

# MINDFULNESS

*'In today's rush, we all think too much – seek too much – want too much – and forget about the joy of just being.'* – Eckhart Tolle.



BEING  
A TRAUMA  
INFORMED  
COMMUNITY

## Why practice mindfulness?

The world is a busy place and our brains are constantly receiving and responding to the thousands of different stimuli around us, as well as our past and present experiences and interactions. Mindfulness though is about being in the moment and noticing. Noticing our breathing. Noticing our thoughts. Noticing how our emotions manifest in our body. This simple act of noticing can help us focus on what is currently happening to regulate our bodies and minds, which in turn can help us better go about and cope with our daily lives.



But, for children who have experienced trauma their ability to regulate and understand their emotions is often hindered. This is because they remain on high alert making it hard for them to manage and adapt to stress, communicate and build positive social relationships. Helping children to be able to push away the noise, to be in the moment, and help themselves to focus and relax can have immediate and long-standing benefits for their wellbeing.

## Mindfulness and children

Practicing mindfulness can help **all** children. It has been found to:

- > mitigate the effects of bullying
- > enhance focus (especially in children who have experienced trauma and those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)
- > reduce attention problems
- > improve mental health and wellbeing
- > improve social skills
- > achieve better health outcomes.

## Introducing mindfulness

There are many ways mindfulness can be introduced into a child's life. Any Internet search can provide hundreds of options and there are also many worthwhile apps. For carers and those working with children, it is important to provide age-appropriate mindfulness practices and to give thought to what might best connect with a child and their specific needs, situation and personality.

For young children, fostering mindfulness through pictures, objects, food, simple movements and music can greatly help them develop an ability to focus their attention.

For older children, they may prefer to choose their own methods by exploring free digital apps like Breathr, which includes body scans and guided meditation, or Calm, which provides stories to help relax before bedtime.

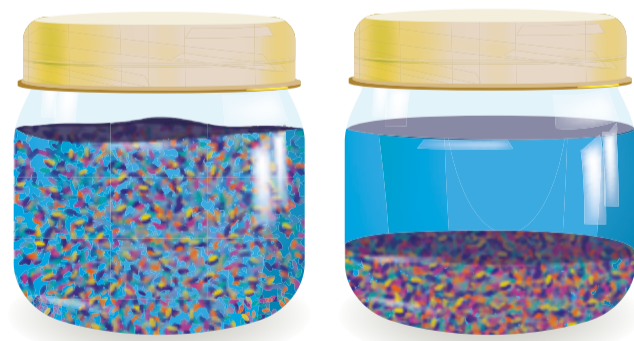
## Have a go – the mindful jar

Why not try the following activity. It's easy and can teach children how to find peace when strong emotions feel overwhelming.

1. With the child, fill a clear jar with water and add a large spoonful of glitter. Screw the lid on and shake to make the glitter swirl.
2. Ask the child to focus on the swirling glitter and say:  
Imagine the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when you're upset – because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us.'
3. Put the jar down in front of the child and say:

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

(Karen Young, 2017).



This exercise not only helps children learn about how their emotions can cloud their thoughts, but it also facilitates the practice of mindfulness as they focus on the glitter falling to the bottom of the jar.

*Note: The terms 'child' and 'children' also refer to 'young person' and 'young people'.*

**Here to help!** Come and talk to us if you'd like more practical ways you can be trauma informed.

### Sources:

- > Young K. Fun, Effective Ways to Strengthen Mind, Body, Spirit. Accessed March 2019. [www.heysigmund.com/mindfulness-for-children-fun-effective-ways-to-strengthen-mind-body-spirit](http://www.heysigmund.com/mindfulness-for-children-fun-effective-ways-to-strengthen-mind-body-spirit)
- > Is mindfulness meditation good for kids? Here's what the science actually says. Accessed March 2019. [www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/5/22/13768406/mindfulness-meditation-good-for-kids-evidence](http://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/5/22/13768406/mindfulness-meditation-good-for-kids-evidence).
- > Bostic J, Nevarez M, Potter M, Prince J, Benningfield M, Aguirre B. 2015. Being Present at School. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America 24.
- > Source images: Freepik.com (macrovector, roserodionova)



LEARN MORE