

7 Fun Ways to Teach Your Kids Mindfulness

If you ever want to be inspired and also have a giggle, ask a group of kids what they think “mindfulness” is. “Relaxing out of our daily troubles and stress,” “A way to stay yourself when you’re going through something troubling” and “It’s like getting off of one railroad track and getting onto another one” were some of my favorite answers from the recent class meeting. [Kids can really be fountains of spiritual wisdom!](#)

When I told them the dictionary’s definition (“a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique”), the kids weren’t entirely sure what I was talking about. And so we did some exercises to test it out. Feel free to try these at home!

1. The Bell Listening Exercise

Ring a bell and ask the kids to listen closely to the vibration of the ringing sound. Tell them to remain silent and raise their hands when they no longer hear the sound of the bell. Then tell them to remain silent for one minute and pay close attention to the other sounds they hear once the ringing has stopped. After, go around in a circle and ask the kids to tell you every sound they noticed during that minute. This exercise is not only fun and gets the kids excited about sharing their experiences with others, but really [helps them connect to the present moment and the sensitivity of their perceptions](#).

2. Breathing Buddies

Hand out a stuffed animal to each child (or another small object). If room allows, have the children lie down on the floor and place the stuffed animals on their bellies. Tell them to breathe in silence for one minute and notice how their Breathing Buddy moves up and down, and any other sensations that they notice. Tell them to imagine that the thoughts that come into their minds turn into bubbles and float away. The presence of the Breathing Buddy makes the meditation a little friendlier, and allows the kids to see how a playful activity doesn’t necessarily have to be rowdy.

3. The Squish & Relax Meditation

While the kids are lying down with their eyes closed, have them squish and squeeze every muscle in their bodies as tightly as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, tighten the muscles in their legs all the way up to their hips, suck in their bellies, squeeze their hands into fists and raise their shoulders up to their heads. Have them hold themselves in their squished up positions for a few seconds, and then fully release and relax. This is a great, fun activity for “loosening up” the body and mind, and is a totally accessible way to get the kids to understand the art of “being present.”

4. Smell & Tell

Pass something fragrant out to each child, such as a piece of fresh orange peel, a sprig of lavender or a jasmine flower. Ask them to close their eyes and breathe in the scent, focusing all of their attention only on the smell of that object. [Scent can really be a powerful tool for anxiety-relief](#) (among other things!).

5. The Art Of Touch

Give each child an object to touch, such as a ball, a feather, a soft toy, a stone, etc. Ask them to close their eyes and describe what the object feels like to a partner. Then have the partners trade places. Both this exercise and the previous one are simple, but compelling, ways to teach the kids the practice of isolating their senses from one another, and tuning into distinct experiences.

6. The Heartbeat Exercise

Have the kids jump up and down in place for one minute. Then have them sit back down and place their hands on their hearts. Tell them to close their eyes and feel their heartbeats, their breath, and see what else they notice about their bodies.

7. Heart-To-Heart

In this exercise, the meaning of "heart" is less literal. In other words, this activity could also simply be called "Let's talk about feelings." So sit down and casually, comfortably ask the children to tell you about their feelings. What feelings do they feel? How do they know they are feeling those feelings? Where do they feel them in their bodies? Ask them which feelings they like the best.

Then ask them what they can do to feel better when they aren't feeling the feelings they like best. Remind them that they can always practice turning their thoughts into bubbles if they are upset, they can do the Squish and Relax Meditation if they need to calm down, and they can take a few minutes to listen to their breath or feel their heartbeats if they want to relax.

My hope for the mindfulness class was [to give the kids some tools they can use anytime](#): tools to calm down, slow down and feel better when they are troubled. I sure wish I had these tools at my disposal when I was their age. Imagine if all the children around the Earth learned to use these tools during their childhoods. What a change our world would experience within just one generation!