returning their attention to it over and over again, they are training their brains in specific ways that will help them throughout their lives.
4. Help them to take a moment to identify their intention at the beginning of each mindfulness practice (both formal and informal).
5. Remind them to:

Keep awareness of their intention present in mind

To notice as soon as they become aware of a distraction, a thought or a feeling to shift their attention back to their intention (usually their breath).

6. Do this over and over again.

7. Apply this process to every mindfulness practice.

Inquiry

Help children reflect on what it was like to set an intention.

Ask them:

- How hard or easy was it to set an intention?
- Did you feel your mind wandering from your intention?
- How did you bring it back to your intention?

Core tools - Attention

Learning Objective

Learning to regulate attention to improve concentration, memory and overall mental clarity.

Subject

Children today are bombarded with social media and all sorts of other distractions. They can get easily overwhelmed with too many things competing for their attention. This exercise will help children with the basic steps in improving their ability to regulate attention.

What to do

Ask the children to decide what they are going to pay attention to. It might be a drawing they have colored in, or the feel of a leaf. Be creative.

- Set your intention to pay attention
- Select something to pay attention to
- Just notice everything you can about the object you are paying attention to
- Notice if you are becoming distracted by a feeling, or a thought or something else
- Acknowledge this and dismiss it without judging it.
- Let it go
- Go back to the intended object of your attention
- Notice everything about the object; What does it feel like ? Does it smell?
- Continue this process in silence for about 30 seconds
- As you practice this more often, increase the time by a minute until

you are doing this for 5 minutes.

- Select something to pay attention to

Inquiry

Ask the children whether their mind wandered during the experience? What did they do when they noticed they were distracted? What did they notice about what they were paying attention to? Did they notice anything new about it? Were they aware of any inner thoughts that were making comments on the process? Explain to the children that it is normal to have a running commentary and give them examples. "I hope this is over soon" "This is so boring" "Oh I never noticed that before".

Core tools - Attitude

Learning Objective

Teaching children to cultivate the freshness of the beginners mind when practising Mindfulness.

Subject

Often Mindfulness is associated with awareness. Awareness is a new concept for most children. However, it is the quality of the awareness which is crucial. The attention you pay something can be cold and critical or it can be warm and friendly. It is important that the children commit to being kind, curious and open to their awareness. The following task is about noticing what's arising as it's arising. This includes awareness of thoughts, body sensations, feelings and what is happening around them. It involves paying attention to what is happening in this moment and acknowledging and dismissing distractions. The goal is to remain aware without trying to change anything. Observe and accept what you observe. With practice, children can become very skilled at becoming more 'aware of awareness'. They can move from 'I am hungry' to 'I noticed I am hungry' or 'I am angry' to 'I noticed I am angry'.

What to do

- Stop. Pause for a moment
- Notice, what's arising as it's arising
- Pay attention to feelings, body sensations, thoughts
- Just be aware without trying to change anything
- Now remember your intention and bring your attention back to your intention

- Continue for 10 seconds, gradually increasing to 5 minutes depending on the child's age and ability.

Inquiry

Help the children reflect and share with each other what their experience was like when doing this mindfulness exercise. Ask them: What did you notice? Did you notice any smells or sounds? Did you notice any sensations in your body? What thoughts arose? Were you aware of any feelings? What distracted you? With kids you might have to give them some examples of things that can come up during this exercise.

Basic Process of Mindfulness

Learning Objective

To help children to grasp the basic process of Mindfulness

What to do

- 1: Decide what to pay attention to
- 2: Notice when you are not paying attention to it
- 3: Accept without judgement that you have been distracted
- 4: Congratulate yourself on noticing that you have become distracted
- 5: Return your attention to what you are supposed to be paying attention to

Body Scan for Kids

Learning objective

To help children reach a deep state of relaxation accept their body as it is, work effectively with their body sensations and feelings of discomfort and pain, and increase powers of concentration and mindfulness.

Subject



The body scan meditation is usually included in studies on the effectiveness of mindfulness for adults, teens and kids. It is a component of most formal meditation practices such as Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program. It involves focusing your full attention on each part of the body, noticing whatever sensations arise, accepting them, and sending

kind and compassionate thoughts to each area of the body.

What to do

Explain to the kids that a body scan is the process of paying attention to each part of their body one area at a time. It is a common part of many formal mindfulness meditation practices. It is designed to help them enter a deep state of relaxation, to accept their body as it is, to work with discomfort and pain, and to increase concentration and mindfulness. Read through the handout on the next page. Ask the children to lie on their backs if at all possible, or sit comfortably in a chair. Encourage them to practice this between sessions. If they become uncomfortable or emotional at any point, ask them if they want to continue or to stop. Be prepared to process what comes up with them. Shorten the practice for young kids to start and gradually lengthen it. For young kids, discuss what the word "notice" means before doing the body scan.

Inquiry

Help children reflect on how they felt during and after practicing the body scan meditation. What did they notice about their bodies? Were they able to stay focused? Did they fall asleep? Did they become more relaxed or more agitated? What was it like for them to simply observe and accept? Did they feel any pain? Did any pain they felt get better or worse? Did any thoughts or emotions arise when they focused on specific areas of their body? If so, process these and help them connect them to past experiences.

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Body Scan for Kids - Handout

Let's begin. Breathe in slowly through your nose to the count of 4: 1-2-3-4 and breathe out even more slowly like you are blowing a huge bubble, through your mouth to the count of 8: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8. Now just breathe normally.

Bring your attention to your left foot. Just notice your left foot, including your toes, heel, bottom of your left foot, top of your left foot. Notice what it feels like.

Then move up to your left ankle. Notice how your left ankle feels. Pay attention to whether there is any pain there, is it cold, or hot, does it feel light or heavy?

Then pay attention to your left leg starting at the bottom, up to your knees, and thighs, all the way to your hips at the top of your leg. Notice if your left leg feels tight or relaxed, warm or cold, light or heavy.

Now pay attention to your right foot. Just notice your right foot including your toes, heel, bottom of your right foot, top of your right foot. Notice what it feels like.

Then move up to your right ankle. Notice how your right ankle feels. Pay attention to whether there is any pain there. Is it cold, or hot, does it feel light or heavy?

Then pay attention to your right leg starting at the bottom, up to your knees, and thighs, all the way to your hips at the top of your leg. Notice if it feels tight or relaxed, warm or cold, light or heavy.

Now pay attention to both legs from your toes up to your hips. Be still, breathe and send your legs some kind and loving thoughts.

Now move your attention to your belly. Just notice what's there. Feel how your belly feels. Let it be the way it is. Send love and kindness to your belly.

Now pay attention to your back starting with your lower back all the way up to your shoulders. Notice how your back feels. Sit for a moment just noticing your back.

Now give your attention to your fingers, thumbs, wrists, arms and shoulders. Just notice how your arms feel.

Now pay attention to your neck and throat. Swallow and notice how your neck and throat feel.

Now pay attention to your face: your chin, your mouth, your cheeks, your eyes, your eyebrows, your forehead and finally your ears.

Now bring your attention to your head, including your hair and scalp and your brain inside your head.

Now take a big belly breath and fill your whole body with a cushion of air. Blow the air out gently like you are blowing a huge bubble and let go of anything that needs to go.

Open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.

Journaling

Learning Objective

To help kids to process and integrate experiences

Subject

Journaling is something kids may or may not struggle with depending on the child. Ask them to write down or even draw a picture that represents something about their experience with a basic mindfulness skill.

What to do

Use this tool after the kids have had some introduction to mindfulness and use it again several more times as they become more experienced. This will help them see how their understanding changes over time. It is more likely to get done if it is given during a session.

Changing the Channel

Learning objective

To teach children a skill that will show them that they can change their thoughts.

Subject



The vast majority of children and even adults do not realise that they can change what they are thinking about. In this exercise we use a tv channel to match the thoughts that we are currently thinking. As an example we may be watching our sad, angry or worried channels. We can then change the channel to a happy or fun channel and in doing so change the contents of our thoughts and feelings. This is an important concept with cognitive behaviour where what we think mirrors itself in how we feel, and we can

choose a thought that will give us better more enriching feelings.

What to do

Explain to the children that in this exercise their thoughts indicate the channel that they are watching. It could be a happy, sad, stressed or angry channel. Help the children spot the thoughts and the channel they are viewing. Now ask them what they would put on their happy channel. Do your best to help them come up with about four positive ideas or activities based on what you know about them and what they like doing. For some it might be football, swimming, ballet, hockey or even playing with their dog. Help them identify activities that feel good to them. Follow the process in the handout to help them use this tool whenever they need to change their thoughts.

Inquiry

Ask the children whether they used this technique at home? Was it helpful? Were they able to spot unpleasant thoughts as they were happening? What did they put on their happy/feel good channel? What did they notice about their thoughts and their mood when they used this channel? Do they have several happy channels or just the one?

Changing the Channel - Handout

We have more than 60,000 thoughts a day. Did you know that you can choose what you want to think about? You can only have one thought at a time. Why not try to make it a good one.

Imagine that what you are thinking about is like watching a TV channel. What are you thinking about right now?

Are your thoughts happy, sad, worried, angry? This is the channel you are watching now.

Think about what you would put on your happy / peaceful / relaxed / feel good channel. Be specific.

Choose 3 different things you could put on 3 different channels that feel good to you. What are these 3 things?

Some examples might be petting your dog or going swimming or playing football with your friends. Whatever it is that feels good for you. What 3 things could you use for your channels?

If your thoughts feel bad or are negative, then pretend you are picking up an imaginary remote control and using it to "change the channel" to one of your happy/feel good channels and imagine you are watching what you already decided would be on that channel.

Practice "changing the channel" in your mind to a more positive channel. Do you feel better watching this channel?

Use this process any time you have negative or unpleasant thoughts or

feelings.

Past Present Future

Learning objective

To teach children how to identify whether thoughts belong to the past, present or future.

Subject

Explain to children that it is possible to think about things that are happening right now in the present moment (present), or something that happened in the past (the past), or something that has not happened yet (the future).



What to do

Use the situations in the resource section to aid the kids in identifying thoughts that are from the past, present or future. Read the statement and ask them whether it is about the past, present or future. Encourage them then to find a thought that is about the present moment. Ask the children to tell a story about the past. Following on from this, ask the children to tell a story about the future. Now ask the children to identify what they are thinking right now and whether it is about the past, present or future. If what they are thinking right now is not about the present, encourage them to find a relevant thought that is. Encourage them to notice how they feel when the thought is not about the present compared to when it is.

Inquiry

Help the children reflect on what this game was like for them. Did they already know or learn the difference between thoughts about the past, the present, or the future? Were they able to correctly identify them? What did they notice about how they felt when the thought was about the present as opposed to the past or the future?

Past Present Future - Handout

Are these statements about the past, the present, or the future?

- Gary is worried about his math exams that he must take next week.
Example: A present moment thought might be "Gary is studying his maths today so he will do well in his exams next week."
- Mary is angry because Joe bumped into her yesterday and knocked her school books on the floor.
- Sophie is thinking about how beautiful the flowers are on the table in front of her.
- Karen loves her new school teacher.
- Jim worries that his brother will get sick like he did last year.
- Peter is enjoying playing with his Xbox.
- Bill is sure that the kids he will meet at camp won't like him.
- Richard is noticing how happy he feels today.
- Kate is paying attention to doing her homework.
- Peter is thinking about going off with the scouts next week

Journal about Mindfulness of Thoughts

Learning objective

To teach children how to explore the process of noticing thoughts and letting them go and also to illustrate the quality of these thoughts through journaling.

Subject

A core aspect of a mindfulness practice is being able to notice thoughts and let them go without engaging. Another key aspect is increasing awareness as to the content of those thoughts and the ability to change negative thoughts and their associated feelings to positive thoughts. This exercise will help kids explore this.

What to do

Explain to the children that mindfulness practice starts with noticing thoughts and dismissing them without engaging with them. Over time this will increase the ability to monitor the thought content and gradually change the automatic negative thoughts to thoughts that feel better. Ask the children to respond to the questions in the resources section.

Inquiry

Review the children's answers. If they were not able to write anything, go over the questions with them and discuss their responses. Help the children identify how mindfulness is helping them.

Journal about Mindfulness of Thoughts - Handout

Things to do

- Draw a picture of yourself and your thoughts.
- Draw a picture of yourself watching your happy channel.
- Draw a picture of a thought from the past, the present, and the future.
- Draw a picture of your happy channel.

Mindfulness of Emotions

In addition to being mindful of thoughts that arise and drift away, it is also important to be aware of the emotions that accompany these thoughts. Younger children are typically not very skilled at labeling emotions. For this reason, we recommend that you start this section with games such as "Name that feeling" to help the children become more skilled in recognising emotions.

There are three basic components to an emotion. They are:

- Thoughts or the story behind the emotion
- Bodily sensations: how the emotion manifests in their body. All emotions have some physical component. This is often the first and easiest way for kids and teens to notice that they are having an emotion. For example, when they are angry they may feel hot or they may feel like their chest is going to explode.
- Emotional mood in the mind. This is difficult to identify with young children.

Often thoughts or the story that gave rise to the emotion pulls kids in so that they lose their mindfulness. Usually such thoughts and stories pertain to the past and the future and not the present. The exercise named "past, present, future" will help them identify which thoughts belong to the past, present and future. As they become more skilled at this, they will be better able to become mindful of emotions.

I Feel

Learning Objectives

To teach children to tell how they are feeling right now

Subject

Being mindful of feelings is a very important part of mindfulness. Typically primary school children are not able to identify how they feel. But this exercise will help them improve this ability. This exercise uses the format of a game to ask children to say how they are feeling right now in the present moment.

What to do

Explain to the children that you are going to play a game called "I feel" to help them become aware of how they feel right now. Practice it with them and start by letting them know how you feel. Ask them to look at you or indeed another child and say "hello". Then say how they are feeling right now. "Hello, I feel"

Examples are:

"Hello, I feel silly doing this"

"Hello, I feel happy to be in school today".

"Hello, I feel embarrassed doing this".

"Hello, I don't know how I feel".

It is ok to say "I don't know how I feel". Encourage the children to notice how they feel right now and if they can name a feeling that they had earlier today.

Another variation of this is to name a feeling and then ask the children when they felt that way or when they might feel that way.

As an example:

“When did you (or might you feel) HAPPY?”

“When did you (or might you feel) SAD?”

“When did you (or might you feel) EXCITED?”

“When did you (or might you feel) ANGRY?”

Inquiry

Ask the children what it was like for them to notice how they felt? Were they able to notice how they felt at all? Were they able to name the feeling? Did they feel embarrassed? Were they able to find the present moment of the feeling?

Name that Feeling

Learning objective

To teach children how to recognise feelings.

Subject

As mentioned previously, being mindful of feelings is a core component of mindfulness. Children often experience difficulty putting a name on a feeling. This exercise uses a common feelings chart to help them improve this skill.

What to do

Use the feelings chart in the resources section to help the children identify and name various feelings. Point to each picture and ask them what each child is feeling. Cover the text and ask them again. Then ask them to tell you a time that they felt that way or when someone might feel that way. As an example, if they name the feeling as "Happy", ask them if there was a time they felt happy and if so why. If not, ask them when someone might feel happy. Tell them about a time when you felt happy. Ask them to draw a happy face or a sad face or an angry face.



Inquiry

Were the children correctly able to identify feelings based on facial expressions on the chart? Could they name a time when they felt a particular feeling? Ask whether it was difficult for them to name the feelings on the chart? Did they have trouble with any of them?

Journal about Mindfulness of Emotions

Learning objective

Now that the children have practiced some mindfulness of emotions exercises, explain how coloring in and writing about them will solidify their learning

What to do

Tailor your explanation to the children based on their age and explain why writing about what they have learned is an important way to make their practice more effective. Ask them to respond to the questions in the resources section.

Inquiry

Review the children's answers to the questions in the resources section. Ask them what they have learned from practicing the mindfulness skills and writing about their experiences.

Journal about Mindfulness of Emotions - Handout

- Draw a picture of you feeling: sad, angry, happy, silly, etc.
- Draw a picture of how you feel right now.
- Draw a picture of how your mom, your dad, or your teacher, feel.
- Draw a picture of how you want to feel.

Mindfulness of Relationships

Learning objective

To teach kids to understand what a relationship is and to increase their mindfulness in relationships they already have.

What to do

Encourage the kids to engage in a discussion about their relationships by asking them what they think a relationship is. You could start the conversation by explaining that a relationship is simply a connection between two people. Discuss the various kinds of relationships such as parent/child, football coaches, teachers, friends to name but a few. Ask them to make a list of people they have a relationship with including family, coaches, friends etc. You could then ask them to make a list of people they would like to have a relationship with. Ask them to identify what makes a good relationship. For example, you might ask them:

What makes a good friend?

What makes you feel good in a relationship?

What makes you feel appreciated?

What makes you feel accepted?

What makes you feel liked?

Does it help you feel connected if you have things in common?

How does it feel if someone calls you stupid?

How does talking to someone make the relationship better, or worse?

For younger children you could ask questions such as:

Do you like it when mommy smiles at you?

How does mommy take good care of you?

What do you feel like if your brother hits you?

Inquiry

Help the children to reflect on the relationships in their lives: What relationships do they have? Which relationships do they like the best? Do you have more relationships than you thought? Is there anyone you have a relationship with that is mean to you or hurts your feelings?

Loving Kindness for Self and Others

Learning objective

To learn how to carry out a 'loving kindness' or sending 'good wishes' meditation.

Subject



Studies have shown that the 'loving kindness' exercise fosters compassion for oneself and others.

What to do

Engage in a discussion with the children about how the practice of loving kindness helps them accept and care for themselves and others. It is worth pointing out that for younger children it might be better to use the term extending 'Kind Wishes'. Examples that they could use might be a sister, brother, parent, teacher, pet or whoever they wish. Please feel free to use

the handout for the basic idea of the 'friendly wishes' or 'loving kindness' meditation. Explain to them that there are six different relationships that you would like them to develop loving kindness toward:

- Themselves
- Somebody in the family
- A friend
- Someone who they know but not very well
- Somebody who annoys them
- Everybody in the world

Ask them to choose somebody in their lives who fits each of the five categories above. Ask them to imagine that person in their minds and send them 'loving wishes'. It might also be an idea to ask them to write down wishes that they have for other people. Examples are 'May my mum feel better', 'May my dog be happy', 'May my friend be healthy and happy'.

Inquiry

Engage in a discussion with the children and ask them what this technique was like for the children. Were they easily able to find people from each of the five categories. Did they have any difficulty sending kind wishes to themselves. Did they have any difficulty sending kind wishes to others. Did they find it more difficult to send kind wishes to somebody that wasn't too friendly to them. Did they notice anything different about how they felt before and after doing this sending 'kind wishes' exercise.

Loving Kindness for Self and Others - Handout

What to do

In this meditation you always begin with sending loving kindness or friendly wishes to yourself. When you have done this, you are ready to send loving-kindness towards others.

Six Types of Persons to send loving kindness or friendly wishes towards:

- Yourself
- Somebody in your family
- A good friend
- A "neutral" person
- A difficult person
- And then gradually everybody in the world

Picture yourself and each of these people in your mind and send them "friendly wishes" each in turn such as:

May I be safe
May I be well,
May I be happy.

[Pick a family member here]

May [my sister/brother/Mam/Dad] be safe
May [my sister/brother/Mam/Dad] be well.
May [my sister/brother/Mam/Dad] be happy.

May my friend be safe
May my friend be well
May my friend be happy.

[Pick somebody who you know but isn't a friend]

May he/she be safe
May he/she be well
May he/she be happy

[Pick a person who you find difficult]

May this person I find difficult be safe
May this person I find difficult be well.
May this person I find difficult be happy.

May all of the people in the world be safe
May all of the people in the world be well
May all of the people in the world be happy.

Repeat with each type of person as above.

Kindful Acts

Learning objective

To teach children an activity to help them be loving and kind towards others.

What to do



Organise the kids into small groups and ask them to make a list of things that might be helpful or kind to someone. On the blackboard, write down their ideas. From this list help them choose an activity that they can manage. If this is not possible, another slant would be to ask them to name an activity that they would like to do for somebody.

Inquiry

Organise a discussion with the children and ask them to describe what it felt like to carry out a kind act. If they were not able to carry it out, ask them to describe what it felt like? What did it feel like for them afterwards?