

From Positive Psychology:

Fun Mindfulness Activities and Exercises for Children

Let's start with these simple ways to attune children with their bodies. At a young age, humans naturally curious about the strength and flexibility of their bodies. It's a great age to introduce body-mind awareness as a valuable way to take care of themselves.

Mindful Posing

One easy way for children to dip their toes into mindfulness is through body poses. To get your kids excited, tell them that doing fun poses can help them feel strong, brave, and happy.

Have the kids go somewhere quiet and familiar, a place they feel safe. Next, tell them to try one of the following poses:

1. The Superman: this pose is practiced by standing with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out to the sky, stretching the body as tall as possible.
2. The Wonder Woman: this pose is struck by standing tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips (Karen Young, 2017).

Ask the kids how they feel after a few rounds of trying either of these poses. You may be surprised.

Spidey-Senses

While on the subject of superheroes, this can be a related "next step" to teach kids how to stay present.

Instruct your kids to turn-on their "Spidey senses," or the super-focused senses of smell, sight, hearing, taste, and touch that Spiderman uses to keep tabs on the world around him. This will encourage them to pause and focus their attention on the present, opening their awareness to the information their senses bring in (Karen Young, 2017).

This is a classic mindfulness exercise and encourages observation and curiosity—great skills for any human to practice.

The Mindful Jar

This activity can teach children how strong emotions can take hold, and how to find peace when these strong emotions feel overwhelming.

- First, get a clear jar (like a Mason jar) and fill it almost all the way with water. Next, add a big spoonful of glitter glue or glue and dry glitter to the jar. Put the lid back on the jar and shake it to make the glitter swirl.
- Finally, use the following script or take inspiration from it to form your own mini-lesson:

"Imagine that the glitter is like your thoughts when you're stressed, mad or upset. See how they whirl around and make it really hard to see clearly? That's why it's so easy to make silly decisions when

you're upset – because you're not thinking clearly. Don't worry this is normal and it happens in all of us (yep, grownups too).

[Now put the jar down in front of them.]

Now watch what happens when you're still for a couple of moments. Keep watching. See how the glitter starts to settle and the water clears? Your mind works the same way. When you're calm for a little while, your thoughts start to settle and you start to see things much clearer. Deep breaths during this calming process can help us settle when we feel a lot of emotions" (Karen Young, 2017).

This exercise not only helps children learn about how their emotions can cloud their thoughts, but it also facilitates the practice of mindfulness while focusing on the swirling glitter in the jar.

Try having the kids focus on one emotion at a time, such as anger, and discuss how the shaken versus settling glitter is like that emotion.

Safari

The Safari exercise is a great way to help kids learn mindfulness. This activity turns an average, everyday walk into an exciting new adventure.

Tell your kids that you will be going on a safari: their goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as they can. Anything that walks, crawls, swims, or flies is of interest, and they'll need to focus all of their senses to find them, especially the little ones (Karen Young, 2017).

A similar exercise for adults is the mindfulness walk. This exercise provokes the same response in children that a mindful walk elicits in adults: a state of [awareness](#) and grounding in the present.

If you're interested in more information on how to encourage the practice of mindfulness in children and teens, you can check out the other exercises from this [website](#). Otherwise, head on to the next section where we lay out key tips for teaching these concepts.

15 Tips for Teaching Mindfulness to Kids and Teenagers

When you are trying to teach your kids or young clients about mindfulness and its benefit, we recommend you begin with a few guidelines:

1. Make sure they are ready to give mindfulness a try; if they are full of energy and itching to run and play, it may not be the best time for practicing mindfulness for the first time.
2. Explain [what mindfulness is](#) and what it is not; give examples of what seems similar to mindfulness but is not (i.e., [introspection](#) or chasing thoughts down the "rabbit hole" versus listening to our bodies).
3. Say it in an age-appropriate way, with words they will understand.

4. Offer to practice mindfulness with them; sometimes having a model makes all the difference.
5. Assure them that it's okay to get off track, and how to gently guide themselves back to mindfulness when they realize they lost focus.
6. Finish the practice by doing something they enjoy with them to ensure they have a positive experience.

Mindfulness Games for Kids

Several interactive games are available on the [Kids Activities Blog](#). Here are just a few:

1. Blowing bubbles. Have your kids focus on taking in a deep, slow breath, and exhaling steadily to fill the bubble. Encourage them to pay close attention to the bubbles as they form, detach, and pop or float away.
2. Pinwheels. Use the same tactics from blowing bubbles to encourage mindful attention on the pinwheels.
3. Playing with balloons. Tell your kids that the aim of this game is to keep the balloon off the ground, but have them move slowly and gently. You can tell them to pretend the balloon is very fragile if that helps.
4. Texture bag. Place several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects in a bag. Have each child reach in and touch an object, one at a time, and describe what they are touching. Make sure they don't take the object out of the bag, forcing them to use only their sense of touch to explore the object.
5. Blindfolded taste tests. Use a blindfold for each child and **have them experience eating** a small food, like a raisin or a cranberry, as if it was their first time eating it.

If you want to know about more games you can play with children to teach them about mindfulness, check out the book [*Mindful Games: Sharing Mindfulness and Meditation with Children, Teens, and Families*](#) by Susan Kaiser Greenland.