

What is mindfulness, anyway?

Welcome to this edition of the Children and Young People's newsletter, where we will be looking at defining the practice of mindfulness and suggesting how the regular use of mindful activities can benefit all members of the family.

The activities in this newsletter are written to be carried out between parent/carer and young person but can just as easily be completed on an individual basis by a young person or adult. The easiest way to use this newsletter is to read through it and then use the information and activities to have discussions with your child or carry out on your own.

So, what is the purpose of mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a technique anyone can use to practise keeping their thoughts on the 'now' and not on events of the past, which can make us sad, or events in the future, which can make us anxious. Mindfulness is also used to help calm the mind when we are feeling overwhelmed by thoughts, events, feelings or information. A few minutes practising mindfulness every day will ensure that we can call upon it when we need to relax and calm down when we feel uptight, stressed or worried. When we learn to quieten the mind, we are able to stay focused for longer, think more logically, be less stressed, be more relaxed and enjoy a better quality of sleep.

Activity

Please take a moment to discuss with your young person how long they spend every day absorbing information from the following sources.

- School/ Education
- Television
- Social Media
- Online Videos
- Radio
- Home Study
- Reading fictional/ non-fictional material
- Other (please write)

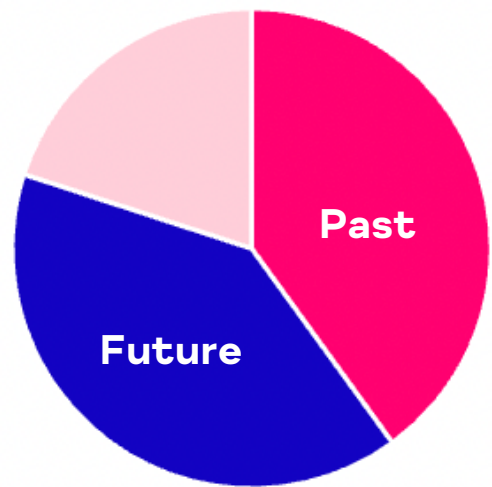


(You might want to write next to each point how many minutes per day is spent on each item)

Done it? Did it surprise you about how active the mind is during the day?

Now think about the following question. In the average day, how long does your child spend thinking about the about the past? For example, past events, people in our past, things we should have said and done or things we wished we hadn't said and done. Similarly, how long does your child spend thinking about the future? For example, places they would like to go, time off school they are looking forward to, the next bit of course-work due in.

Does their day look anything like this pie chart? If so, then how much time is spent being aware of and enjoying the very moment they are in right now? How long does your child and yourself spend enjoying the present? The practice of mindfulness allows us to enjoy more and more of the present moment without being distracted or upset by thoughts of the past and future.



So, what is mindfulness, again?

Mindfulness is the peace of mind brought about by being in the now. Simply put, mindfulness is awareness.

Activity

Discuss and carry out with your young person in order to practise bringing full attention to the present:

What noises can you hear right now?
How is your body feeling at this moment in time?
Close your eyes and listen to your breath for a few minutes, how does this make you feel?
How long before a thought pops into your head and what is that thought?

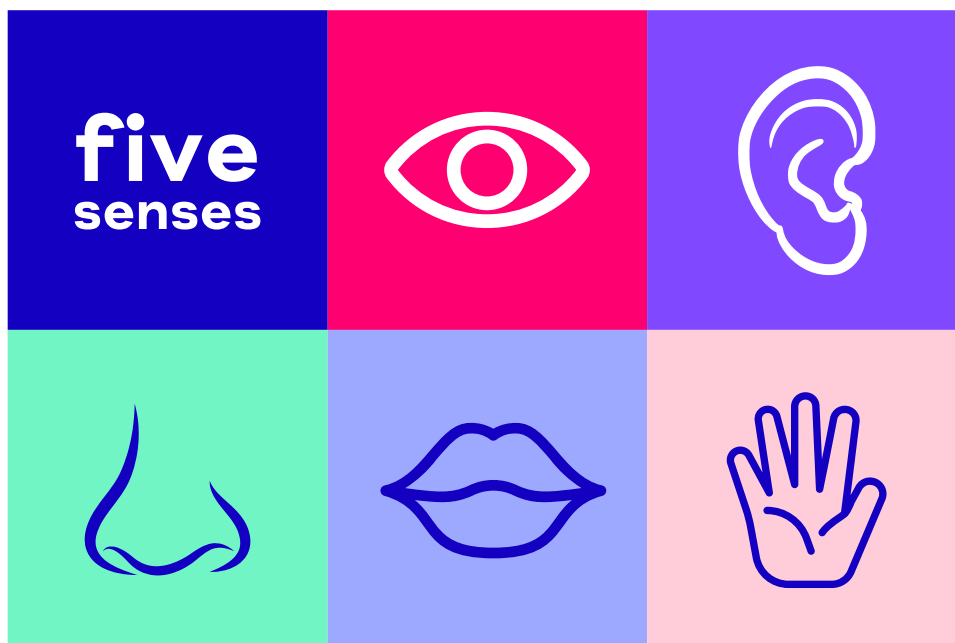


Mindfulness is also...

Mindfulness is the ability to not assign labels to the things we see and hear as we go about our day. These labels are based on either previous experience, knowledge we possess or even the viewpoints of others. We do not need to label and mentally assess everything we come across; we can just as easily 'accept' it. Try walking down the road without labelling everything you see like a tree, a tall neighbour, a noisy car. It's difficult at first but this is a great way to practise mindfulness.

What is an easy way to get started?

An easy way to practise mindfulness is to harness the power of your senses. Try holding onto a thought, for example an argument you had with a friend or a piece of work you need to complete. Now move your full attention onto one of your senses, for example hearing. You will quickly discover that you cannot do both. Your mind is unable to hold focus on a sense and also a 'thought' at the same time. Whilst doing this exercise, if thoughts creep in then gently accept them and move your attention back to your sense. Have fun with this exercise and then move on to some other resources to continue your practise of mindfulness.



Have fun practising with mindfulness. There are lots of resources on the internet including some great mindfulness meditations on YouTube. Make sure you keep checking back on our resources page for updates and further wellbeing activities.

Thanks for reading. See you next time!