

# 5 Mindfulness Activities for Children

Here are 5 simple activities for helping your child live in the present and focus on the positive using mindfulness.

## Fun MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES for children by Big Life Journal

### 1 "JUST ONE BREATH" BREATHING ACTIVITY

- Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.
- Breath deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.
- Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.
- Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.

### 2 CREATE A GLITTER JAR

- Finding a jar or plastic bottle and allow your child to decorate it however they like.
- Fill the bottle up 3/4 of the way with water. Next, add clear glue, food coloring, and glitter then shake.
- Seal the lid and you are ready to go.

### 3 HEARTBEAT EXERCISE

- Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.
- At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels.

### 4 GOING ON A SAFARI

- Go outside on an exciting adventure, try picking up a small rock or touching a plant or flower.
- Notice the bugs or the birds. Take a moment to kneel down and touch the earth.
- Walk mindfully paying close attention to everything. Make sure you walk in silence because you want to notice all those little details.

### 5 TENSE AND RELEASE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.
- Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.
- Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.

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When it comes to calming kids down, nothing is simpler than a breathing activity.

It's okay to simplify. Life can be simple if we let it. Mindfulness can help children clear the cobwebs out of their minds. It's like taking a breath of fresh air and opening the windows on a beautiful spring day.

One common technique is the mindfulness of breathing or just one breath activity. This is a great activity to try if your child is anxious or upset.

## **Mindfulness Activity #1: "Just One Breath" Breathing Activity**

Find a **relaxing place** where you and your child will not be disturbed. Sit in a comfortable posture, either with your legs folded or any comfortable posture. This activity can be done in as little as one minute, but you can also do it for longer periods of time.

Begin by setting a timer for one minute.

Start **breathing deeply** in and out. Notice how the breath feels as it moves in and out of your body. Notice how the air feels on your skin. Pay attention to any sensations that you notice or any sounds that you hear.

Take another slow deep breath and see if you can imagine how the breath moves down into the lungs and then back up again. Thank your body and breath for giving you life and keeping you healthy.

Take one more deep breath and hold the breath for a moment - then release it.

If thoughts become intrusive, try and imagine your thoughts immersed in a white, puffy cloud and push the thought cloud out of your awareness. Afterward, notice how you feel after taking this one-minute break.

# Just One Breath

## BREATHING ACTIVITY



Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.

Breath deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.



Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.

Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.



## Mindfulness Activity #2: Creating a Glitter Jar

Children of any age can create a **glitter jar**. You can also use a snow globe. The glitter jar is a great activity to use when your child is worried, upset, nervous or angry. The glitter in the jar represents your child's thoughts, rushing around in a mad dash.

The next time your child is **upset or anxious** simply have them shake the glitter jar and remain quiet and still while the glitter is settling. As they breathe deeply they can watch the glitter float around in the jar and finally settle on the bottom.

### Steps to Make Your Own Glitter Jar

1. Start by finding a glass mason jar and allow your child to decorate it however they like. You can also use a plastic water bottle if you can't find a mason jar.
2. You will also need one bottle of clear glue and some kind of glitter. Food colouring is optional.
3. Fill the bottle up 3/4 of the way with water. Next, add the clear glue and glitter and shake. You may want to use a funnel to get the glitter in the jar. You may add food colouring if desired. Seal the lid and you are ready to go. Your child can **SHAKE** the jar or bottle when they feel anxious or upset and remain still while the glitter settles.

The jar is like the child's mind, and you can even encourage your child to think about how *their thoughts are like glitter*. As the glitter settles down into the bottom of the jar, the mind becomes calmer as well.

# Create a GLITTER JAR

- ★ Finding a jar or plastic bottle and allow your child to decorate it however they like.
- ★ Fill the bottle up 3/4 of the way with water. Next, add clear glue, food coloring, and glitter then shake.
- ★ Seal the lid and you are ready to go.



## Mindfulness Activity #3: Heartbeat Exercise

The **heartbeat exercise** is a wonderful grounding activity because it allows your child to focus on the sensations in the body. This exercise is a wonderful activity to do if your child is feeling stressed or anxious. For example, if your child is working on a project for school and getting frustrated or feeling stuck, you can gently redirect them by asking them to STOP what they are doing and take a break.

Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute. At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels.

Tuning into the physical body is a wonderful way to redirect the focus. With this new burst of energy, your child will feel a new motivation to complete the previous task.

# Heartbeat Exercise



Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.

At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels.



## Mindfulness Activity #4: Going on a Safari

**Going on a Safari** is another creative mindfulness activity that helps redirect the focus away from stress and anxiety.

Physical activity is a wonderful way to infuse positive energy back into the body. This is a great activity to do right after your child gets home from school because it gives them a mental break from a long day.

You can go outside on an exciting adventure on your next walk. As you walk put all of your senses to work by paying **close attention** to your environment. Notice the feel of the air on your skin, notice the sound of the ground as you walk and pay attention to all of the little movements and sensations.

As you walk, you can also try picking up a small rock or touching a plant or flower. Notice the bugs or the birds. Take a moment to kneel down and touch the earth. Walk mindfully paying close attention to everything. Make sure you walk in silence because you want to notice all those little details. Walking is a wonderful stress-relieving activity because it helps clear the mind and sparks creative ideas. Try going on a safari the next time your child gets **frustrated** and you might be surprised at how well this works.

# Go on a SAFARI

Go outside on an exciting adventure, try picking up a small rock or touching a plant or flower.



Notice the bugs or the birds. Take a moment to kneel down and touch the earth.

Walk mindfully paying close attention to everything. Make sure you walk in silence because you want to notice all those little details.



## Mindfulness Activity #5: Tense and Release Muscle Relaxation

The **tense and release** muscle relaxation is an exercise that relaxes the mind and body by progressively tensing and releasing those large muscle groups.

In this activity, you will gently tense and then release each large muscle group without straining too hard. Try to tense each muscle for approximately 5 seconds for the best results.

This activity is perfect prior to going to sleep because it helps the body **release tension**. Have your child try this activity lying down after they get into bed for the night.

Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing. You can also point the toes up and then back down for a gentle release.

Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.

Notice how much **calmer** you feel already.

Next tense and release the hips and buttocks. You can also do this by straightening the legs and then releasing the tension.

Squeeze the abdomen and chest next and gently release. Notice the wave of relaxation moving through you.

Now slowly draw both hands into fists and squeeze tightly for about 5 seconds then release. Point your arms and hands out straight while squeezing tightly then releasing next.

Finally, shift your attention to your neck and shoulders. Raise your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze for 5 seconds then release. Do this a couple more times and feel the gentle release.

Gently move your head from side to side 2-3 times and then relax.

If you would like to, you can continue this activity back down the body for more relaxation.

This activity grounds you into the physical body and it's a great way to practice mindfulness. The tensing and relaxing of the muscles of the body helps **release the strain and stress** of the day helping your child get a wonderful night's rest.

# TENSE AND RELEASE

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## MUSCLE RELAXATION

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- 1.** Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.
- 2.** Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.
- 3.** Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.



## **Recap**

Any everyday act can be used to practice mindfulness. You and your child can be engaged in mindfulness in the midst of any ordinary activity, which, in essence, really makes it an extraordinary activity.

From walking outside and going on a safari, to shaking a glitter jar or tensing and relaxing muscles, there is no limit when it comes to practicing mindfulness.

You can even encourage your child to eat mindfully or read a book mindfully because any activity can be done with a mindful awareness. The most important thing about mindfulness is being in the here and now - living your life and taking the time to enjoy the world around you.