

Mindfulness meditation

EXPLANATION:

At each developmental stage mindfulness and meditation can be useful tools for helping children and students to experience personal alertness.

Being fully present, taking a breath, and not beholden to reactive thoughts and feelings requires careful attention to thoughts, feelings, and environment. These activities can be conducted daily building attention, calmness and perspective.

It is important to acknowledge the difference and connectedness of mindfulness and meditation. Mindfulness can be practised anytime, anywhere, and with anyone by showing up and being fully engaged in the here and now. Meditation is usually practised for a specific amount of time. Mindfulness supports and enriches meditation, while meditation nurtures and expands mindfulness.

For the purpose of the Kaplan Kindness Curriculum we use the term 'mindfulness meditations'. This is because mindfulness meditation practice is one way to experience the current moment and integrate that awareness into everyday life. As children get older and more experienced, they can manage their own mindfulness moments.



A variety of activities are listed below. Many of the activities are suitable for all ages!

AGE/YEAR LEVELS: For all ages

STUDENT GROUPING: Group descriptions and individual meditations

ACTIVITY LENGTH: varies according to children and students' experiences

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Social skills and self-regulation skills that are embedded throughout curriculum documents.

One of the general capabilities of the ACARA curriculum, *Personal and Social Capability* supports students in becoming creative and confident individuals who 'have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing' (MCEETYA 2008). The development of personal and social capability is a foundation for learning and for citizenship.

This capability encompasses students' personal/emotional and social/relational dispositions, intelligences, sensibilities and learning. It develops effective life skills for students, including understanding and handling themselves, their relationships, learning and work. The organising elements of the Personal and Social capability particularly relevant include self-management and self-awareness.

Self-awareness

This element involves students developing an awareness of their own emotional states, needs and perspectives.

Students identify and describe the factors that influence their emotional responses. They develop a realistic sense of their personal abilities, qualities and strengths through knowing what they are feeling in the moment and having a realistic assessment of their own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-knowledge and self-confidence. Students reflect on and evaluate their learning, identify personal characteristics that contribute to or limit their effectiveness and learn from successes or failures. In developing and acting with personal and social capability, students:

- recognise emotions
- recognise personal qualities and achievements
- understand themselves as learners
- develop reflective practice.

Self-management

This element involves students developing the metacognitive skill of learning when and how to use particular strategies to manage themselves in a range of situations.

Students effectively regulate, manage and monitor their own emotional responses, and persist in completing tasks and overcoming obstacles. They develop organisational skills and identify the resources needed to achieve goals. Students develop the skills to work independently and to show initiative, learn to be conscientious, delay gratification and persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations. In developing and acting with personal and social capability, students:

- express emotions appropriately
- develop self-discipline and set goals
- work independently and show initiative
- become confident, resilient and adaptable.

Mindfulness meditation supports the personal/emotional and social/relational growth of students in key learning areas.

SCOPE OF TASKS:

When conducting mindfulness meditation activities remember:

- Set a regular time in the daily classroom routine to incorporate mindfulness
- Give some freedom to students to choose the most relevant mindfulness activities for their class
- Ensure the environment is safe and calm – this builds trust in the group
- Encourage the children and students to share their experiences – how are they feeling or how did they feel during the mindful meditation?

ACTIVITIES:

Blowing bubbles: Focus on calm, slow, deep breaths – exhaling to blow the bubble – inhaling in preparation for the next bubble. Take time to watch each bubble – where did it go, what did it look like, how long did it last?



Pinwheels: Perfect for inside or outside use. Children and students concentrate on the movement of the pinwheel in the breeze as it turns – does its movement change as its position in the air changes? If inside, focus can be on the breath as it moves the pinwheel – fast/slow, long/deep breaths and how long the wheel spins before stopping.



Mindful Breathing: Sitting or standing still and focused – concentrate on one breath cycle at a time – breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth – let your body move with the breath. Let go of your thoughts – empty your mind. Watch your breath – as it enters and leaves your body.

Glitter jar: Each child or student in a class can have a personally made glitter jar. The jar is shaken to move the glitter around and then time is taken to sit and watch the glitter and how it moves. Does it move quickly, swirl, stick together? You can also count slowly to see how long the glitter moves for. This activity can be done as a class or individually throughout the day.



How to make a glitter jar

- Fill your plastic bottle about 1/3 full using clear glue. The more glue you add, the longer it will take for the glitter to settle after shaking
- add a tablespoon (or more) of glitter to the jar - different colours and textures can be added - stir the glitter to combine glitter and glue
- Fill the bottle the rest of the way with warm water
- When the bottle is full, cap it and shake it.
- The cap can be sealed with a hot glue gun

Mindful music: Choose the music - a slower tempo can quiet the mind and relax muscles creating a calm and soothing feeling. Likewise, sounds of nature, rain and thunder may also be relaxing, particularly when mixed with other music such as classical, light jazz or easy listening music. Ask children and students to close their eyes, lie down or sit comfortably and allow themselves to get lost in the music – blocking other thoughts. Explore the song - listen to the different instruments and sound of the voice – separate each sound and concentrate on it. Become immersed in the song only.



Mindfulness colouring: There are many downloadable mindfulness colouring templates on the internet and images can be chosen to meet the interests of groups or individuals. When colouring find a quiet, calm place to sit. Encourage children and students to focus on how they choose and apply colour in a design to bring awareness to the present moment. Colouring in a manner that consciously develops openness, curiosity, and flexibly focused attention is the most productive.



Almost any activity you can think of can be done mindfully ... or not. Playing a musical instrument, driving in a car, cooking or walking can all be mindful experiences if they are given focused, curious attention.

RESOURCES:

- Range of different styles of music
- Glitter bottles
- Colouring sheets which can be downloaded from the internet
- Bubbles
- Pinwheels – these can be commercially bought or made by children and students.