

Mindfulness

13 Lessons, One Per Day

Set the Stage: Guided Mindfulness Practice, URL : <https://net.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/fab58680-10f3-40e3-af3d-f0931620d0a7/guided-mindfulness-practice/> - 4minutes and 54 seconds.

Resources: Waterford Organization at <https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-kids/>

Activity: Why are we participating in mindfulness exercises?

Inform: As you know, astronauts, Mission 2 Mars 1.0 was a failure for three main reasons:

1. We lacked people’s diverse perspectives. This resulted in overlooking critical needs of our astronaut pioneers. ***We need more people to bring their unique perspectives to M2M 2.0.***
2. Communication was not clear. The instructions provided in M2M 1.0 for building the colony were hard to replicate. ***The astronauts need clear objectives.***
3. **Human wellbeing and health were completely overlooked.** The human body is designed to work flawlessly in earth like conditions. Mars is so different from what our bodies are used to that the astronauts struggled to survive. ***We need to bring resources for nature to grow and prosper on Mars to allow life to Thrive.***

These mindfulness activities that you are asked to participate in – one per day of this mission, are designed to take better care of your human body. Whether in space or here on earth, practicing mindfulness will strengthen your brain and its ability to serve you well throughout your lifetime.

Materials:

- See each day’s lesson for supplies needed.

Note to parents: According to brain imaging research, practicing mindfulness can alter brain structure in a way that can improve a child’s reaction to stress. It thickens the cerebral cortex, which is responsible for perception and reasoning, and increases blood flow in the brain. And not only does mindfulness training reduce stress levels, it can also help alleviate anxiety or depression.

Days 1-13

1. **Mindful Glitter Jar** - The glitter jar represents the mind settling. It's a great activity that your kids can keep coming back to as a mindfulness practice.
 - a. You can use a mason jar, a spice jar, or even a plastic water bottle for this practice. Be sure to use glitter that sinks rather than floats. Adding some glycerin to the water slows down the fall of the glitter.
 - b. If you'd prefer to avoid using glitter, you can make a more eco-friendly version by using [different-colored beads](#), a mix of [food coloring and oil](#), or even [pieces of LEGO](#) you already have around the house.
 - c. Fill the jar to the top with water. Have your children pick three colors of glitter: one to represent thoughts, one to represent feelings, and one to represent behaviors (or "urges to do things"). Drop a few pinches of each color glitter into the water, which represents their mind, and maybe a few drops of food coloring. Seal the jar with its lid or duct tape.
 - d. ***With each event they name, swirl and turn the jar, demonstrating how it becomes difficult to keep track and see clearly what our thoughts, feelings, and urges are.***
 - e. Ask your child what kinds of things will make the glitter in the jar swirl. Encourage answers that reflect distressing events (fights with siblings, losing in sports) and positive ones (getting a good grade, making a new friend), events in the foreground (sick siblings) and events in the background (scary stories on the news). With each event they name, swirl and turn the jar, demonstrating how it becomes difficult to keep track and see clearly what our thoughts, feelings, and urges are.
 - f. Now that you have a Mindful Glitter Jar encourage its use on a regular basis.
2. **Heartbeat Exercise** - As your child to monitor their heartbeat and breathing after exercise, they'll learn to become mindful of how their body feels.
3. **Pinwheel Breathing** - This exercise allows us to see how different ways of breathing affect how our mind and bodies feel.
 - a. **Step 1** With a pinwheel for your child and yourself, sit with your back straight and your body relaxed.
 - b. **Step 2** Blow on your pinwheels together using long, deep breaths, and notice how you feel. Do you feel calm and relaxed? Is it easy or hard to sit still?
 - c. **Step 3** Now blow on the pinwheels using short, quick breaths. How does your body feel now? Do you feel the same way after breathing quickly as you did after breathing slowly?
 - d. **Step 4** Now blow on the pinwheels normally. How does this feel?
 - e. **Step 5** What did you notice about how different ways of breathing makes you feel?



4. **Muscle Relaxation** - How often are we truly mindful of the muscles in our body? With this activity, children can start practicing mindfulness around how they tense or relax their muscles.

5. **Teaching STOP Mindfulness** - Teach kids the core components of mindfulness through the acronym **STOP**: **S**top, **T**ake a breath, **O**bserve, and **P**roceed. By applying mindfulness to these experience during your day, your mind will be on autopilot less, and you will be able to check in with how you are feeling, what you are thinking, and what behavior you're engaging in.

a. **S: Stop.** Whatever you're doing, just pause momentarily.

T: Take a breath. Re-connect with your breath. The breath is an anchor to the present moment.

O: Observe. Notice what is happening. What is happening inside you, and outside of you? Where has your mind gone? What do you feel? What are you doing?

P: Proceed. Continue

b. doing what you were doing. Or don't: Use the information gained during this check-in to change course. Whatever you do, do it mindfully.

6. **Show gratitude to others** – When your child shows gratitude to and for others, he/she ends up feeling better about themselves. It is as if recognizing good in others helps them see the good inside of them. Here are some examples that you can use.

- a. Say please and thank you. ...
- b. Help someone less fortunate. ...
- c. Volunteer. ...
- d. Send out thank you cards. ...
- e. Look for awe-inspiring moments in your day. ...
- f. Share your gratitude at bedtime. ...
- g. Share your gratitude at the dinner table. ...
- h. Compliment others.

TENSE AND RELEASE

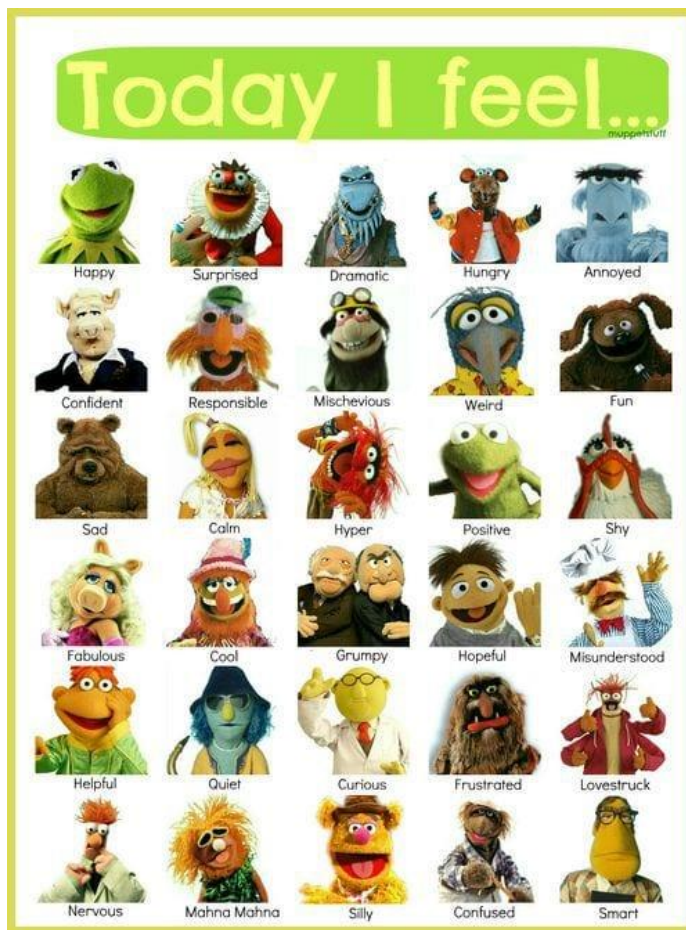
MUSCLE RELAXATION

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.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

7. **Today I feel** - Use this Muppet-themed chart and teach your child how to recognize the emotions they feel each day.
8. **10 Mindful Journaling Prompts** - When youngsters journal, they become more aware of their own feelings and grow more comfortable expressing their ideas. Here are 10 journaling topics.



- a. What is your greatest talent?
 - b. What is the best compliment you've ever received?
 - c. How do others encourage you to be more confident?
 - d. Write about a unique quality you have that makes you special.
 - e. Write down five things that define who you are, listing them as "I am _____," statements. Take a few minutes to think about each one. Which quality feels the best?
 - f. Write about a time when you did something you were afraid to try. How did you feel afterward?
 - g. When you're feeling confident, what emotions do you experience?
 - h. Write about a person you admire. What qualities do you have in common with this person?
 - i. What is your favorite thing to do? How do you feel when you work on this activity?
 - j. What does it feel like when someone recognizes something you worked hard to do?
9. **Rainbow Walk** – Go on a walk with your child and encourage them to find one item that is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet as a quick way to practice mindfulness. Your child could list items in a journal upon return or take images while walking.
10. **Draw Your Breath** – Place your pencil (or other drawing tool) on paper. Take a moment to notice your breathing. Visualize your intake breath and draw it on the paper. If it is a deep breath, make the line wider. Draw your exhale in the same manner. Intake and Exhale breaths can be different colors. What do you notice about your drawing?
11. **Root to Rise Activity** - This moving meditation is to help children visualize the practice of rooting in order to rise. We root to ground, to find strength. We rise as we become heartfelt, kind to ourselves, others and the world around us.
- a. **Stand Grounded - Breath Rising** Stand feet slightly apart, firmly grounded into the earth. Notice your toes slightly apart, the edges of your feet rooting into the ground. Palms facing out, tall spine. As you breathe in, feel the breath rising from your feet, chins, knees, hips, all the way up your spine to the crown of your head. Slowly breathe out. Repeat the breath three times.
 - b. **Breathe, Stretch, Bend with Gratitude** - Breathe in and reach your arms out wide, stretching your fingers apart. Slowly lift your arms above your head, palms touching. As you breathe out,

take your arms apart outward in a wide circle from your body, and bend all the way down until your hands touch the ground. You can bend your knees if you need to. Take the palms on the ground, patting the earth, feeling the earth and **thanking the earth**.

- c. Rise with Strength - As you rise, and pull up the earth's energy, let your head and arms hang heavy. Slowly lift up, one vertebra at a time. Take arms wide out from your body, reach all the way above your head, palms touching. Take your palms together at heart center and say "**I am strong.**"

12. **Clear Your Work Area** - Visual clutter is distracting and agitating. It slows you down and makes you less productive. It impedes your creativity and clarity. It also sends a message to those around you that you are disorganized and scattered.

- a. The act of clearing and organizing your work area allows you a few minutes of focused mindfulness, as you decide where to put your stuff and what to keep and throw away.
- b. Once your work area is clear, you have set the stage for more mental and emotional energy and focus to begin your work.
- c. Have fun organizing your work area!

13. **Five Senses Exercise** - Did you know that you can use all five of your senses while being mindful? This activity can show you how!

- a. **Notice five things that you can see.** Cast your eyes around and bring your attention to five things you might not normally notice. Choose something you wouldn't ordinarily pay attention to, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.
- b. **Notice four things that you can feel.** Bring your awareness to four things you are currently feeling, like the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.
- c. **Notice three things that you can hear.** Try to tune in to the sounds of your surroundings. What can you hear in the background? This might be a bird singing, the low hum of the refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic from a nearby road.
- d. **Notice two things that you can smell.** Tune your senses into smells you might usually gloss over, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. Perhaps the breeze is carrying the scent of pine trees if you're outside, or the smell of cafe from the sidewalk.
- e. **Notice one thing that you can taste.** Focus on one thing you can taste right now, in this moment. You can take a sip of coffee, savor some chocolate, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open it to search the air for a taste.

For the Challenge: Upload images and/or information related to a NEW Mindfulness Activity that you have created as needed to the Challenge Instagram site.