

Mindfulness and Calming Activities

SHORT ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT CALMING THE BODY AND MIND
TO REMAIN FOCUSED AND MOTIVATED



This document contains a collection of easy to implement activities designed to support the wellbeing of students, specifically:

- An instruction manual for the 'Mindful Box' items and other mindfulness activities
- Description of activities for students to develop their own personal 'Coping Box'
- Activities and resources to encourage help-seeking behaviours in students
- Other resources collected and developed by School-Link to support the wellbeing of students

The activities in this package can be practiced by individuals, small or large groups, young children, teenagers and adults. They may be used to refocus when moving from one activity to the next or to de-stress in the middle of a complex task.

Illawarra Shoalhaven School - Link Program

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<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-illawarra-shoalhaven>

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The Mindful Box has been collated by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District School-link Program.

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Items with a ‘ * ‘ have materials to conduct that activity within the Mindful Box

Items with a ‘ * ‘ have examples of a resource within the Mindful Box and may require the purchase of resource to conduct the activity

Items with a ‘ * ‘ may require the purchase of resources to conduct the activity

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It's important to note that after a while some activities do not 'catch-on' with some students or may become too familiar and begin not to have as great an affect, so don't hesitate to change up your activities whenever it feels right.

The Mindfulness Box

The Mindful Box collated by the Illawarra Shoalhaven School-Link Program contains a number of items used to introduce and practice mindfulness activities with students.

The following pages in this document describes mindfulness activities using items from the Mindful Box, others that can be conducted without purchase of additional resources and some that require purchase of low cost items.

Mindfulness means paying conscious or close attention to whatever is happening right now. Mindfulness helps you slow down, calm and respond rather than react to situations in your life. Regularly practicing mindfulness supports regulating emotions, being in control and fosters positive interactions and relationships.

Mindfulness may assist you with:

- concentration and learning
- decision making
- emotional intelligence
- self-confidence, and
- connectedness to others



All of the mindfulness activities in this document are based on the three core steps of:

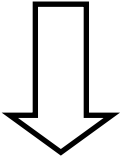
1. Pause
2. Observe
3. Decide

With practice your favourite mindfulness activities can become useful tools to remain focused and motivated throughout the day.

Five Senses Exercise

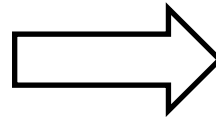
To bring yourself to a mindful state and grounded in the space around you, bring awareness and take note of:

Start Here



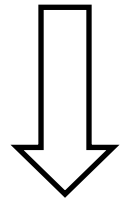
1/ Vision

Five things around you that you may not normally see, like a shadow, a small crack in the concrete or a fly on the wall.



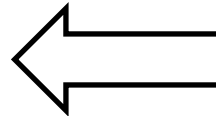
2/ Touch

Four things around you that you may not normally feel, the texture of your clothes, the breeze on your skin or the smooth surface of a table.



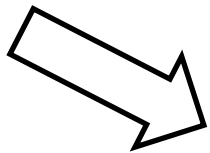
4/ Smell

Two things around you that you may not normally smell, the breeze carrying a whiff of trees or the smell of a fast food restaurant.



3/ Hearing

Three things around you that you may not normally hear. The chirp of a bird, the hum of the air conditioning or the faint sounds of traffic.




5/ Taste


One thing that you can taste. You can take a sip of a drink or eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth or even open your mouth to search the air for a taste.

Everyday Mindfulness


As a follow up to the Five Senses Exercise, discuss everyday opportunities to explore each of your five senses, at home or in the community, imagine and discuss what you may feel between doing these activities.

- 
- Look at a beautiful flower
 - Light a candle and watch the flame
 - See some beautiful art in a book or on the internet
 - Look at the view outside the window
 - Watch nature around you
 - Go out at night and watch the stars
 - Walk in a pretty part of town
 - Mix paints to make new colours


Acknowledge each sight that passes in front of you, not lingering on anything.

- 
- Take a bubble bath
 - Pet your dog or cat
 - Walk barefoot on the grass
 - Put a cold cloth on your forehead
 - Sink into a really comfortable chair
 - Wear or touch things which are soft, silky, fluffy or rough
 - Brush your hair
 - Hug someone


Be aware of any physical sensations you may have, acknowledge them and let them fade away.

- 
- Eat something you enjoy
 - Have a favourite soothing drink such as tea or hot chocolate
 - Sample flavours in an ice-cream store
 - Suck on peppermint
 - Chew chewing gum
 - Try something spicy or savoury

Really taste the food you eat, eat one thing at a time and allow the taste of one bite to flow into the next.

- 
- Listen to beautiful or soothing music
 - Listen to invigorating or exciting music
 - Pay attention to sounds of nature
 - Sing out loud to your favourite songs
 - Hum a tune
 - Listen to chat show or a pod cast

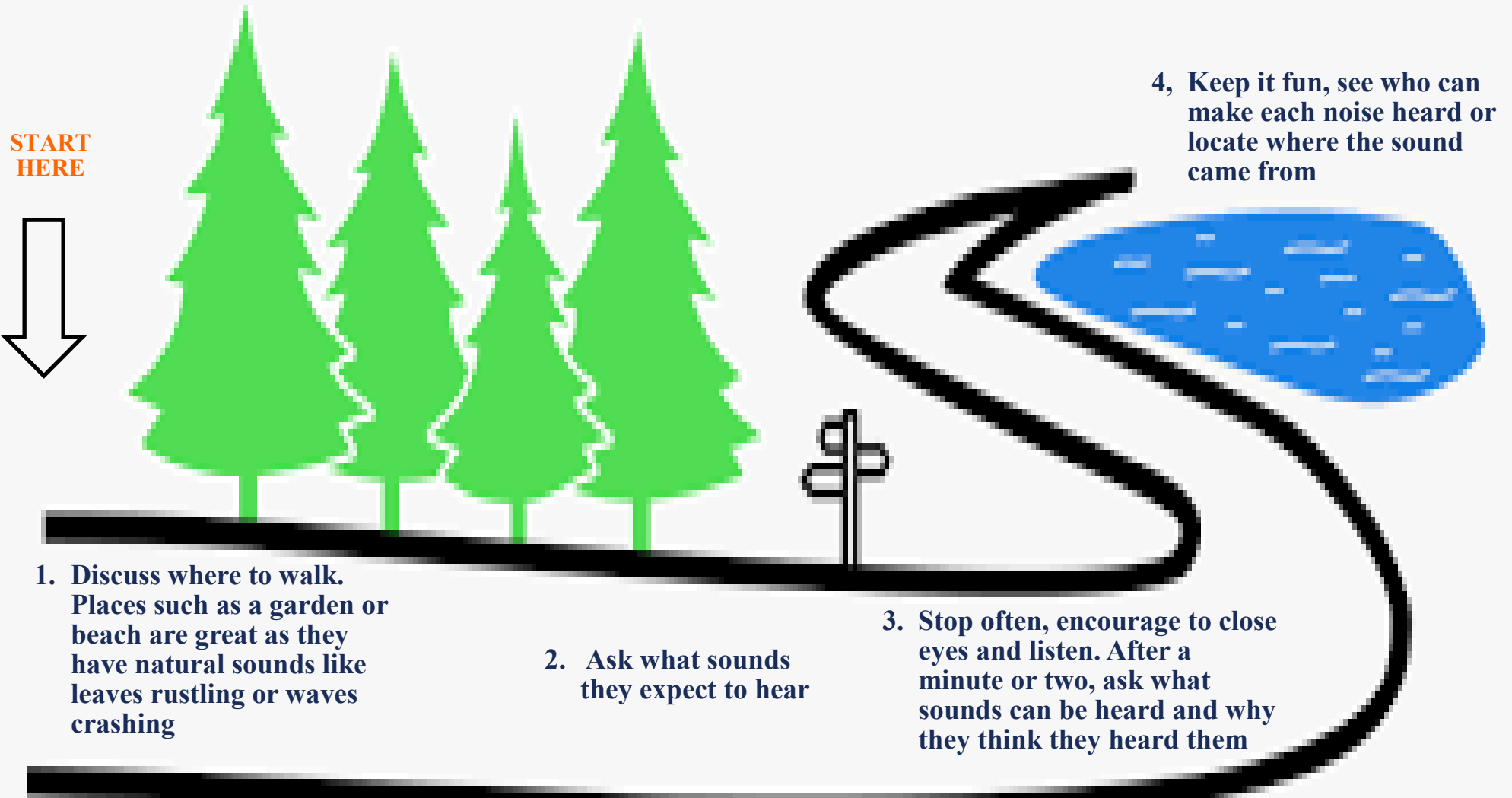
Be aware of any sounds that come your way letting them go in one ear and out the other

- 
- Use your favourite perfume or spray
 - Light a scented candle
 - Boil cinnamon
 - Bake cookies, cake or bread
 - Smell a flower, plant or tree
 - Walk in a green area or along the beach

Breathe in and let the fresh smells of nature come and go.

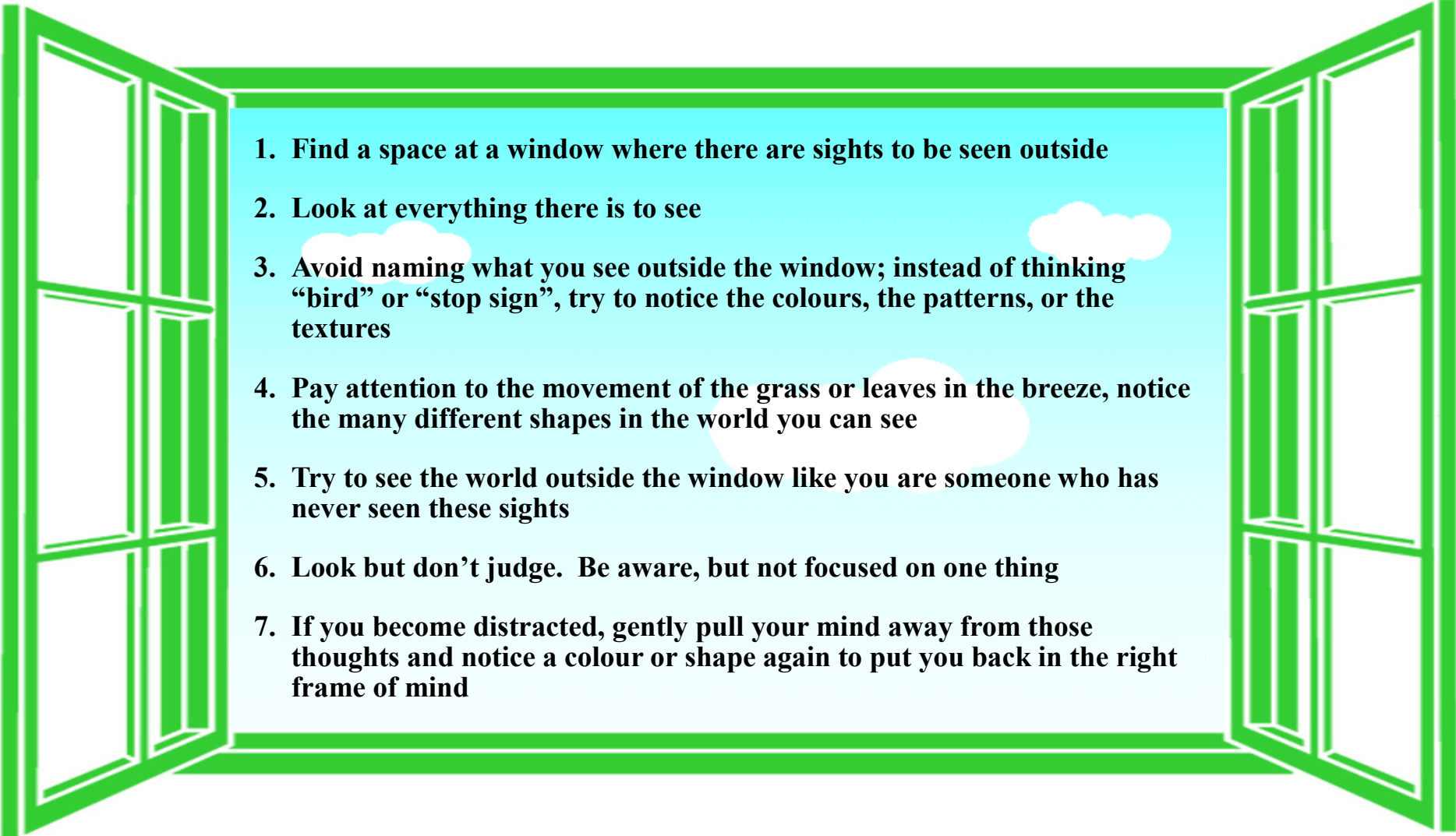
Listening Walk

A listening walk is simply going for a walk while focussing on your surroundings and sharing findings. Familiar places are great because things can be discovered that haven't been noticed before. A listening walk helps teach patience and how to be present in the moment.



Mindful Seeing

Practice mindfulness by taking your mind from a place of thinking and doing to a place of noticing.

- 
1. Find a space at a window where there are sights to be seen outside
 2. Look at everything there is to see
 3. Avoid naming what you see outside the window; instead of thinking “bird” or “stop sign”, try to notice the colours, the patterns, or the textures
 4. Pay attention to the movement of the grass or leaves in the breeze, notice the many different shapes in the world you can see
 5. Try to see the world outside the window like you are someone who has never seen these sights
 6. Look but don't judge. Be aware, but not focused on one thing
 7. If you become distracted, gently pull your mind away from those thoughts and notice a colour or shape again to put you back in the right frame of mind

What is a Leaf?

Take a leaf and study it. Take some time to focus on your leaf and all of its features and characteristics.

Bring all of your attention to study your leaf carefully. You may notice that your mind wanders or gets distracted by other things, just note these as thoughts and bring your attention back to the leaf that you hold in your hand.

Examining Your Leaf

1. What do you notice when you look at the leaf? What colour is it? What shape? When you move it, how does it catch the light? Are there any imperfections that you can see?
2. How does the leaf feel in your hand? Its weight or weightlessness? How does it feel against your skin? What do you notice about its texture? Explore the textures of the leaf between your fingers. What do you feel when you run the leaf through your fingers? Are there any areas of roughness or is it smooth?
3. Move your attention to the smell of the leaf. Taking it, squashing it and holding it beneath your nose. Do you notice any smells or fragrances? Taste? Sound?



Reflection

1. Once you have studied your leaf put it back in with the others. Take a look at all the leaves and see if you can locate your leaf, the one that you have held in your hands and studied.
2. If you are doing this activity with others you may like to share your thoughts and feelings about the activity. Was it hard/ easy to find your leaf?



Practicing this type of mindfulness can remind us to pay attention to what is happening within our selves and what we are doing. It can also greatly improve ways we communicate with others in our lives.

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is using literature to provide information, support, and guidance in the form of reading books and stories. Bibliotherapy is often used as a support to other forms of therapy to help facilitate the healing process for individuals and groups of all ages.

Even when not part of a therapeutic process some of the benefits of bibliotherapy can be gained by sharing literature with students and discussing the messages within, students can learn to:

- Find ways of coping with life's challenges
- Gain insight into personal challenges and develop strategies to address them
- Develop problem solving skills, understanding, and self-awareness
- Gain perspective by seeing how other people address and deal with issues
- Understand expected behaviours in different situations

Primary School Students

Can benefit from reading at their own pace, having stories read to them and participating in group discussions about the messages within. Students may further explore the issues raised through art or their own creative writing.

High School Students

Can benefit from books that they can read in their own or during class time at their own pace, such as; autobiographies, self-help books, fiction novels, poetry, plays, online blogs and websites. Students may participate in group discussions about the messages within the literature and/or complete a written report.



A selection of books appropriate for either Primary or High Schools can be found in the Mindful Box.

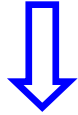
The USB that comes with the Mindful Box contains lists of more literature that can be used for bibliotherapy.

Mindful Breathing

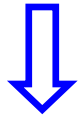


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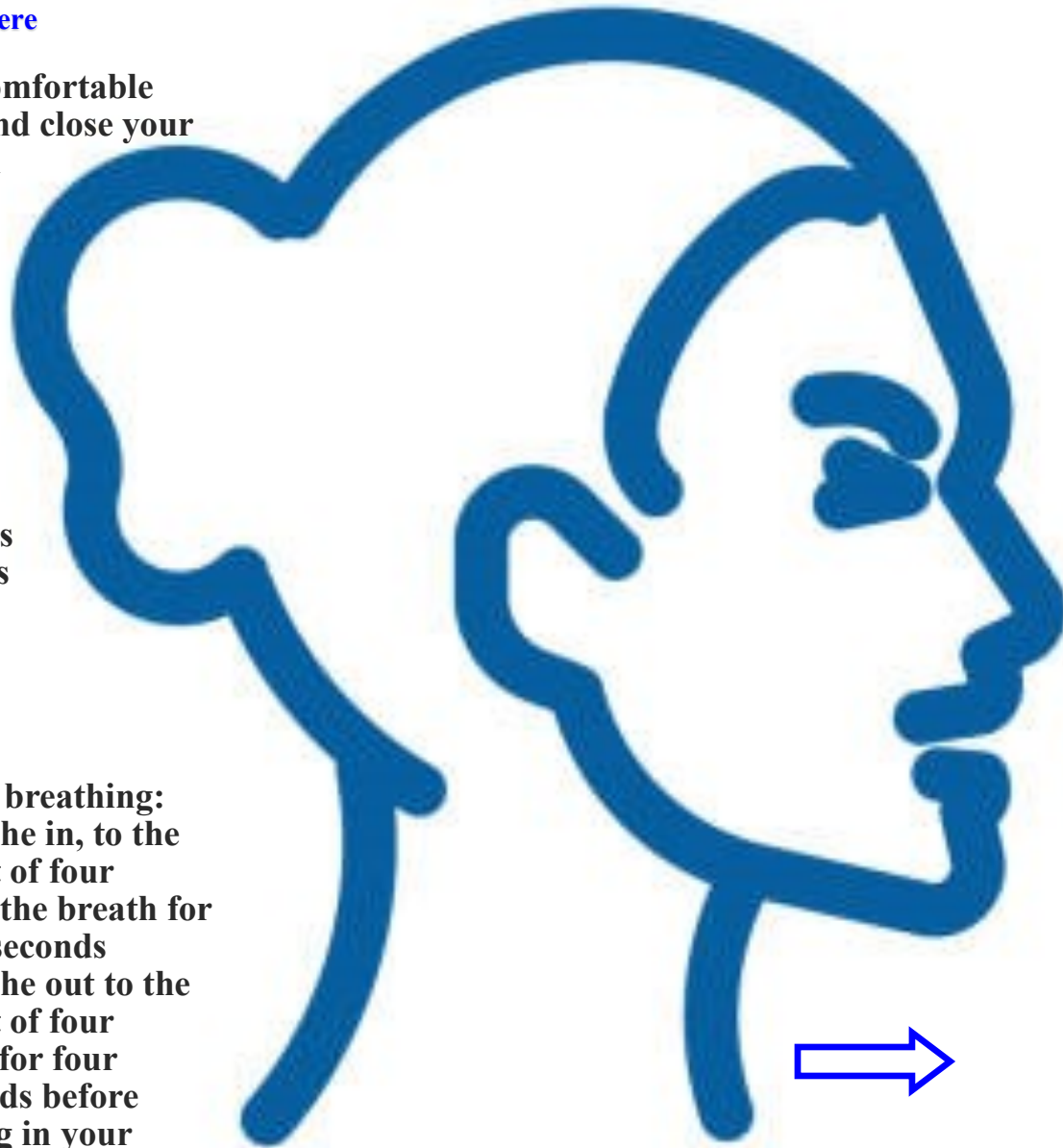
1. Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes if you choose



2. Breathe normally and notice how it feels; pay attention as the air goes in and out



3. Controlled breathing:
 - a. Breathe in, to the count of four
 - b. Hold the breath for four seconds
 - c. Breathe out to the count of four
 - d. Wait for four seconds before taking in your next breath



6. If your mind starts to wander from the task at hand, gently guide it back to your breath



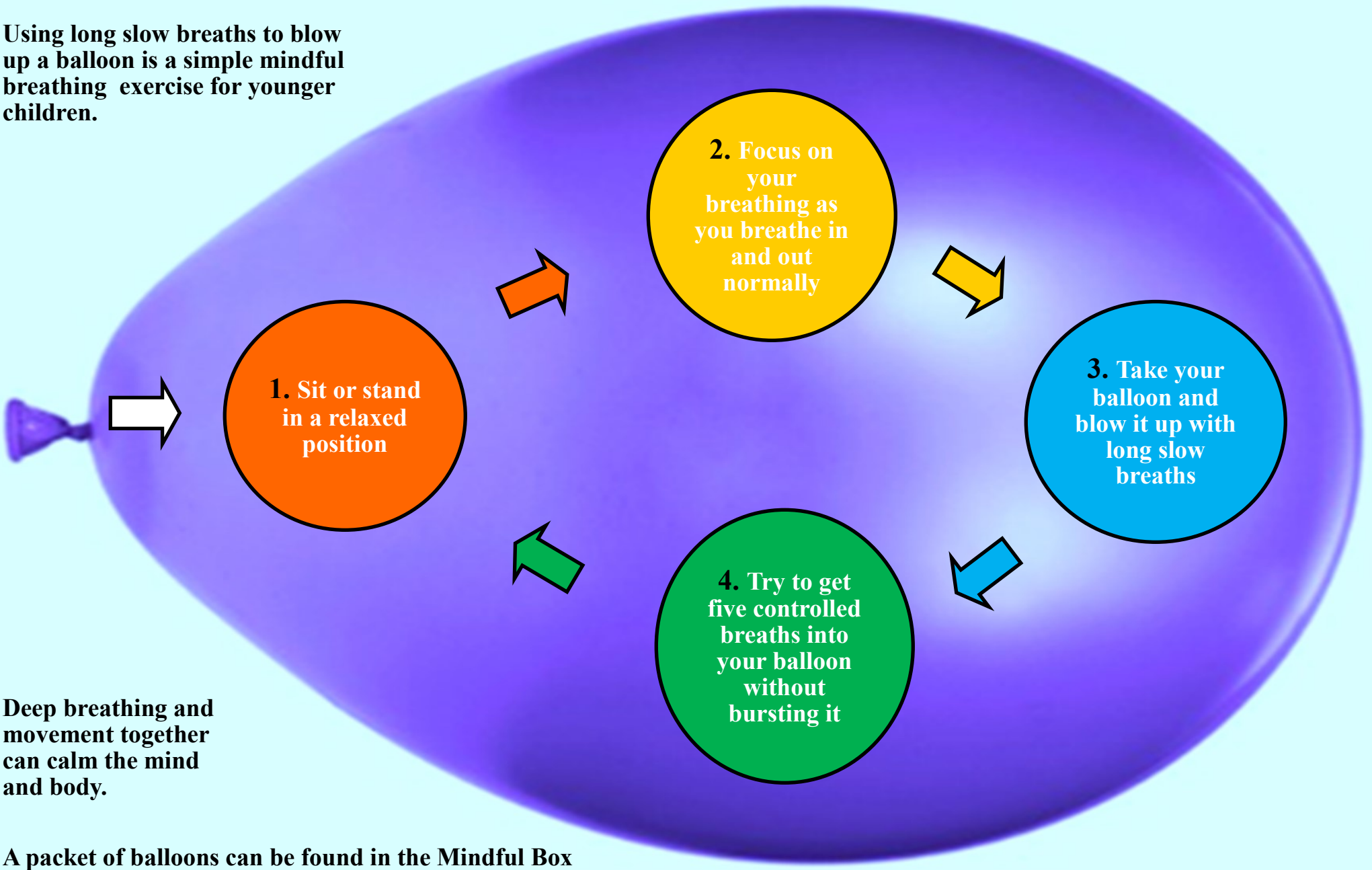
5. Sit for a few minutes, paying attention to your breathing, and become as relaxed as you can be



4. Notice how your breath moves your body, your chest and/or your belly rising and falling as you breathe

Blowing Up A Balloon

Using long slow breaths to blow up a balloon is a simple mindful breathing exercise for younger children.

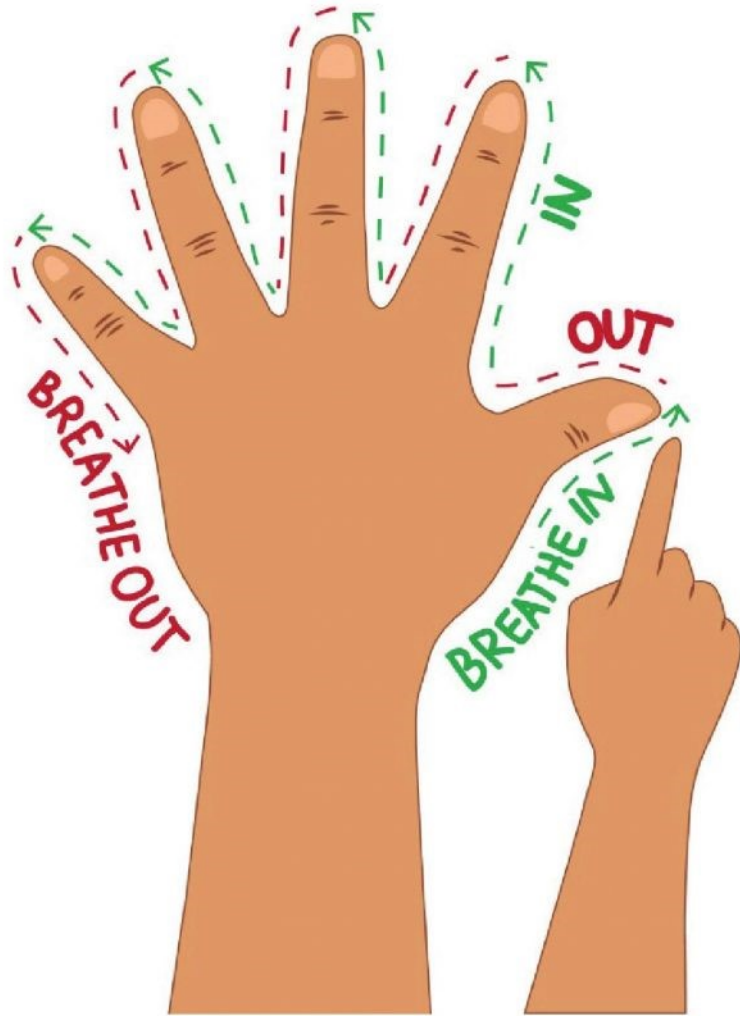


Deep breathing and movement together can calm the mind and body.

A packet of balloons can be found in the Mindful Box

Finger Breathing

MANAGE YOUR BREATH with your hand



Copyright © KiddyCharts.com

Deep breathing enables more air to enter your body and can help you calm and reduce stress.

Deep breathing involves taking long, slow breaths to replace the short, quick breaths that you may take when feeling stressed or anxious.

Deep breathing can also help you improve your attention span and refocus on tasks.

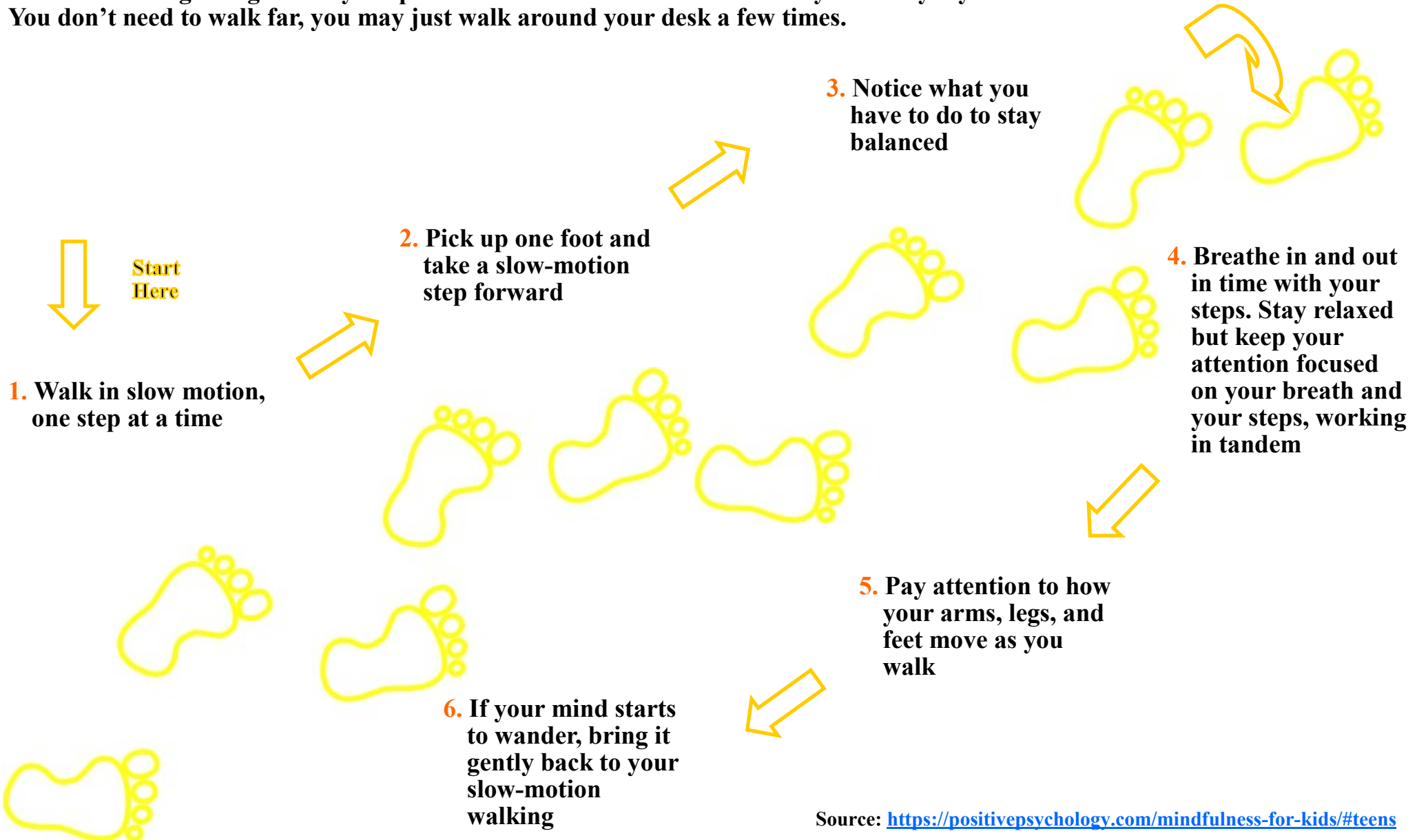
Deep Breathing:

1. Stretch your hand out in front of you and use a finger on your other hand to trace
2. Breath in as you move your finger up your thumb and out as you move your finger back towards your palm.
3. Repeat for each finger
4. Do this exercise slowly and focus on your breathing

Source: <https://blog.baamboozle.com/>

Mindful Walking

Mindful walking is a great way to practice and maintain mindfulness in your everyday life. You don't need to walk far, you may just walk around your desk a few times.



Mindful Word

Choose a word that connects back to mindfulness and use it as an anchor to keep you present, calm, and collected.



Start
Here

1. Think of a word that seems calm or soothing to you, like “peace”, “love”, “sunlight”, or “calm”

2. Think the word to yourself, saying it silently in your own mind. Say it again as you breathe, once when you breathe in and once when you breathe out. Stay focused on the word



3. If/when your mind begins to wander, gently bring it back to your word

4. Challenge yourself to do this for one minute. If that seems too easy, try five minutes

Mindful Posing

These poses help to slow down your breath as well as your body, quiet the mind, and heighten your awareness. Hold each pose for ten seconds and cycle through the three poses a few times.

Mountain Pose



Posture and Alignment

Warrior Pose



Stability and Stamina

Tree Pose



Balance and Stability

Additional Resource:

A set Yoga Pretzel Cards are in the Mindful Box which are a good source of additional movement exercises.

Source and more poses: <https://www.dimensions.com/collection/yoga-poses>

Legs up the Wall

This passive inverted pose helps you melt into the floor as you let go of stress, anxiety, and tension.

You may place a cushion or folded blanket under your hips, or move closer to the wall if you are more flexible. You can bend your knees or place a cushion between your knees and the wall or under your head for support too. Once in position you can cover your eyes with a mask or cloth.

It is important to find a position comfortable for you.

1. Sit with your right side against the wall, bend your knees pulling your feet towards your bottom.
2. Swing your legs up against the wall turning to lie flat on your back.
3. Move your hips to a comfortable distance from the wall.
4. Place your arms in any comfortable position resting on the floor.
5. Stay in this position for up to 20 minutes.
6. To release the pose, gently push yourself away from the wall.
7. Relax on your back for a few moments before sitting up



Mindful Eating: Don't Just Eat the Lolly

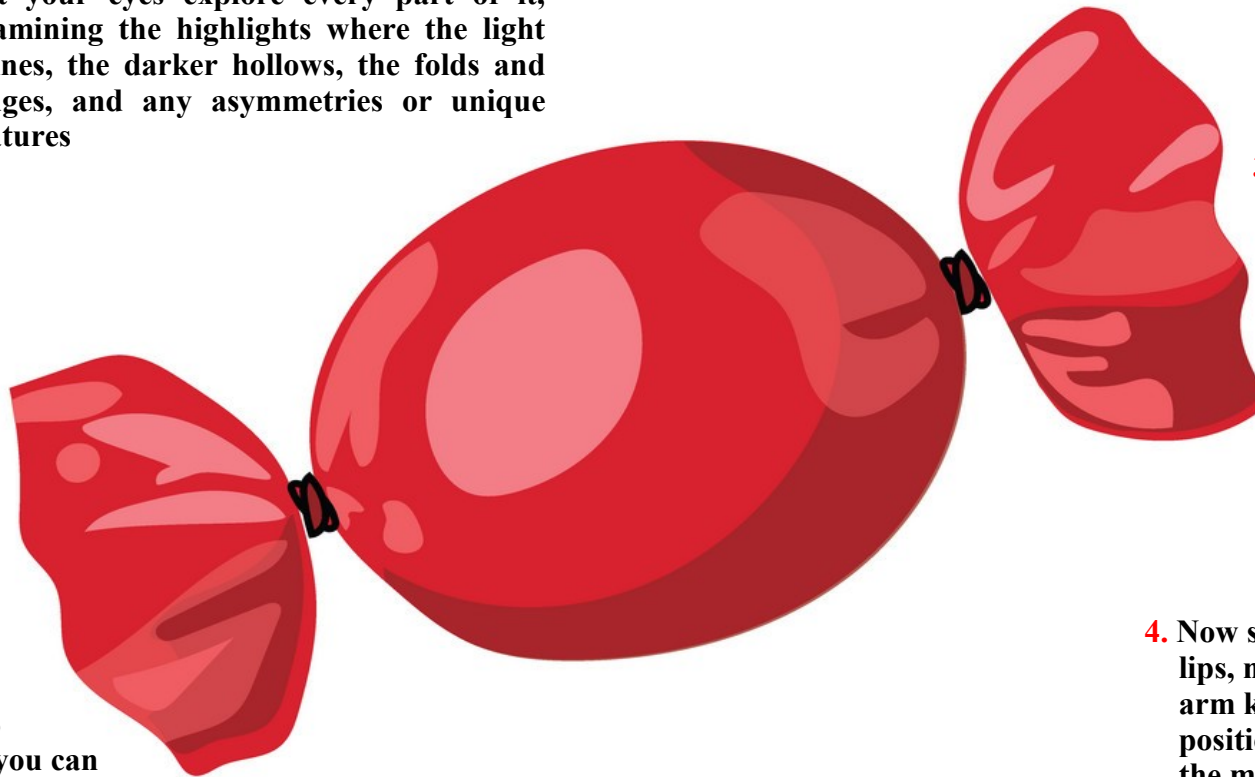
Start
Here



1. First, take a lolly and hold it in your hand. Focus on it, take time to really see it; gaze at the lolly with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the folds and ridges, and any asymmetries or unique features

2. Turn the lolly over between your fingers, exploring its texture, close your eyes to enhance your sense of touch

3. Holding the lolly beneath your nose, with each inhalation drink in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise, noticing as you do this anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or stomach



7. Finally, see if you can feel what is left of the lolly moving down into your stomach, and sense how the body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise in mindful eating

6. When you feel ready to swallow the lolly, see if you can first detect the intention to swallow as it comes up, so that even this is experienced consciously before you actually swallow the lolly

5. Prepare to chew the lolly, noticing how and where it needs to be for chewing. Then, very consciously and slowly, take one or two bites into it and notice what happens, experience any waves of taste as you continue chewing. Notice the sensations of taste and texture in the mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment, as well as any changes in the lolly itself

4. Now slowly bring the lolly up to your lips, noticing how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the object in the mouth, without chewing, noticing how it gets into the mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments exploring the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue

Source: Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal, and Jon Kabat-Zinn (2007). *The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness*. New York: Guilford Press.

Tip: Any small food object can be used instead of a lolly such as a raisin or a grape

Mindful Listening Bell

Five different activities to practice mindfulness with the sound of a bell, chime bar, triangle, singing bowl or gong. If you lose count or your mind wanders, practice bringing it back to the sound of the bell.

Ring the Bell Once – Basic Mindful Listening

1. You can do this with eyes open or eyes closed
2. Ring the bell
3. Listen to the sound it makes until you can't hear it anymore
4. When the sound stops, raise your hand



Ring the Bell Once – Counting Breaths

1. Ring the bell hard
2. Count how many out-breaths you take before it stops ringing. Breathe in and say in your head “in”, then breathe out and count in your head “one.” Breathe in “in”, breathe out “two”
3. See if the number changes after you repeat this exercise a few times

Stopping With the Bell – Incorporating Movement

1. Slowly walk around the room in a circle, when you hear the bell, stop and take three slow breaths. Then, you can start moving again, but stop and breathe each time you hear the bell
2. You can also vary this exercise by playing music and freeze and breathe when the music is paused



Ring the Bell Multiple Times – Counting Bells

1. Ring the bell lightly and at random intervals
2. Count how many times the bell is rung while you sit and breathe

Ring the Bell Multiple Times – Counting Silence

1. Ring the bell a few times at random intervals
2. Count how many seconds of silence there are while you sit and breathe

A Chime Bar is provided in the Mindful Box

Source: <https://heartmindkids.com/mindful-listening-with-a-bell/>

Storycatching

The stories we share can help us to build personal identity, reshape and bring new meaning to our lives. Stories reach the very essence of who we are. By listening to the stories of others we come to realise that we're not alone in what we are experiencing, but part of a wider cultural network.

Storycatching is an 80 card resource that prompts storytelling in people of all ages, inspiring memories and creative possibilities.

Cards can be used as an icebreaker, a listening tool, creative writing and journaling prompt, or even a memory game.

Storycatching covers a wide range of subject matter and emotional territory, including identity, childhood, aging, heartbreak and much more. It is a simple and easy-to-use resource that requires no special training.



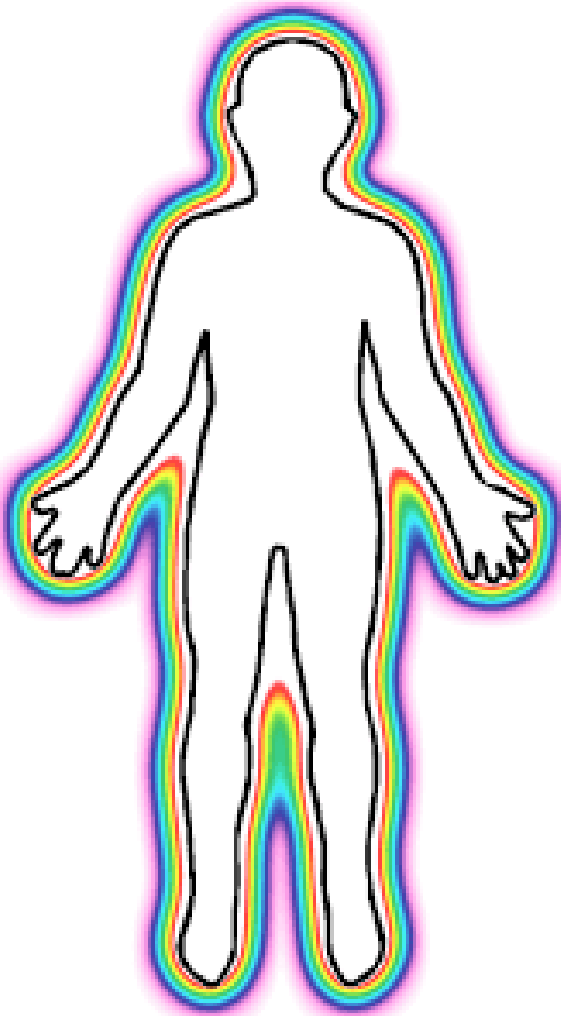
A set of Storycatching Cards can be found in the Mindful Box

More information and further resources can be found at: <https://innovativeresources.org/resources/card-sets/storycatching-2/>

Mindful Body Scan

Body scanning involves paying attention to parts of the body and bodily sensations in a gradual sequence from head to feet. By mentally scanning yourself, you bring awareness to every single part of your body, noticing any aches, pains, tension, or general discomfort.

The purpose is to tune in to your body and notice any sensations you're feeling without judgement.



1. Sit in a chair or lie on the floor in a comfortable position
2. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so
3. Take a deep breath in and breathe out slowly
4. Focus on the top and back of your head, noticing any contact with the chair or floor
5. Notice any movement or tension
6. Feel yourself relaxing as the tension leaves your body
7. Focus in turn on the rest of your body:
 - a. Face
 - b. Neck and shoulders
 - c. Arms and hands
 - d. Back, chest and stomach
 - e. Upper legs, lower legs and feet
8. Be aware of any physical sensations you may have
9. Acknowledge these sensations and let them fade away
10. Take a deep breath in and breathe out slowly
11. Open your eyes and slowly start to move

Making Coping Boxes

A Coping Box holds the things that calm you down or lift your spirits in times of distress.

A coping box can be any container holding items that help us deal with unwanted thoughts, feelings and sensations in a positive way instead of falling back into bad habits or negative thinking patterns.

A coping box can help to:

- Identify and express your thoughts
- Comfort you
- Provide positive distraction
- Fuel your sense of hope, motivation and perseverance
- Shift your mindset from worrying and overanalysing to a problem-solving mentality

As a classroom activity students can design and fill a coping box to meet their personal needs, to access and use whenever they are feeling the build-up of unwanted thoughts, feelings and sensations.

A part of the process of creating coping boxes are discussions with students about unwanted thoughts, feelings and sensations, explaining that emotions in themselves are not bad but it is important they know how to identify and confidently manage them.

The following pages in this document provide examples of what could be included in a coping box.



Things I Can Control

Things I can't control

Things I can control

When you are in a situation that causes you distress it can be helpful to put your energies into the things you have some control.

Use the template to list the things you can and can't control.

Practice Being in Control

Some ideas of what you can control:

- 1. Your Breathing**
Focus on your breath, in and out, try a mindful breathing exercise
- 2. Your Self-Talk**
Remind yourself that you are worthy of love and attention, or that it's okay to make mistakes
- 3. Your Gratitude**
Thinking of what we are grateful for boosts optimism and resilience
- 4. Your Body Language**
Taking a relaxed posture or a confident stance can influence the way you feel and how others see you
- 5. Asking For Help**
Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness

Squeezing out Stress

Though squeezing a stress ball is not a long term solution for stress it can help to release tension in the moment

Stress balls can be purchased or made by filling a balloon with rice (double balloon recommended)

Other stress ball making ideas:

<https://www.weareteachers.com/stress-balls/>

Creating individualised stress balls may be an engaging whole group activity

The squeezing motion acts as a reminder to relax the muscles that are clenched when anxious, which can help avoid complications like headaches or pain that accompany long periods of tensing

Use of a stress ball may assist with:

- Managing fidgety and impulsive behaviour
- Reinforcing calm on-task behaviour
- Learning socially appropriate and responsible behaviours to replace a problem behaviour
- Helping to recognise triggers in time to divert disruptive behaviour
- Increasing concentration and attention span

Individuals who are prone to anxiety or stress may be provided a stress ball for discreet use when they are feeling stressed

References:

<https://www.brownmed.com/uncategorized/do-stress-balls-really-work/>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fidget-toys-arent-just-hype/>

Using Stress Balls to Focus the Attention of Sixth-Grade Learners : Sheryl Stalvey and Heather Brasell

Visual Sensory Bottle

Sensory bottles can be used as tool to distract from strong emotions, by shaking up the bottle and watching as the contents settle.

“As the bottle clears, so does that mind.”

Sensory bottles may also be used as a meditation focus, acting as a timer and also keeping the person meditating from being distracted by outside influences.

Creating individualised sensory bottles may be an engaging whole group activity

Example Sensory Bottles are included in the Mindful Box.

Reference:

<https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/sensory-bottles>



Common sensory bottle fillers are:

- water
- mix of water and clear glue
- hair gel
- hand sanitizer or liquid soap
- water beads and water
- baby oil
- cooking oil
- shampoo

Interest item examples are:

- glitter
- confetti
- sequins
- beads
- buttons
- marbles
- ribbon
- items found on a nature or beach walk

A hot glue gun is recommended to seal each bottle.

Worry Jar

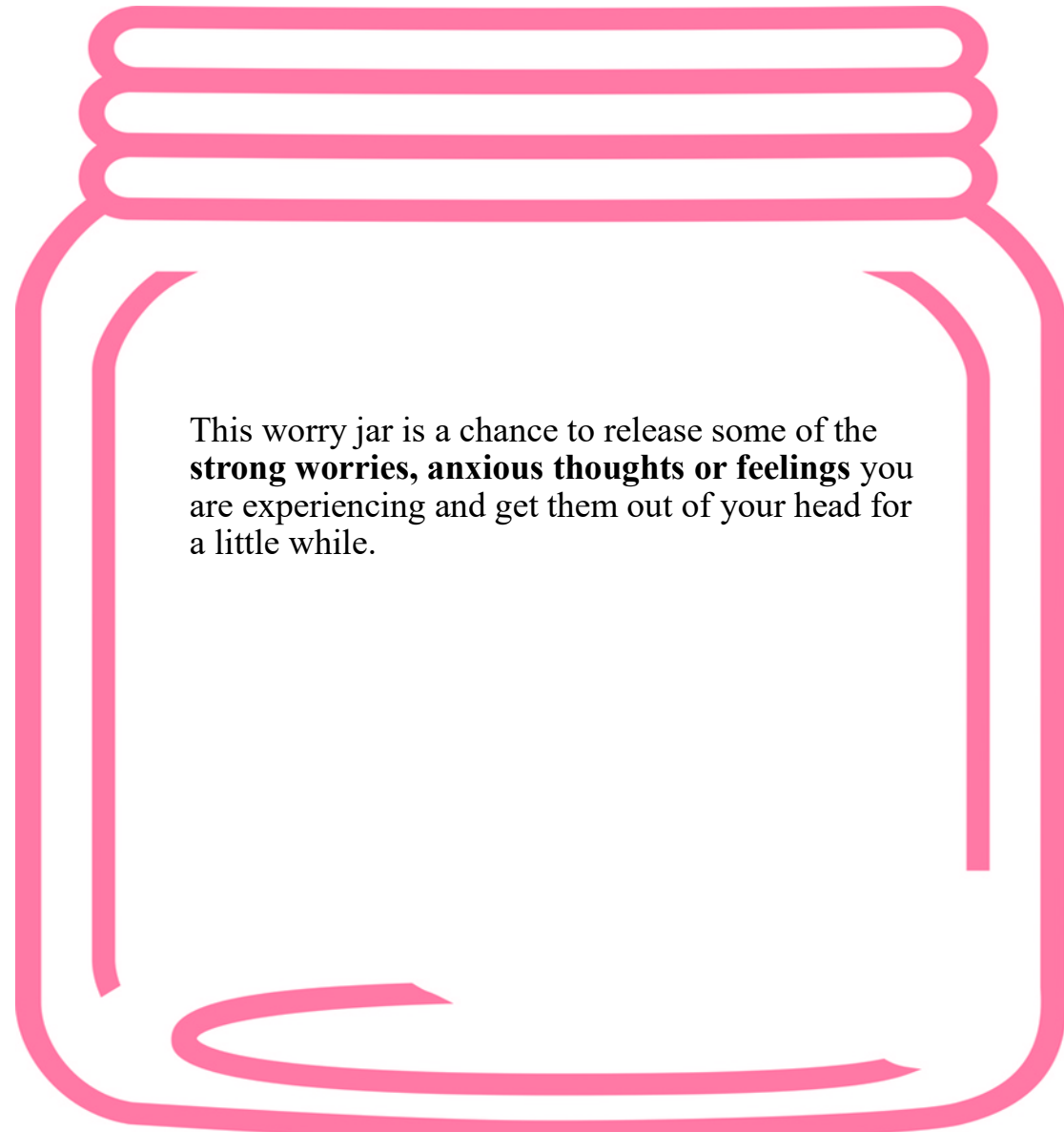
Using a worry jar is a technique that can help teach us the skills to contain worries more easily. We want to stop worries being in charge of our day.

The worry jar technique involves writing down or drawing the worry onto a piece of paper. By doing so, this helps us identify and name the worry.

By acknowledging fears, and expressing them in pictures or words, the fears can take up a physical space. This can potentially allow your mind to release them for the rest of the day. Gone, but not forgotten.

A key requirement of the worry jar technique is setting aside a dedicated “worry time” – a time when you have permission to entirely focus on your worries and think deeply about them.

The worry jar itself could be a physical jar into which pieces of paper with written or draw worries can be placed, or a picture of a jar that can be written or drawn on, or a page in a journal.



Eye Pillow

Where would I use an eye pillow?

Eye pillows can be helpful when we are trying to relax or when using mindfulness techniques.

Light pressure on the eyes is soothing and can be helpful in regulating the heart rate, helps to block out light and decrease the stimulation we are experiencing.

Making an eye pillow.

1. Partially fill a clean, crew or short sock with uncooked rice or flaxseed.
 - ◇ This can be an old sock you just have laying around, make sure it is clean with no holes.
 - ◇ A sock with a close weave works best—otherwise the contents will come out of the sock over time.
2. Tie a loose knot in the sock
 - ◇ Laying down test it for fit and comfort—it should cover both eyes and not feel too heavy.
 - ◇ Adjust the amount of rice or flaxseed till it feels comfortable.
3. Untie the sock and add 1-2 teaspoons of lavender flowers or 2-4 drops of essential oil of choice (just add a little at a time).
4. Tie a knot to close again.
5. Trim excess sock, ready for use.

Care

1. Keep your eye pillow in a dry and cool place to keep the rice or flaxseed fresh.
2. If you need to wash the sock, make sure you remove all the rice/flaxseed and lavender first.. Once the sock is dry you can refill it using fresh rice / flaxseed or if the original is dry you can re-use it. Add more essential oil if needed.



Source: <https://mosaickidsyoga.com/diy-no-sew-eye-pillows/>

Positive Affirmations

Positive affirmations are statements that we tell ourselves for self-motivation or to challenge negative thoughts

Develop personal affirmations:

- Think about an area in your life you want to improve
- Create or research an empowering statement
- Write it down and keep it with you, or place it where you will see it often
- State affirmations in the first person: e.g. “I am...” or “I can,,,”
- Phrase them in a positive way
- Repeat them often and whenever a negative thought intrudes
- Repeat them aloud
- Look at your reflection in the mirror while saying the affirmation

**I am strong enough to
make my own decisions**

**I am going to
be happy today**

**I am strong and getting
stronger every day**

**I am resilient and can get
through anything**

**I am in control of how
I react to others**

**I am an unstoppable
force of nature**

**I've done tough
things before**

**I can, I will,
end of story**

**“Am I good enough?
Yes I am.”
-Michelle Obama**

**I learn
from my mistakes**

I am doing my best

**“I am the greatest,
I said that even before
I knew I was.”
-Muhammed Ali**

**“I see failures as
stepping stones.”
-Albert Einstein**

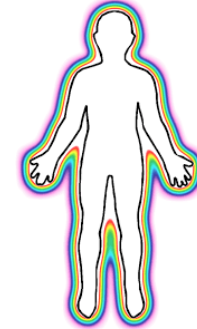
Calm Down Strategy Cards

Visual aids are an effective reminder to use calming strategies

Create visual reminders for coping skills:

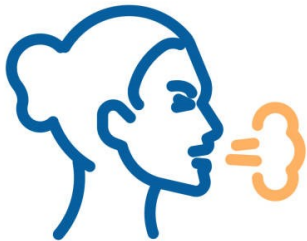
1. Take several index cards or small pieces of cardstock
2. On each one write or draw one issue of concern and one coping skill that works for you
3. Hole punch the cards and place them on a keyring

When I can't relax



I can do a body scan

When I feel angry



I can practice
mindful breathing

When I feel scared



I can focus on my
mindful word

When I feel stressed



I can squeeze my
stress ball

Vision Boards

A vision board is a visualisation tool that gets students thinking about what they want to accomplish either academically or personally. With a vision board, students create visual representations of goals through a collage of pictures and words.

Vision boards are often a collection of images and words cut out from magazines and pasted onto a poster-sized piece of cardboard, or, for example could be photographs, drawings or just words in an exercise book or on the outside of a coping box.

Most important is that the vision board can be displayed to remind and motivate the creator.

Aims of creating and displaying a vision board may be to:

- Describe dreams for the future and provide motivation to get there
- Boost self awareness of positive qualities and encourage personal growth
- Achieving life balance between academic, social and personal goals



Mementos

Recalling happy memories creates positive feelings, improves wellbeing and results in greater resilience, by letting the world be seen through a more optimistic, happier filter.

Select items for your coping box that take you to happy times in your life and put a smile on your face.

Comfort Objects

Holding and touching a stuffed toy, pillow, blanket or other sentimental item can reduce stress, ease loneliness and bring a sense of security. Comfort objects can be a reminder of love and security and the tactile experience of touching the object can support the processing of strong emotions.

Positive Notes from Yourself or Others

Leave yourself a few notes for when you need a boost that help you remember you're resilient, loved and valued. Include messages from friends or loved ones as well to remind yourself of their support



Photographs

Of pets, friends or family, holiday snaps or celebrations. These photographs provide a reminder of happy memories, a feeling of connectedness to those in the photograph and a boost to self-esteem by recognising that you are valued and important to others in the photograph.

Records of Achievement

Memories of things done well such as merit certificates or participation awards. Are proof of your ability to succeed and motivation to keep trying.

Coping Boxes for Home

Some students may wish to create a Coping Box for use at home

Any of the items described for a Coping Box at school can also be used at home

Below are some additional ideas for a Home Coping Box

Books and Movies

Reading a book or watching a movie that will put you in a better mood can be effective when feeling stressed or down. The right book or movie can distract you from your daily stressors and engage your imagination, relaxing your body and mind.



A Journal

Writing down your personal thoughts, feelings, and insights can be a useful tool to process and accept challenging situations. Journaling can help regulate emotions, increase self-awareness and encourage some to reach out for social support.



Art Supplies

Expressing yourself in a creative way can help you work through your experiences and explore feelings and emotions. Art can help you connect with the present moment and relax. Items for your kit may include paints, modelling clay, a colouring book, a knitting kit or jewellery making supplies.

Music

Create a mood playlist with your favourite tunes or lyrics that mean something to you. Faster music can make you feel more alert and concentrate better. Upbeat music can make you feel more optimistic and positive about life. A slower tempo can quiet your mind and relax your body. Music can help you rest better, lift your mood and reduce stress.

Scents

Scents can trigger strong emotions and memories, reminding you of past events. The sense of smell can also be used to influence emotions, lavender or vanilla can have a calming effect. Lemon or peppermint scents can increase alertness and energy. Add to your coping box a sample of your favourite perfume, relaxing essential oils, scented candle or incense.

Students with Sensory Processing Needs

The use of sensory items such as fidget spinners, squishy toys, weighted blankets or noise cancelling headphones may assist a student living with a neurological condition such as Autism Spectrum Disorders or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Sensory tools are intended to promote regulation, improve focus, and increase participation by supporting the various sensory needs of the students in the classroom in a way that is as natural as possible.

It is highly recommended that before any use of sensory items that School Counselling and Learning and Support staff are consulted with on the particular needs and Individual Learning Plan of the student.



When introducing sensory supports or tools in a classroom consideration must be given to the other students in the class. While current research does not indicate a sensory benefit for students without neurological conditions, it may be appropriate to provide access to sensory items to all students to encourage a classroom environment of inclusion and acceptance.

A Sensory Cube and a Massage Ball or Strap are included in the Mindful Box

Normalising Help Seeking

Perceived stigma towards help-seeking (or a fear of what peers may think of them if they are seen to be asking for help) may prevent many students seeking help when they need it.

Normalising help-seeking can dramatically improve a student's life outcome by encouraging students to ask for help around academic, social or health and wellbeing concerns.

Use the following pages in this document to normalise help seeking, discuss ways students can approach someone for help, the benefits of seeking help and how to help someone who asks.

Help seeking can be normalised by:

- Normalise people talking to trusted friends and adults, School Counsellors and helplines, through personal encouragement and the sharing of stories of positive outcomes
- Avoiding use of and discouraging stigmatising language such as 'crazy', 'dumb' or 'lazy'
- Breaking down stereotypes about mental illness by providing students clear and accurate information
- Having a range of printed resources available that students can take home and read in private
- Not making promises you can't keep, only encourage and offer help when you know that help will be available
- Modelling help-seeking behaviours not only for mental health concerns but also for other common challenges such as stress, relationships and worries about home



Blue Cards

Putting off asking for help can make things worse in the long run. Everybody can have difficulties in life, many of these difficulties we can solve ourselves, but sometimes we need help.

It can be hard and sometimes an impossible task for someone in crisis to summon up the courage and the words to ask for help. The 'Blue Card' is a simple means of removing some of this difficulty. Simply hand the card to a trusted person and let them follow the advice provided.

Front side



Reverse side



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE BLUE CARD, OR TO ORDER FREE CARDS, PLEASE GO TO: WWW.SSPAN.ORG.AU

The Helping Hand

The Helping Hand is a way to know what we can do when we are struggling or need to reach out.



Process:

1. **Make copies of the hand images provided in the Mindful Box for each student**
2. **Have each student take a hand, think about the four questions on strengths and resilience and on each digit write down their thoughts:**
 - 1) **Name**
 - 2) **How do I look after myself?**
 - 3) **A strength, value or talent I have?**
 - 4) **How am I a good friend?**
 - 5) **Where do I go for help and support?**
3. **Encourage students to take their hand home and talk about it with their family – they may be surprised by some of their suggestions**
4. **Suggest students put their hand somewhere they will see it every day**
6. **If students are not sure what to write, want more information or are thinking about getting support – encourage them to talk to a trusted adult**

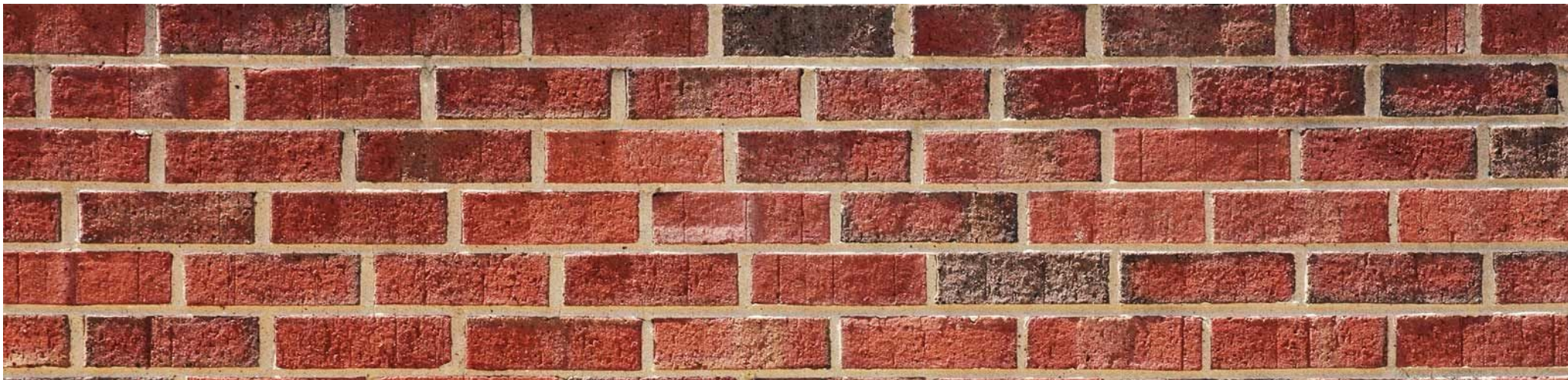
The Helping Hand activity, was inspired by the Tree of Life methodology, co-developed by REPSSI in Southern Africa (www.repssi.org) and Dulwich Centre Foundation in Australia.

Wall of Support

Sharing ideas on coping skills, help-seeking behaviours and positivity helps students recognise that others feel the same way they do and that it is healthy and normal to seek help.

Process:

1. Make copies of the brick images provided in the Mindful Box for each student
2. Choose a question on mental health, strengths or relationships for the activity. Some example questions are:
 - How do I look after myself?
 - How do you be a good friend?
 - Where do I go for help and support?
 - How may you get support for a friend?
 - What are your strengths?
 - How do you manage stress?
3. Have each student take a brick, think about the question and write down their thought on the brick
4. Have each student stick their brick onto a large poster or a space on the wall. Students may be willing to explain their answer, but also allow students to stick their answer up without discussion if they prefer
5. Hold a class discussion about the responses on the wall, point out common themes, validate and encourage the best responses
6. Have to hand additional ideas for the display and information for students about help-seeking options available to them



Help-Seeking Care Plans

Having a plan and knowing the supportive people in our life can help us meet challenges and keep safe.

What are the things you can do that helps you? and who are the people in your life that can help and support you?

My Support People

At School

Name	How they can help
Teacher	
School Counsellor	

At Home

Name	How they can help

In the Community

Name	How they can help

My Care Plan

Use this plan to help people understand what helps you

How am I going and what are my needs?

When I am _____ (e.g. upset, distracted, angry)

I need help to _____

What can I do to meet my needs and get help? (e.g. use a calming technique, ask a friend for support or get professional help)

Action Plan 1:

Action Plan 2:

Action Plan 3:

If none of these work please: _____

Keep this plan somewhere safe or on your phone. Share this plan with the people mentioned in the plan.

Helplines and Emergency Numbers

Numbers in the below list may be made available to High School Students or Parents of any Student

Service	Phone Number	Hours of Operation	Notes
Emergency Services	000	24 hours, 7 days a week	Police, Ambulance or Fire Department
Lifeline	13 11 14	24 hours, 7 days a week	Crisis support service
ParentLine	1300 1300 52	9am-9pm weekdays 4pm-9pm weekends	For parents and carers with children aged 0 to 18 who live in NSW
Mental Health Line	1800 011 511	24 hours, 7 days a week	Help and advice and referrals to local mental health services
Suicide Call Back Service	1300 659 467	24 hours, 7 days a week	Telephone and online counselling to people affected by suicide
Poisons Information	13 11 26	24 hours, 7 days a week	Poisons information for the public
Domestic Violence Line	1800 65 64 63	24 hours, 7 days a week	Crisis counselling and referral service for women, including trans women
Family Relationship Advice Line	1800 050 321	Mon to Fri 8am to 8pm Sat 10am to 4pm	For families affected by relationship or separation issues
Qlife	1800 184 257	3pm-12am, 7 days week	To connect and discuss LGBTI topics
13YARN	14 92 76	24 hours, 7 days a week	Crisis support line for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders
Child Protection Helpline	132 111	24 hours, 7 days a week	To report suspected child abuse or neglect
Mensline	1300 78 99 78	24 hours, 7 days a week	Counselling service offering support for Australian men aged 15 and over
National Eating Disorders Support Line	1800 33 46 73	8am-12am, 7 days week	For concerns about eating disorders or body image issues, for yourself or someone you care about
Kids Help Line	1800 55 1800	24 hours, 7 days a week	For children and young people aged 5 to 25 years
Alcohol and Other Drugs Information Service	1800 250 015	24 hours, 7 days a week	counselling, support, referrals and information for those affected by alcohol or other drugs
NSW Rape Crisis	1800 424 017	24 hours, 7 days a week	Counselling for all people whose lives have been impacted by sexual assault

Calm Down Corners

A calm down corner (or peace corner, safe space, chill zone) is a designated space in a classroom for a student to go to when they feel their emotions are running too high and they need to regain their emotional and physical control.



Setting up a calm down corner

1. Select a space to the back of the class but within view of the teacher
2. Organise the space neatly. a tidy and organised space will help promote calm
3. Provide comfortable seating such as a beanbag or cushion
4. Provide bright and colourful visuals; calming images and positive messages
5. Provide a range of options so that students can choose what will help them feel calm, mindfulness items, books, and prompts for various coping strategies

6. For students who use the space regularly, consider structuring the calm down corner time with a individualised schedule

For example:

- a. **Mindful Breathing Exercise** in and out four times
- b. **Watch Calm Down Jar** settle one time
- c. **Relax and calm** until feeling in control
- d. **Mindful Posing** do three positions
- e. **Return to class**

A timer may be useful for students to monitor how much time they are spending in the space. Many students won't need more than 5-10 minutes the corner, some due to individual needs longer

It is highly recommended that before a calm down corner is introduced to a classroom that School Counselling and Learning and Support staff are consulted on how the calm down space will be set up, introduced to students and how it will be used.

School-Link Resources USB

Within the Mindful Box is a School-Link branded USB that contains:

Mindfulness and Calming Activities: soft copy of this document supporting the resources in the Mindful Box

Illawarra Shoalhaven School-Link Program Wellbeing Resources

- **School-Link Consultation and Outreach**
- **School-Link Newsletter**
- **Emergency Department Postcard**
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources:** Age appropriate information on mental health and wellbeing
- **Changing Attitudes Towards Mental Health:** Mental health articles for high school newsletters
- **Mental Health School Planning:** Creating a school environment that is safe, inclusive and empowering
- **School Expo Days:** Support for host schools and attending agencies
- **School Options:** Education support services for children and young people with mental health difficulties
- **Helpful Resources:** Flyers, posters and brochures that can be displayed or provided to students or families, used in class activities or at special events to engage around wellbeing and to assist schools to support students and families.
- **Books for Primary Schools:** Providing age appropriate information on mental health and wellbeing
- **Books for High Schools:** Providing age appropriate information on mental health and wellbeing
- **Child Protection Chapter 16A Fact Sheet:** Key principals for Health and Education to work together
- **The Teachers Guide:** Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

For enquiries, further information about these resources or requests for information on other health and wellbeing topics that impact on school-aged children. Illawarra Shoalhaven School-Link can be contacted on:

David.bunder@health.nsw.gov.au or Johanne.sneddon@health.nsw.gov.au (02) 42541600
<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-illawarra-shoalhaven>