

Mindfulness with Children

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a word that a lot of us are familiar with, and perhaps even practice regularly.

We can think of mindfulness as being present in the moment, and bringing our awareness to ourselves, thoughts, feelings, and being in that moment without judging the thoughts and emotions that come up. Some of us may think of mindfulness as 'time in', but this does not have to mean time alone.

Mindfulness is a skill, which, when practised regularly, is a useful strategy to support us in regulating our emotions and calming down our nervous system. So how do we support our children in building this skill? By doing it together. Not only does this build the mindfulness skill, these activities can support connection.

How do we practise mindfulness together?

A mindful breath is one that is slow and steady, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Pay attention to your breath as you go and notice how it feels. Techniques like the following can be useful in building this skill within ourselves and our children from a young age, and can be practised together using mindful breaths:

- **Five Finger Breathing** - Face each other with your fingers stretched out like you're going to do a high-five. Then, slowly trace your fingers from the base of your thumb to the top, then go down and up again for each finger. Each time you go up, take a breath in. Pause. Then breathe out when you trace down the next. Now swap! Trace the other person's hand and practise breathing together.
- **Feeling Bubbles** - Take some mindful breaths together and get ready to blow some bubbles. Think of a big feeling you have and say it out loud. Now blow a bubble and watch that big feeling be carried away until it pops or disappears.
- **Belly Breathing Buddy** - Lie down next to each other and place a stuffed toy on your bellies. Take some mindful breaths and notice how the toy goes up and down with each breath. What changes when you take a slower breath? Which breath makes the toy rise and which makes the toy go back down?
- **I Spy** - Go for a walk together and pick a colour. For five minutes, notice your surroundings and search for something in that colour, pointing out what you see. After five minutes, swap and pick a different colour, and search for something in that colour.



Remember, practising mindfulness works best before things spiral out of control. Once we have built the skill, we can start using it when we feel overwhelmed to bring us back to a calm space.

Arnold, S., & Emerson, E. (2020). Mindfulness activities for Kids (and their grown-ups): Learn calm, Focus, & Gratitude for a lifetime. Z Kids.

