

Mindfulness in schools

Aims of this session:

- To know what mindfulness means and how it affects the brain
- To be able to use mindfulness activities at home
- To understand how mindfulness benefits the children's ability to learn more effectively

What does mindfulness mean to you?

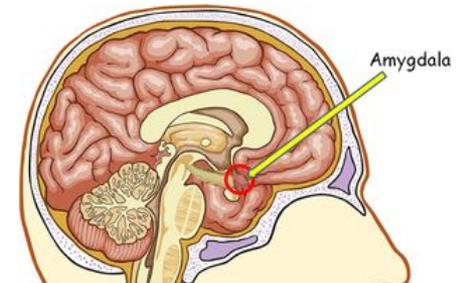
Please share on your tables

Mindfulness is “Paying attention on purpose, without judgement to our experience as it unfolds moment by moment” Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990 Mindfulness involves **paying attention to the state of your mind**, without judging it or changing it. This naturally quietens the mind and offers insights into the automatic habit driven behaviours we develop in our lives.

Left to itself the mind wanders through all kinds of thoughts, and mostly these thoughts are about the past or future. In mindfulness we're concerned with noticing what's going on right now which helps us to be fully awake in our own lives. It's noticing the little things on an ordinary day, and allowing ourselves just to be.

Mindfulness and how the brain works

Mindfulness regulates the stress response by strengthening the “noticing” or “thinking” part of the brain in the frontal lobes. It engages the parts of the brain that help to regulate emotions and create a sense of safety. Mindfulness helps all of the brain to work together as an integrated whole. The more you practise mindfulness, the more your brain will remember to engage all parts of the brain, even under stressful events. Mindfulness calms the Amygdala, which is the “smoke alarm “ of the brain. Shown in research to perform a primary role in the processing of memory, decision-making, and emotional reactions.



Why do we want to offer mindful activities to our children at iCAN?

- **To experience greater well-being (e.g. feel happier, calmer, more fulfilled)**
- **To fulfil their potential and pursue their own goals e.g. be more creative, more relaxed, academically, personally**
- **To improve their concentration and focus, in classes, on the sports field, when playing games, when paying attention and listening to others**
- **To work with difficult mental states such as depressive, anxious thoughts and low moods**
- **To cope with the everyday stresses and strains of life such as friendship issues, anxieties, sleep problems, family issues**

2N Guided meditation



Butterfly visualisation

I felt safe and calm. I could imagine people having a picnic next to me. Henry 6R

"I feel relaxed and happy now!!!" Silizar 6R



I felt really calm and relaxed. I imagined a blue and white butterfly flying around me.

"In my imagination, it felt like a special day. I imagined the drilling was people building a cathedral" Alex 6R

Reflection:

Our thoughts are like butterflies: some are bright and make us feel happy and others are dark and can make us feel sad. It is important to see our thoughts fluttering like butterflies but allow them to fly away when we need to focus on our learning.

How do our teenagers feel about meditation?

'I really liked the visualisation because it made me feel very calm and relaxed. It also helped to lighten my mood when I was having a hard day. It also helped my imagination flow.' Kim
Ton Yr9

'It was very relaxing and helped to relieve some stress. It helped to spark new ideas in my imagination.'
Melvin Yr 9

'Personally when we are in school, we don't always get to use the creative part of our brain and this activity really opened my imagination. It helped me explore my feelings through imagination.' Oliver Yr9

'I really liked meditation because I was able to be in my own world. I didn't have to worry about anything at that time and it made me feel calm and relaxed.' Theavy Yr9

Mindfulness to identify emotions

Just breathe

Children need help and guidance to help them identify and name their emotions.

You can ask them to draw a picture of what it looks like when they are:

Angry

Frustrated

Sad

Anxious

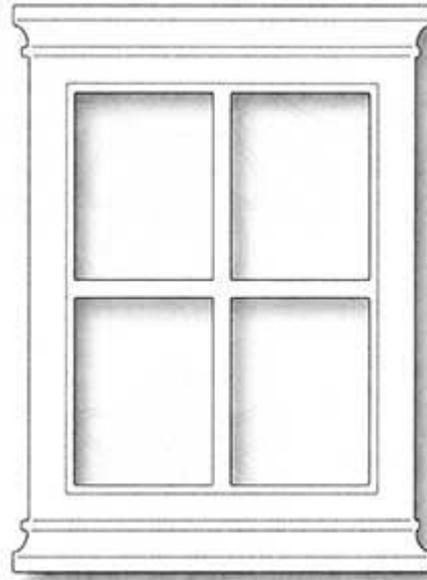
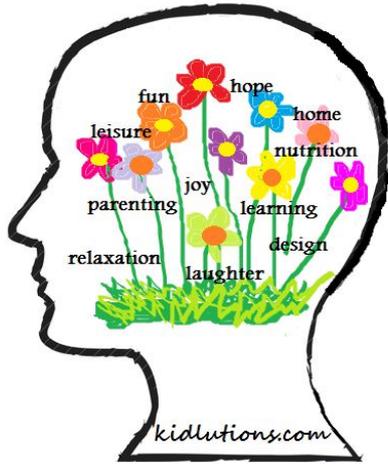
Musical statues

What do the children think?

[Graduates of the youth mindfulness programme](#)

Practical strategies you can use at home to help your children take notice of their emotions

Who's in Your Mind Garden?



The Window- Ask your child to look at their life through the window. In one square, draw or sketch of your past. In another square, draw or sketch how things are for them now and in the other two squares draw or sketch what they would like to change in their lives.

Through creative art, children may be able to represent experiences that they cannot verbalise. They may draw pictures out of proportion, exaggerating things that are important to them. When we value children's creativity, we help them feel valued as people, raising their self-esteem.

Stories to help name emotions

As a group, look through the storybooks on your tables.

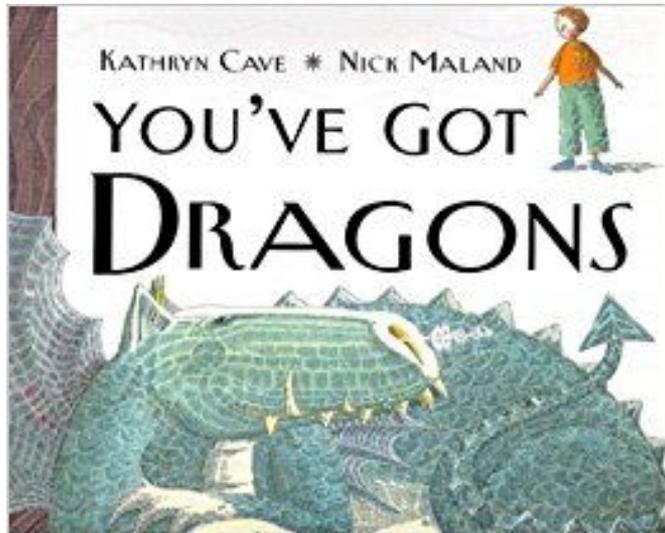
Please answer the following questions:

What do you think the purpose of the story is?

How could they help your child name emotions?

Knowing how your child is feeling can help you respond in a more mindful manner and therefore support them more meaningfully.

Children interpret stories very differently



You've Got Dragons is a tale that aims to address childhood fears.

'The dragons are lonely and need someone to look after them. I would build them a house and play with them everyday so they are not lonely. I would hug them and when I go to school, I would tell them to sleep so they aren't lonely.'

Does being mindful require sitting in the lotus position?

Can you think of any other ways you can encourage your child to be mindful?

Jigsaws

Concentration games

Mazes

Colouring in (boundaries)

Sitting still with calm music

Art and craft activities

Nature walks

Listening to Music

Meditating together

Putting things in order
(repetitive movement is
calming)

Write or listen to stories

Creating a safe space

Feedback

3,2,1

Please share three things you learned today

2 questions you have

1 statement to show your understanding of mindfulness in schools

Interesting talks to further your understanding:

<http://www.mindfulteacher.com/learn/mindfulness-schools-ted-talk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yJPcdiLEkl>