

ACTIVITY 6: MANAGING YOUR MIND



AIM: Children recognise how to use mindfulness practices and other tools to help cope with stresses and manage emotions (Article 24).

Preparation:

- Review the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 warm-up exercise and prepare a place for the group to complete the activity
- Gather materials for building the calm-down kits

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 6 Presentation
- Resources for calm-down kits

Participant materials

- A4 paper and coloured pens

Materials for a calm-down kit including:

- Shoebox, bag or jar
- Slips of paper
- Stress ball, or a balloon and sand to make your own
- Coloured pens or crayons and paper

Tips for those working in Early Years settings:

- Introduce the [Rainbow Relaxation](#) or [Bubble Bounce](#) mindfulness activities
- Create an age-appropriate calm-down kit with colouring sheets, playdough, a bouncing ball and a soft toy to use in your setting.

Facilitator Introduction

When Paddington arrived at the station in London it was very busy with people going this way and that. Everyone seemed in a rush to catch their train or get home in time to make tea.

Remind the children that sometimes when our minds are too active or too busy – like a train station at rush hour – it can be hard for us to manage our emotions and behaviour, even if we want to change how we are feeling or acting. Ask them: have you ever tried to go to sleep, but were so worried or excited about something, that you couldn't rest at all – even though you were very tired?



Explain to the group that practising mindfulness is one important way that we can help calm our minds and bodies. In this lesson we'll learn all about mindfulness and how it not only helps us manage our mental health but can even help strengthen our brains.

ACTIVITY 6:

PART 1: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 WARM-UP

1. Ask children to sit in a peaceful place, indoors or outside. Explain that we are going to use our five senses to learn a practise of mindfulness.
2. Lead children through the exercise using the following narrative:

Take a deep belly breath to begin

	<p>5 – SEE: Look around for five things that you can see. Say them out loud. For example: <i>I see the desk, I see the teacher, I see the pencil, I see the water bottle, I see the whiteboard.</i></p>
	<p>4 – FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of four things that you can feel. Say them out loud. For example: <i>I feel the fan blowing on my face, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the vibration of the ringing of the school bell, I feel the hardness of the chair I am sitting on.</i></p>
	<p>3 – HEAR: Listen quietly for three sounds. Say them out loud. For example: <i>I hear the birds outside, I hear the raindrops falling on the window, I hear the sound of my breath.</i></p>
	<p>2 – SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you can't smell anything from where you're sitting it is okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your two favorite smells. For example: <i>I can smell lunch being cooked in the canteen, I can smell freshly cut grass.</i></p>
	<p>1 – TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste. For example: <i>I can taste the toothpaste from brushing my teeth this morning.</i></p>

Take another deep belly breath to end.

3. Ask the children how they feel after completing this activity? When might doing this activity help them in the future?
4. Explain to children that through mindfulness we can train our brains to be more aware so we can better cope when faced with stress. Guide children to the conclusion that this mindfulness practise is something that they could complete anytime and anywhere as a way to calm themselves when they feel stress or face a tough situation.

Optional activity: Play again. Pretend you're Paddington and standing on the platform in the middle of a very busy train station. First, imagine how busy and loud the station must feel, then answer the questions to the best of your imagination. How did it feel?

ACTIVITY 6: PARTS 2 AND 3



Part 2: Managing emotions with mindfulness tools

1. Use the Activity 6 Presentation to introduce the definition of mindfulness and the idea of how mindfulness works to help us manage our emotions.
2. Ask children to create a list of all of the ideas of what makes them feel better when they are sad or frustrated, or what activities that they like to do when they want to shift their emotions or change their feelings. Prompt children to include items like meditation, breathing, mindful eating, smiling, running, dancing, keeping a thankful journal. Explain that these activities are mindfulness exercises, and by doing them, our brains and nervous systems are able to help recognise and change how we feel in a specific moment.
3. Using A4 paper ask each child to trace their hand(s) using non-permanent markers. On each hand ask the children to write the tools that they can access to manage their emotions. Then use crayons or markers in the colour of the emotion scale to decorate the hands. Encourage children to hang their hand(s) in a place where they can see them as a reminder of the mindfulness tools they already have in their hands when they need an emotional boost!

Part 3: Create your own calm-down kit

1. A calm-down kit (or self-care kit) is a box or bag full of items or activities a child might use when they need to redirect their energy in order to calm down or regulate their emotions. A kit can be created for the classroom or activity room and, as materials allow, the children should be encouraged to create their own kits they can take away and keep for longer term use.
2. Discuss with the group what tools they might want to put into an activity kit to help them release energy, practise mindfulness, or process their emotions. How each child or group creates their own calm-down kit will depend on the resources available within each group. The kit can be as simple as a jar full of slips of paper with activity suggestions written on them. If children/groups have additional resources, a calm-down kit may also include homemade or low-cost physical items for mindful play or creation. See box for ideas.
3. Gather materials, or ask children to bring the materials to create the classroom kit or individual kit(s). As children are working on their kits, encourage discussion and/or class rules or process around when a child should use their activity kit to help regulate their emotions and mental health.

CALM DOWN KIT IDEAS

Activities:

- do 20 star jumps
- draw a picture of how you are feeling inside
- make a list of 10 things that make you happy
- take a mindfulness walk
- have a dance party
- write down a story of an imaginary friend
- do three yoga poses
- try a one-minute meditation
- write a poem

Creative items:

- playdough or clay
- colouring pens and a book or journal
- a [mindfulness glitter jar](#)
- balloons or a ball
- a [homemade stressball](#)
- mindfulness or emotion [colouring sheets](#)

ACTIVITY 6: CONTINUED



Managing your mind: ideas from UNICEF Voices of Youth

Create a self-care package

Young person Paavani Arora, from India, writes about how a 'pocket pouch' helped her take charge of her mental health. She says: "The most important thing that I learned was how to focus on the basics. Self-care doesn't mean big changes or tasks." Read more about the pocket pouch idea [here](#).



Image: [Aizat Noma](#)

All aboard the train of self-care!

Young person Aizat Noma, from Krygyzstan, has an idea to create a 'train' of self-care. You can see her example above. She says: "How are you, my friend? Not good? Don't forget that you have a free train ticket in your pocket. Come to the station of mental health and say 'I am an amazing person!' Do you hear this loud 'Everything will be OK!' sound? That means the train is coming! Get ready!"

Write a poem

Pratyusha Bhattacharjee, 22, from India, wrote a poem called Silent Screams to express how she was feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic. Read her poem [here](#).