



HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN MINDFULNESS

Are you ready to start reaping the benefits of mindfulness in your school? Here are seven steps to help you begin.

1



Start with you

Learn about mindfulness through an eight week course, a self paced book, such as *Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Mark Williams and Danny Penman, or free online resources or apps, such as Insight Timer. Use these to develop your practice, creating more moments of awareness in your day. It helps to connect with others, maybe through an online group or with your colleagues.

2



Introduce it to children

You don't need to perfect mindfulness to start teaching it. When you are ready, talk about how it benefits you and share how the children might also benefit. Let them choose what is relevant to them, giving examples of celebrities who use mindfulness, such as footballers, singers and business leaders. You can also watch videos of children practising it. Empower children by teaching them about the physiology of their brain – the 'wise owl' prefrontal cortex and 'guard dog' amygdala. Manage expectations by comparing the training of our minds to learning any new skill, such as playing the piano. It takes time.

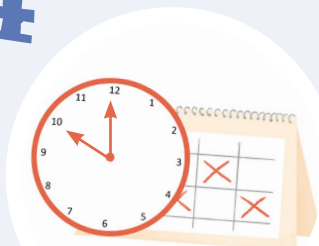
3



Create a safe space

Use a comfortable space and invite the children to take part, encouraging them to be in a bubble. Ask them to choose silence, so that they can really notice their senses and respect others practising. You can offer support for children who need it, such as something tactile to touch, a different seat or drawing and journaling materials. Use a gentle speaking tone and pace, choosing simple, conversational words. This reassures the amygdala, so that children feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

4



Short, slow and regular

Choose a practice, such as breath awareness, mindful listening, mindful movement, body scan or gratitude. Aim to do this daily at a fixed time. It's best done during a transition time, like first thing in the morning, after lunch or before home time. Add, change and evolve the practice in your own time. Consistency helps to strengthen the neural pathways for better brain integration, flexing the 'muscle of awareness' and creating a habit. Children are then more likely to remember the techniques when they need them, such as using the breath as an anchor when they feel angry.

5



Cultivate curiosity and kindness

Invite the children to be like a scientist or explorer of their body and being. Each mindfulness practice is a new experiment, allowing them to notice their experience with gentleness and reassure the amygdala. If children want to share their response, foster a culture of welcoming, curiosity and non-judgmental kindness about what is being shared.

6



Be present

Be in the moment, in the being and in the 'sensing mode'. Fully connect with yourself and the children, modelling the qualities of a mindful awareness. Meet the children where they are at with patience. Let go of outcome expectation. You might need to take a few conscious breaths, feel your feet on the floor to ground yourself and remind yourself of your intention for sharing mindfulness before you start.

7



Have fun

If you keep it simple, playful, and accept that it is a journey of discovery, you will be able to enjoy your practice with the children. Mindfulness could be one of the greatest gifts that you give yourself and those in your care.

Mindfulness support

If you would like support, resources, staff training or to learn more about mindfulness and how to share it with children, contact nadege@growingmindful.co.uk, visit the website www.growingmindful.co.uk or subscribe to the YouTube channel [Growing Mindful – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqWz8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8).