

Daily Activities for Mindfulness Month

1 Mindfulness to start the day
Good Morning!

2 Practice deep belly breathing
2. Inhale 2. Exhale
1. Belly out 1. Belly in

3 Name it to tame it

4 breathe in 2 seconds hold hold breathe out

5 Body scan exercise

6 Letting go

7 Pause and drop anchor breathe into your body

8 Remember that thoughts are just thoughts, they're not fact

9 Slow down Keep calm Be positive + Take it easy Unplug Enjoy life! Have fun! Breathe Relax Go outside Meditate

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Reduce distractions and begin to engage all your five senses

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1

Mindfulness to start the day

Good Morning!

Win the morning, win the day.

Starting your morning off well sets the whole tone for the rest of the day.

Instead of waking up and rolling straight from bed to work, try to take some time to practice some mindfulness and check in with yourself, before checking your phone.

It will help to boost your mood and productivity for the day.

OR Mindful morning check in

Take a few deep breaths first thing in the morning.

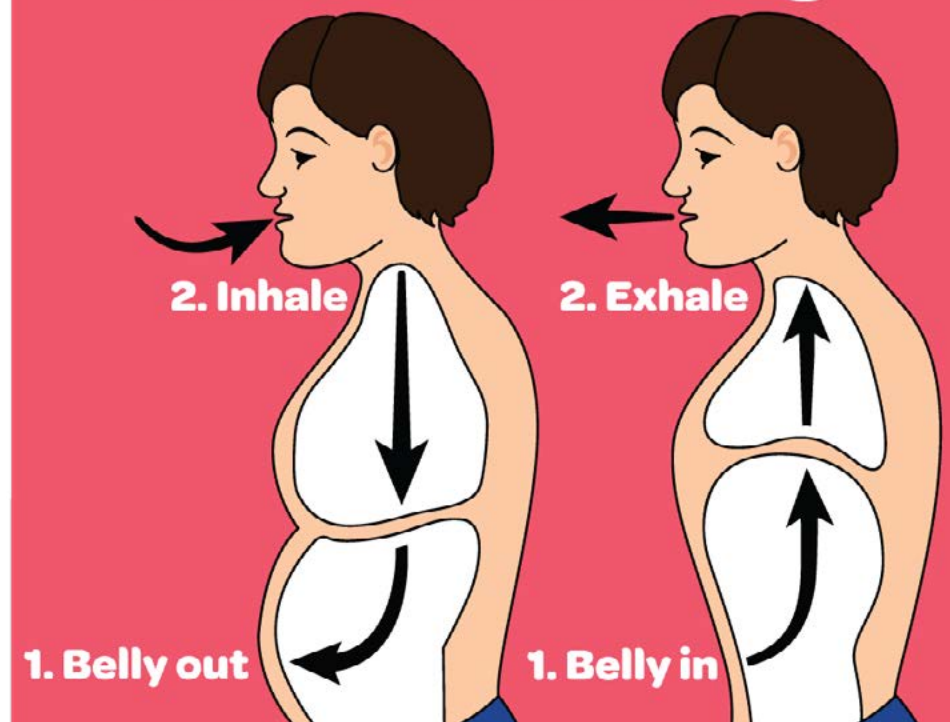
Write down three things you are grateful for.

Do some mindful movements e.g. a mindful walk or some mindful stretching.

Listen to a short, guided mindfulness practice.

2

Practice deep belly breathing



When we take deep breaths into our belly, we stimulate the vagus nerve, which is a key part of our self-calming circuitry.

Next time you are feeling overwhelmed with difficult emotions, try a few deep belly breaths and notice how it makes you feel.

3

Name it to tame it

When we experience an upsetting emotion, such as feeling frustrated, angry, anxious or agitated, it helps to name it.

When we name our emotions, we activate the part of the brain responsible for language which is an important step for self-regulating.

When you feel an uncomfortable emotion rising, try these steps:

1. Give the emotion a name e.g., sadness, anxiety, anger

2. Accept the feeling for what it is, without judgement (e.g., tell yourself that "it is ok to feel this way").
3. Focus on your breathing (it might help to silently say on each in-breath "anger, I am here for you" and on the out-breath; "it's ok to feel this way")

4. Allow the feeling to pass

Practicing these steps can help to calm the emotion before it becomes overwhelming.

4

breathe in

hold

2
seconds

hold

breathe out

The breath is a simple and powerful tool to help down regulate the nervous system and manage feelings of anxiety, stress, worry or unease.

Box breathing is a simple exercise to add to your toolbox as a way of calming down, or to do three or four times before a period of mindful breathing (which involves observing the breath as it is, without manipulation).

Box breathing works to equalise the in breath and out breath, giving us something to focus on and helping us to regulate our breathing.

Follow along with this animation to practice **box breathing**.

5



Lay down
or sit in a
comfortable
upright position

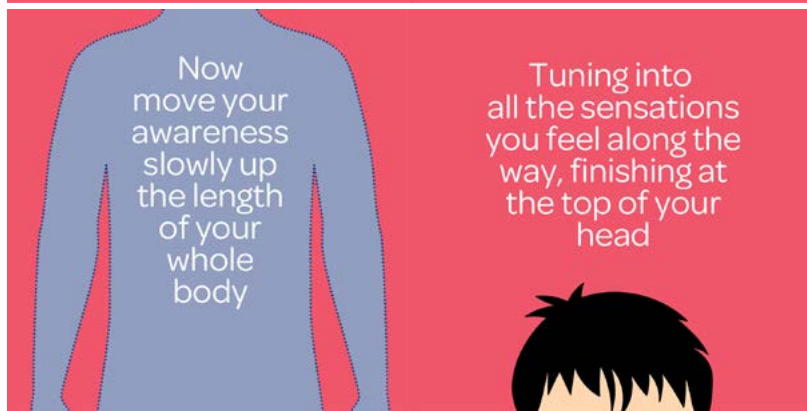
Start by
bringing your
awareness
to your feet



Notice
all the
sensations
in your feet
and toes

Now
move your
awareness
slowly up
the length
of your
whole
body

Tuning into
all the sensations
you feel along the
way, finishing at
the top of your
head



When we take deep breaths into our belly, we stimulate the vagus nerve, which is a key part of our self-calming circuitry.

Next time you are feeling overwhelmed with difficult emotions, try a few deep belly breaths and notice how it makes you feel.

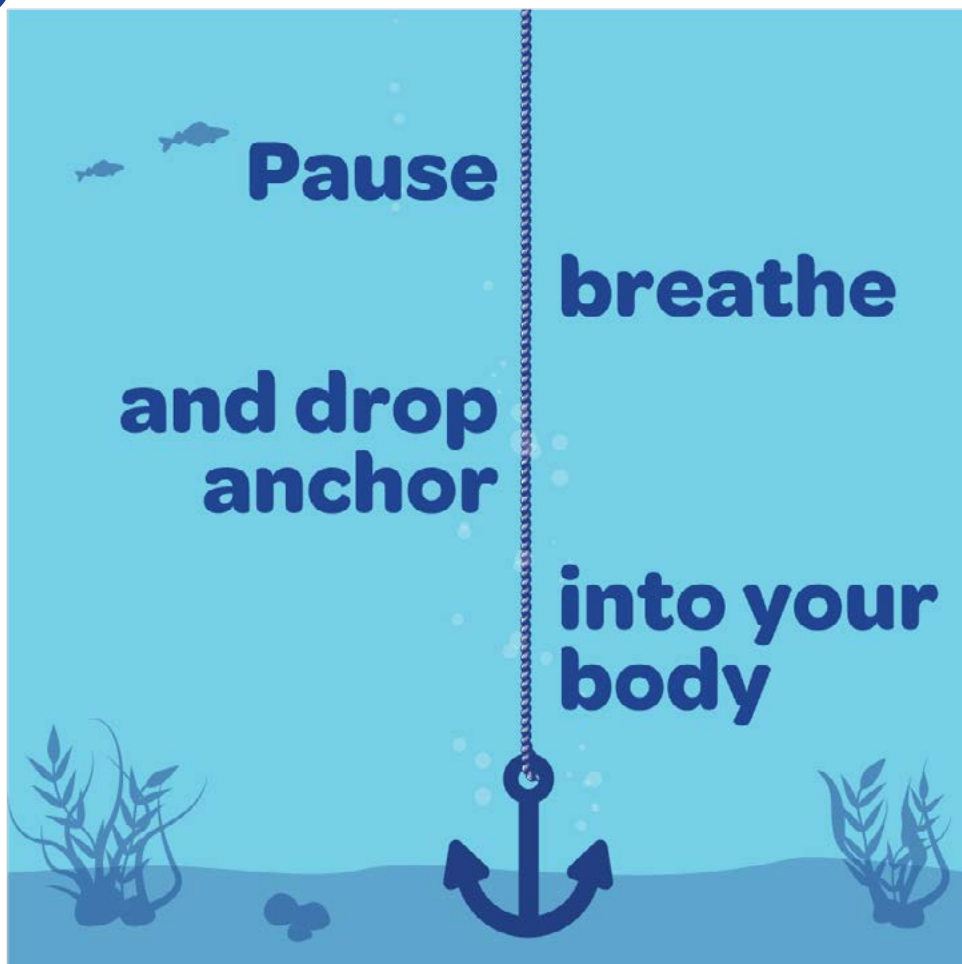
6

Letting go



A sign that mindfulness practice is developing well, is an increasing sense of letting go, and letting be. The psychological release of letting go happens naturally with practice and is a sign that there is an increasing sense of trust developing in your being. For example, when people first start practising mindfulness meditation there can be a tendency to control the flow of breathing. You may have noticed this for yourself? With time and consistent practice though, that tendency towards control starts to release as we learn to trust in the natural flow of breath. When this occurs, everything seems to 'click' within our practice a little more and we start to taste the possibility of living life a little more effortlessly. Try this guided practice to help promote a sense of trust and letting go.

Listen to The Wonder of the Body



Dropping anchor

When life feels stormy, imagine your breath as an anchor dropping your attention into your body and into the present moment.

Just like a boat in the midst of a stormy sea, dropping anchor with your mindful breathing, can bring a sense of stability even in the middle of a storm.

Dropping anchor won't stop the stormy waves happening around you, but mindful breathing and visualizations like this can support your ability to self-regulate and respond with awareness rather than impulsive reactivity to life's present circumstances.

Listen to Dropping Anchor for older kids

**Remember that
thoughts are just
thoughts, they're
not fact.**

It is estimated that throughout the day, we can have around 50,000 thoughts! No wonder then, that it is easy to get caught up in our thoughts and buy into the stories that our minds tell us. But very often our mind movies aren't helpful or true.

When our minds are so busy, it's difficult to notice which thoughts are helpful and which thoughts are unhelpful.

Mindfulness helps us to slow down, notice our thoughts and respond to them in a healthy way.

Try to get into the habit of noticing your thoughts as they arise.

Try this practice at home to help you to start noticing your thoughts:

Sit comfortably with a straight back and soft belly

Take a few mindful breaths to settle and focus

Then, let go of trying to notice your breathing or stop your mind from wandering. Instead, let your mind be free to do whatever it wants to do!

But try not to lose awareness. I.e. try noticing the many thoughts that roll through the mind, without following after any of them. Kind of like watching clouds blowing through a clear blue sky

Re-centre with mindful breathing whenever you feel like you have lost the thread of awareness

When finished, review your practice. Can you appreciate the difference between noticing thoughts flowing through the mind without chasing after them and getting caught in thinking? Did you notice any gaps between thoughts? How did it feel to rest in stillness between thoughts?

Remember that just because you think something, doesn't mean it's true.



1. When you wake in the morning, try not to immediately think about the day ahead, but instead bring your attention to your breathing just for a few breath cycles. Then state an aspiration for how you are going to approach your day. An aspiration should be practical, a reminder of something that you can realistically achieve, e.g., your aspiration may be as simple as to meet others with friendliness.
2. Try walking or cycling to and from work mindfully. If you drive, then leave the radio off and be with your own sound. Whether you are walking, cycling or driving, be aware of any unnecessary tensions held in the body and use your awareness to release them.
3. Take regular breaks. Many of us keep “pushing on” through busy periods, but breaks are a strategy for success. They help to boost productivity and focus, improve mood and decrease stress and anxiety. Try working in 60-90 blocks with a 10-minute break in between
4. Breathe. Breathing mindfully helps regulate the nervous system and lower stress. Put a reminder on your phone to take a few mindful breaths every hour. Notice your breathing when you are feeling stressed and take a moment to pause and become mindful of each in breath and each out breath.
5. Reduce the tendency towards multi-tasking. Trying to do too many things at once overloads the brain and causes stress. It can also take 40% longer to complete tasks when our attention is divided. Instead of multi-tasking, keep a list and focus on one task at a time. Notice if this creates space, uses less energy and leads to a sense of achievement with every completed task.
6. Try to get out of your work environment during breaks. Go for a walk, being mindful of your breathing, your footsteps, and the environment around you.
7. Bring some kindness into your workday. Every now and then, pause and call to mind a work colleague. Picture them on the in-breath, and then on the out-breath, think “may you be well”. Try this for two or three breath cycles, sending kind wishes to two or three different work colleagues.

Going for a mindful walk



Mindfulness is more than a technique. It is about the quality of attention we bring to each moment of our lives.

Sometimes sitting stationary with our eyes closed to practice mindfulness can feel challenging.

Mindful walking can be an effective and simple way to bring mindfulness into your day through movement.

You can practice mindful walking anywhere, walking to the car, down the stairs, at the beach or in a forest, by simply tuning into your breath, your body, and the world around you.

Next time you are walking anywhere, try these four supports for mindful walking:

1. noticing each footstep on the earth
2. noticing your body moving through space
3. noticing your breath flowing with each step
4. walking with joy - with a smile on your face or a sense of lightness in your heart

Don't worry if you can't bring all four of these supports together all at once, just try walking with one or two of these anchor points as your focus.



This 5 senses grounding technique is a powerful way to help bring you back to the present moment when you are experiencing feelings of anxiety, a busy mind or just to enjoy a quiet moment of presence.

Create a daily reminder that pops up and reminds you to practice anywhere, at any time.



Mindful eating is a simple way to bring mindfulness into our daily lives.

By slowing the process of eating down and tuning into all our senses, it helps us to enjoy the food more, feel more satisfied, make better food choices and show up to something we do daily with more presence and awareness.

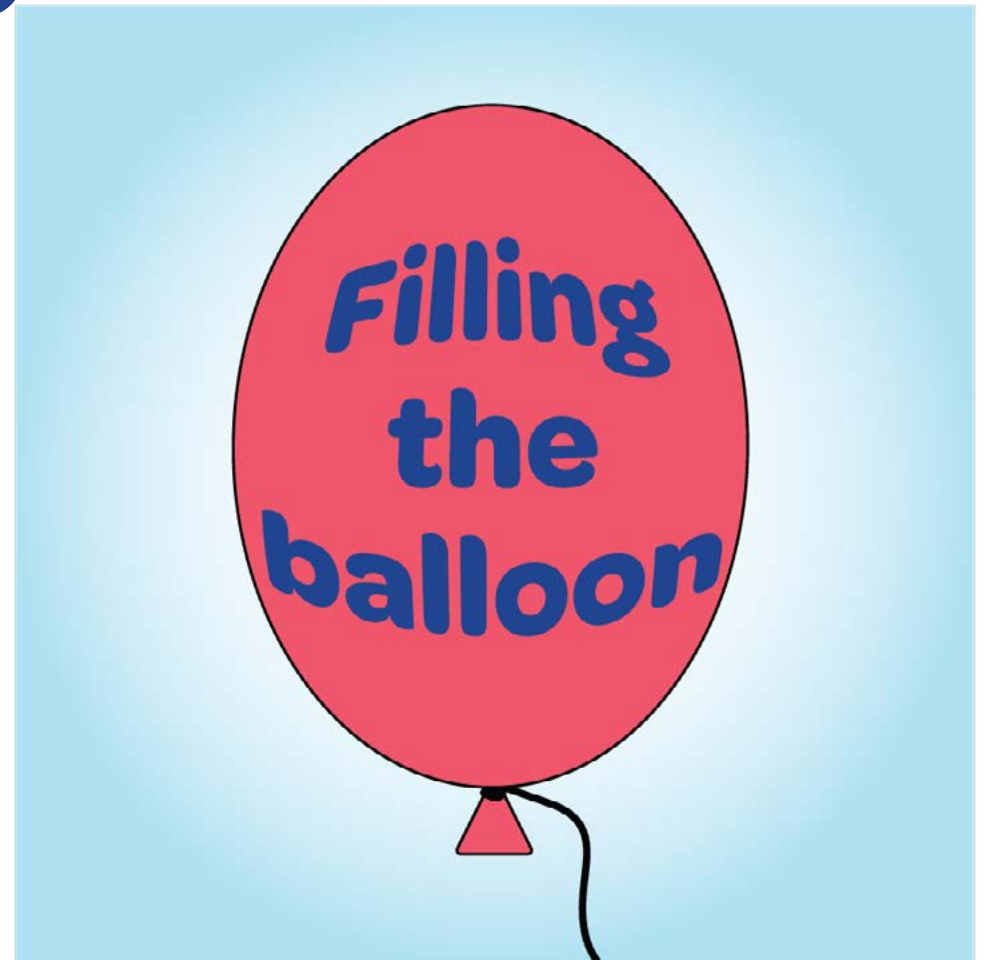
Try practicing mindful eating at mealtimes and notice how it makes you feel.



Research shows that gratitude is proven to lift mood and create healthy mindsets.

Creating a gratitude box is a simple and powerful way to bring gratitude into your life.

Make a gratitude box for your home or workplace, each morning, write down one thing you are grateful for and put it in the box. At the end of the day, read out all the notes that are in the box.



Mindful breathing is a simple and effective way to bring greater presence into our lives and help to regulate our emotions.

A good way to practice mindful breathing is to imagine your belly inflating and deflating like a balloon.

You could place a hand on the belly to feel the gentle rise and fall of the breath.

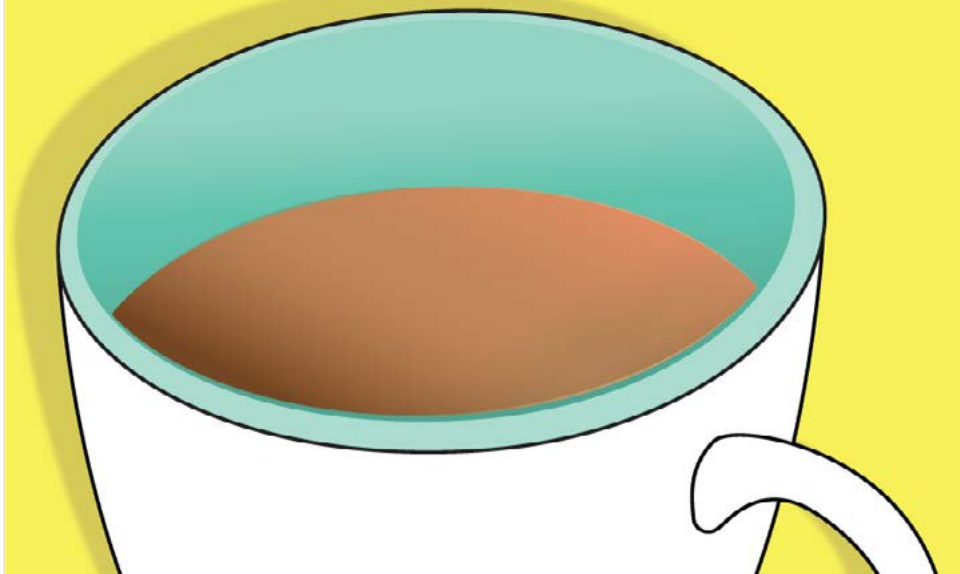
Try not to control the breath, just let it flow naturally.

Remember not to worry if the mind wanders, thinking is all part of the process. Each time you notice the mind has wandered off, gently bring+ all of your attention back to the rise and fall of the belly.

Save this to your phone to practice anytime, anywhere.

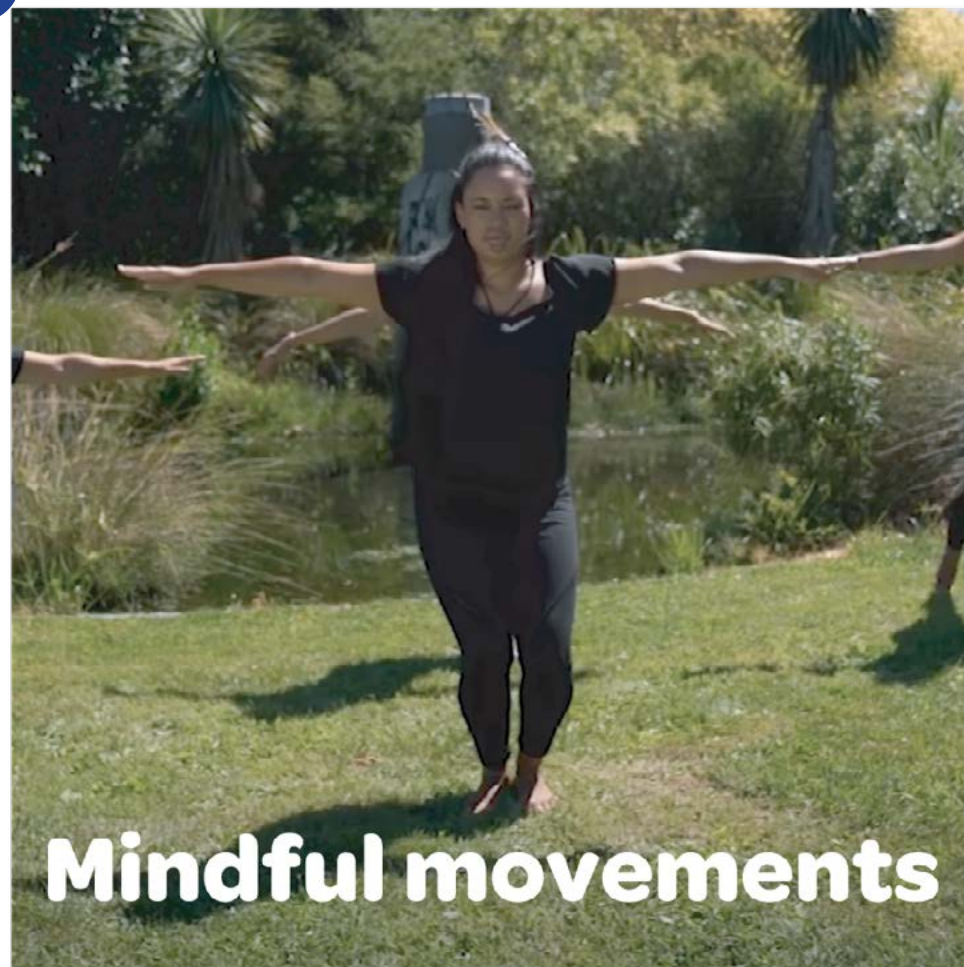
Listen to Filling the Balloon, short, long, young, older

Have a mindful cup of tea



Mindfulness is more than a technique. It is the quality of attention we bring to each moment of our living. Try this as a simple way of bringing a more mindful way of being into everyday life.

1. Be attentive to filling the kettle with water – the sound of the water running, the weight of the kettle changing as it fills and so forth
2. Listen mindfully to the kettle boiling while also taking a moment to notice your breathing
3. Try to avoid the urge to do something else while the kettle boils. Whenever your mind wanders, just note it and then bring all your attention back to the breathing and the sound of water coming to the boil
4. Notice the act of pouring tea – the sound of the water hitting the cup or teapot; the water changing colour; the steam rising; the aroma of tea filling your nostrils...
5. Sitting comfortably, feeling the weight of the cup in your hands; noticing the warmth
6. And finally, mindfully sipping the tea – noticing all the flavours and aroma; the act of swallowing and the warm afterglow of a good cup of tea!



Mindful movements

Exercise and movement are vital to look after both our physical and mental health.

When we move with mindfulness and awareness, we create a deep relaxation response in the body and mind and help to calm the nervous system.

Mindful movements can be practiced anytime, anywhere by simply moving your body and becoming aware of the breath and sensations in the body.

Try going for a mindful walk, doing some stretching, practicing yoga or dancing. Focus your attention on the body and the breath as you move.

Watch Hikitia Te Ha

17

Extended exhale breathing:

Inhale for
a count of **4**

Hold for
a count of **2**

Exhale slowly
for a count of **6**

A simple and effective breathing technique is extended exhale breathing.

Often when we experience difficult emotions such as stress or anxiety, our breathing can become quick and shallow.

By taking a moment to pause and tune into our breath, we help to stop these emotions from taking over.

By extending the exhale for a little longer than the inhale, we tell our brains and bodies to relax.

Try this simple technique on a regular basis to activate the relaxation response.

18



Traffic lights are your friend

Use traffic lights as an opportunity to practice some deep belly breathing.

Instead of getting impatient or annoyed, breathe deeply until the light turns green.

It's a simple and easy way to bring some calm into your daily life.

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Mindful activities for kids

**Listen to Sitting
Like a Mountain**



Helping our kids find calm in an engaging way can be hard sometimes.

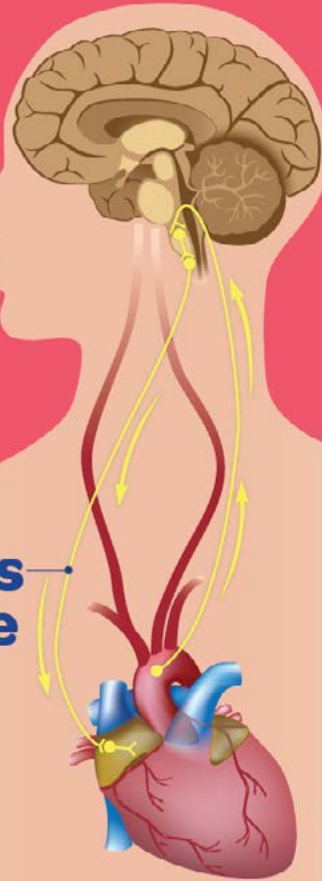
Doing some mindful activities can help to keep them busy, without the need for devices.

Try practicing a few of these mindful activities with the tamariki in your life to help calm busy minds and lower the worries.

1. Mindful activities for kids
2. Go on a nature walk and observe the sights and sounds
3. Do some mindful colouring in a colouring book
4. Practice some deep breathing before bed, or listen to Straight Back Soft Belly
5. Close your eyes and draw your breath on a piece of paper, following the inhale and exhale
6. Talk about things you are grateful for in the morning before school, or around the dinner table at night

The science of kindness

Vagus nerve



Practicing kindness has psychological and physical benefits.

Studies show that practicing kindness can strengthen vagal tone, which is the activity of the vagus nerve.

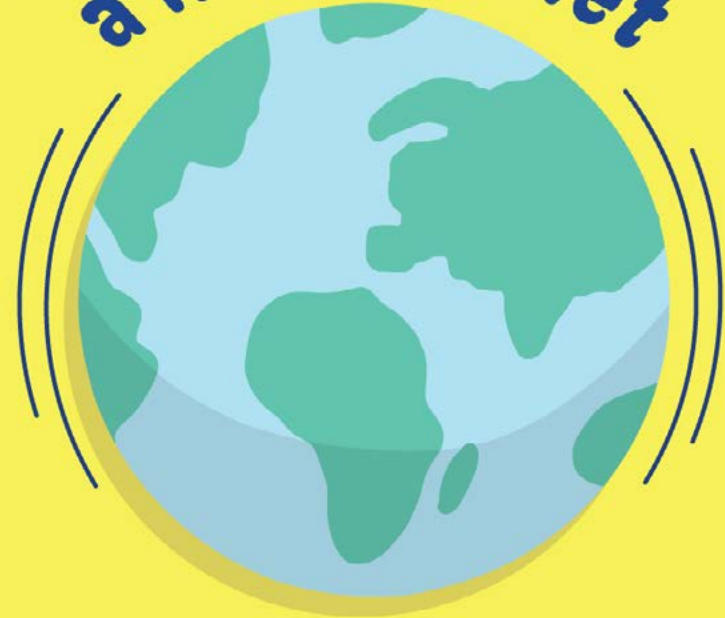
The vagus nerve is the most important nerve in the parasympathetic nervous system. Strong vagal tone is associated with a range of benefits including:

- Good cardiovascular health
- Emotion regulation
- Greater sense of connection and other positive emotions

Practice a little kindness today to benefit both your body and mind.

Listen to Kindness

Breathing with a living planet



Sometimes sitting and mindfully noticing our breathing can feel like a dry mechanical exercise.

We can forget that each breath we take is supported by rainforests, grasslands, and oceanic algal blooms!

In fact, at least 50% of the air we breathe comes from algae that blooms in the ocean, with the rest provided by green plants.

The Earth breathes with us in every single moment.

Try this guided audio practice to invoke a sense of wonder about the act of breathing and to be reminded of your rich and intimate relationship with a living, breathing, planet.

Listen to Earth Inside Earth Outside



The Presence of Nature

A simple and powerful way to settle a worried mind is to get into nature. Nature can generate a multitude of positive emotions, such as calmness, joy and creativity.

Feeling connected to the natural is also associated with lower levels of poor mental health, in particular lower depression and anxiety levels.

Try to get off your screens and into the outdoors regularly, there is so much to be discovered in a little nature walk.

Practising self-compassion



Sometimes we can get caught up in judgements about our perceived imperfections (even though imperfection is part of being human)

It's normal to feel self-critical sometimes. We all do it, but mindfulness mixed with a little self-compassion can help re-train the mind to be a little less judgy and little more loving.

Try this compassion support practice to calm the inner critic and promote a kinder, more compassionate state of mind.

1. Take a few moments to establish mindfulness of breathing.
2. Now, imagine someone who helps you feel loved, supported, and cared for. Like a parent, sibling, significant relative, someone you admire, or it could even be a favourite pet.
3. Picture them clearly in your mind.
4. Imagine what it feels like being with them and the feelings of care and love that they send to you, perhaps through their words, actions, or just their presence.
5. Notice what it feels like to receive these feelings and then imagine sending these feelings of warmth back to them.
6. We can then invite these feelings of warmth and compassion to flow more deeply into ourselves, like sunshine permeating every cell.
7. Notice how you feel towards yourself after doing this practice, perhaps there is a feeling of lightness and a sense of kindness and compassion that wasn't there before?
8. You could also try this guided mindfulness practice called **"Being a Friend to Yourself"**

How to have difficult conversations mindfully



Having difficult conversations is an inevitable part of life. In order to make these conversations as healthy as possible, it is important to bring awareness to the situation to make sure both parties feel safe and heard.

We can use mindfulness as a way to improve our own communication and how we engage with others.

Consider these 5 mindful listening tips when you are engaged in a difficult conversation.

How to practice mindfulness during difficult conversations

1. Look out for the internal commentator

Can I act like a clear mirror reflecting back to the other person exactly what they are saying instead of being caught by my own thoughts and feelings?

2. Awareness of physical sensations

How do shifting emotions felt internally affect the way I listen and speak?

3. Listening openly and speaking with honesty

Can I hear and respect the 'truth' of the other, while confidently expressing 'my truth'?

4. Awareness of your intent

What specific needs am I looking to fulfil by engaging in this conversation/ way of relating? Why do I feel the need to interject? Is it appropriate to do so, or can I wait?

5. Respect as 'fresh-seeing'

Can I let go of pre-conceived ideas about the other person and:

- Listen with openness and without judgement?
- Speak within the context of the situation and not be distracted by personality differences?

Compliment someone

Brilliant!

Amazing!

Good job!

You're awesome!

Share gratitude by saying thanks or give a genuine compliment to someone.

Mindful listening



Mindful listening can be practised with music or the sounds of nature and involves simply bringing attention to sounds as they occur, with curiosity and openness.

We can use the sounds we hear around us as an anchor to ground us in the present moment.

You can practice mindful listening anytime, anywhere by simply noticing the sounds rising and falling. Try going for a mindful walk in the bush, the beach, or around the block and notice the sounds of the world continuously coming and going.

Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered off task, pause where you are, take a few mindful breaths and then continue with attention tuned to the sounds all around.

How to practice mindful listening:

1. First settle into the body begin by noticing all the sounds you hear around you - simply letting sounds come to you rather than actively grasping for them.
2. Try noticing the fluidity of sounds, how they come and go, how they shift and change
3. There is no need to label or judge the sounds, just let your attention move in a relaxed and mindful way from sound to sound
4. if there are no sounds, notice the silence; or perhaps you might be able to notice a sense of stillness behind each sound?
5. Can you notice the sound of your own breathing, which can serve as an extra 'anchor' for your attention as you practice breathing mindfully in and out.

Imagining others who we love or appreciate



Sometimes when we feel hurt or self-critical about our perceived imperfections (even though imperfection is part of being human!), a helpful compassion support can be imagining or calling into mind others who make us feel loved, supported, and cared for. This can be a parent, sibling, significant relative, someone we look up to or appreciate—it could even be a pet! Imagine what it feels like being with this person or being and the feelings of care and love that they send to you, perhaps through their words, actions, or just their presence. Notice what it feels like to receive this, before sending compassion back to them. We can then invite these feelings of compassion to gently flow to ourselves and then to others.

Random acts of kindness



Kindness is a core quality of mindfulness.

Challenge yourself today and perform a random act of kindness for someone else. Smile at a stranger, make someone a cup of tea, or buy a coffee for someone standing behind you in the queue.

The idea is to do something kind to someone and notice how it makes you feel. It can make a huge difference to your mental health while bringing a positive lift to others.

Keep it going over the next week – challenge yourself to at least three acts of kindness this week.