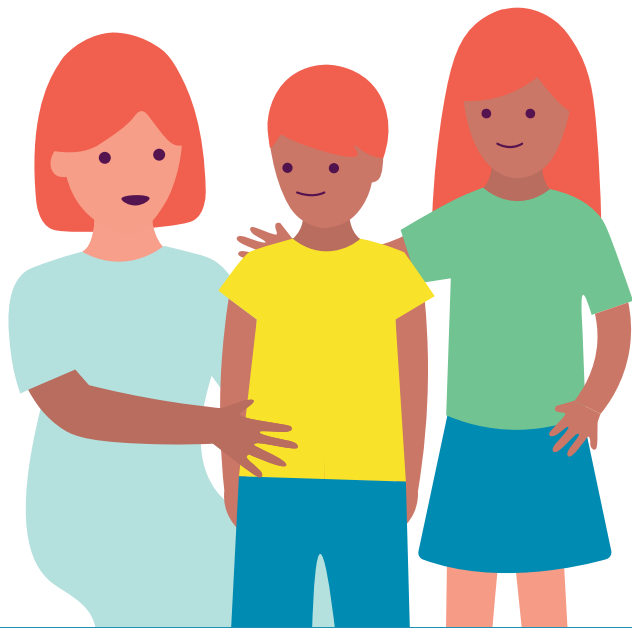


Supporting Children aged 5–7 years' Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness.



Introduction

As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the children in their care to deal with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and helpful tool to help adults and children alike manage the challenges many of us are currently facing.



Typical development and challenges:

At this age, children are full of curiosity. Friendships become more important, which can make being away from school and their peers difficult. With increasing learning expectations and less structured home learning environments, they may find it challenging to regulate and express how they are feeling.

Signs of distress:

During times of adversity, it is common for children to express feelings of worry or stress as anger or frustration, behaving younger than their age. Children may also experience physical symptoms in response to stress (e.g. unexplained headaches and stomach aches).

How to support them:

Do your best to maintain routines and support social connections for your children. When talking to children about COVID-19 try to strike a balance between being transparent and honest and protecting children from excessive worry about uncontrollable events. Provide opportunities for children to express themselves through drawing and symbolic play.

(Emerging Minds, 2020)

Integrating mindfulness into everyday life with the children in our care can have profound benefits for both adult and child.

Academic research shows that when we pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, with openness and curiosity, and without judgement, we activate many wellbeing benefits. These include:



Higher self awareness



Higher emotional regulation



Reduced stress

Through regular mindfulness practice we can also improve our:



Focus



Concentration



Creativity

—

This Care Pack contains three sections with 11 foundational mindfulness topics to progress through with your child:



1. Recognising and Managing Emotions

- From Autopilot to Awareness
- Paying Attention to the Present Moment
- Recognising and Managing our Emotions
- The Senses
- Mindful Movement



2. Looking After Worry and Anxiety

- Handling Unhelpful Thoughts
- Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body
- Bouncing Back



3. Focusing on the Positives

- Gratitude and Savouring
- Choosing Optimism
- Growth Mindset

These three sections combine to deliver a comprehensive toolkit to assist in supporting emotional wellbeing with your child.

How to use this Care Pack

Children look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance to help them manage their reactions during challenging times. The best way to support children in your care is to provide comfort, reassurance and emotional support; and allow the time and space for children to talk or ask questions (without forcing them). A calm and steady presence is a powerful source of comfort and reassurance for children. It helps them gain a sense of emotional and physical safety which supports them process their reactions.

Of course, it's likely that you're struggling with your own feelings of overwhelm and distress. It's important to recognise if you are struggling with your own reactions and find ways to take care of yourself. Seek support as needed, personal and/or professional, so that you are in the best possible position to support the children you care for. It's not about being perfect; it's about being kind to yourself and recognising what you need in order to support the children in your care as best you can. Just like in an aeroplane – it's about putting your own oxygen mask on first!

Here is a step by step guide to get the best out of this Pack designed specifically for 5–7 year olds:



1. Learn

Take a few minutes to read the topic overview written for parents, carers and teachers.

- This will orient you to the purpose and intention of each topic and set up some background for conversations with your child.

2. Practice

Listen to the mindfulness meditation with your child in a quiet place without distraction.

- Spend a few minutes afterwards inviting your child to share their experience and their thoughts and feelings following the meditation.
- Share your own experience, thoughts and feelings with your child.

3. Explore

Ask your child to select one of the activities at the back of the book, and discuss their experience.

- Invite your child to choose an activity, they can be printed or completed on an electronic device.
- While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration with your child as they complete them.
- Use the activity to collaborate and continue the conversation.

Smiling Mind offers a range of engaging evidence based experiences and activities designed by wellbeing educators.

You are encouraged to experiment and explore the wide range of meditations and activities with your child to find out what works best.

Recognising and Managing Emotions

This first module, Recognising and Managing Emotions, contains five foundational mindfulness topics to progress through with your child:



5 topics

- From Autopilot to Awareness
- Paying Attention to the Present Moment
- Recognising and Managing Our Emotions
- The Senses
- Mindful Movement



5 meditations



11 activities

We invite you to practise the following meditations with your child as a way of cultivating the ability to turn towards one's own experiences with care and kindness. Doing this together, and discussing the experience, is especially important if your child is struggling. Children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others and you as their parent, carer or teacher have a vital role to play.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to recognise and manage our emotions. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to complete. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



From Autopilot to Awareness

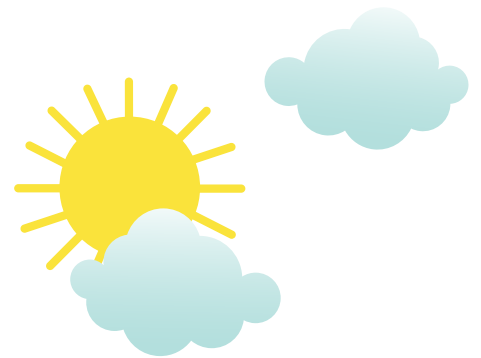
—

In the midst of a global pandemic, it can be a significant challenge to stay in the moment and pay attention. Awareness of our thoughts and emotions, and how they are impacting our behaviour, is especially important in times like these. Developing the ability to observe our thoughts and emotions more objectively allows us to access a calmer and more mindful place.



Have you ever noticed your mind has wandered? Sometimes we find ourselves in a tangle of thoughts and emotions about the past or the future, not really knowing how we got there. Practising mindfulness helps us become more focused and aware, and better able to direct our attention to where we want and need it to be. Awareness of how we spend our time thinking and tuning into the emotions that come along with this, is an important first step to creating a mindful life. Awareness enables us to see our thoughts and emotions more objectively and to be less pushed around by them. In this way, we can choose how we respond to different situations as opposed to simply reacting as if on autopilot. In doing so we get to live more in line with who we want to be and usually feel better.

Awareness connects our minds and our bodies in a way that brings us back to the present moment. The first step in awareness is tuning into how we are feeling right now. Asking ourselves “How am I feeling at this moment?” can help. By cultivating greater awareness of our own emotional landscape, we get better at noticing what is showing up for us as we traverse daily life, including our interactions with the children in our lives.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
The Bubble Journey

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- The Bubble Journey

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/2/2/2/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets on the
following pages:

How am I feeling in this moment

This activity is all about bringing awareness to how
feelings show up inside us each and every day.

Bubbles of Awareness

This activity encourages you to spend time reflecting
on how today has unfolded in terms of moment to
moment awareness.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

Where in your body might you feel calm and happy feelings,
how about sad and upsetting feelings?

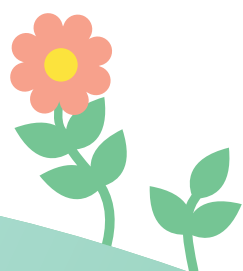
What do you love to notice when you are at home and school?

Can you tell me all about what caught your attention today
and why?

How am I feeling in this moment?



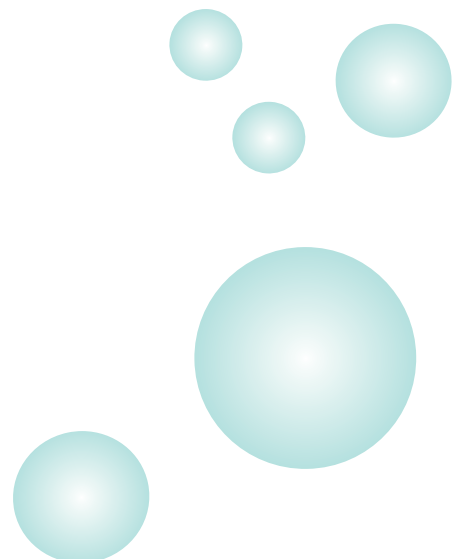
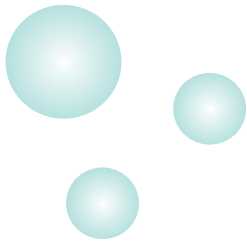
Think of a time when you felt calm and happy. See if you can notice those feelings somewhere in your body. Draw yourself in that moment/place.



Bubbles of Awareness.

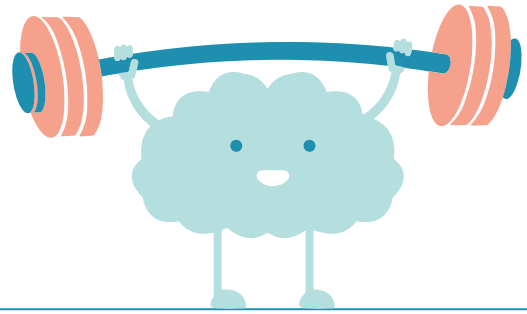


Draw some big bubbles on this page and take a moment to think of some moments today when you really noticed things around you. It may have been a warm smile someone gave you, something you ate or drank, or something in nature that caught your attention. Draw these moments of awareness inside the bubbles.



Paying attention to the present moment

Mindfulness helps us to attend to the present moment and the task at hand. This is especially useful in times of global uncertainty when our focus can be pulled in many directions, and often into the past or towards an uncertain future.



Children are often asked to pay attention. This can be hard to do because our minds are very curious and hardwired to wander. Mindfulness is about paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgment. Given that our body is always present, focusing our attention on our breath is one of the most effective ways to return to what is happening right now.

The breath is a natural process with which we can all engage. It is always with us and each new breath offers an opportunity to become more self-aware and focused. When we attend to the present moment, we are more aware of how we are feeling and what we are doing. For children, their ability to learn and grow depends upon being able to develop this important skill.

When big and uncertain events happen close by or around the world, our minds can quickly latch on to any information available. We usually do this in the hope of finding some certainty and reassurance that all will be okay. As role models, children will look to us for guidance. Focusing our own attention on the present moment can help us to be better placed as a source of reassurance and balanced information for children.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Balloon Bellies.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Balloon Bellies

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1204/>



Continue the conversation using the activity sheets on the following pages:

Deep Breath

This activity encourages you to reflect on how the breath might be imagined and captured with colours and shapes.

Focus on the Breath

This activity invites you to recall a very focused time for them recently and explore how that felt.

Shining a Torch

This activity is about imagining how we can switch on our attention like a torch and shine a beam of light on the present moment.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

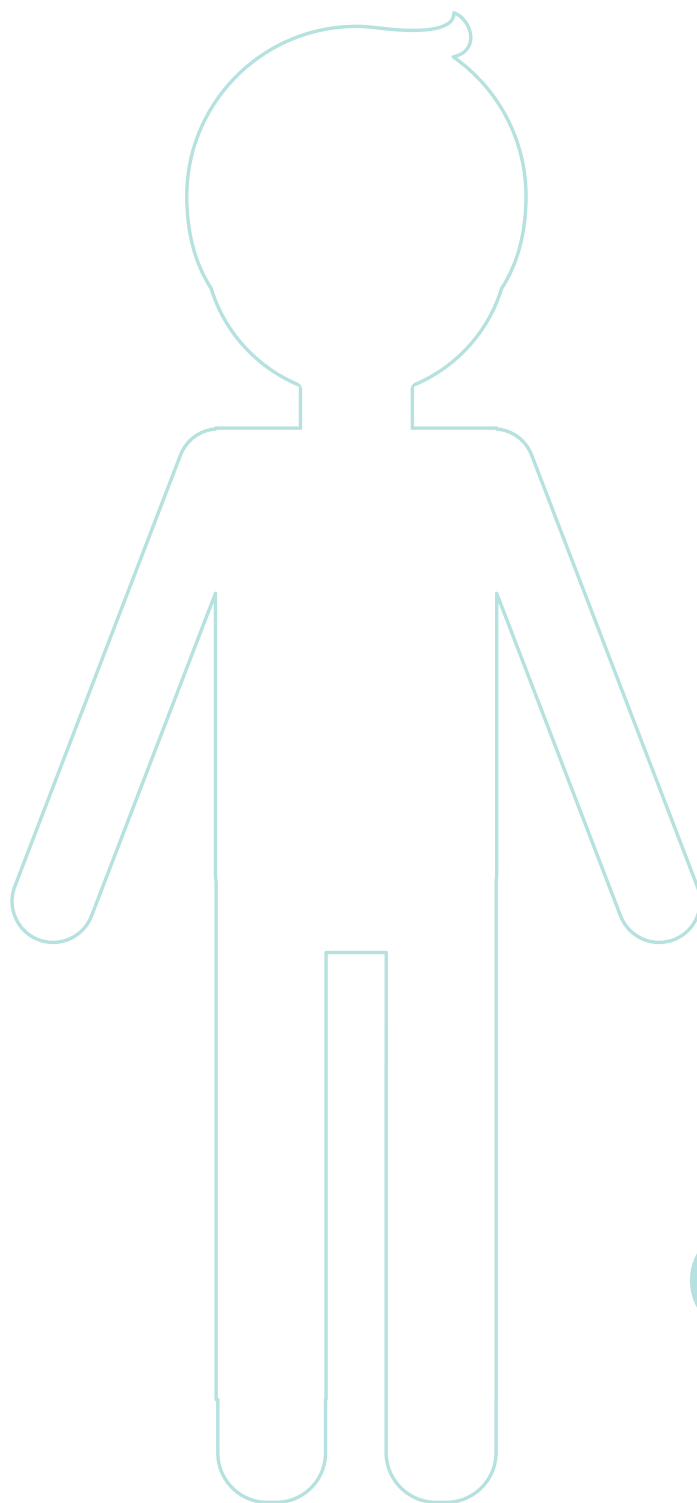
What does it feel like for you to take a really big breath and where do you feel it?

Can you tell me what happens in your mind and body when you are very focused?

How might we switch on our attention when we need to?

Deep Breath.

Belly breathing helps us to remember to fill our bellies with every breath. Fill your body with deep breaths and use colours and shapes to show how it feels.



Focus on the Breath.



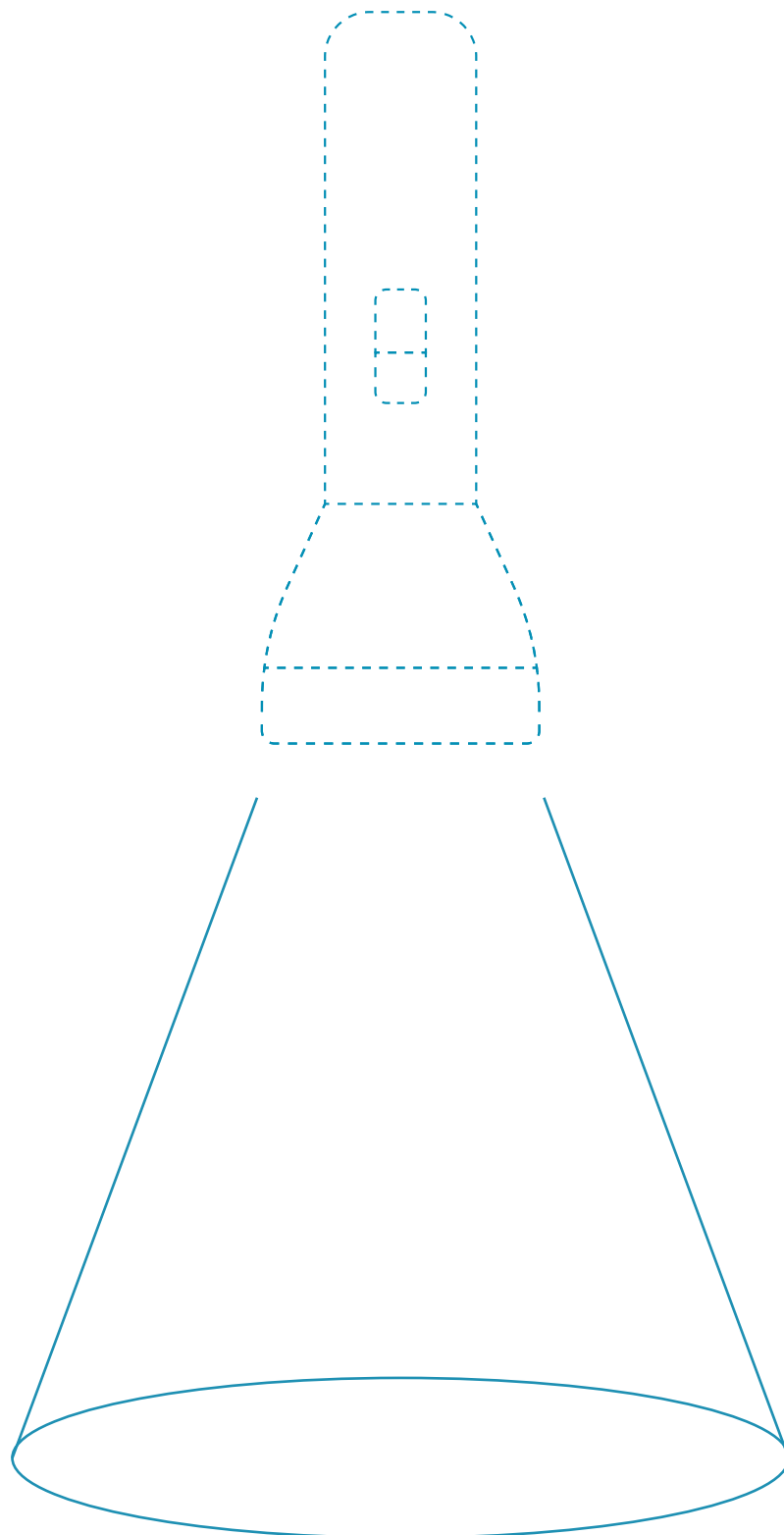
Each new breath is an invitation to return to the present moment. Think of a time recently when you were really focused on what you were doing. Write and draw what you were doing and how you felt.



Shining a Torch.

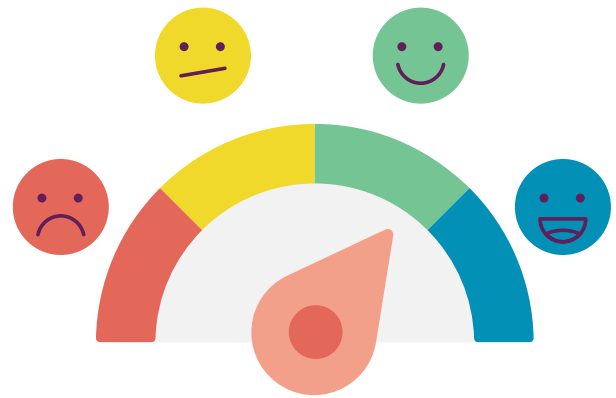


When we shine a torch, we can see something clearly. Draw a magical torch and shine it on the present moment. Draw yourself in the torch beam and write some words to describe how you are feeling in this moment.



Recognising and Managing Our Emotions

We each experience a whole range of emotions every day; some are pleasant and some are not so pleasant. Most of us spend a great deal of time caught up in our emotions, particularly difficult ones. When this happens, our behaviour is on autopilot and we can feel stressed and overwhelmed. We may miss important information and find it hard to see situations clearly. When we practise mindfulness, we tune into our bodies and become aware of how we are feeling and how those feelings are impacting us. We also learn that emotions come and go and will not last forever. This assists us to feel less overwhelmed in the present moment and role model effective ways to manage emotions as they arise.




As children grow and develop, their awareness of feelings and emotions expands. Children communicate to us how they are feeling through facial expressions, gestures, actions, behaviours and words. For us all, when we are able to notice and express how we feel, we can begin to make decisions about how we might manage our emotions effectively.

Mindfulness helps us to develop the ability to observe our emotions with more openness and curiosity, and with less judgement. By being able to observe them more objectively, we tend to be less pushed around by them. We are also better placed to be there for those still learning to understand what a wide range of emotions feels like for them. Mindfulness allows us to switch off autopilot and get back into the driver's seat. It also enables us to see our emotions are more like passengers in the back seat rather than the one driving.






 Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Breath & Sounds

- Smiling Mind App Location:
- All Programs
 - Kids & Youth
 - 07 – 09 Year Olds
 - Mindfulness 208 – Self Compassion
 - Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:
<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/17/154/154/>


 Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Many Emotions

This activity encourages you to reflect on how you have felt today and to then express your feelings with shape and colour ideas.

Gently Holding My Emotions

This activity is designed to reassure you that we can all experience many emotions at the same time, and holding them gently comes with practice.

 Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Can you think of a time when you felt many feelings and emotions all at once? I would love to hear all about it.

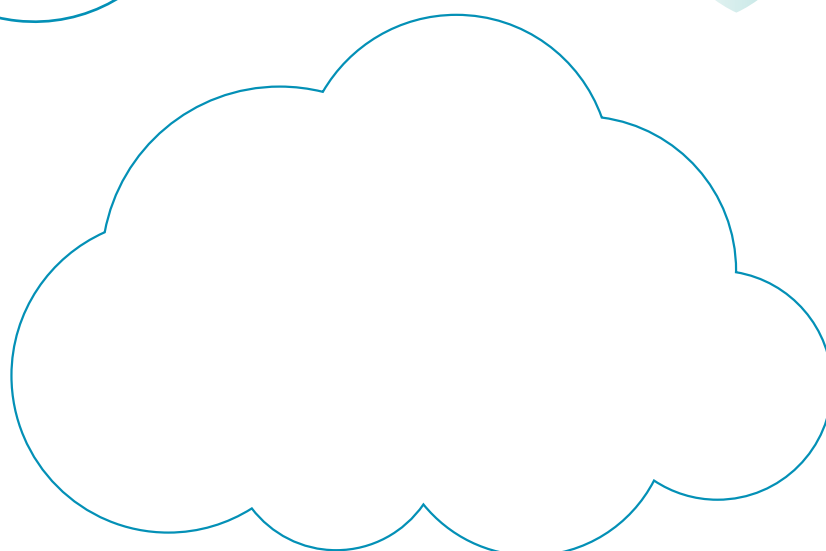
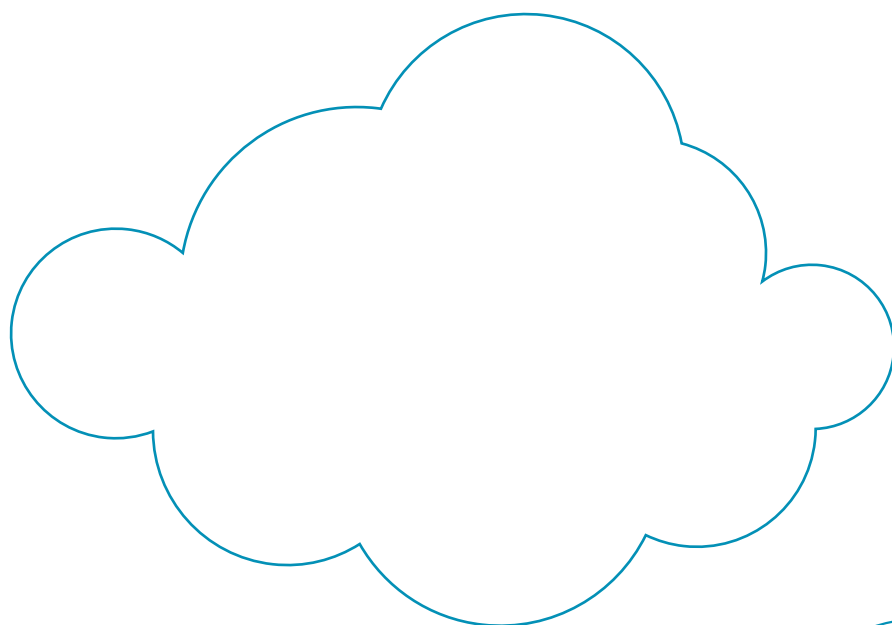
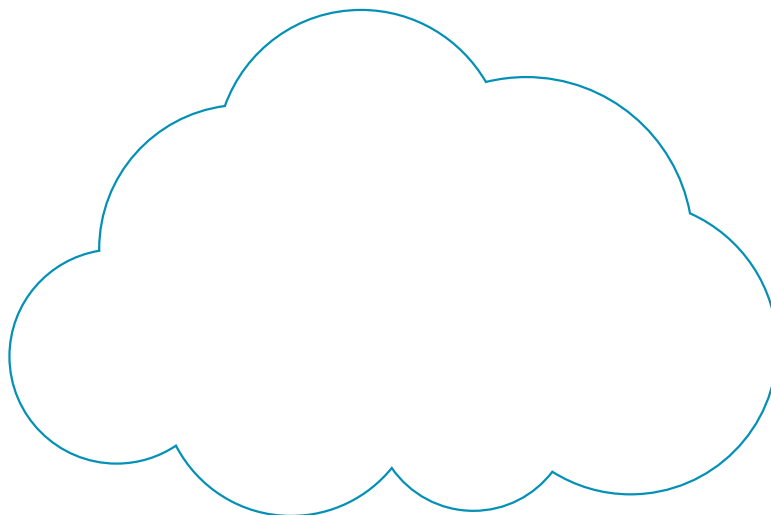
Do you ever think about all the feelings you have inside you?

Where might they be?

What other ways besides using our voice, can we show our feelings and emotions?

Many Emotions.

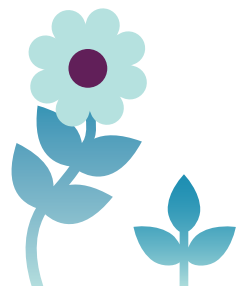
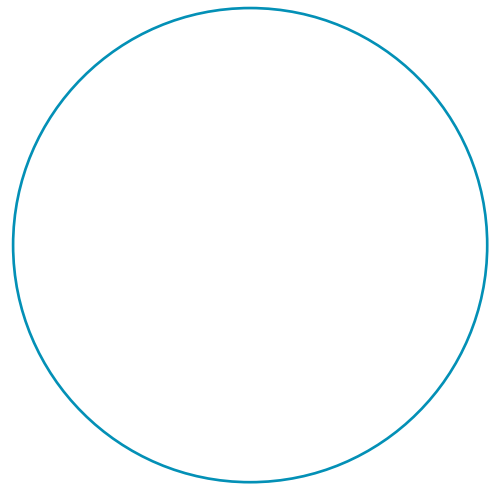
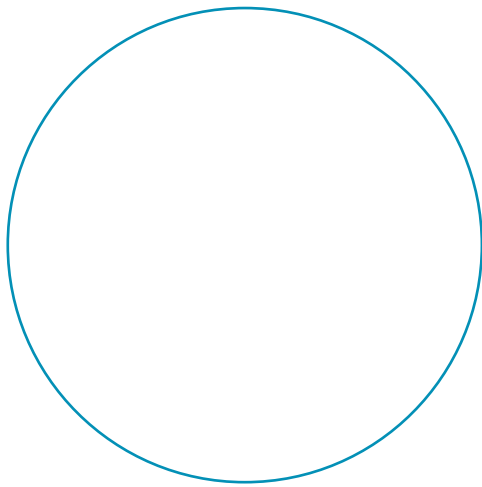
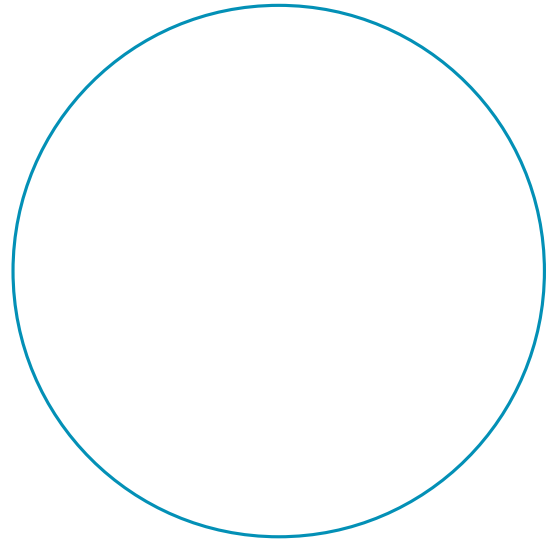
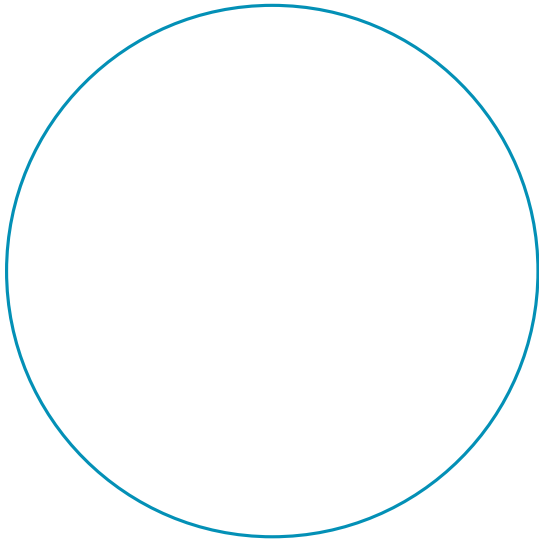
We all feel lots of emotions every day. We can notice and name them. Draw three emotions you have felt today. Do they have shapes and colours?



Gently Holding My Emotions.

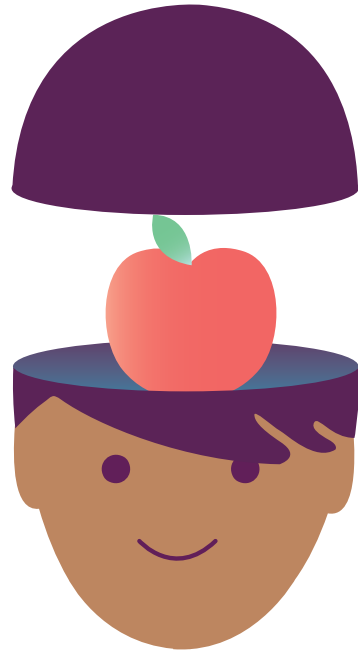


Have you ever felt lots of feelings all at once? Emotions turn up in our minds and our bodies every day. We can notice and name them. Then we can hold them gently until they are ready to move on.



The Senses

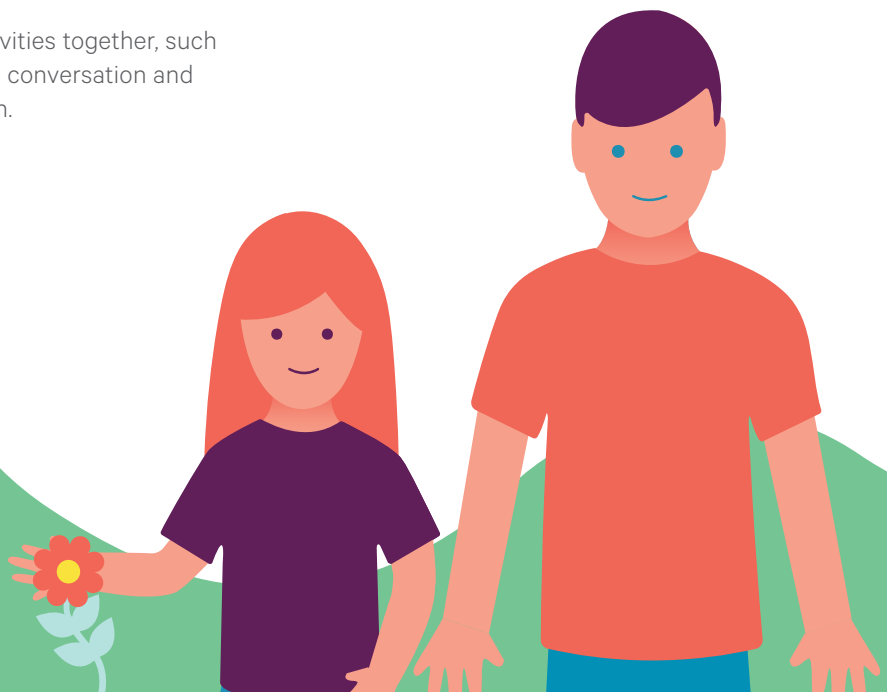
We have five primary senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Our senses are the way in which we interact with the world and learn about what is happening around us. Mindfulness gives us a pathway back to the present moment through our senses. For the children in our care, the senses are a wonderful way to feel grounded and in the here and now. We can model this for them by tuning into our own senses and engaging with the world in the present.



In the midst of a global pandemic, our senses are being over stimulated. We are literally bombarded with sensory information as we move through each day and many of us, and many of our children are feeling the effects of this overload.

Mindfulness helps us to focus on one thing at a time. When we do this via our senses, two important things happen: we develop our sensory awareness and we increase our capacity to pay attention. When we pay close attention, we are able to calm our mind and let go of distracting thoughts. We then have an opportunity to open ourselves up to the world around us without getting too caught up in our thoughts and emotions.

Having time to experience sensory activities together, such as a mindful walk outside can stimulate conversation and appreciation in both adults and children.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Sounds of The Outback.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Sounds of The Outback

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1212/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

My Senses Teach Me About The World

This activity highlights the role of our senses in every moment of every day.

Sensory Me

This activity encourages you to think about how our senses can come to life within our minds and bodies.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

What senses do you really like exploring and using outside?

Tell me about a recent time when your senses taught you something important?

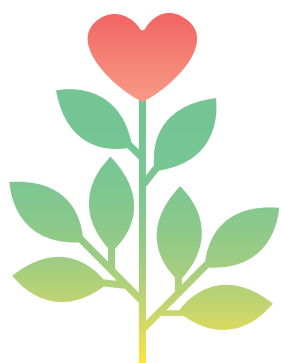
When we are very quiet and calm, what might our senses be doing?

My Senses Teach Me About The World.



—

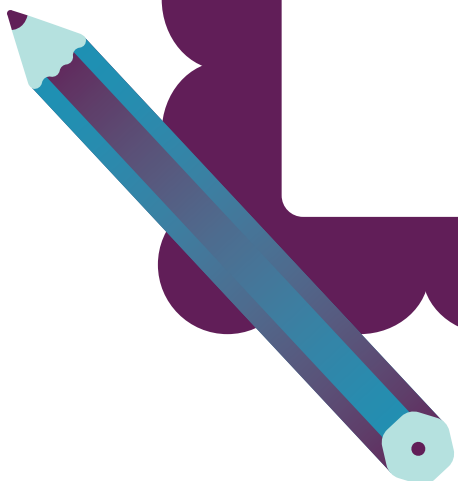
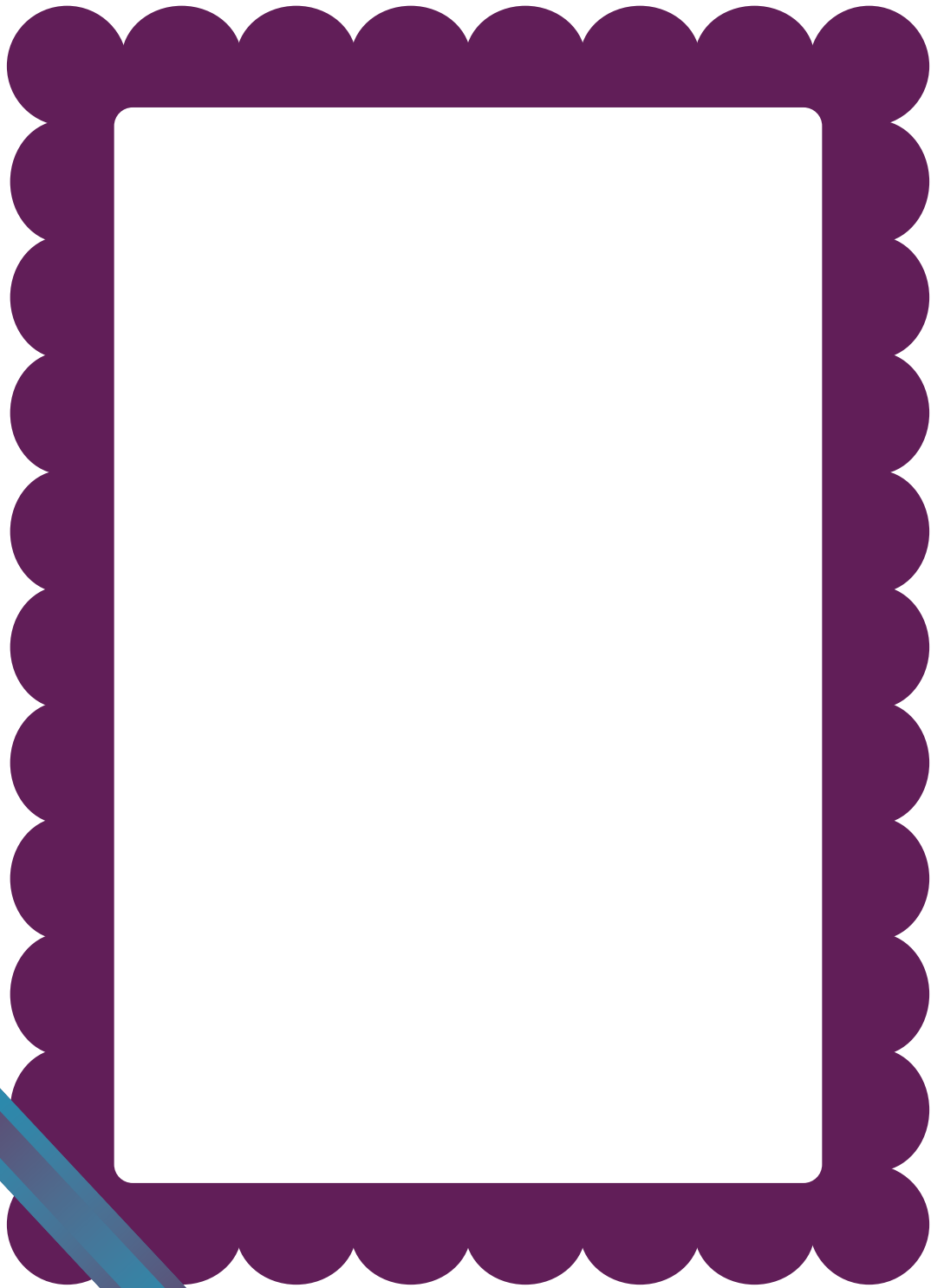
Draw yourself somewhere you love to be. What are your senses telling you about the world around you? What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?



Sensory Me.

—

Draw yourself in this photo frame doing something that switches on your five senses. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?



Mindful Movement

For adults and children, one of the ways in which we can manage our emotions is to mindfully drop down out of our heads and begin to pay attention to the sensations in our bodies. Our bodies are multi-sensory and provide us with so much 'present moment' information. We feel better when we move because it is what we've been engineered to do. Young children are especially at ease when moving and being active.



Sometimes, we may find ourselves very caught up in our heads. It is especially at these times that mindful movement can help us to reconnect with our bodies and activate some of the wisdom they contain. Being in the present and paying attention to the felt sensations in our body is an ideal gateway to mindfulness.

COVID19 represents a new and uncertain challenge to us all and one which has possibly seen us do a lot of mental work. As we grapple with the rapid changes to our way of life, the restrictions to our movements and the palpable sense of loss around the world, it is not surprising many of us are experiencing a wide range of emotions.

Children look to us as role models and guides on how to navigate change and handle new and possibly unsettling experiences. It is important to remember that humans learn the most through observing what others humans do. Children intuitively know that trusted and caring adults are a source of wisdom. Getting out and about and moving together can be a highly effective way to create feelings of calm and connection. We have this unique and powerful opportunity to show the children in our care a positively oriented approach to change and uncertainty through mindful movement.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Let's Go On Safari

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Let's Go On Safari

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1196/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets on the
following pages:

Moving Mindfully

This activity encourages you to reflect on how your mind and body combine to create wonderful movement.

Mind – Body Connect

This activity gently introduces the concept of feeling disconnected from our bodies at times, especially when we have a busy mind. It encourages you to imagine a totally connected mind and body.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

How do you think our mind and body communicate with each other?

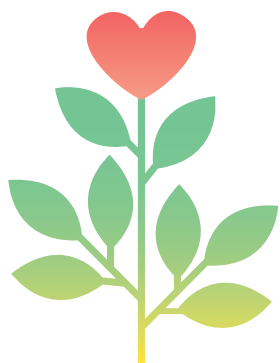
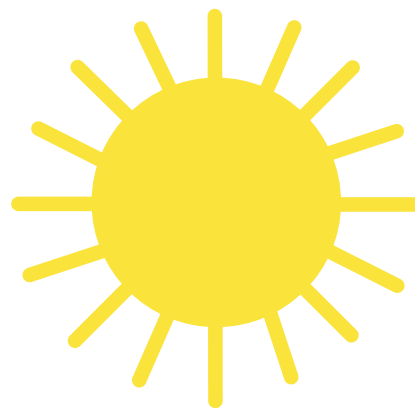
How do you feel in your mind when you are active and moving your body?

Do you ever wonder how your body just knows so much about how to help you in every moment?

Moving Mindfully.



Think of a time when you were using your whole body and feeling fantastic. Perhaps you were swimming or running or playing an active game. Draw your body feeling great and moving mindfully and write some of the feelings you felt at the time.



Mind-body Connect.



Sometimes we get so busy inside our heads, we forget that our bodies are attached... oops! Draw yourself at a time when your head and body are working and moving together like a wonderful machine!

What are you doing and how are you feeling? Think of some emotion words to add.



Looking After Worry and Anxiety

—

This second section, Looking After Worry and Anxiety, contains three specific mindfulness topics to progress through with your child to assist them to turn towards the positive, especially in times of challenge:



3 topics

- Handling Unhelpful Thoughts
- Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body
- Bouncing Back



3 meditations



6 activities

We invite you to practise the following meditations with your child as a way of cultivating the ability to turn towards one's own experiences with care and kindness. Doing this together, and discussing the experience, is especially important if your child is struggling. Children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others and you as their parent, carer or teacher have a vital role to play.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to manage anxious feelings. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to complete. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



Handling Unhelpful Thoughts

Acknowledging that feeling fearful and anxious at a time such as this is not only normal but appropriate. Given the nature of the threat we are facing, fear and anxiety are adaptive responses as they alert us to the fact that we need to be taking appropriate action to keep ourselves and others as safe and healthy as possible. It's also important to recognise that fear and anxiety can quickly escalate and reach a tipping point beyond which they are no longer particularly helpful and can affect our thinking in negative ways.



When the acute stress response is activated we're less able to think clearly or make good decisions. We become more reactive and less responsive. Our thinking can quickly spiral, becoming increasingly negative and unhelpful and difficult to unhook from.

Mindfulness helps us get better at recognising and understanding our own personal signals that tell us we're close to our tipping point. It gives us the opportunity to respond by taking steps to settle and soothe our nervous system which in turn enables us to think more clearly, make better decisions and respond as opposed to react.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: The Wish Tree.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 107 – A Wish For Me
- The Wish Tree

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/8/23/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

My Magical Wish Tree

It's time to make a wish! This activity builds awareness around our own ability to change our thinking when we feel a need to.

Float Away

This activity presents a calming way to imagine letting go of unhelpful thoughts and observing them in a neutral light. You can practise this whenever you like, remembering the floating leaves.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How can we help each other to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have happened in the past?

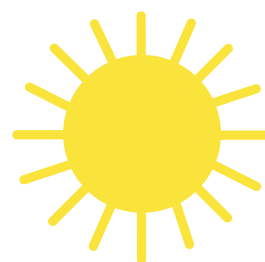
How can we help each other to stay in the moment and not worry too much about things that have not happened yet and might not even happen?

When we think of thoughts and feelings that upset us, what are some great ways you help them to gently move on and let you get back to what you are doing?

My Magical Wish Tree.



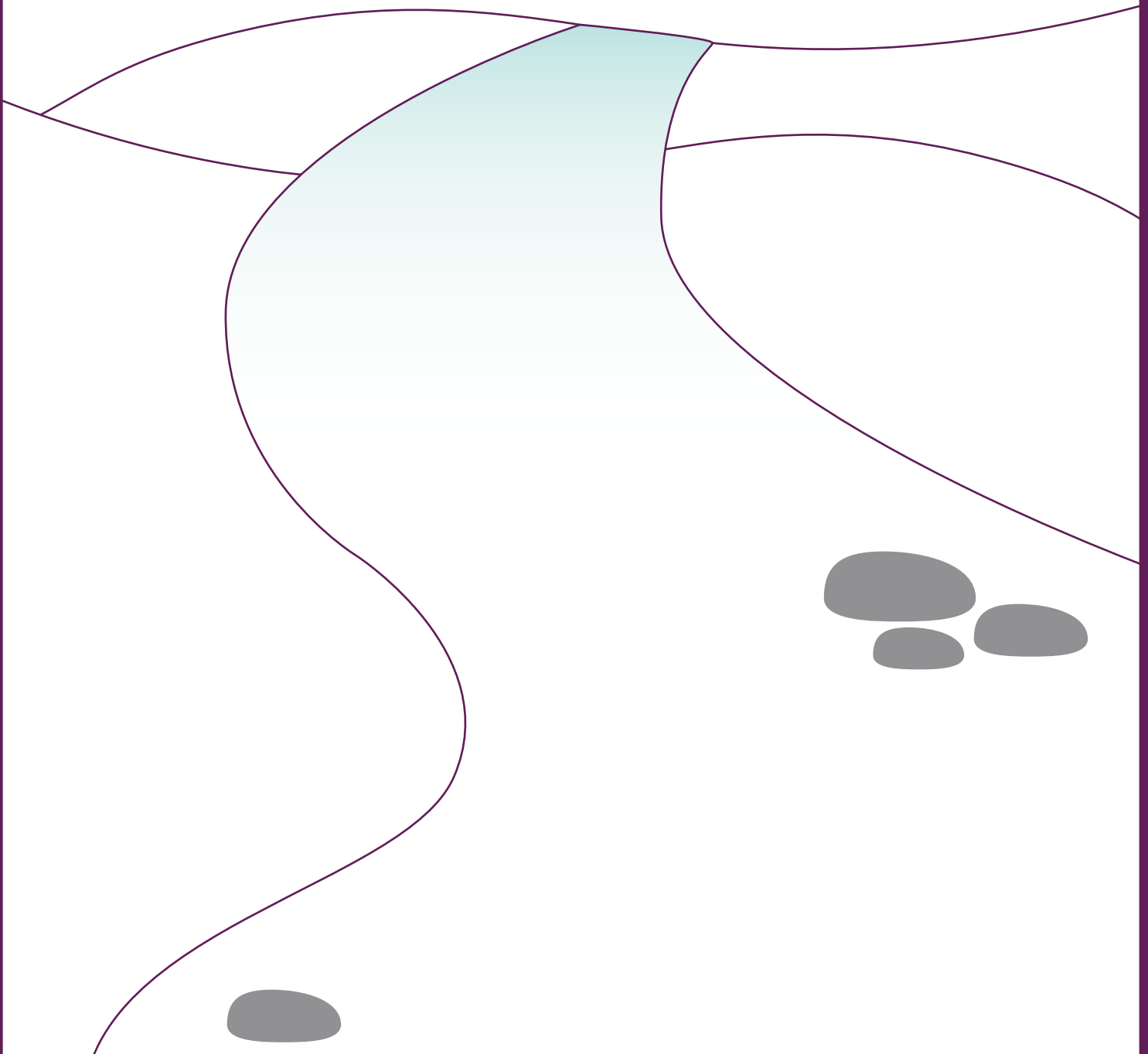
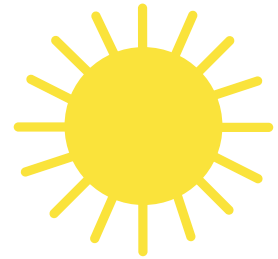
Think of a favourite tree, or imagine a favourite tree. Imagine it is filled with magical wish birds. What do you wish for today? Just choose something that makes you feel calm and happy. Draw your favourite tree and fill it with wish birds. Write your wish beneath your tree.



Float Away.



Imagine sitting beside a beautiful creek. The sun is shining, the birds are singing and the cool fresh water is flowing past you gently and calmly. Pop your worries on leaves that are floating past and just let them float away. Draw and write what you are imagining right now.



Looking After an Anxious Mind and Body

Humans have worried for millennia. Our brains have evolved over thousands of years, tossing thoughts, ideas, worries and emotions around, sometimes all at the same time! Worries are often about the future and how it might unfold for us. Sometimes these worries become more deeply seeded and are harder to ignore. Mindfulness can help with this. It helps us get better at noticing where our attention is and choosing where we would like it to be.



For many children, worries manifest in their bodies. For example, a tummy ache can be an indicator that children are worried about something. They may not have the language to fully express what is on their minds, but unpleasant, felt sensations in the body can be a sign. Feeling anxious for much of the time can be very tiring and lead to poor sleep. Mindfulness is a way to regularly tune in and become aware of how thoughts and emotions are impacting us physically.

As parents, carers and teachers, we can model this by focusing our own attention on the present moment and not allowing ourselves to be drawn into unhelpful thinking. Through gentle conversations, children can be warmly encouraged to share their worries with a trusted adult rather than carry them alone. A conversation with a caring adult can help them to make sense of their worries and then let them go, knowing an adult is there as a source of support and reassurance.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Teddy Bear Breathing

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 03 – 04 Year Olds
- Teddy Bear Breathing

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/433/1184/2451/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Teddy Bear Breathing

This activity shines a light on the special place that teddies and soft toys have in our lives. They can be a great source of comfort and play an important role.

Someone Special

This activity helps you to name those adults around you that are able to support and assist you during the tough times. This knowledge builds trust and peace of mind.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do things feel in your body when you are worried?

Who and what can help you when worries show up and won't move away after a little while?

How does it feel when you hand your worries to an adult and you can happily get on with being a kid?

Teddy Bear Breathing.



Do you have a favourite soft toy or blanket? If you do, go and get it now. How does this very special friend make you feel when you are together? Draw the two of you looking after one another and write some feelings words around you both.



Someone Special.



Think of someone you love very much who helps you out when you feel sad and unsure. Imagine being together and having fun. What do you love doing together? Draw a picture and add some feelings words around you both.





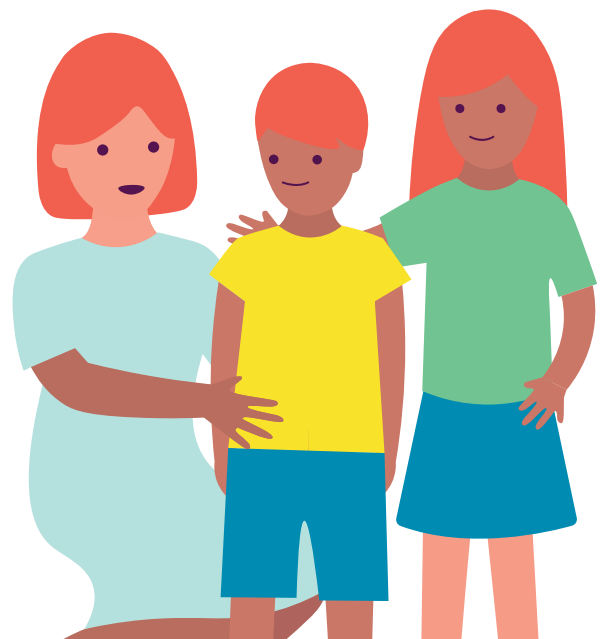
Bouncing Back

Resilience is the ability to bounce back when we experience challenges or things don't go the way we planned. Resilient people find ways to cope when life gets tricky and uncertain. As adults, we already know that life is full of ups and downs and the importance of having tools to manage this. Children need help to develop resilience, especially in the midst of so much uncertainty and stress. Mindfulness is one such valuable tool that we can use to build resilience, lower stress and support our wellbeing.



Mindfulness is especially important when we experience setbacks and failures. Having things go in unexpected or undesirable ways can be a learning opportunity. It is in these moments that we can let go of old ways of doing things and find new ways to overcome challenges. Mindful awareness of the present moment helps us do this by enabling us to assess challenges calmly and with a clear head. When children see adults doing this, it can be a powerful learning experience.

Positive self-talk at these times can also help, and we can model this behaviour to children. When we tell ourselves that we'll be okay, that we are strong enough to deal with a situation and that there are better times ahead, we begin to build positive patterns of thinking that strengthen with practice. This positive process allows our minds to think more flexibly and creatively providing access to a broader range of possible strategies and solutions.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Steady as a Tree.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Families
- Any Time
- Steady as a Tree

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/482/1374/2804/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Bouncing Back

Imagine holding and playing with an actual ball when deciding to bounce back after a difficult moment. Have a bouncy ball handy for this activity so that you can experiment with the concept together.

Picking Ourselves Up

This activity shines a light on a common challenge and helps you to imagine positive coping strategies so that you can move on into the rest of their day.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do humans and other animals like pets manage when things are really tricky so that they can keep going and enjoy the rest of their day?

Can you remember a time when things have been hard and you have learned an important lesson? If you can share a childhood experience of your own, this can be very helpful.

When your day is a bit up and down, what do you do to stay positive and calm?

Bouncing Back.



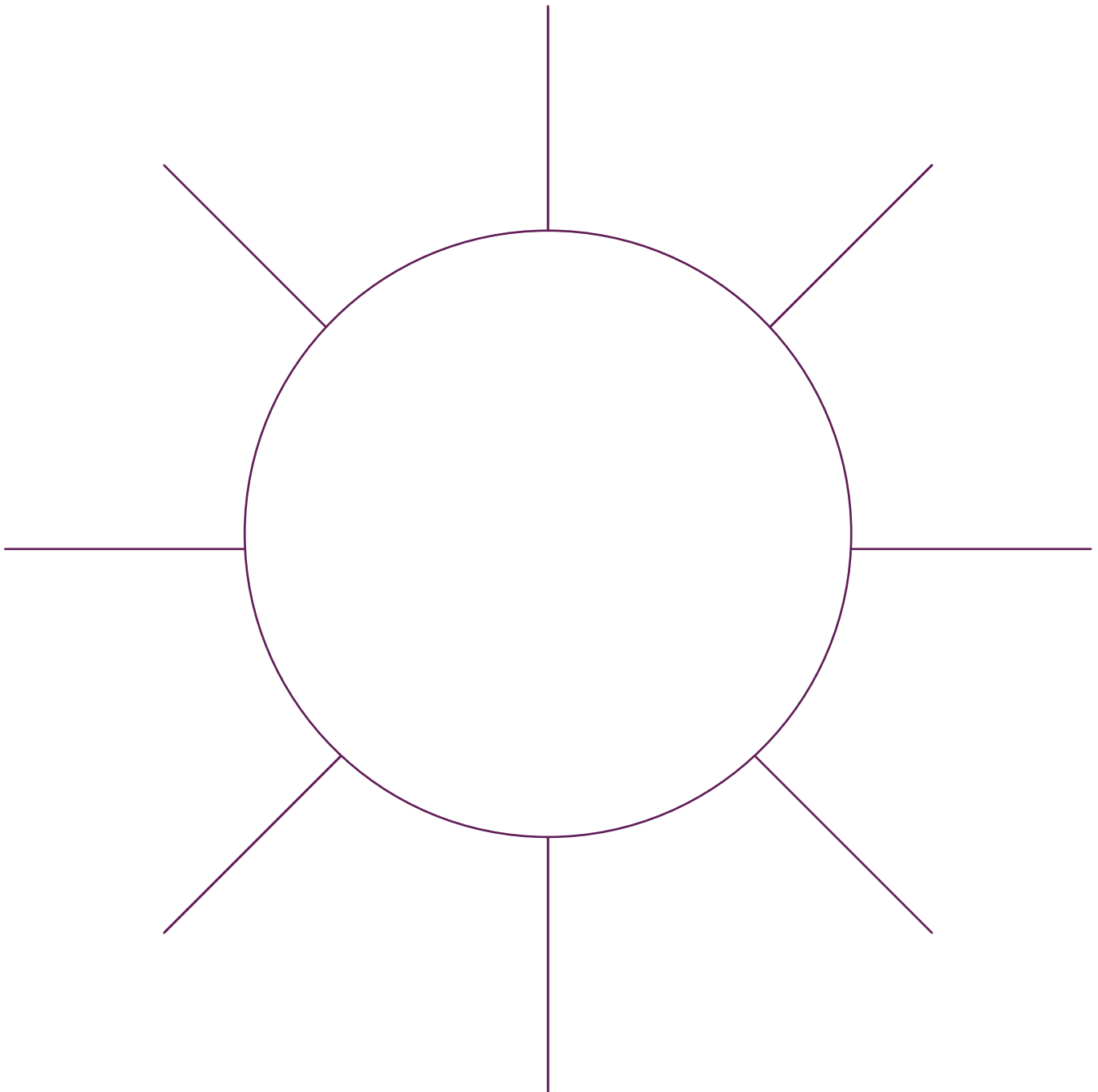
When we bounce a ball it can bounce way up high and it always comes down again. Draw yourself with some bouncy balls to show that life can be like this too. We have up and down bouncy days too, just like a bouncy ball.



Picking Ourselves Up.



We've all fallen in the playground and found ourselves on the ground. Life can be like this too sometimes and it can be very hard to get back up and keep going. But when we do, things begin to become clearer for us and we can see a way forward. Write and draw about a time you had to just pick yourself up and keep going.



Focusing on the Positives

—

This third module, Focusing on the Positives, contains three specific mindfulness topics to progress through with your child to assist them to turn towards the positive, especially in times of challenge:



3 topics

- Gratitude and Savouring
- Choosing Optimism
- Growth Mindset



3 meditations



6 activities

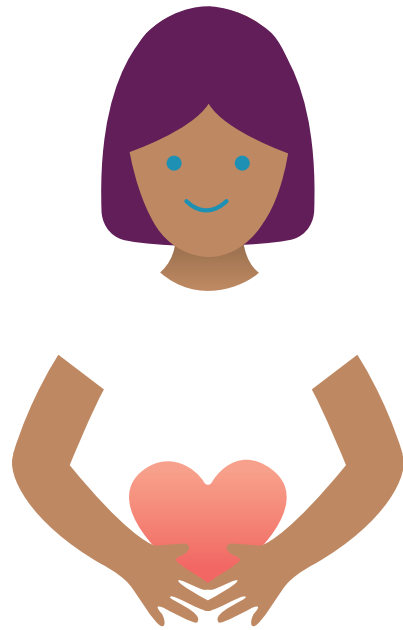
Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. Doing this together, and holding further discussions of your experience, is especially important because children thrive on caring and trusting relationships with others.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help us to focus on the positives. We then suggest inviting your child to choose an activity they wish to engage with. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



Gratitude and Savouring

Taking in the good doesn't always come naturally. The human brain is wired like velcro for negative experiences and teflon (non-stick) for positive (that negativity bias again!). The stickiness of negative experiences was adaptive and has helped ensure our survival as a species. However, we no longer need to be on the constant look out for threats and danger, yet the hardwiring of our brains remains the same.



Gratitude is being thankful for the good things in our lives. When we appreciate people, places and experiences, we begin to pay more attention to what brings us joy.

Savouring is all about deliberately focusing on enjoyable experiences by tuning into them mindfully and with appreciation. We can savour looking forward to a special experience, as it is unfolding in the moment, or later as we recall it in our minds.

Cultivating gratitude and savouring are ways to velcro the positive. They can serve as an antidote to the natural tendency to take the positives in our lives for granted, and are essential elements of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to train our ability to focus on one thing at a time. This present moment awareness is a way to tune into our minds and bodies and become more aware of positive experiences in our lives. When we focus on feeling grateful, our bodies may fill with warm and happy emotions. Areas of the brain associated with connection and building relationships are activated. Savouring helps us to take in and really absorb the positive details of an experience.

As care-givers, we can model this by focusing our own attention on the positives in our lives. When we are grateful, feelings of joy can increase both within us, and in our immediate environment.

Children can be gently encouraged to practise gratitude and savouring on a daily basis. As they do this, they begin to take in the good and notice the little moments of joy that can be easy to miss.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Gratitude

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 207 – Gratitude
- Gratitude

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/16/97/97/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Gratitude Tree

This activity presents an ongoing gratitude project which can be added to over time. It will encourage you to actively look for moments to be grateful for so they can be added to the tree. How many leaves can you add?

Savouring Chain

This activity encourages you to build a savouring routine, actively noticing and recording positive moments in the past, present and future. How long can you make your chain?



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Doing this regularly can cultivate greater awareness of the good.

Tell me about what it feels like to really look forward to something?

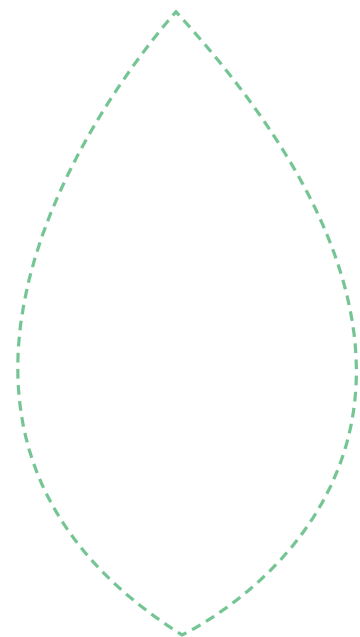
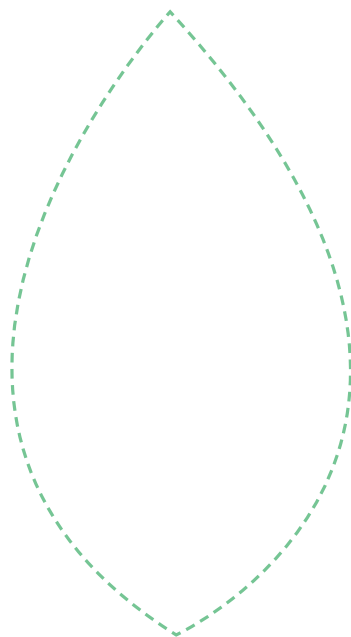
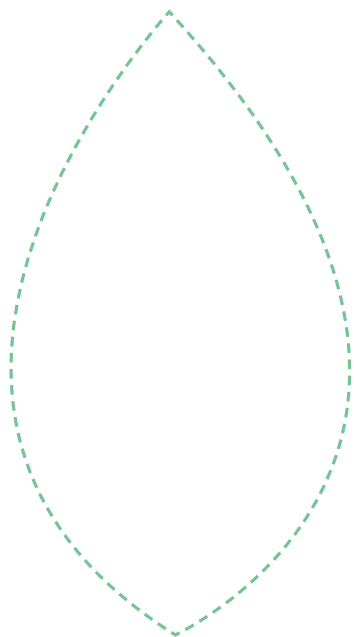
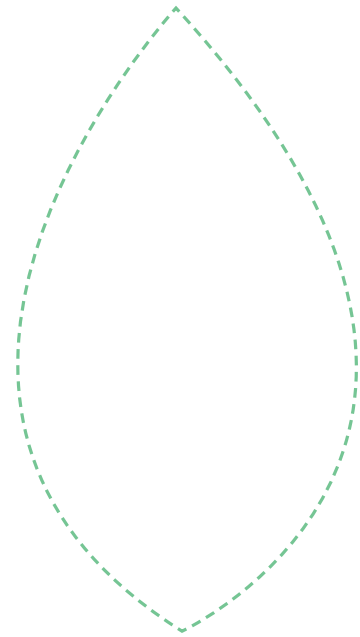
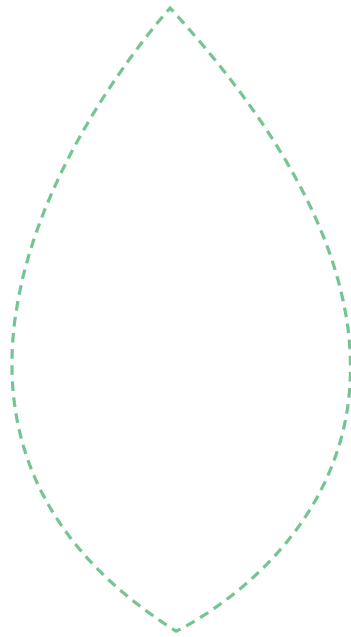
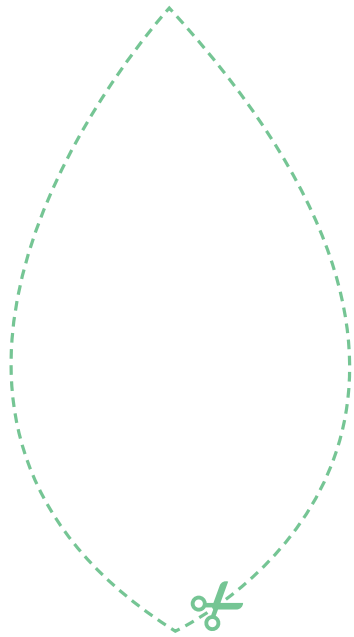
How can we make sure we notice the little moments in every day that make us feel good?

How does it feel inside when we are thankful and happy?

Gratitude Tree.



Think of all the wonderful people, places and things that make you feel happy inside. Use these leaves to write and draw some of them. Then go outside and find a dead branch to bring inside (with your parent's permission) to tie them onto. You can add more each week.



Savouring Chain.



When we think of beautiful times, we call this savouring. We can do it anytime, about anytime, even if the special thing has not happened yet. Using these coloured strips, write and draw some happy moments and then make a chain. You will need a glue stick to make your loops. You can add to your chain each week.



A series of seven horizontal rectangular boxes, each outlined with a dashed line. The boxes are arranged vertically and are intended for writing and drawing happy moments. The colors of the dashed lines are: red, red, yellow, blue, purple, purple, and green.

Choosing Optimism

When we think optimistically, we feel hopeful and confident and often positively place ourselves in the future. Optimism is a future minded emotion that assists us to build a positive perspective about something that is yet to happen, even when we face challenges.



Research shows that when we are optimistic, we are more able to cope with stressful happenings in life. We tend to take a problem-solving approach and mindfully plan our way forward. Alongside this behaviour, we begin to see the best in a situation and move towards the positive in our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Optimism is a strength we can build and practise from early childhood onwards. Children in our care look to trusted adults and model what they see, hear and experience. Being aware of our own thoughts and emotions is therefore very important. When we model a positive outlook, we demonstrate an ability to mindfully navigate challenges effectively without becoming stuck in the negative implications. Children witness this perspective taking place and learn to consider the same positively oriented actions in their own lives.

Cultivating an optimistic outlook can begin with mindfulness. Through awareness and attention, we can begin to notice our thinking patterns. Acknowledging and supporting positive thoughts and acknowledging and then letting go of negative thoughts is a great place to start. This does not mean that we pay no attention to the negative or challenging aspects of life. Rather it is about gently unhooking ourselves from negative thought patterns in order to provide room for a more optimistic outlook.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Catching Butterflies

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Classroom
- Primary Year 2 – The Mindfulness Curriculum
- Lesson 9 – Optimism
- PRACTISE – Catching Butterflies 2

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/311/678/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Catching Butterfly Moments

This activity encourages you to mindfully look around you and catch the lovely and hopeful moments in life. It can help you to keep a lookout for the good (your butterflies).

Unhook and Swim On

Whilst every day has challenges, you can mindfully move towards the positive moments, just like a colourful fish unhooking and swimming on in the deep blue ocean. This activity builds a strategy of changing direction when you get stuck in your thoughts.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How can we move towards positive thinking when we get stuck with a problem?

How do you think positive thoughts help us to learn and grow?

Can you think of a time when you were feeling negative and then were able to change direction?

Catching Butterfly Moments.



When we see a butterfly, it is often a joyful experience. Butterflies dance and weave in the sunlight, making the most of every moment. Create your own butterflies with art materials and hang them up in your room to remind you to look for beautiful moments each and every day.



Art Materials you may need:

- Plain or coloured paper
- Ribbons
- Glue
- Cardboard
- Pencils & colouring materials

Unhook And Swim On.



Imagine you are a colourful fish in the deep blue ocean. A hook means danger and it's important to keep swimming if you see one nearby. Draw yourself swimming towards all that makes you happy and far away from the hook.



Growth Mindset

—

Growth Mindset is the belief that with effort, we can train our brains to grow and develop. Our brains are neuroplastic – able to develop and change across our lifespans. The more we challenge our brains, the more neural connections we make, leading to a smarter and stronger brain. Growth mindset helps create a love of learning and a resilience that supports positive development and wellbeing, and is an essential element of mindfulness.

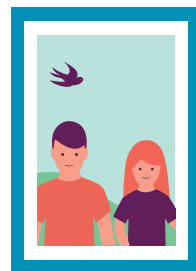


When we practise mindfulness, we create much needed space within our minds to learn and grow. Combining mindfulness and growth mindset helps us to be open to possibilities and challenges. It enables us to cultivate what's referred to as a 'beginner's mind', a mind that is willing to see everything as if it was for the first time and is completely available to the moment. Think of a scientist making a new discovery, or a child examining a new insect or playing in puddles for the first time.

Focusing on what we don't know or can't do can become an unhelpful pattern of thinking. We may also find it challenging to do things in a new way. We call this a fixed mindset. Building a growth mindset does the opposite, expanding our awareness to how we can try things out and improve through learning, even if we make mistakes along the way.

We can model a growth mindset by focusing our own attention on the possibilities for growth and development in our own lives. When we demonstrate that we are able to learn from our mistakes and challenges, we show the children in our care that giving up is not productive and things improve with effort and persistence. A key attitude to model is to always aim to do our best.

Children can be gently encouraged to have an open mind on a daily basis. As they do this, they are more likely to persist and believe in themselves. Cultivating a growth mindset begins with mindfulness as we pay attention to the present moment with curiosity, tuning in to all it has to offer us.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Rock the Boat

There are boat-building instructions in the Origami Mindfulness Activity.

Smiling Mind App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- Activity – Rock the Boat

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/2/4/4/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets on the following pages:

Origami Mindfulness

This activity is designed to be completed together and will assist you to do your best and see a challenge through to completion. Origami requires slow and careful attention. This is useful in building mindfulness.

Growth Mindset Heart

This activity is designed to be completed together and will assist you to do your best and see a challenge through to completion. It is also useful in helping you to identify those people in their lives who help you to grow.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

When things get tricky, what do you say to yourself to keep trying?

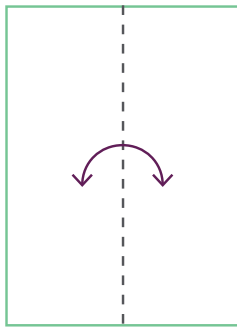
How can we be our own best friend when we are struggling with something difficult?

Who encourages you at home and school when you are working on a task that is difficult?

Origami Mindfulness.

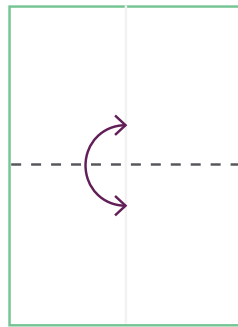


Have you ever tried making origami? You will need an A4 piece of paper to make this little boat shaped origami with an adult and then do the Rock The Boat meditation together. Then make more little boats together and decorate them with many colours.



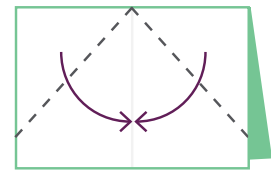
1.

Fold in half



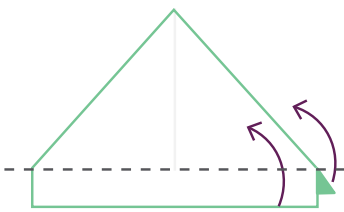
2.

Fold in half again



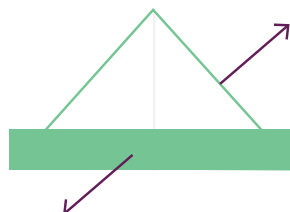
3.

Fold in corners



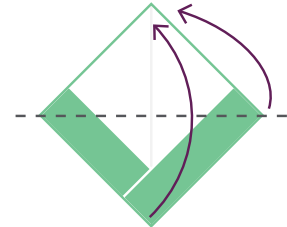
4.

Fold up edges on both sides



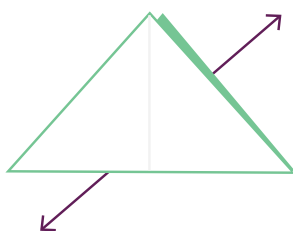
5.

Pull the sides out and flatten



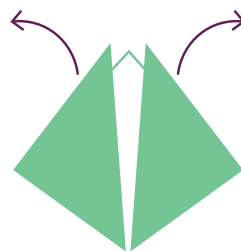
6.

Fold front and back layers up



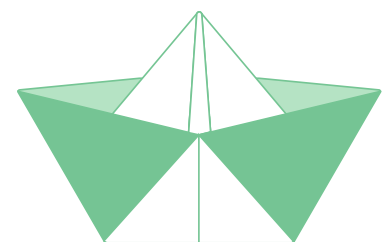
4.

Pull sides apart and flatten



5.

Pull top flaps outwards



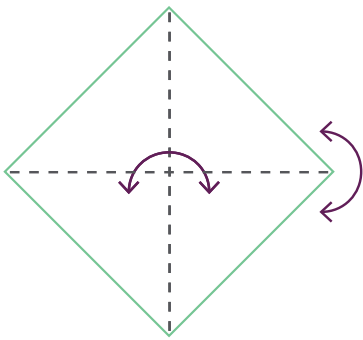
6.

Squish the bottom and pull the sides up. Tada!

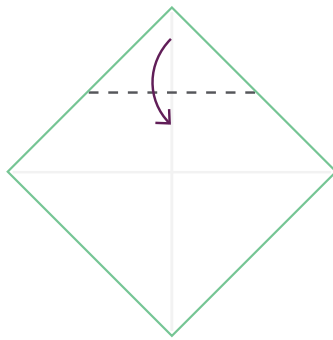
Growth Mindset Heart.



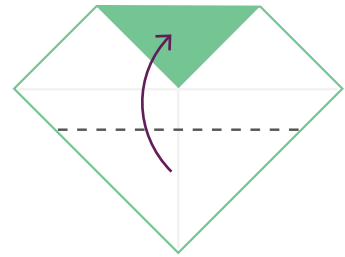
Think of someone who is always there for you and helps you to learn and grow by helping you to keep trying even when things are tricky. Using a square piece of paper, make an origami heart for this person.



1.
Fold in half in both directions



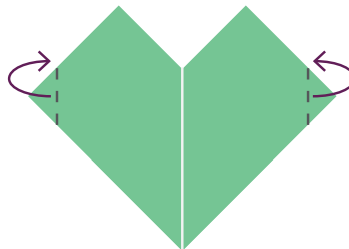
2.
Fold the top corner down



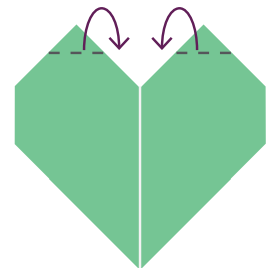
3.
Fold the bottom corner up



4.
Fold each edge inwards



5.
Fold the corners on the side



6.
Fold the corners on the top





Smiling Mind

info@smilingmind.com.au

smilingmind.com.au

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

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

