

Mindfulness Activities for Adolescents and Adults

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing can be useful to calm us and to help us experience what is happening now, rather than thinking about what has already happened or may occur in the future.

Find a comfortable place to sit and either close your eyes or if preferred, look down at the floor. Once you have done this, start to focus on your breathing - take a deep breath in, hold for a couple of seconds and then breathe out slowly. Repeat this ten times. You may find [this breathing bubble](#) helpful in relation to the speed and how often to breathe in and out.

The first time you try this exercise, if taking ten deep breaths feels like too much then you could start with five and work your way up to ten with more practice. Some people may prefer to set a time instead, e.g. a timer could be set for 1-2 minutes.

Whilst doing this breathing exercise, some people may wish to lie down and place their hands on their stomach so that they feel their lungs fill as they breathe in and out.

Others may prefer to have their eyes closed and hold their thumb and middle finger together in each hand, while pretending to hold a balloon, butterfly or feather. If using this method, imagine the balloon you are holding to float away into the sky on each breath out, or the butterfly or feather to flutter gently each time you exhale.

Some people may prefer to close their eyes and hold a physical item, e.g. a flower from the garden, whilst they do this breathing exercise. With this method, upon opening their eyes again, the physical item they hold can be examined to notice its colours, smell, intricate lines, details, textures and the overall shape.

What should I do if a thought or feeling pops into my head during this exercise?

You should accept it, but allow it to float on by. People have different ways to help them do this - for example imagining they are pinning their thought or feeling to a cloud, or perhaps visualising it being placed on a leaf and allowing it to float down a river. Some people may prefer just redrawing their focus to their breathing.

It is important that you focus your attention on the rise and fall of your chest, feeling the air entering and leaving your body.

Reflecting on Positive Events

This activity helps you explore the positive events in everyday life, which may feel particularly challenging at this moment in time. It is therefore important to take time out of your day and week to do this.

Reflect on your day and consider a positive event that occurred during it. This event can be either big or small. Whilst thinking about this positive event, consider the following:

- Pinpoint what your positive event was.
- Were you aware of the positive feelings you were experiencing while the event was occurring?
- How did your body feel during the positive event?
- What mood/ feelings/ thoughts did you experience throughout that event?
- Now that you have reflected on a positive event, what thoughts are in your mind right now?

You can either keep these thoughts in your head during the mindful breathing exercise mentioned earlier or perhaps write these down to keep in a safe place so that you can revisit your positive events whenever you wish.

Body Scan

Before doing a body scan, you can either record the script on the next page to playback, ask another member of your household to read the script out calmly and at a slow pace, or you can use audio recordings available online or through various downloadable apps. For example, [Headspace](#) offer a three minute body scan on their website.

The aim of a body scan is to help with self-awareness and relaxation. It is important that you find an environment that is comfortable for you.

For this activity, you may wish to either sit, lie down or if preferred, rest your head on a desk. It is also suggested that you close your eyes for this exercise or alternatively, you can look at the floor if sitting.

The activity may feel slightly unusual the first few times you try it but it is worth giving it a try as many people report the benefits of this exercise. You may wish to try a short version the first time you try this activity and build up to a longer version over time.

Short Version Example Script for Body Scan:

Start by focusing on your breath. Feel your breath entering and leaving your body and notice how it feels. Really focus on this feeling. If thoughts pop into your head or your mind wanders, acknowledge this and refocus on your breathing. Notice your inhale and exhale.

In..... Out.....

Next, take your full attention to your feet. Feel their contact to the ground....

Next, take your full attention to the backs of your legs.....

Next, slowly move all your attention up your spine. Try to sense each vertebrae....

Move up your back to the shoulder blades.....

Think about how they feel right now?.... Tight? Relaxed?

Next take your attention to your face. Bring your attention back to the here and now and your breath if your mind wanders....

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation asks you to tense and relax different muscles around your body. It helps bring awareness to the present experience of the body and is good for relieving tension and worry. It may also help you to fall into a state of deep relaxation.

You can find a guided progressive muscle relaxation [here](#), with the audio aiming to guide you through each stage to help you master this technique.

Further Resources

Books:

- [The Essential Guide to using mindfulness with children and young people - by Tine Rae, Jody Walshe and Jo Wood](#)
- [The Ladybird Book of Mindfulness \(Ladybirds for Grown Ups\) - by Jason Hazeley](#)
- [Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world - by Mark Williams and Danny Penman](#)
- [The Wellbeing Journal: Creative Activities to Inspire \(Wellbeing Guides\) - by MIND](#)

Apps:

- [Headspace](#)
- [CALM](#)
- [Smiling Mind](#)
- [Clear Fear](#)