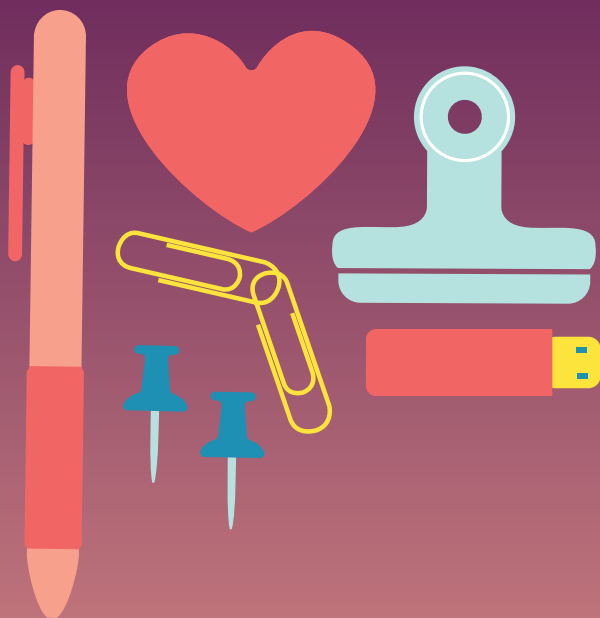


# Guide for parents and carers



# Creating mindful generations

Imagine if every young person was taught the skills they need to be resilient, emotionally aware and mentally healthy as a standard part of their education? We think this is possible and important for the mental health of future generations.

We want to see generations of young people thrive — and that means doing things a bit differently.

## About Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is a 100% not-for-profit organisation with a bold ambition - we want to change the way we all look after our mental health. Smiling Mind offers a range of programs and resources designed to make mindfulness accessible, easy to practice, and as normal as brushing your teeth.

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The Smiling Mind app provides free mindfulness-based programs for all ages. In early learning centers and schools we offer a range of resources and training programs to support mindfulness across the whole learning community. We also offer a range of mindfulness programs for adults in our app and a workplace wellbeing program designed for all types of workplaces.

### Our Vision

To help every mind thrive.

### Our Mission

To provide accessible, lifelong tools to support healthy minds.



# Mental Health & Mindfulness

Keeping children happy and healthy not only involves taking care of their physical health but also their mental health.

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Mental health and wellbeing is important as it underpins the way children feel about themselves, how they think, learn, and relate to others.

With good mental health, research shows children are happier, more confident, more resilient learners and able to build positive relationships. Good mental health in childhood sets young people up for positive mental health in the future.

Mindfulness is a state of being fully awake to life; being aware and undistracted in the present moment and observing life as it unfolds without analysis or judgment. It is about focusing attention on the here and now, rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future.



**Mindfulness  
is like gym  
for the mind**

The background features several stylized, soft-edged white clouds scattered across the light blue gradient. The clouds vary in size and are positioned primarily in the lower half of the image, creating a clean, airy aesthetic.

## Mental Health & Mindfulness

A good way to explain mindfulness to those unfamiliar with the practice is to compare mindfulness with physical exercise.

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Practising mindfulness is attention training, designed to strengthen the mind. The process of repeatedly paying attention is similar to activities you might undertake to build a muscle – a bicep curl for the mind!

In this way practising mindfulness strengthens the minds' ability to focus, pay attention and reduce worry — the more we practise, the stronger the mind becomes. Therefore, mindfulness is like gym for the mind.



# Mindfulness can be beneficial for learning

Mindfulness provides important skills to help young people engage and participate in learning in two ways:



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01

**Mindfulness can reduce emotional distress, settle and calm students and reduce behavioural challenges.**



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02

**Mindfulness enhances and strengthens the areas of the brain that are involved in learning, thinking and memory.**

# Backed by evidence



## The Science

Research has shown us that practising mindfulness strengthens areas of the brain that control ‘executive function’ such as the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus.

For that reason, mindfulness leads to better attention, memory, regulation of emotions and self-awareness<sup>1,2,3</sup>. In turn, improvements in these areas leads to reduced stress, anxiety and depression, and better academic skills, social skills and self-esteem<sup>4,5</sup>.

- 1 Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical psychology review*, 31(6), 1041-1056.
- 2 Eberth, J., & Sedlmeier, P. (2012). The effects of mindfulness meditation: a meta-analysis. *Mindfulness*, 3(3), 174-189.
- 3 Klingbeil, D. A., Renshaw, T. L., Willenbrink, J. B., Copek, R. A., Chan, K. T., Haddock, A. ... & Clifton, J. (2017). Mindfulness-based interventions with youth: A comprehensive meta-analysis of group-design studies. *Journal of school psychology*, 63, 77-103.
- 4 Klingbeil, D. A., Renshaw, T. L., Willenbrink, J. B., Copek, R. A., Chan, K. T., Haddock, A. ... & Clifton, J. (2017). Mindfulness-based interventions with youth: A comprehensive meta-analysis of group-design studies. *Journal of school psychology*, 63, 77-103.
- 5 Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 62(3), 373-386.

## Independent Evaluation

We’re serious about the success of our mindfulness program in Australian schools so we put our program to the test. In 2016, we completed one of the largest research programs worldwide evaluating a technology-assisted mindfulness program in schools.

Researchers from Deakin University and InsightSRC surveyed **12 schools, 104 teachers** and **1,853 students** to assess the impact of the Smiling Mind mindfulness program.

The results indicated that our program can assist students with sleep, wellbeing, managing emotions, concentration and classrooms behaviour.

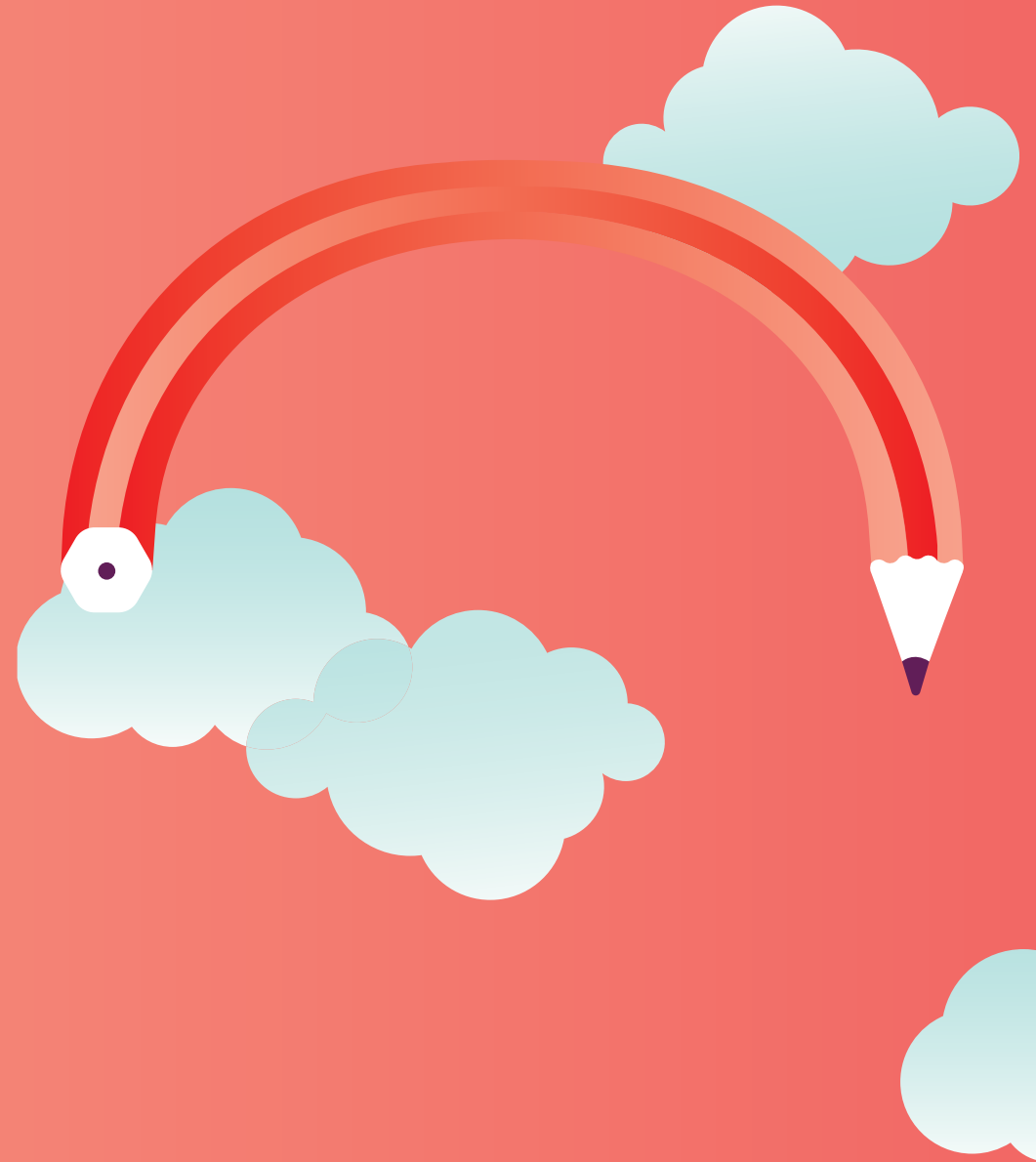


# Smiling Mind at your child's school

We know that every school is different and that's why we encourage a flexible approach to using mindfulness in the school setting.

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Depending on your school's stage in their school improvement process there are many different approaches that we can support.



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01

## The App

Many schools are using the Smiling Mind app to bring mindfulness into their classrooms. You might find that your child is practising mindfulness throughout the school day and we encourage schools to take this approach.

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If your child is using the Smiling Mind app at school we encourage you to download the free app and try it at home too. They will tell you what their favourite meditation is!

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02

## The Mindfulness Curriculum

As a more comprehensive and structured approach to bringing mindfulness into the classroom we have developed a mindfulness curriculum for schools to use.

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This curriculum provides students with a deeper understanding of the concepts of mindfulness as well as a regular mindfulness practice. It is mapped to the Australian Curriculum and provides a framework to ensure students are developing essential social and emotional skills.

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03

## Professional training

Smiling Mind often provides training to teachers, students and the whole school community to support the integration of mindfulness into the school setting. We encourage parents to come along to this training.

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# How you can support your child at home

We encourage you to get involved in your child's mindfulness journey!

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## Mindfulness activities

We know that the greatest learning actually happens at home and we hope you are excited to find ways to bring mindfulness into your home - it will benefit your child and your whole family!

If your child's school has started to use Smiling Mind, your child will have a take-home activity that they can do at home each week.

Here are some more ideas for mindful activities you can do together at home:

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01

## Mindful eating



Think about how your family eats their meals - is everyone all over the place or do you sit down and enjoy a meal together?

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Try and use meal time to savour your food, speak to each other and be present without any unnecessary distractions.

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02

## Mindful awareness



Spend time inside your house or in the garden and take some time to simply pay attention to what you can see, hear and smell.

—  
It's amazing how often we go about our day without noticing what's right in front of us.

---

03

## Mindful communication



Try and practice mindful communication by being aware when you are distracted and not paying attention, and bring your attention back.

—  
Try and remind yourself to stop multitasking and simply pay attention when you're speaking to one another - really try and focus on what is being said and see if you can listen without thinking of other things - its hard, but worth it!

## How you can support your child at home

We recommend practising a meditation with your child or as a family at least 3 times per week.

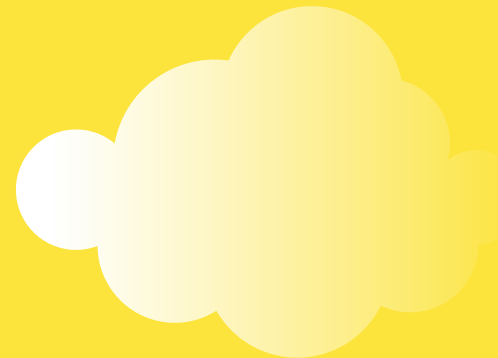
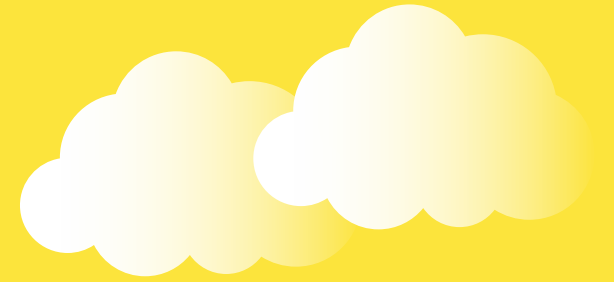
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### Mindfulness Meditation Practice

You can play any meditation in the Smiling Mind app and it will guide you through the process.

In the Smiling Mind app the meditations are age specific and you are able to choose meditations for age groups ranging from **7-9**, **10-12**, **13-15**, **16-18** and **adults**.

The language and content of these age-specific meditations are developed to suit specific topics that may relate to each group.





# Mindfulness in times of crisis

While mindfulness is designed to be a practice that is beneficial to practise regularly, it can also be a really useful tool when you or your child might be experiencing specific challenges.

01

## Anxiety or panic

If your child is experiencing anxiety, mindfulness practice can be used to reduce the physical activation that often is experienced with anxiety.

A body scan (The bubble journey) or visualisation (The wish tree) can be great meditations to use when you need to calm down.



02

## Sleep



If your child is experiencing difficulty with sleep, it is important to develop a routine that is calming before bed.

Playing a meditation before bed is a great way for children to wind down and get ready for sleep. There are many sleep meditations in the app.

03

## Disruptive behaviour



Acting out and disruptive behaviour can sometimes be a symptom of other emotional reactions and responses.

Supporting your child to develop the skills to manage their emotions and behaviour is important and regular mindfulness practice can help with this. Regular mindfulness will help your child learn how to be aware of their thoughts and feelings and can help them to learn how to manage their own feelings. Start with meditations that focus on emotion awareness (body scan or emotion awareness meditations).

# So, let's get started

To set up a regular meditation practice with your child at home, we suggest:

01

## Share the meditation practice with your child.

By doing the meditations together you are not only being a positive role model for your child and showing that you value meditation, you will also enjoy the health benefits of mindfulness yourself!

02

## Having a regular time of day for your meditation practice

The start or the end of the day are often good times



03

## Setting up a regular, quiet meditation space within your home

Sometimes the bedroom is the best place for this



04

## Practising sitting down on a chair or cushion with your child before beginning the meditation



05

## Practise taking three deep breaths before starting the meditation



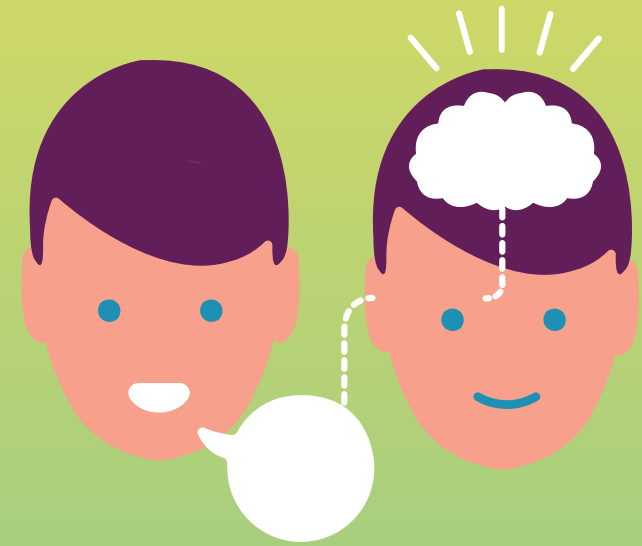
## So, get started

A big part of practising mindfulness with your children is debriefing the experience after each activity:

It's important to normalise any physical or emotional reactions they may have had and provide them with support if you think they need it.

—  
Here are a few questions to get the conversation started.

- **What was your experience and how did you find that?**
- **What did you notice?**
- **What did you learn?**
- **How do you feel now?**





# Your own mindfulness practice

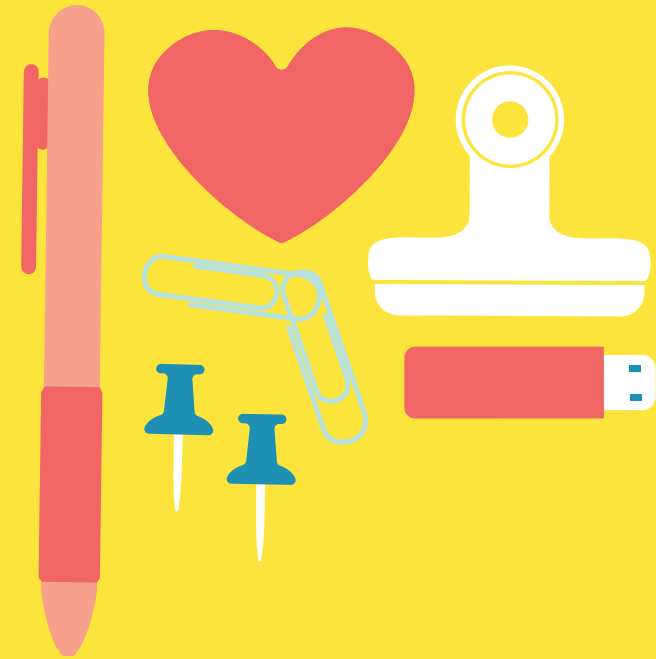
Mindfulness can be beneficial for everyone, no matter what age we start. The Smiling Mind app has a great adult program that we recommend you try.

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## Smiling Mind at work

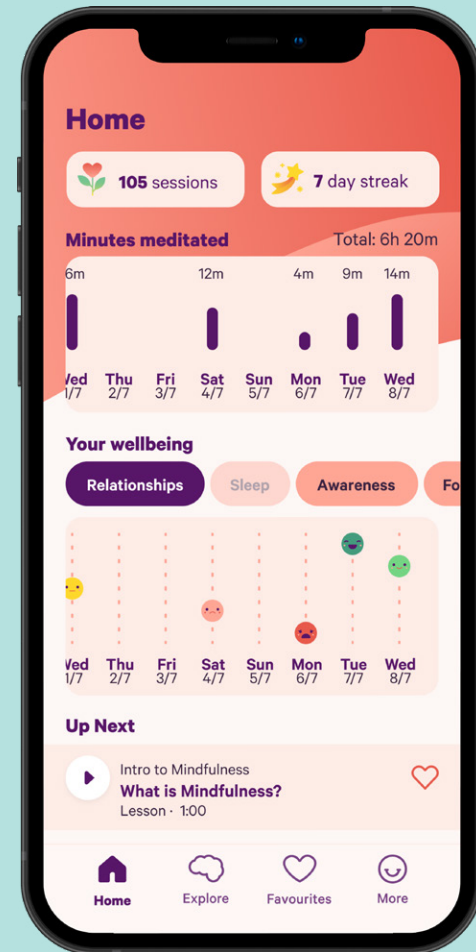
Smiling Mind offers a tailored workplace mindfulness program because we think that, just like schools, all workplaces need to be thinking about the wellbeing of their employees.

Our workplace program could be a great way for you to start your own mindfulness journey. Have a look at our website for more information.



# Download the Smiling Mind app today

Our free app is available through the App Store or Google Play and can be downloaded on your phone, iPad or computer for your personal use.



More information  
can be found on the  
Smiling Mind website  
[smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au).

## Smiling Mind

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[smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au)

**Illustration by Beci Orpin** | The Jacky Winter Group

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**Smiling Mind is a 100%  
not-for-profit organisation  
that works to make  
mindfulness meditation  
accessible to all.**

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Visit us online or download  
the free app to get started.

