

Mindfulness

Because we are spending more time at home, we may be feeling emotions we don't recognise or having feelings we don't like. These can be difficult to understand and even more difficult to deal with. Below are some activities which are designed to support us when we need to calm down or we are finding a situation difficult. There are also some activities that help us to stay calm and enjoy being 'in the moment'.



Glitter Bottle: this can help illustrate the power of calming and the benefit of mindfulness. Fill a bottle with water and plenty of glitter. You can use the following script to talk about what happens when you shake it.

“Imagine that 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 hard to make good decisions when you're upset – because you're not

thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grown-ups too).

[Now put the jar down in front of them.]

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.”



Back to Back Breathing: Sitting tall, with their back resting against their partner's back, begin the mindful breathing.

You may like to count "1, 2, 3" for each breath in and "1, 2, 3" for each breath out, pausing slightly at the end of each exhale.

Encourage students to think about how the breath feels, answering the following questions silently, in their mind.

- What is moving your hands? Is it the air filling your lungs?
- Can you feel the air moving in through your nose?
- Can you feel it moving out through your nose?
- Does the air feel a little colder on the way in and warmer on the way out?
- Can you hear your breath?
- What does it sound like?

Encourage students to notice their partner's breath.

- Is it shallow or deep?
- Fast or slow?
- Can they feel their partner's back moving as they breathe?

After a little while, students may find that their breath falls into sync with their partner. Or it may not! These are all talking points for bringing awareness to the breath, in the present moment.



5 senses- if all or some of the senses can be used by a young person (either with support or independently), this can be a useful countdown and calming activity. It can help with transition to a meal or snack. **First, notice 5 things that you can see.** Look around you and become aware of your environment. Or present your young person with five engaging items, one at a time.

Second, notice 4 things you can feel. Bring attention to the things that you're currently feeling, such as the texture of your clothing or the smooth surface of the table you're resting your hands on. You could place four different textures within reach of your young person and give them time to explore.

Third, notice 3 things that you can hear. Listen for and notice things in the background that you don't normally notice. It could be the birds chirping outside or an appliance humming in the next room. Or, different sounds could be played for the young person- which do they react to?

Fourth, notice 2 things you can smell. Bring attention to scents that you usually filter out, either pleasant or unpleasant. Present with herbs, spices, fruits and other foods. Which are most engaging?

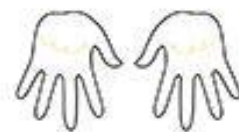
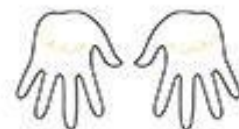
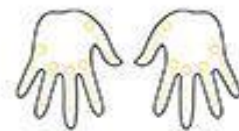
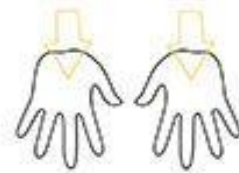
Finally, find 1 thing you can taste. Take a sip of a drink, chew gum, or notice the current taste in your mouth. This activity could lead to snack time or mealtime.

Hand Massage: Choose a nice smelling hand-cream or scented oil to give your young person a gentle hand massage.

HAND MASSAGE IDEAS

Hand massage is great for relaxing and de-stressing, plus it improves circulation.

1. Warm some hand cream in your hands. Hold a hand in your hand, and using your other hand gently smooth the cream from forearms down to the fingertips.
2. Using both hands, gently squeeze from the forearms down to the palms, working from the centre to the outside.
3. Work cream into the joints of the hand and then give each finger (one at a time) a little wiggle and a tug.
4. Gently make circular strokes over the back of the hand.
5. Using your thumb and forefinger gently squeeze down the hand from the wrist to the finger webbing (skin between fingers). Outside fingers then inside.
6. Using your thumbs make circular motions into the palm of the hand.
7. Place your hands palm to palm and with fingers intertwined walk your fingers up to the top.
8. Using your thumb and fore finger gently walk up the sides of each finger, squeezing as you go, then slide down the finger. Support the hand with your other hand, and repeat for each finger.





Bubble snakes: For this activity you'll need plastic bottles, socks and bubble mixture (washing up liquid and water will work).

1. Cut the bottoms off the bottles.
2. Put the socks over the ends, pulling them all the way over the bottle and then folding them back so you have a tight fit.
3. Dip the sock-covered end into the bubble mixture and blow through the top end to make lovely long bubble snakes.
4. Watch the reactions as the bubbles emerge!

Try adding drops of food colouring to the sock.

