This month's activities all have 'mindfulness' at their centre, in support of Children's Mental Health Week. This last year has been an enormous challenge for us all and we all need help sometimes!



Have you ever felt angry, sad or frustrated? Take some time to do these mindfulness activities to help keep me happy and relaxed instead!

BIG BRAIN

Watch this



Draw your feelings



How to raise emotionally intelligent children – TED



Mindfulness has been part of the school day for many children for some time now. At its most basic level it equips you with the ability to be fully present and aware. It is an important skill for children to develop. It gives children, especially those who are stressed, angry or sad, some space and time to calm down and pay attention to what is going on in their body and their environment. Whether or not you believe mindfulness can or cannot help, one thing I can guarantee is, it won't hurt!

Christine, OjO Educator











Activity 1 / one / A mindful walk

Get your boots on... It's time for a walk!

The first time you try this make sure you pick somewhere you will be successful! As you stroll along talk to your little one about what you can see, smell, hear and touch.

You are trying to guide your child to gently engage with their senses so pay careful attention to what is around you both. Prompt your child if necessary, by giving them an example of what YOU can see or hear or smell. I strongly recommend a couple of minutes of complete silence as part of the walk. Pick a spot and just try to be present with what is happening around you both.





Activity 2 / two / Belly buddies

Get your child to pick their favourite small toy for this activity!

- 1. Ask your child to lay on the floor.
- 2. Place toy on their tummy and hands gently on top on the toy.
- 3. Guide your child in taking 3 slow breaths in and out.
- 4. As you count to 3 ask them to inhale deeply, then to exhale to a slow count of 4.
- 5. Tell them to fill their tummy as they inhale through their nose, they should feel it get bigger and bigger throughout the count to to 3. They might see the toy moving.
- 6. Now get them to exhale slowly on a count to 4. They may see the toy move as their tummy shrinks back.
- 7. Do this 5 to 7 times.

This activity helps children to learn to focus, calm down and relax. They can then apply this technique to other situations.





Ask your child how it felt, what did they notice?

How did it feel when breath was released? How did it feel in their...

nostrils chest belly

What happened to the toy?

When we teach belly breathing, it's important to also teach the child to pause and hold their breath at the top of the inhalation. Breathe in for 4, fill our bellies with air like it's a balloon, keep the balloon inflated, then exhale for 6-8. Keeping our bellies inflated and exhaling for longer than we inhaled for are both ways of activating the vagus nerve to flood our system with calming neurotransmitters.

Dr. Koslowitz, Psychologist



Activity 3 / three / Sensory jar

A Sensory jar is easy to make, even for very young children. You could even use a snow globe until you get the chance to make your own! The mix when shaken, creates delightful swirling patterns and is ideal for calming a stressed child.

How to use

- Invite your child to shake the sensory jar.
- Tell your child to gaze at the jar while taking deep belly breaths with looong exhalations.
- Continue with the deep breaths until the oil or sprinkles have settled or your child has calmed.

Why

Deep breathing is a greatly beneficial relaxation technique which helps combat stress, anxiety, and anger. It is a crucial skill for children to learn as it helps relax muscles whilst lowering their heart rate.

Who

It's a great activity to use when you have a child who is anxious, stressed, upset, nervous or angry.



1 small water bottle or jar
Tap water
Oil (clear, such as baby oil)
Child safe food colouring
Optional: Objects like biodegradable glitter, pompoms, beads, shiny things to flow in the water!

- 1. Fill the bottle 3 quarters full of water. Add your food colouring of choice to colour the water & gently swirl the bottle.
- 2. Add the oil and any other pom poms, colored sand, shiny foils which will float and settle in the water.
- 3. Pop the bottle lid on and mix it around and you are ready. You can add tape or glue the lid for extra security!