

A WELLBEING PACK FOR NPT SCHOOL STAFF

IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19
SITUATION

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Contents

Page 3	Wellbeing Pack for staff
Page 4	Hygge- what can we learn from the Danish way of living during these troubled times?
Page 7	Hygge for Young People....a response to coronavirus
Page 10	Hygge in the classroom...self -care ideas during a global pandemic
Page 12	Maintaining a Balance for your Wellbeing
Page 14	What is a Gratitude Journal?
Page 19	Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children
Page 26	Mindfulness – The benefits and practical exercises to try
Page 31	Self-care - Working from home

Wellbeing Pack for Staff

It is important that throughout this pandemic, that all education professionals look after their mental health and wellbeing. Pressures and concerns can build up to a point where they have a negative effect on wellbeing.

Staff are providing a key role not only in helping keyworkers to provide frontline services but also providing a safe place for children and young people in the most challenging of circumstances. Staff in schools are having to find alternative ways to support young people's anxiety and mental health while they are self-isolating, through phone calls, letters home, websites and social media. . For this reason it is important to recognise the essential contribution made by staff during this time.

Within this pack there are ideas, tools and information to help support you during this difficult and challenging situation.



Hygge- what can we learn from the Danish way of living during these troubled times?

Denmark consistently ranks among the happiest countries in the world and the concept of hygge is firmly embedded in their culture.

Hygge has been described as “ taking pleasure from the presence of soothing things “ and “ Cosiness of the soul “

As the world grapples with a global pandemic our lives have been turned upside down. 2020 has seen the closure of schools, mass working from home and the government implementing the strictest regulations ever known in peace time to minimise human transmission and to delay the spread of the growing epidemic. All this leads to a growing sense of panic and unease. Children are forced to stay at home, the news is bombarding us with frightening images and content and for the moment this heightened anxiety is here to stay. This resource looks to Hygge, a concept many people find comforting and helpful generally to seek some solace in these troubling times.

Hygge is all about taking pleasure in the simplest things and this can be related to our current concerns. While we have little control in the pandemic or media aside from staying home and following rules, Hygge teaches us all to look inward and accept things as they are. Just as the Danes accept the dark winters and awful weather and make the most of staying indoors with plenty of throws, candles and hot drinks maybe we can adopt a similar attitude. Staying home is what we need to do so we may as well do it in comfort. This is not to undermine the enormous worry and seriousness of the pandemic but recognising that trying to, live for the moment and letting go of trying to control everything might make life a little easier. Some Hygge essentials you might wish to explore include...

Candles...

Some candles can bring some much needed sense of peace and relaxation. Candles are very closely associated with Hygge in Denmark with many feeling the warmth they bring represents all that Hygge embodies. A small touch but one that can make a difference to our mood especially when it times are tough.



Lights, Lamps, Fires

Pools of light, fairy lights or reading lamps can complement candles and while we need to stay indoors these can make our homes that bit more inviting. Our natural inclination is to want to go outside but Hygge works on the acceptance of the current situation. Some people think the reason Hygge is associate with higher levels of happiness is its ability to find comfort in things within our control (the home and its pleasures) and accepting other events are out of our control. Coronavirus and the need for social distancing/ self- isolation

is a situation that is not only new but unbelievably unfamiliar. So while it is very hard to accept that we can't live our lives as we would like, Hygge can help us to accept that this is our current reality and that fighting it is a waste of energy.

Togetherness

Being forced to spend time with family during this difficult time may result in a natural slowing down of our busy lives and maybe an appreciation of the simple things in life. That is not to say it is easy and it is ok to be finding this hard. However it won't last forever so getting out the board games or cooking together as a family, whatever yours looks like, might help the time together to be better appreciated.

Being kind to ourselves...

This is vitally important in times of upheaval and stress. The Danes espouse the pleasures of coffee, cake, hot chocolate and all the good things and appreciating small pleasures amongst difficult times is something that we all could benefit from. These testing times of a national lockdown might not be the time to start that diet. A hot drink and a break from the non-stop news is a vital part of self-care. A bar of chocolate wouldn't go amiss either 😊



Blankets, throws, indoor comfort.

Accepting that for now staying home is essential and our homes being our safe place is even more evident at this current moment. Hygge is relatively new to our culture but the warm and comforting feeling of drinking a coffee in a candle filled room crosses cultures. While there is a huge amount of underlying anxiety and this is growing, we hopefully have control in our homes in the sense of what we wear, how we warm ourselves and how we find comfort. Many children instinctively look to blankets for comfort....adults are now seeing the benefits for themselves.

Gratitude.

Gratitude seems to have a positive impact on happiness levels...Being grateful and enjoying simple pleasures may seem particularly hard right now. Life seems unfair and scary and people are losing their lives to a disease, These are undeniable facts that we can't sugar coat, However being grateful for our NHS and the countless altruistic acts that we are seeing might help bring a feeling of balance as well as believing we are in this together, Communities are showing they are pulling together from the enormous responses to volunteers to help the NHS and the windows of houses filling with pictures of rainbows representing hope during the pandemic.

Nature

If anyone is lucky enough to have a garden or can access green open spaces nature is a key concept in Hygge and connecting with it is brilliant for our well-being. Walking barefoot on the sand is something lots of us will appreciate all the more when life returns to normal as

well as grabbing a coffee with friends and enjoying an ice cream in the sun. We can still go for walks and cherish the outdoors during this time.

Appreciation.

Appreciating what you have rather than focusing on what you feel is missing is the embodiment of Hygge. Practising gratitude through journals and being in the present moment is especially hard when life seems overwhelming but life goes on. Hygge has brought many people comfort and happiness and shines a much needed light when things appear very dark, Hygge cannot change what is happening but it might change our reaction and feelings albeit in a small way to what is happening.



Further Reading if you are interested...best read with a hot drink ☺

[The Little Book of Hygge, The Danish Way to Live Well...Meik Wiking](#)

[The Year of Living Danishly, Uncovering the Secrets of the World's Happiest Country...Helen Russell](#)

[The Key to Happiness, How to Find Purpose by Unlocking the Secrets of the World's Happiest People...Meik Wiking](#)

[Hygge, The Danish Art of Happiness...Marie Tourell Soderberg](#)



[HYGGE for Young People....a response to coronavirus](#)



Many young people may not have heard of hygge before but you may have seen it...Just search Instagram and countless accounts will show up #hygge has 5.8M posts, closely followed by #hyggehome on 681K...it's not JUST a hashtag generating likes and followers but it comes from Denmark and is a way of appreciating the little things in life and making the best of things,

[So what is it and how is it relevant to young people and self-care?](#)

2020 has been like no other. Schools have closed, lockdowns have been imposed worldwide and young people, like everyone else, cannot go out, attend school, socialise or visit friends. Staying at home and reducing social contact is essential but this is a massive change for young people everywhere...so if you want some ideas on how to survive lockdown then Hygge may help.

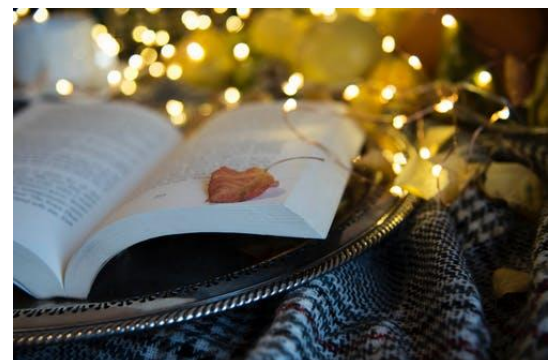
It has been described as “taking pleasure from the presence of soothing things” and “cocoa by candlelight”. So while we know your phones, FaceTime, Instagram and Snapchat are probably a vital part of your lockdown survival kit as well as an everyday necessity, Hygge looks to some other things to make us feel good. 😊 In Denmark, people are generally happier than us in Britain and some believe it is their mind-set that helps. They have cold dark winters but make the best of them with plenty of hot drinks, candles and blankets. Essentially treating yourself to things that increase your well-being. And it just so happens that many of these are activities or things you can enjoy at home. What better time than now to indulge when #lockdown is on.

[Candles](#)

Check out Instagram for inspiration on how to bring hygge living to your bedroom. Candles look great, smell great and bring some calm feelings which may help during this anxious time. Be safe though and don't leave them lit unattended.

[Fairy lights, lamps, lanterns.](#)

Think Christmas all year round. Lights bring a cosy atmosphere to any room and as the only variety we are getting at the moment is which indoor room to sit in then why not make the best of it. Switch on those lights when studying or face timing your mates. You will be surprised how they can improve your mood. Why not include it in an Instagram story #hyggelife



Together, Family. Home.

On a serious note, it is a frightening time for us all. Staying home is a way of reducing the transmission of the virus and will eventually save lives. Yet we can't pretend that lives aren't being lost because they are. This is deeply tragic for all those families. #Stay home has become a familiar hashtag and it is vital we do so. However it is forcing us to spend a lot of time with family and you may be finding it hard going. It is ok to feel this way. Maybe some forced time can help us appreciate our loved ones and make the best of the time. Get out the board games, maybe help your mum or dad make dinner. This won't last forever.

Some young people may also be staying at home in a family where there are difficulties and tensions and this will make lockdown doubly hard. In this instance there is help if any young people need it whether that's online or via school or college. Reach out if need be as there will be people who can help and understand. Family life can be tough at the best of times and even more so at times like these. Just because we have to stay at home it doesn't mean anyone should suffer in silence. So ask for help if needed

Being kind to ourselves...cake, hot drinks, chocolate, blankets and throws, the sofa...

Hygge is a way of enjoying the moment...that hot chocolate with extra marshmallows in bed in your lounge wear. Sundays in Pyjamas watching box sets. A hot tea and a welsh cake, In moderation but without feeling guilty, Self-care can be this, It can be a hot bath and a face mask. An assortment of bath bombs followed by Netflix and a cosy throw. All activities that can fill our time and get us through these difficult times.



Gratitude and writing Journals

Gratitude is being grateful and enjoying simple pleasures. It seems to have a positive effect on happiness levels- the more grateful people are the happier they tend to be. This is hard but with practise it gets easier. A journal detailing things you have enjoyed or are grateful for each day can help us when our mood is low. It can also help now when the days are merging into one and everything around you has changed. Instead of just instagramming highlights of your day put a pen to paper and capture it with words.

Appreciation

Hygge is associated with well-being due to its acceptance of the way things are which is something lots of us struggle with. At the moment the world is an unfamiliar and sometimes frightening place so to accept we have no control over the virus is difficult. We can control our social distancing participation, staying home and maybe filling our time with nice things. Trying to take each day at a time and thinking positively might help you. Appreciating what we have rather than dwelling on what we don't is also a good way of gaining a new perspective. Accessing social support is important if you feel you need it, talk to friends and family, Look online for useful websites at this time. Mind is an excellent support for mental

health and has some relevant advice on how to cope with coronavirus. Headspace is a great app for mindfulness which is also very Hygge.

Life as we know it has altered and it is important to be kind to ourselves and others. Hygge doesn't promise miracles but its principles can be applied to any challenge that we face. And one that promotes cake and coffee can't be bad 😊

Fancy learning more? Amazon has these...

[The little Book of Hygge, The Danish way to live well...Meik Wiking](#)

[Hygge, The Danish Art of Happiness...Marie Tourell Soderberg](#)

Best read with a steaming hot drink, marshmallows and a blanket



Hygge in the classroom...self-care ideas during a global pandemic

Denmark consistently ranks among the happiest countries in the world and the concept of hygge is firmly embedded in their culture.

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This resource takes inspiration from Hygge and looks to borrow some of their much loved and cherished traditions and bring them to

the classroom following the interruption and devastation that coronavirus has brought. Many teachers and schools may not be overly familiar with the concept but it is generally a way of making the best of things and being kind to oneself; never has this advice seemed most apt. Whilst candles, hot drinks, throws and lanterns may seem the domain of home they can also be adapted to your classroom in these difficult and troubling times. Following schools being closed in March 2020 and much of the world being placed on lockdown what the classroom may look like upon the return to some sort of normality might be something many people in education are wondering.

Hygge could be something that is useful to children and staff who will be in need of a gentle easing back into school life. Children have had their routine obliterated and for many school is their safe space. So when schools re open their doors introducing some new and soothing elements and traditions may be a welcome idea. Many educators are interested in the concept that happiness has an impact on children’s capacity to learn. Post coronavirus learning may not immediately be the chief priority. Many children will have experienced a bereavement and will have lived through this period of isolating at home which has been strange and challenging for adults alike. Creating a safe and comforting classroom environment is equally as important.

Fairy Lights/Lanterns

Stringing some fairy lights around the whiteboards and other nooks and crannies can help bring the relaxing ambience that Hygge embraces. Most people and children especially enjoy the lights and sparkly baubles that Christmas allows. Alternatively fill a clear jar with fairy lights to create a lovely accessory providing light and warmth. Hygge just encourages this throughout the year. ☺ Incorporating lights in this way into the classroom brings feelings of cosiness and relaxation and might encourage children to talk if they need to and to focus on well-being.



Hygge treats...

A way of bringing Hygge to the classroom is to bring fairy lights, maybe even light some candles or lanterns and perhaps allow an hour in which to sit with the children. Bring in some cakes or tasty treats and have a story or time to talk about how they are, Play some relaxing music in the background or even light a fire on the whiteboard to evoke cosiness and just be with the children and have some time away from traditionally learning. Mental health is being talked about in ways which were unimaginable a generation ago. Recognising that schools are not just concerned with meeting the educational needs of its pupils but also looking after the mental health of our children and young people outlines just how vital they are.



Emotional warmth and support

Coronavirus has turned our lives upside down, even for people who haven't directly suffered or experienced a loss. Just being asked to stay inside and being bombarded with news and constant updates has brought its own stress and pressures on our mental health. Children will need time to understand and process this experience as will adults. Recognising that many children view school as a safe place aside from their home is being mindful that they may need some additional support or reassurance.

One of the reasons that people feel that the Danes are happier than many other nations is their reliance on Hygge- accepting things as they are, appreciating simple pleasures and the small things in life. Hygge is present in workplaces and homes and unites the nation. While the arrival and spread of coronavirus has been outside of our control how we deal with it is not. Self-care is vital at this time and maybe introducing some gentle Hygge-like elements will provide some reassurance and positivity during extraordinary times. What child won't appreciate some cake and some fairy lights and bring some much needed warmth into some of the darkest days?

Hygge is just one idea to incorporate some cosiness into the classroom and provide some nurture to children who have undoubtedly been affected by this pandemic. Not every child will have a supportive family and it might have been very difficult during this lockdown period. Additionally even the most stable family unit will have experienced tensions and anxieties whether that financially, emotionally or practically. It will be important to recognise this when schools begin to reopen. Many adults find comfort in Hygge due to its quiet acceptance and ability to find the good amongst the challenging. Maybe our children will feel the same.



Maintaining a Balance for your Wellbeing

With the current global health situation many of our normal routines and daily activities are changing. Naturally this can be unsettling and it is understandable that you may be worried. When we are struggling with anxiety and worry, we can find that the things we usually did to look after our well-being have become difficult and we can lose touch with the things that used to give us pleasure. So engaging in activities could help limit the time you spend worrying which assists in taking steps to manage your well-being by focusing on something else.

Whether you are working from home or in some form of physical isolation or distancing, it can be helpful to organise a daily routine that involves a balance between activities that give you a sense of achievement, help you feel close and connected with others and activities that you can do just for pleasure.

It has long been recognised that people gain benefits from active engagement in creative pursuits. These benefits relate mainly to emotional health and wellbeing. Therefore undertaking activities each day that are pleasurable can make you feel good. For example reading a good book, watching a comedy, dancing or singing to your favourite songs or eating your favourite food. It is also important to find creative ways to connect with your family and friends to help you feel socially connected. Using social media, phone and video calls. Exploring ways to be involved in helping your local community by looking at local online neighbourhood groups or setting up shared online activities e.g. a virtual book or film club or an exercise class.

It is important to undertake a variety of activities as if you spend most of your time relaxing for pleasure and not doing other things that are important to you then this can impact your mood. So there is a need to include activities that give you a sense of achievement e.g. doing housework, gardening, a new exercise routine or a work task. Also if you spend most of your time working and not making time for pleasure or socialising this can also cause you to start feeling low and isolated. So it is important to choose a balance of activities that give you feelings of pleasure and closeness as psychologists believe that this has a positive impact on your wellbeing.

Below are some activities and Ideas to stay occupied

Be kind to yourself and others. Help a friend or neighbour. Plan a surprise or make a gift for someone. Make a list of things or people you are grateful for.



Connect with people

Contact family or a friend. Join an online group. Send a message or write a letter to a friend. Reconnect with an old friend. Write a thank you note.

Create

Draw or paint a picture. Doodle or sketch. Write a story. Organise photographs and make an album. Start a scrapbook. Finish a project. Write a diary or a journal.

Cook

Cook a meal for yourself or for someone else. Bake a cake. Try a new recipe. Try a new food.

Music

Listen to music. Turn on the radio. Find some new music to listen to. Sing a song. Play an instrument. Listen to a podcast.

Mind

Meditate. Reflect Try relaxation exercises. Practise yoga.

Nature

Try some gardening. Plant something. Mow the lawn. Buy flowers. Go for a walk in nature.

Read

Read a book. Read a magazine. Look at your favourite website.

Watch

Watch a movie or a TV show. Watch a YouTube video. Learn something new.

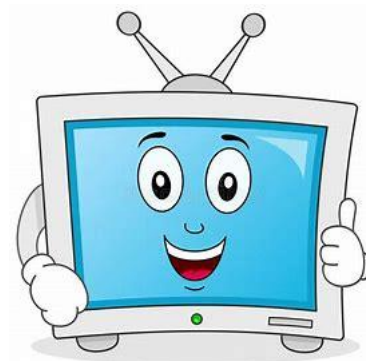
Watch a tutorial video. Learn a new language.

Be active

Go for a walk. Go for a run. Go cycling. Use an online exercise video at home. Decorate a room in the house. Organise your workspace.

Self-care

Take a bath or a shower. Give yourself a facial. Connect with someone. Sunbathe (wear sunscreen!) Take a nap. Relax. Do something you enjoy.



What is a Gratitude Journal?

Gratitude journaling is the habit of recording and reflecting on things (typically three) that you are grateful for on a regular basis. In essence, you are rewiring your brain to focus more on the positive aspects of your life and build up resilience against negative situations.

What are the benefits of gratitude?

Practicing gratitude may increase overall feelings of happiness and reduce depressive symptoms.

An initial happy “boost” may relate more to the excitement of starting a new habit; learning to focus on the good things requires a bit more time. Try to be patient with the process.



Tips for keeping a gratitude journal

Gratitude seems like a simple enough concept, you can probably think of a few things right now: your family, your friends, health... that’s three, easy!

Enjoy the little things - Specifics are what make your gratitude journal unique and full of little surprises. Writing “amazing friends” may miss most of the emotion compared to “Amy made me laugh this afternoon when she sent that joke.”

Avoid repetition - Ok, your significant other really is amazing, but you don’t want their name to be the only thing in your journal. Mix it up with different domains of life, e.g. work, relationships, or health. This can keep the practice “fresh” and extend the effectiveness of gratitude journaling.

Mention specific people and places - Along the lines of avoiding repetition, citing specific people and places will help prevent your posts from feeling stale. You'll also be learning more about who and what affects your happiness.

Don't stress about the bad days - Everyone has bad, awful days where nothing went your way. Gratitude journaling can be most important on the most difficult days - try to push aside the negativity and go simple ("my dog" or "Cake").

Make it a habit - It's generally suggested that you try writing in a gratitude journal at night before bed. Setting a reminder or pairing it with another habit (brushing your teeth)

Mention surprises - Not every day will have these, but reflecting on surprises is a useful way to avoid repetition and really savour your best days.



Apps provide all sorts of benefits from photo uploading to fun ways to explore past memories

Looking for an easy way to journal?

Happyfeed is a simple gratitude journaling app available for iPhone and Android. It makes it easy and fun to start your new habit.



Digging deeper: Gratitude journal ideas and prompts

Effort and intentionality are the main ingredients to starting a successful gratitude journaling habit. As soon as your journal becomes another autopilot task (like checking your social newsfeed) it starts to lose its effectiveness.

Savour those feelings - Some moments stand out from all the others. When you're lucky enough to have those emotions, really, really savour them. Literally close your eyes and take in all the smells, sounds, and thoughts. Learn to do this often and you might discover you're luckier than you thought.

Thank someone - Go the extra mile and actually reach out and tell someone how much you appreciate them. Send them a "thank you" note or just wait until their birthday and send a real card. Remember the last time you received a letter? It's an *absolute delight* and something neither of you will forget.

Learn from your habits - Remember, avoid too much repetition in your gratitude journal. Recognizing patterns and themes can help you learn more about your happy triggers. For example, I tend to love days where I wake early and work on something I love. By doing this more often, I can actually affect my happiness.

If you are feeling stuck or need an extra nudge, try one of these gratitude journal prompts:

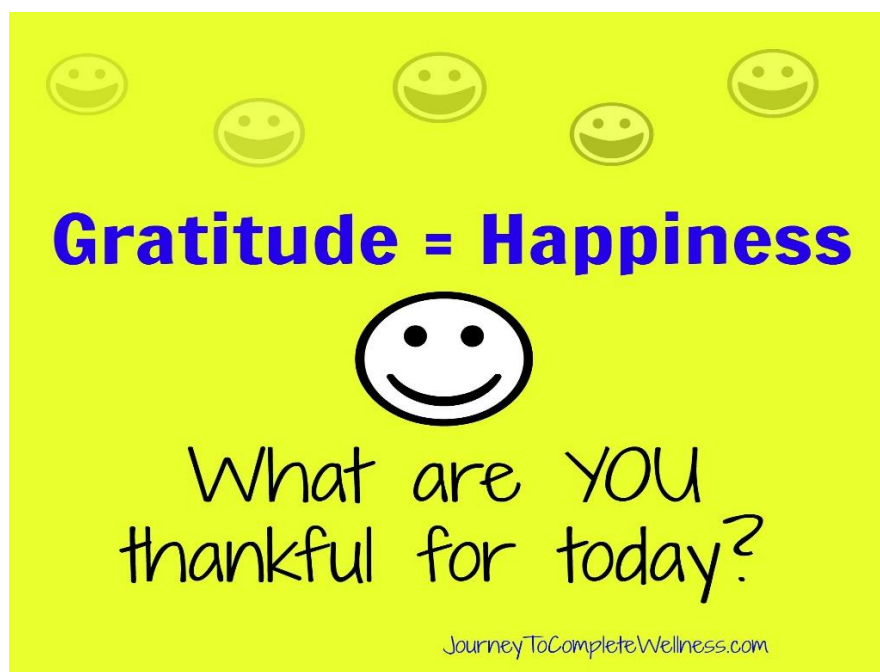
- Who is someone that consistently makes your life easier?
- How are the seasons or weather affecting your mood today?
- Has anything been going particularly well at work? Why?
- Did you catch yourself smiling at anything today?
- What trips are you looking forward to? What excites you?
- What habits or routines bring you joy? What was different today?
- Any experiences with nature today? How did it affect you?

Summary

Starting a gratitude journal is a very personal decision and you should create yours in the way that best suits you.

Either using an app or a notebook and pen.

As you grow your habit, you'll figure out what works for you and what doesn't. Taking the effort to learn what makes you happy and how to best capture those feelings will benefit you in more ways than you might expect.



Gratitude Journal week of

Monday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thursday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tuesday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Friday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Wednesday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Saturday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sunday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children

- By Alexandra Eidens

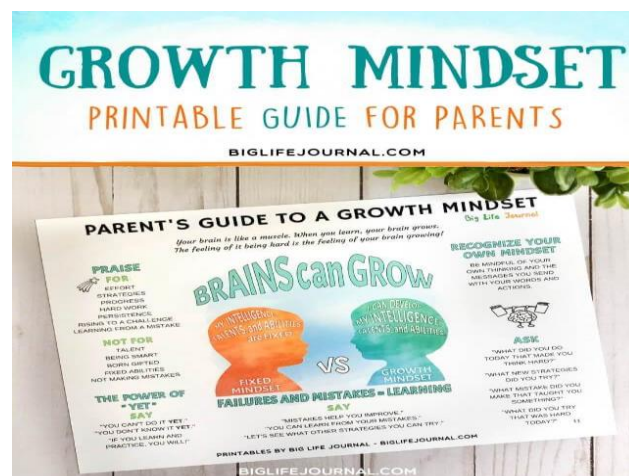
The practice of mindfulness has become a big trend but it can be confusing when it comes to defining it, especially as a parent.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a practice where you use the **five senses** to engage physically and non-judgmentally with the world around you. When you do a task with a **mindful awareness**, you do it with 100% of your energy and attention.

Any activity can be done with a sense of mindfulness, even eating dinner with your family. For example, you can teach your child to pay attention to the texture and flavours of the food. You can guide them to think about how the food nurtures their body and keeps their body healthy.

Practising mindfulness is incredibly **empowering** for children. It can help them better manage stress and anxiety when it does occur. It helps with self-regulation, promotes positive emotions and self-compassion.



How Mindfulness Benefits a Growth Mindset

Practising mindfulness techniques can help children change their Mindset from a FIXED Mindset to a GROWTH Mindset.

First, mindfulness can help children feel empowered, so they can learn to try new things and take more risks.

Second, using mindfulness techniques like deep breathing and tensing and relaxing the muscles can help children overcome anxiety when they make mistakes.

Third, by promoting self-love and self-compassion, mindfulness activities can help children overcome negative self-talk.

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.

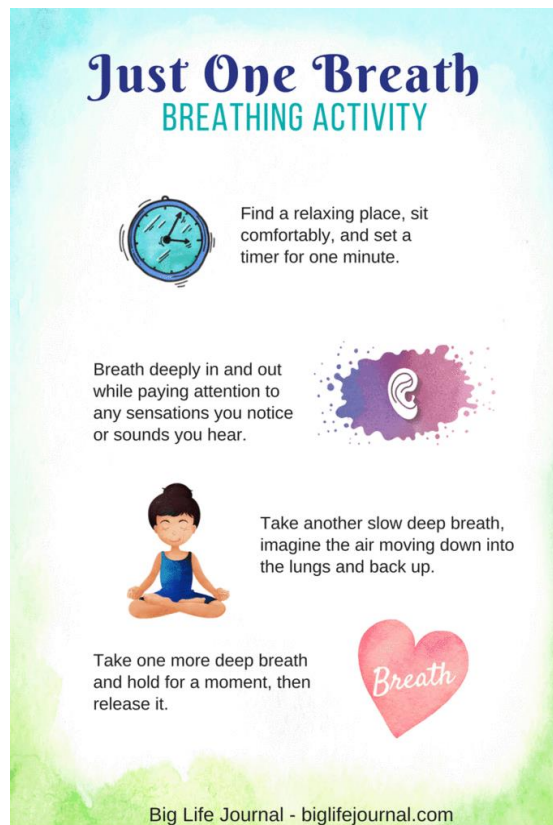
Also, check out our play list on Spotify! This music will help your children relax while doing mindfulness activities.

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

It's OK 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 breathe 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.

Mindfulness Activity 2: Creating a Glitter Jar

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.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

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.

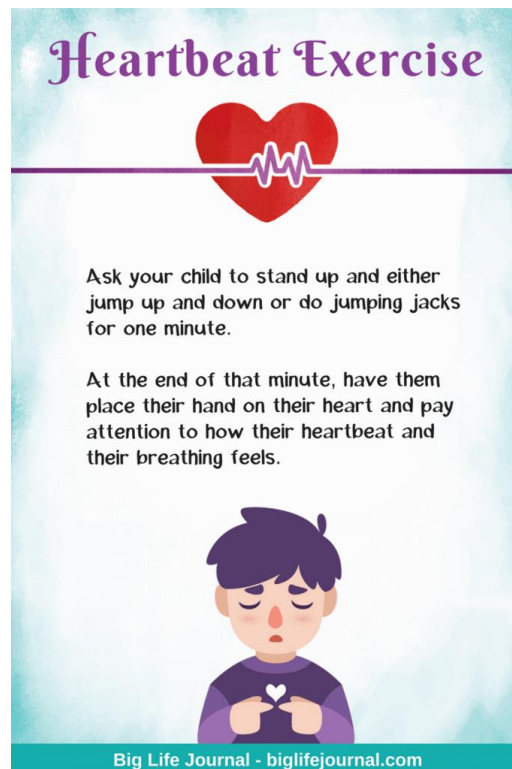
Steps to Make Your Own Glitter Jar

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 the glitter*. As the glitter settles down into the bottom of the jar, the mind becomes calmer as well.

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.

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 spark creative ideas. Try going on a safari the next time your child gets **frustrated** and you might be surprised at how well they are doing.

Mindfulness Activity 5: Tense and Release Muscle Relaxation

TENSE AND RELEASE

MUSCLE RELAXATION

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.



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.

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 mindfulness 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.

Mindfulness – The benefits and practical exercises to try

What is Mindfulness?

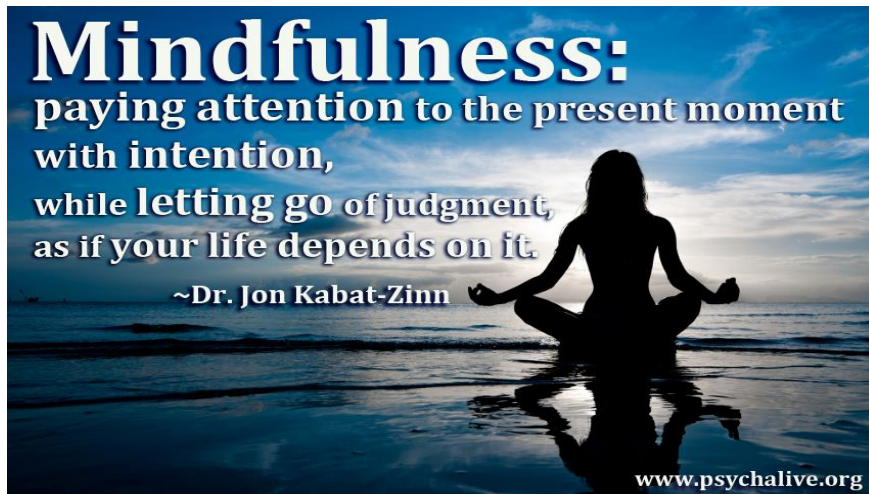
Mindfulness. It's an appropriate easy word to use. It suggests that the mind is fully attending to what's happening, to what you're doing, to the space you're moving through. That might seem trivial, except for the annoying fact that we so often change direction from one thing to another. Our mind takes over, we lose touch with our body and its senses, and pretty soon we're consumed in obsessive thoughts about something that just happened or worrying about the future. And that makes us anxious.

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present and aware of what we are doing in the moment.

Paying attention to your breath as it flows in and out of your body.

Mindfulness is about observing your thoughts without criticism, being compassionate with yourself. Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, it's not something you have to conjure up, you just have to learn how to access it.

While mindfulness is inherent, it can be learned using various techniques, such as sitting or walking meditation it's also possible lying down but often leads to sleep. Certain exercises and sports can help us become more present and mindful.



Benefits of mindfulness

When we're mindful, it reduces stress, increases our performance, and creates more self-awareness.

- It helps us to become less reactive or overwhelmed by what going on around us.
- Over time mindfulness brings long term changes in mood and levels of happiness.

- It positively affects the brain patterns, underlying day to day anxiety, stress, depression and irritability. So that when these feelings arise, they dissolve away more easily
- Scientific studies have shown that mindfulness can help prevent depression and anxiety.
- Improves cognition
- Boosts immunity
- Improves mood
- Increases our ability to feel empathy for others
- Boosts attention span and focus
- Improves resilience
- Better mental health
- Reduces anxiety

Mindfulness meditation gives us a time in our lives when we can suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness—to ourselves and others.

Taking a mindful walk

Taking a walk and bringing your attention to your senses is an easy way to become more mindful. As you deliberately focus on what you can see, hear, smell and touch, your mind and body become more relaxed.

When we take mindful steps on the earth, our body and mind unite, and we unite with the earth.

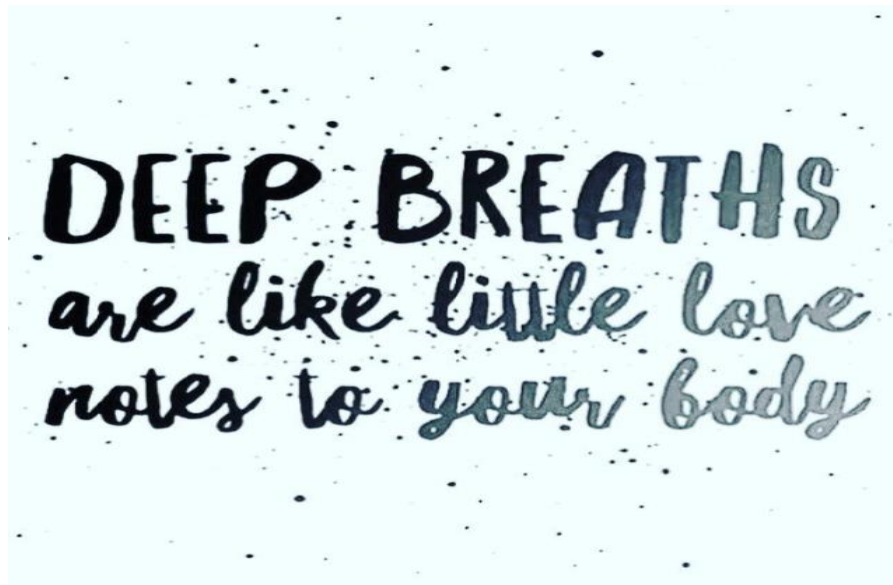


Using the breath to create calm and balance in your life

So often we tend to breathe shallow from the chest which can create a fight and flight response. If you don't like to meditate or close your eyes, you can simply bring your attention to your breath, allowing the breath to go deeper to your stomach rather than your breath being shallow and short. You can focus on this when you watch TV, go for a walk, have a shower and while cooking. You can use your breath at any time of the day. It is your anchor that brings you back to the present.

When we breathe properly and bring focus to our breath it does two things:

- Helps us physically energise the body with fresh oxygen and dispels toxins. This changes the chemistry, it helps with sleep immunity and hormone balance.
- It rewires our brain to focus on the present moment. Instead of allowing the autopilot mind to flick into the past, negativity and fear.



Diaphragm breathing

1. Sit in a comfortable position or lie flat on the floor, your bed, or another comfortable, flat surface.
2. Relax your shoulders.
3. Put a hand on your chest and a hand on your stomach.
4. Breathe in through your nose for about two seconds. You should experience the air moving through your nostrils into your abdomen, making your stomach expand. During this type of breathing, make sure your stomach is moving outward while your chest remains relatively still.
5. Purse your lips (as if you're about to drink through a straw), press gently on your stomach, and exhale slowly for about two seconds.
6. Repeat these steps several times for best results.

Expanding your Ribs

Expanding your ribs is another helpful deep breathing exercise. Here's how to do it:

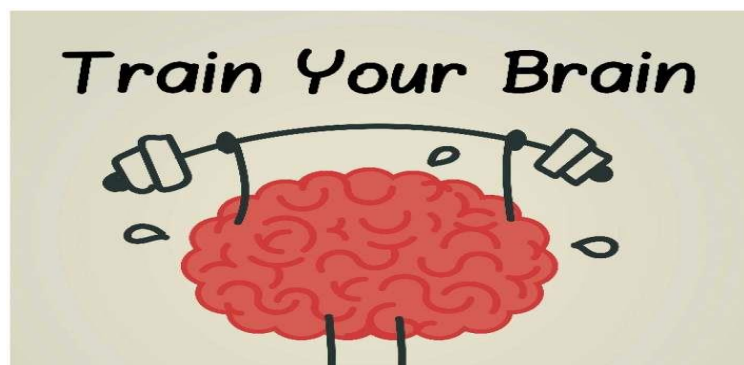
1. Stand up straight and arch your back.
2. Breathe out until you just can't anymore.
3. Inhale slowly and gradually, taking in as much air as possible until you can't breathe in anymore.
4. Hold your breath for about 10 seconds.
5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. You can do this normally or with pursed lips.

Meditation practice

Making Mindfulness a habit

Most of our behaviour runs on autopilot. This happens because neural networks influence all of our habits, reducing our sensory inputs so we can continue with our daily lives in this busy world. These default brain signals are so effective that they often cause us to slip back in to old unhelpful behaviours without any realisation.

Mindfulness is a good way to take a bit more control of your life rather than running on autopilot. It allows us to take actions with more intention. As we take actions with more intention we strengthen this part of the brain. Every time we do some deliberate and intentional we spark neuroplasticity which has not been primed for the autopilot brain.



When we practice meditation on a daily basis we instil long term benefits to our lives. We are able to feel calm in difficult situations. We are less stressed. We connect easier with others, we become kinder to ourselves and others.

Here is a link developed by Lesley Saunders, School Based Counsellor, to start your practice.

Right click on the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lgQ4UVKha4&t=1s>

'Relaxation Body Scan for anxiety and stress during the Covid 19 Pandemic'. Lesley Saunders



Self-care working from home

Make sure you follow a routine:

Setting your alarm to wake up the same time

Making your bed

Tidying your work space

Having a morning shower

Eating a healthy breakfast

Start the day with a morning self-care practice:



Start your day with some self-care:

A morning meditation routine is a great way boost your emotional resilience.

<https://www.headspace.com/> <https://www.calm.com/> <https://www.sanvello.com/>

Avoid multitasking:

Often multitasking can make us less efficient. Aim to focus on one task at a time.

Keep your work space organised:

Try and set up a space as it would be at your work place. Use an appropriate chair and desk if available, rather than sitting on the sofa with a laptop. Try to create a quiet environment.

Take regular breaks:

Allow yourself time for breaks

Move away from your work space and make a cup of tea. Try some restorative yoga stretches to feel more energised.

Go Outside if possible:

A short walk is a great way to feel more refreshed. Or if you have a garden you can use your garden to take in some deep breaths and use your senses as you look around.

Build on social connections

Connect with work colleagues via video calls. (Zoom) (Microsoft teams) This is an opportunity connect and support one another.

Set healthy boundaries:

Working from home can feel a bit blurred at times. Ensure you finish and have time for yourself during the evening and weekends.

WORK FROM HOME SURVIVAL GUIDE

EVERYDAYHEALTH



Keep a consistent sleep schedule



Create a designated workspace



Make a home-to-work "commute" like enjoying a cup of coffee



Use your breaks to get up and stretch



Change out of your pajamas and get ready for the day



Eat a real lunch and stay hydrated



Schedule time for live online workout classes



Have a clock-out time to avoid overworking yourself



Make time for self-care