

Making stress balls — Mindfulness meditation

EXPLANATION:

Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which one focuses on being strongly aware of what is being sensed and felt in the moment. Stress balls can be stretched and squeezed as students stop, breath and concentrate on the here and now. In this activity students make stress balls to use as a tool to assist their mindfulness meditation.



YEAR LEVELS: Years 7–10

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole class discussion and individual creations

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 30-40mins

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Learning Continuum of Personal and Social Capability

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.

SCOPE OF TASK

Mindfulness refers to being in the *now*. It involves purposefully focusing attention on what is happening in the present moment and being aware of one's thoughts, feelings, physical sensations. Research suggests that mindfulness can improve working memory, reduce stress, and help us be more aware of our own thinking.

1. With the whole class, activate the students' prior knowledge of mindfulness meditation:

- What is mindfulness meditation?
- What is involved in 'being mindful'?
- How do you practise mindfulness?
- Are there any tools that can assist you in your mindful practice? (E.g. music, glitter jars, breathing sticks, windmills)



2. Inform the students that they are going to make a tool to support practising mindfulness. In this activity, they are making a stress ball. Ask students how a stress ball could be used. For example: squeezing with breathing – inhaling and exhaling as the stress ball is gripped and released; concentrating on the movement of the contents of the ball.

3. Instructions on how to make a stress ball:

1. Make a paper funnel – curl the paper and secure with sticky tape
2. Using the funnel fill a plastic bottle with flour, rice, beans or any other suitable filling. Fill your plastic bottle with flour using your funnel!
3. Stretch the balloon across the plastic bottle
4. Tip the bottle upside down to transfer the contents not the balloon - gently squeeze the bottle to push the contents in.
5. Remove the balloon from the bottle
6. Hold the balloon tight and push the air out and tie the balloon tight
7. Decorate

4. Give the students time to play with their stress balls and work out how they can use the stress balls to support their mindfulness practice

5. Reflect with students asking questions:

- Does a stress ball support your meditation?
- How do you use your stress ball for mindfulness practice (breathing, squeezing, use both hands or one hand)?
- Is there a different tool you prefer – why?
- Do you need tool to practise mindfulness meditation?

6. After students have practised using the stress ball, inform them that they can use them during spare time in the classroom or in any other contexts where they practise mindfulness meditation.

Please remember over time the plastic of the balloons will become brittle and will break!

RESOURCES:

- One balloon per student (but have some spares in case of accidents)
- Small plastic bottle
- Flour, rice, beans, corn flour – items to fill the balloon with
- Paper DIY Funnel
- Pens and wool for decorating