

Bērol®

# 5 fun mindfulness activities to support a calm classroom



# What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about training the brain to focus on the present moment rather than worrying about past or future events which may or may not happen. It encourages a person to switch on all of their senses to foster greater awareness, attention and curiosity of what is happening now. Mindfulness promotes the ability to deal with emotions, behaviours and situations so that a person is better equipped to choose their response.

## Why mindfulness in schools?

Mindfulness has gained greater popularity in recent years, particularly with its use among young people. There is growing evidence that practising mindfulness in schools can bring about significant benefits to behaviour and learning by impacting on self-regulatory abilities. It is something the whole school can get involved with, and is particularly beneficial around times when it might be necessary to refocus attention e.g. around SATs/assessment time, at the start and end of term or following a big school event.

## Ready to get started?

Here are five fun mindfulness activities you can try straight away with your class. The activities can run as standalone activities or be extended into longer lessons by linking them to your current class topic or curriculum. They're really simple to deliver - using everything you'll already have in your classroom.





# There's a superhero in all of us

## You will need:

Flipchart, Berol flipchart markers, sticky notes, Berol fiber tip pens, Berol felt tip colouring markers, pencils, blank paper

## Mindfulness skills:

Creativity, curiosity, observation, self-awareness, concentration

## Activity:

- Write the word 'Superhero' in the centre of your flipchart.
- As a whole class, discuss the children's favourite superheroes. What do they have in common?
- Encourage the children to notice both physical and non-physical attributes that superheroes share (e.g. physically strong, wears a costume, has special powers, brave, truthful, etc).
- Hand out a sticky note to each child and ask them to write down their favourite superhero characteristic. Invite children to come and stick their idea on the class flipchart.
- Next, introduce the idea that we are all unique or 'extraordinary' in some way. Ask the children to think of their own positive attributes (things they especially like about themselves, things they're good at, things that are unique to them, times they have overcome a particularly adversity etc).
- Ask the children to write down or share these verbally with the rest of the class.
- Do they notice any similarities between their own special attributes and those of superheroes?
- Using their ideas and discussions, invite the children to design a superhero of themselves that focuses on their 'super' qualities. Encourage them to make their designs as colourful as possible to really bring them to life. Older children may want to add labels and annotations.
- Encourage the children to focus on the positives, turning any perceived weaknesses into strengths (e.g. if a child wears glasses this could give them special xray vision).



## EXTENSION:

Invite the children to create a short story about themselves as a superhero. Encourage them to think of different characters (e.g. villain, victim); location (fictional or real-life); a plot that involves overcoming adversity; and finally a resolution. Children could even storyboard their stories in the style of a comic.



## Pinwheel breathing

### You will need:

Berol felt tip colouring markers, coloured crayons, paper straws, split pins, downloadable 'Make your own pinwheel' template.

### Mindfulness skills:

Creativity, observation, breathing techniques, concentration, repetition

### Activity:

- Begin a whole class discussion about how our breathing changes depending on our activity and mood levels.
- Invite the children to suggest when their breathing might become very fast or erratic, and ask them how they might be feeling or what they might be doing (during sport, when upset, frightened or stressed etc).
- Next ask the children to think about when their breathing might be much slower and steadier (e.g. while sleeping, when very relaxed, happy etc). You might ask them to roleplay snoring with a partner - what do they notice about how the snoring sounds (other than the volume)? Encourage them to notice that snoring is very slow and rhythmic.
- Talk about how when we are feeling anxious or upset, taking some slow, deep breaths can help us to feel better. Model what this breathing might look like by inhaling and exhaling purposefully.
- Invite the children to colour in the downloadable 'Make a pinwheel' template using Berol felt tip colouring markers or coloured crayons. The detailed pattern on the template features a common style used in many mindfulness colouring activities to encourage patience, focus and concentration.
- Once the children have finished, invite them to cut out, fold and make their pinwheels following the simple instructions on the template.
- Ask the children to gently blow the pinwheel and notice how it moves. What kind of breath makes the pinwheel rotate the best? Repeat several times to help the children practice slow breathing techniques.



### EXTENSION:

Talk to the children about different ways of coping with stressful situations - both positive and negative. Suggestions might include fighting, arguing, meditation, talking to someone, going somewhere quiet, listening to music or doing some exercise (e.g. playing a favourite sport). What types of stressful situations might the children encounter (e.g. exam/assessment pressure, falling out with friends, changes at home)? Emphasise that even though we can't always control why a situation is stressful, how we respond to stress is entirely our choice. Invite the children to create a stress-busting slogan or mindfulness mantra for the whole class. Encourage them to repeat this phrase to themselves quietly whenever things get a bit tough.



# Today is going to be an awesome day

## You will need:

Flipchart, Berol flipchart markers, Berol fiber tip pens, paper

## Mindfulness skills:

Creativity, focusing on the present, being grateful

## Activity:

- Share the famous quote by Alice Morse Earle: “Everyday may not be good but there is something good in every day.”
- Discuss what the quote might mean. Elicit that even if the children are having a bad day, there will likely be times - in that same day - that are good. For example, a child might get caught in the pouring rain one day, lose a favourite toy and have a disagreement with a friend. But then they get their all-time favourite dinner later that day.
- Invite the children to write down one good thing that’s already happened to them that day and share their ideas. It’s important the children focus on ‘today’ - so try to discourage them discussing events yesterday or tomorrow.
- Next extend the discussion to introduce the idea of gratitude. Encourage the children to be grateful for any positive experiences or events in their day, no matter how small.
- Explain to the class that you are going to create a whole class poem based on their ideas. The poem will be called: ‘Today is going to be an awesome day.’ You could tap into the senses and begin each line with: I will see / I will listen to / I will taste / I will touch / I will smell, or you may want to explore different poetry forms, e.g. acrostic (using ‘Awesome Day’).

## EXTENSION:

Ask the children to create their own poems based on the theme. Afterwards, invite the children to dramatise their poems by adding movement and actions, and perform to the rest of the class.



# Playground detectives

## You will need:

Berol fiber tip pens or pencils, paper, downloadable 'Playground detectives' worksheet, clipboard

## Mindfulness skills:

Observation, sensory perception, awareness

## Activity:

- Discuss how humans have five basic senses and ask the children to name them (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch).
- Ask the children why we have these senses. What do they help us to do?
- Elicit that our senses help us to perceive the world around us by providing our brains with information/data. By joining up these 'clues' or pieces of a puzzle our brains determine what it is we are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching. For example, an object looks round and it is red and green with a stalk on the top. It feels smooth on the outside and moist on the inside. It tastes sweet and makes a crunchy sound when cut or bitten into. Our brain puts all this information together to tell us it's an apple.
- Extend the discussion to talk about how police officers and detectives need to switch on all their senses when they arrive at the scene of a crime in order to gather as many clues as possible. By recording what they see, smell, hear etc, they can help solve the mystery.
- Using the downloadable 'Playground detectives' worksheet, take the children outside into the playground or other suitable outdoor space.
- Ask the children to get into the role of detectives and record every bit of evidence they perceive in the playground on to their worksheet. Encourage them to look up as well as down, to notice tiny detail, sounds made by wildlife or traffic, any smells etc.



## EXTENSION:

Invite the children to become crime scene investigators. Tell them their headteacher has been kidnapped and it's up to them to crack the case. Using the main activity on the left, the children need to collect as many clues as possible from the playground either by recording them on their worksheet or by collecting physical evidence if possible. Back in the classroom, ask the children to write a short crime story about 'The case of the missing headteacher'. They need to include as many of their clues as possible and find a way of linking them together to solve the crime.

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# Blow art posters

## You will need:

Paints (watered down), paper, straws, Berol permanent markers black

## Mindfulness skills:

Creativity, focus, concentration, breathing techniques, awareness, empathy, self-regulation

## Activity:

- Introduce the idea that we can associate different colours with how we might be feeling (e.g. grey for sad, yellow for happy).
- How many colours can the children associate with an emotion? Does everyone associate the same colour with the same emotion?
- Discuss how we each experience a mix of different emotions everyday. Apart from colour, how else might we identify them (i.e. actions, behaviour, language etc)?
- Ask the children to choose one or more paint colours that they think portrays some of the emotions discussed.
- With watered down paint, straws and paper, ask the children to put a blob of paint somewhere on their paper, then blow down the straws to disperse the paint into a pattern.
- Encourage the children to notice their breathing during the activity, and how everyone's artwork is completely unique (even where the same colour and technique is used).

## EXTENSION:

Talk to the children about what the word 'motivation' means. What kinds of things help to motivate us? When might we need motivation? Show the children some examples of motivational quotes (there are lots available on the internet) and discuss the types of words and phrases used. For example, many quotes use similes and metaphors to help them resonate. Ask the children to write down their favourite motivational quote or alternatively create their own. Using their blow posters as the background, invite them to experiment writing their quote in different font styles to create an inspirational and motivational poster.

# Playground detective worksheet

Detective name: .....

Date/Time: .....

Location: .....



## Things I see


## Things I hear


## Things I smell




# Make your own pinwheel worksheet

1. Colour in the front of the square. Cut it out, then create your own colourful pattern on the back.
2. Turn the square back over and cut along the diagonal dotted lines towards the centre of the pinwheel. Be careful not to cut all the way into the middle.
3. Using a sharp pencil carefully make small holes in the centre of the pinwheel and in each corner marked by a small dot.
4. Fold in just the corners of the pinwheel that have a small hole at the end so that all the holes line up with the centre hole. Push a split pin through all the holes to keep them together, and then into a paper straw.

