



# Mindfulness, Meditation & Mindful Movement for Youth

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# Opening

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- I see You
- Breathing Ball
- Chime

# Session Overview

- Mindfulness & How Can it Help Young People
- Managing Emotions with Mindfulness
- Helpful vs. Unhelpful Thinking
- Creating a Practice
- Mindfulness Techniques for Children & Teens





# Session Overview

- Meditation
- Why teach Meditation & Breathwork to Children
- Creating a Family Practice with Techniques for Children & Teens



Mindfulness

# Mindfulness

“By practicing mindful presence and awareness, kids learn to pause for a moment, catch their breath, and get a sense of what they need in this moment in time.”

Eline Snel





# Mindfulness

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- **Present:** fully in the moment
- **Non-Judgmental:** observe without labeling, good or bad
- **Avoiding distractions:** stuck in past regrets or future worries
- **Being aware:** of everything going on in the moment internally, externally, & socially

[Mindfulness vs. Meditation \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com)

MindUp Curriculum 2011 The Hawn Foundation



# Mindfulness vs. Meditation

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- **Mindfulness:** directing attention to present moment
- **Meditation:** tool that helps enhance ability to stay present & centered & can help us practice mindfulness



## Research: Mindfulness

- Research on young people is growing rapidly
- Appears to be well worth pursuing
- Systematic reviews have concluded results of this are feasible & promising
- Interventions are generally acceptable & well-liked by participants, with no reports of adverse effects

A group of students with backpacks running in a hallway. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

# Overall Benefits

- Improve well-being & resiliency
- Reduce anxiety
- Reduce distress & reactivity
- Enhance quality of sleep
- Improved academic achievement
- Enhanced executive functioning

# Overall Benefits

- Improve self-awareness & self-esteem
- Promote calmness & relaxation
- Increase self-control & self-regulation
- Decrease peer conflicts & increase social skills
- More empathy
- Increased focus & attention

## Benefits: Teens

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- Increases positive emotions
- Improves quality of friendships
- Decreases negative emotions & anxiety
- Produces self-compassion: stay present, realize everyone struggles, & kind to self





Managing Emotions Through Mindfulness



# Brain: Stress Response

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- Stress response: fight, flight, freeze
- Slow down & can choose thought
- Not reacting from “emotional brain”

## Brain Impact

- Skills to control prefrontal cortex “thinking brain”
- Improving focus & thinking skills
- Mindfulness also impacts parts of the brain emotional awareness & balance



MindUp Curriculum 2011 The Hawm Foundation

[The Benefits of Mindfulness in Children | Psychology Today](#)

# Impact



Creates a “pause” between trigger & response



Able to slow down & see options



Create solutions instead of reacting

[The Benefits of Mindfulness in Children | Psychology Today](#)

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Helpful vs. Unhelpful Thinking: Thought Watching



# Thoughts

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Average 50,000 thoughts a day

95% are “the same thoughts as yesterday”

So 2,500 of the thoughts are “new”

Mindfulness helps create new pathways of thoughts

# Mindful Thoughts

- Mindfulness is:
- Noticing thoughts & determining if they are helpful or not helpful

# Unhelpful Thoughts

- Distract from present moment
- Hinders progress toward goals
- Focus on things over & over again: past or future, negative
- Engaging or acting on leads to frustration & poor choices
- A thought may be “true” & still not be “helpful”



# Helpful Thoughts

- Engage & move toward a goal
- Make the most of the present moment
- If it is not moving me in the right direction, I re-focus the thought

# Children who practice Thought Watching. . .

- Learn to slow down thoughts to make better choices
- Help hardwire brains optimally early in life
- Increase their cognitive control
- Promote skills to control the prefrontal cortex, such as focus & controlling their thoughts
- Develop judgment & patience to make good choices for self & with others



Putting it Into Practice

## So What Does Mindfulness Look?

- Sarah Ezrin, author of *The Yoga of Parenting*, practices with her 1 & 3-year-old: using “hot cocoa” breath with the toddler to calm tantrums: with her baby she uses sensory meditations like tracing fingers or scalp to calm him



# Introducing Mindfulness

- Introducing mindfulness to kids can be challenging.
- Have a variety of mindfulness techniques on hand to engage kids
- Kids have shorter attention spans: practices should be short & straightforward



## Starting Out

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- Start with a few minutes of breathing or stretching & gradually increase the duration
- Preschoolers: only a few minutes a day
- Grade-school children: can focus for about 10 minutes daily
- Teens can practice for up to 45 minutes or longer each day

# Coping Toolkit

- Create a coping toolkit with various items to help kids center themselves in the moment
- Practice using the coping toolkit before kids need to use it

[These parents are teaching their kids mindfulness. Here's how it impacts their families. \(yahoo.com\)](#)





## Mindfulness Techniques for Children & Teens

# Start with the Brain

- Mindful thinking allows our brain to process before responding.
- Our brain and nervous system scan for threats
- The amygdala reacts to protect us, sometimes overreacting
- Determine if “scary but safe,” or “scary and dangerous,” but the amygdala may not differentiate. Example: taking a test
- Being in control means pausing between events and responses

# Journaling

Ask them to write or draw about a specific part of their day, like their morning routine. Their responses might be brief at first. Avoid correcting or digging for details. Remind them you'll do it again tomorrow & to notice things. With practice, they'll share more.

Journal prompts:

- Draw a beach scene and describe sensory experiences
- Write about colors and their feelings
- Provide a scenario and explore both positive and negative perspectives

# Mindful Looking

[BUBBLE BOUNCE! MINDFULNESS  
FOR CHILDREN \(MINDFUL  
LOOKING\) \(YOUTUBE.COM\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



# Using Sense of Smell

- Use something aromatic, like a spice jar or flower, have them close their eyes to focus on the scent. Challenge: don't let them see what they're smelling



# Using Sense of Smell

- What do you think of that smell? How would you describe it to someone? What did you notice in your body? What feeling would you associate with the smell?
- Smell & the amygdala: what smells may send a warning signal to your brain; smoke, chemicals, expired food



# Using Sense of Taste

- Have the child close their eyes, cut a bite of food, like a banana: smell it first, then take a bite & move it around the mouth to identify it
- Give a food, like a raisin, & have them look at it & describe it, then have them place it in their mouth, feel its texture, then bite & note the sensations
- We have 10,000 taste buds: look at & learn about the taste buds & the different things we can taste



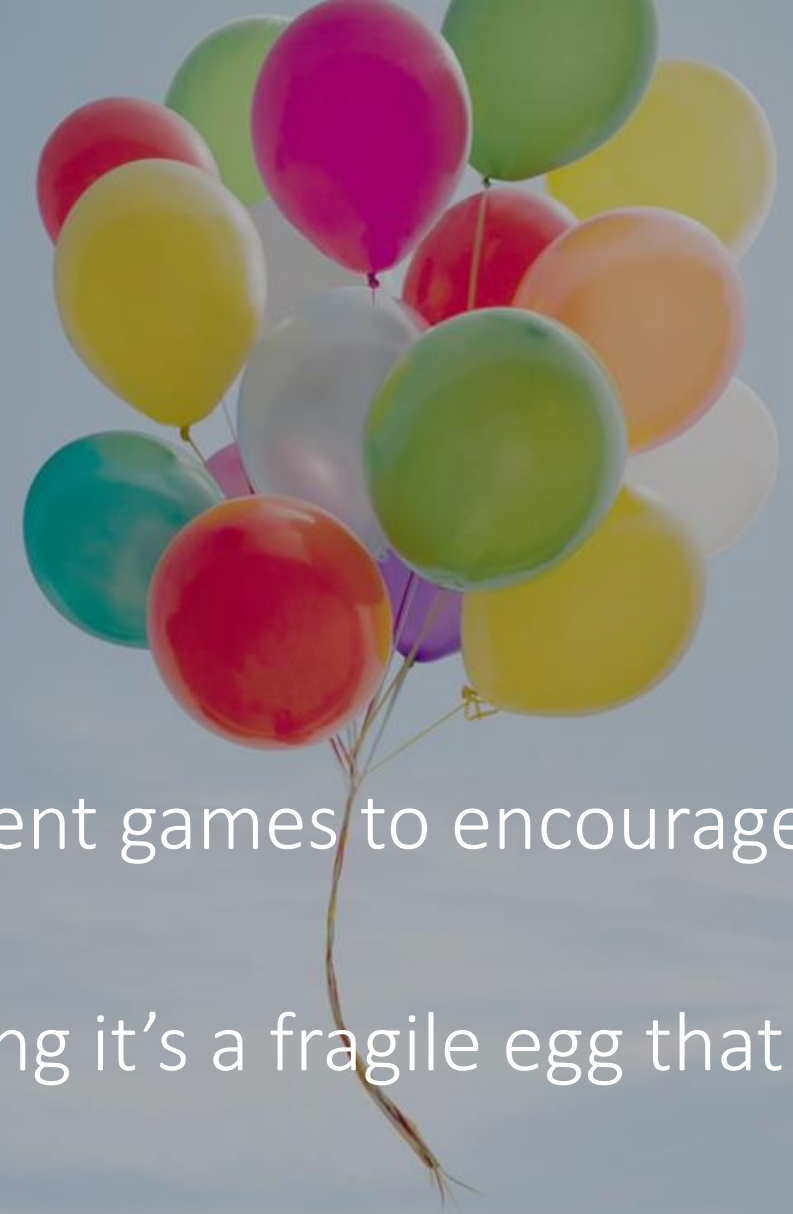
# Mindfulness Exercises: Handout

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[MINDFULNESS-EXERCISES.PDF](#)

# Body Awareness

- Awareness of body and movements: Invent games to encourage slow and careful movements, such as . . .
- Tossing a balloon in the air and pretending it's a fragile egg that must be kept in the air without breaking.



# Body Awareness

- Pretend they're walking on thin ice, move slowly & carefully: be a radio announcer, narrating their movements (e.g., "You're picking your right leg up slowly & carefully putting it back down").
- Mindful walking: using your senses
- Mindful exercise classes





## Social Perspective

- Smile at people today & journal about what you notice
- Write acts of kindness on paper chain links, repeat daily seeing the chain grow. Color: Red-someone you care for, Yellow- someone in the community, Blue-a kind deed at home, & Green- the environment

# Social Perspective

- Plan an act of kindness as a family: talk about it, how did it feel
- Choose a fairy tale, then write from a character's perspective: what may they have been thinking/feeling
- **Everybody Eats Bread** by Dooley: Explore types of bread, notice them in stores, use recipes, & study the cultures

MindUp Curriculum 2011 The Hawn Foundation


[20 Ways to Teach Mindfulness to Kids \(verywellfamily.com\)](http://www.verywellfamily.com)



# Mindfulness & Meditation



# Mindfulness vs. Meditation



- Mindfulness: directing attention to present moment
- Meditation: tool that helps enhance ability to stay present & centered & can help us practice mindfulness

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MindUp Curriculum 2011 The Hawn Foundation

# Meditation

- **Meditation:** A tool or practice to cultivate mindfulness.
- **Intentional practice:** Calms you down, aids concentration, & helps achieve emotional balance.
- Mental & physical techniques to **create focused attention & awareness**

[Mindfulness vs. Meditation \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/mindfulness-vs-meditation-2786177)

[How Meditation Impacts Your Mind and Body \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-meditation-impacts-your-mind-and-body-2786177)



# Meditation

- **Deep breathing:** Often the starting point
- Is it a religion? Has roots in ancient philosophies & several world religions. But it is not exclusively religious

[Mindfulness vs. Meditation \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/mindfulness-vs-meditation-2786177)

[How Meditation Impacts Your Mind and Body \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-meditation-impacts-your-mind-and-body-2786177)

# Meditation

- Common misconception: Meditation is only sitting quietly & kids won't sit still to meditate
- **Silent meditation:** Challenging for many, especially children.



A young child with brown hair, wearing a bright yellow raincoat and a red and black plaid shirt, is looking down at a small terrarium. The terrarium is filled with moss and small plants, and is placed on a rock in a forest setting. The background is a soft-focus green forest.

# Meditation

- Variety of meditations: Includes walking, progressive relaxation, etc.
- Benefits for kids: Helps them ground and connect to their body.

# Types of Meditation

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Body-scan: Scanning the body & noticing physical sensations

Breathing: Focusing on different breathing techniques.

Loving-kindness: Focusing on kind and caring thoughts towards loved ones, yourself, and others.

# Self Love Affirmations

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[I Am Lovable! 4  
Minute Self Love  
Positive Affirmations  
Meditation for Kids  
And Classrooms  
\(youtube.com\)](#)





# Types of Meditation

**Mantra:** Chanting a word or phrase, aloud or in your mind.

**Movement:** Focusing on body movements, breathing, or observing the world during a walk.

**Object or sound focus:** Focusing attention on a specific object, mental image, or sound

[The Benefits of Breathwork and Meditation for Kids \(drroseann.com\)](http://drroseann.com)

[How Meditation Impacts Your Mind and Body \(verywellmind.com\)](http://verywellmind.com)

IMAGINE



Mantra

[WORDS IN  
MEDITATION:  
MANTRA | A KIDS  
MINDFUL MOMENT  
\(YOUTUBE.COM\)](#)

# Types of Meditation

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Rituals of prayer or gratitude affirmations

**Contemplation:** Concentrate on a question or idea

**Emotion-centered:** Focusing on a specific emotion, like kindness, or peace

**Visual-based:** focusing on something you can see (with your eyes or a mental image)

# Inner Listening: Handout

[INNER LISTENING.DOCX -  
MICROSOFT WORD ONLINE  
\(LIVE.COM\)](#)



# Breathwork

- Breathwork involves regulating and focusing on your breath to calm the mind and body
- Focusing on your breath brings you into the present moment
- Breathwork can be both a preparation for meditation & a meditation itself

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids & Their Parents – Eline Snel

[Mindfulness vs. Meditation \(verywellmind.com\)](http://verywellmind.com)

MindUp Curriculum 2011 The Hawk Foundation



# 5 Minutes a Day

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[BREATH -- FIVE MINUTES CAN  
CHANGE YOUR LIFE | STACEY  
SCHUERMAN | TEDXCHAPMANU  
\(YOUTUBE.COM\)](#)

A path of smooth, light-colored stones leads from the foreground towards a bright sunset over a body of water. The stones are arranged in a slightly curved line, starting from a large stone in the lower left and ending with a small stone near the horizon. The water is calm, reflecting the light from the sun. The sky is a mix of soft orange and blue.

# Guided Imagery

- A visualization meditation technique
- Method: Involves creating a mental image of a specific object or experience
- Five senses: Utilizes the body's senses to calm the mind.

<https://www.choosingtherapy.com/guided-imagery/>

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Why Teach Meditation to Kids?

# Impact on Brain



- Billions of neurons: Use electrical & chemical signals to communicate & form different brain areas with specific functions (neural networks)
- Meditation effects: Regular meditators have denser brain tissue & larger brain areas

# Impact on Brain



- **Stronger connections:** More and stronger neuron connections, improves internal brain communication
- **Calms the nervous system**
- **Affected areas:** Manage senses, thinking, concentration, & emotions.

# Impact on Brain

Essential for regulating behavior, emotions, learning, information processing, & memory.

**Health benefits:** Healthier brains, less age-related decline, better emotion processing.





# Brain Changes

- Daily meditation can lead to lasting brain changes
- Just 10+ minutes per day for 40 days can make a significant impact



# Research: Effectiveness

- Effective against various mental health and physical issues
- Particularly beneficial amidst rising mental health issues in children and teens
- Supports issues like anxiety, stress, OCD, depression, and addiction



## Creating a Practice & Techniques

# Starting Out

- A few minutes of breathing or body awareness & gradually increase
- **Preschoolers:** only a few minutes a day
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- **Teens** can practice for up to 45 minutes or longer each day



# Breathwork

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**Deep breathing:** Often the starting point

**Breathwork:** Regulate & focus on your breath to calm mind & body.

**Activates the Vagus nerve:** Regulates digestion, heart rate, and respiratory rate.

**Relaxed state:** Engages the calm (parasympathetic) nervous system

# Observing Breath

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- Quieting the mind: focus on their breathing.
- Close eyes: Encourage them to close their eyes and focus.
- Mindful observation: Return to observing breath when the mind wanders.
- Awareness: Exercise is about awareness, not changing breathing.
- Body and lungs: Help them notice how their body and lungs feel.

# Deep Breathing

- **Belly breathing:**  
Breathe through your belly, not your chest.
- **Deep breathing:**  
Inhale deeply through your nose, fill your belly like a balloon.
- **Long exhalation:**  
Exhale slowly and fully.



[20 Ways to Teach Mindfulness to Kids \(verywellfamily.com\)](https://www.verywellfamily.com)

[The Benefits of Breathwork and Meditation for Kids \(drroseann.com\)](https://www.drroseann.com)



# Breathing Techniques

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**Blowing bubbles:** kids must blow gently to create bubbles.

**Rainbow Breathing:** Arms start at the side of your body; arms go up as you breathe in & go down as you breathe out

**Starfish Breathing:** trace their hand as a guide to deep breathing.

# Breathing Techniques

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**Ocean Breathing:** Breathe in - Imagine a wave rolling in, Breathe out - Imagine a wave rolling out.

**Color Breathing:** Breathe in: Imagine a calm, happy, positive color. Breathe out: Imagine a color representing stress and anxiety leaving your body.



# Breathing Handout

[DEEP BREATHING.DOCX](#)  
[- MICROSOFT WORD](#)  
[ONLINE \(LIVE.COM\)](#)

# Guided Imagery with Breathwork

Pretend to be a baby dragon.

Draw breath in slowly through the nose to warm it up.

Release breath slowly with a soft baby dragon growl.

Imagine releasing gentle, warming baby dragon fire.

Control exhale to “toast a marshmallow or melt cheese on toast”.

Consider the color of the dragon fire (e.g., purple, bright green).

Think about the smell of the dragon fire (e.g., cupcakes, fresh bread).

# Walking Meditation

- Discuss being mindful while moving.
- Body aware: focus on what different body parts feel & do.
- Let go of thoughts: Allow other thoughts to pass.
- Easier than thinking about nothing, provides focus.



[20 Ways to Teach Mindfulness to Kids \(verywellfamily.com\)](https://www.verywellfamily.com)

[The Benefits of Breathwork and Meditation for Kids \(drroseann.com\)](https://www.drroseann.com)

A young boy with dark hair is shown in profile, sitting and meditating with his eyes closed. He is wearing a light-colored hoodie. The background is a softly blurred room with a shelf containing various items, including a clock. The overall tone is calm and serene.

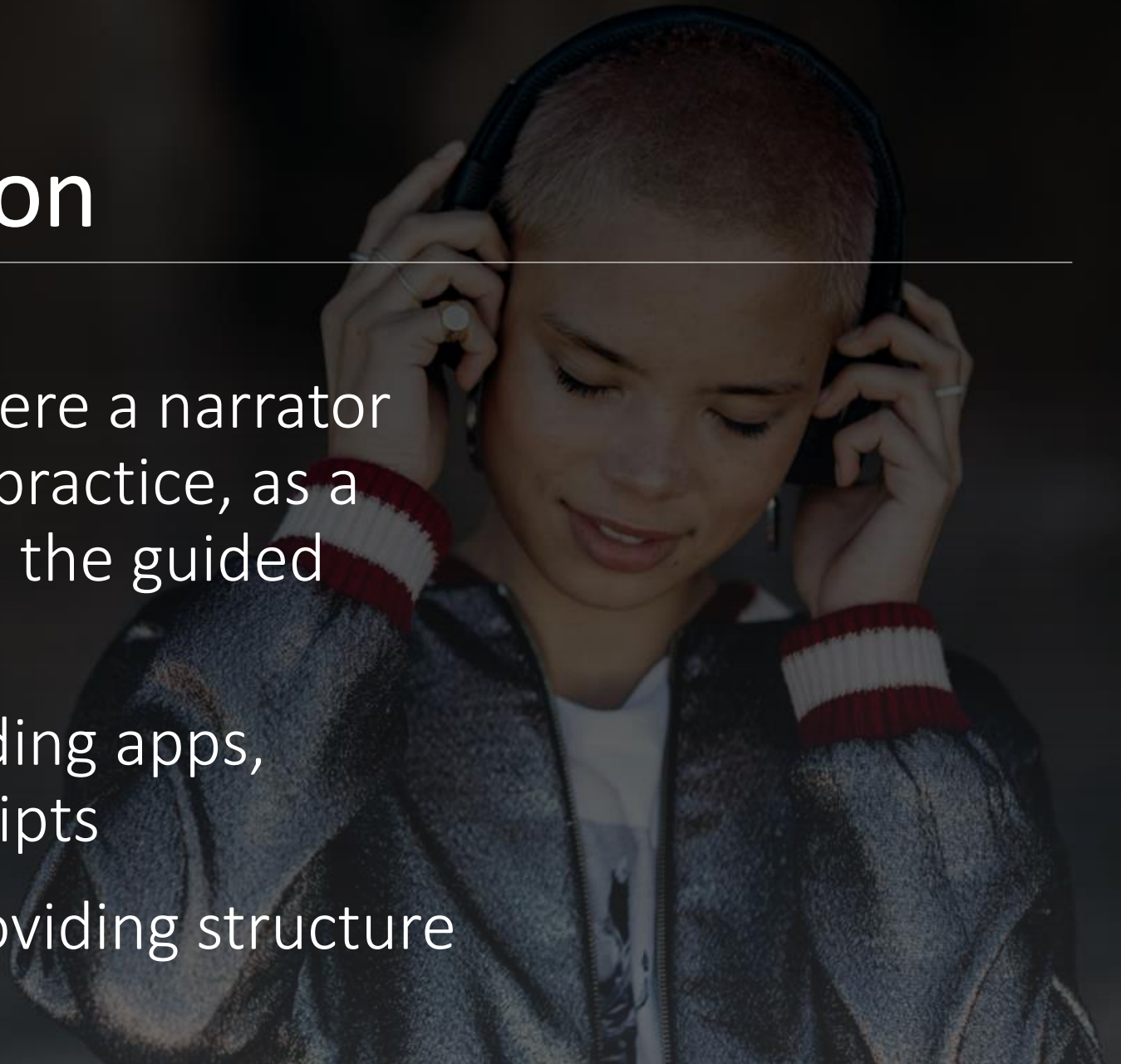
# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Meditation

- Tense and relax different body parts one by one.
- Start from feet to head.
- Whole-body tightening: hold for a few seconds, then release.
- Helps release muscle tension.
- Calms mind and body.
- Provides awareness of body sensations.

# Guided Meditation

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- Type of meditation where a narrator leads you through the practice, as a caregiver you may lead the guided meditation
- Various formats, including apps, podcasts, videos, & scripts
- Helps beginners by providing structure



# Guided Meditation

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- Have the child sit or lie down in a comfortable position
- Ensure the room is at a comfortable temperature
- Follow the meditation audio
- Headphones may help tune out distractions
- Consider doing the meditation together

# Sound Meditation

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- Can use a chime, bell, synergy chime, sound bowl, or find an online app with a similar sound
- Ensure the sound reverberates for at least 10 seconds

# Sound Meditation

- Have your child listen, then close their eyes to see if they hear it better or have them raise a hand when they can't hear it anymore, or ask them to count the bell rings
- Ring the bell over several minutes with varying silence intervals.
- With practice, children will become more comfortable with silence and improve focus and concentration.

# Gratefulness Meditation

- Provide your child with a journal and pencil
- Each day, have them write down three things they are grateful for
- Encourage them to be specific about what they're thankful for and why
- Many kids enjoy drawing a picture to accompany their list
- They can pray or meditate on the things they are grateful for



# Guided Imagery

Self-guided

Listening to a script

Calming photos

Create a special place in your mind

Physically relaxes body quickly

Benefits so effective hospitals are incorporating

# Guided Imagery

A woman with curly hair, wearing a white sleeveless dress, and a young boy in a blue long-sleeved shirt and khaki shorts are walking away from the camera on a beach. They are walking through shallow water, and their reflections are visible in the wet sand. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

Imagine a happy place to feel calm.

Picture yourself winning a race.

See a cool, colorful mist around any pain.

Think of the perfect place to sleep well.

Imagine being on stage and everyone clapping for you.

Visualize a protective bubble around you.

Picture yourself reaching a goal.



# Yogic Movement

# Forward Folds & Inversions



Lengthens Spine: flexibility & relieving tension

Relieves Stress: Calming effect on the mind, helping to reduce stress & anxiety

Improves Digestion: By compressing the abdomen, the pose stimulates the digestive organs

Boosts Circulation: Inversion encourages blood flow to the head, which can help rejuvenate the mind & body

Helps with Fatigue: Helps to relax the body and calm the nervous system.

Enhances Balance & Coordination: By engaging and focusing the body's muscles

# Balance Poses



Enhances stability and coordination

Strengthens Core Muscles

Enhances Focus: Requires concentration & helps improve mental focus

Increases Proprioception: Awareness of body position and movement

Builds Strength: Strengthens the legs, ankles, and feet.

Improves Posture: Proper alignment of spine

Reduces Risk of Injury: Enhances balance and coordination, reducing the risk of falls and injuries.

# Twists



Stimulates internal organs & helps detoxify the body

Improves Digestion: By promoting the movement of food & waste

Increases Spinal Flexibility: Stretches and strengthens the spine

Relieves Back Pain: Alleviates tension & discomfort in the back muscles

Enhances Circulation: Encourages blood flow to vital organs and tissues

Reduces Stress: Promotes relaxation and reduces stress by calming the nervous system.

Improves Balance



## Hip Opening

Increases Flexibility: Of the hips and lower back

Reduces Lower Back Pain: Alleviates tension and discomfort in the lower back

Improves Posture: Encourages better posture by releasing tight hip muscles

Enhances Circulation: Boosts blood flow to the pelvic region

Helps release stored emotions & stress

Strengthens Hip Muscles & pelvic muscles

Improves Overall Mobility: Enhances the range of motion

# Side Bends



Provides a deep stretch to the spine, increasing flexibility

Improves flexibility in the obliques, intercostal muscles, & shoulders

Helps in aligning the spine & improving posture.

Massages and stimulates the digestive organs, promoting better digestion

Relieves Tension: Eases tension in the rib cage, shoulders, & lower back.

Boosts Circulation: Increases blood flow to the upper body

Helps balance energy flow throughout the body, promoting overall well-being

# Back Bends



Opens the Chest: Enhances lung capacity and improves breathing

Stretches & lengthens the front of the body, including the chest, abdomen, and hip flexors

Builds strength in the back muscles, promoting better posture

Reduces tension and tightness in the spine.

Invigorates & energizes the body

Increases flexibility & mobility in the spine

Stimulates the Nervous System: Activates the sympathetic (calm) nervous system, which can improve mood and reduce stress



Yoga Calm:  
Putting it All  
Together

# Yoga Calm Tools



- BREATHE WORK
- YOGA-BASED MOVEMENT
- SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES
- GUIDED RELAXATIONS
- EMOTIONAL GUIDANCE
- DEVELOPS SKILLS FOR EDUCATORS TO HELP CHILDREN NAVIGATE, RESPOND & INTEGRATE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES



# Yoga Calm Principles

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[YOGA-CALM-PRINCIPLES.PDF](#)  
[\(YOGACALM.ORG\)](#)

# Yoga Calm: Commitment Sheet

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<https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21APhghR%2DiOHxsP7k&id=39CA04D796417BDE%218353&cid=39CA04D796417BDE&parId=root&parQt=sharedby&o=OneUp>



# RESOURCES:

**The MindUP Curriculum: Strategies for Learning and Living Illustrated Edition** by: The Hawn Foundation

(Author) 2011 – There are multiple curriculum books in this series for all ages

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/ways-to-teach-mindfulness-to-kids-4134344>

[Nature-Based Mindfulness Practices for Families – Mindful](#)

[How Self-Compassion Can Improve Teen Mental Health | Psychology Today](#)

**Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids & Their Parents** – Eline Snel

[This Is the Mindful Guide to Identity We Wish We Had Growing Up - Yoga Journal](#)

**Mindfulness Makes Me Stronger: Kid's Book to Find Calm, Keep Focus and Overcome Anxiety (Children's Book for Boys and**

**Girls)** (World of Kids Emotions) Hardcover – May 4, 2022

**Mindful Games Activity Cards: 55 Fun Ways to Share Mindfulness with Kids and Teens Cards** – April 4, 2017

**The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time (The Instant Help Solutions Series)** –

Illustrated, April 1, 2015

[Bubble Bounce! Mindfulness for Children \(Mindful Looking\) – YouTube](#)

[Yoga-and-Mindfulness-for-Children-Activity-Coloring-Book-interior-1-copy.pdf](#)

[Teaching Yoga for Kids: Why Kids Need Yoga as Much as Adults Do \(yogajournal.com\)](#)