

Calming and Grounding Techniques through Mindfulness for Children (age 4-11)

We spoke with Play Therapist Emma Brummell who shares some calming and grounding techniques for children aged 4-11.



The activities, exercises and suggestions are shared by certified Play Therapist Emma Brummell, not of Pearson Education or Pearson Clinical. Some other great sources of information and support on children's mental health and well-being can be found here.

If you feel that your child or someone you know is at risk of causing harm to themselves or others, then it is important to seek **immediate professional help**. Seek an emergency GP appointment, call **999**, or NSPCC **0808 800 5000** if you think you or your child is at immediate risk.

Read on for some more advice on how children can feel calm and grounded.

Mindfulness, in its simplest form, is being present in the moment we are in right now. Letting go of thoughts of tomorrow or yesterday and paying attention to what is happening in the environment right now, as well as noticing what is happening in our own bodies and minds at each present moment.

Mindfulness can be a powerful tool in helping us move from a place of worry and anxiety to a more positive mindset, allowing us to experience the joy available in the here and now.

The following are Emma's suggestions of activities that you can use to begin to help children to develop the skill of mindfulness.



Calming Jar

Fill a clean and empty jar or see through container with:

- A range of coloured glitter/sequins/stars
 - Water
- A couple of drops of food colouring (optional)

Shake the jar and allow your children to watch as the glitter swirls and circles around the jar.



We can use the jar as a tool to help teach children to use their breath to calm their minds, use one of the breathing activities below, practice it along with your child while the glitter swirls in the jar. When you have completed the breathing, notice the now calm glitter.

You might like to talk to your child about how we can help our thoughts to slow down and become calm by watching the glitter slow down as we breathe.

Breathing Activities

The breath can be an extremely soothing and calming tool. Deep belly breaths can activate our parasympathetic nervous system and induce feelings of calm. We can help children to breathe in this way using props such as:

Lying down and placing a teddy or loved toy on their tummy.

Asking if they can help their teddy fall asleep by rocking them slowly up and down using their tummies.

Breathing in a big breath, right into their belly to make the teddy rise up and slowing blowing the air out again to make the teddy lower down. Do a few of these then check if the teddy has become calm and fallen asleep.

Starfish breathing:

Use your child's hand (or help them cut out and decorate their own starfish,) to help them take deep, calming breaths. Use your finger or direct them to use their own to trace up their thumb, breathing in as they do so, then breathing out as they follow their thumb down the other side.

Repeat for each finger.

Blowing feathers to see how far they can get them to move.

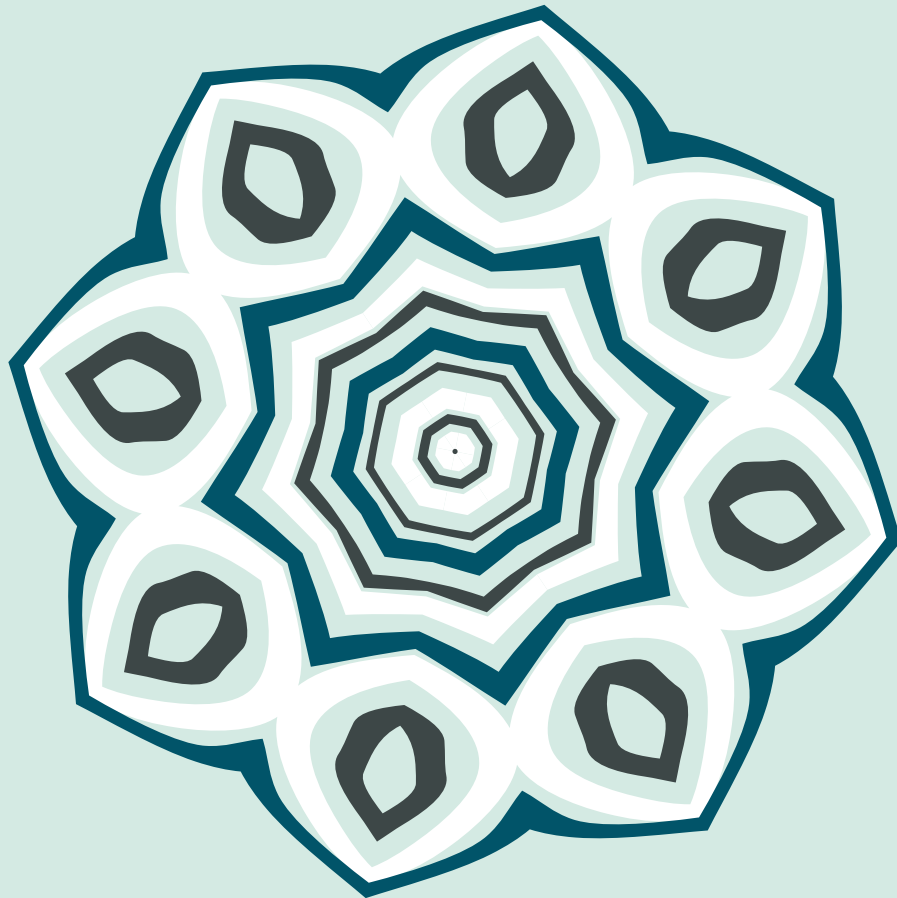
Hot chocolate breath:

cup your hands together like you are holding a mug of hot chocolate. Guide your child to, "Breathe in and smell the hot chocolate, breathe out, cool it down."

We can explain to our children how deep breaths can help us feel calm when we are worried, upset or angry. We can also model the effectiveness of this to our children by showing them how we use deep breaths to help us when we are feeling these emotions too.

Mandalas

Drawing or colouring a mandala can be very soothing and help to regulate emotions from feelings of anxiety or worry to a state of calmness. You can print some mandalas to colour or draw a circle and allow your child to create their own mandalas.



Grounding exercise

This activity is helpful when your child is in an over stimulated state or when they are experiencing anxiety, worry, upset. Ask your child to name:

5 things they can see

4 things they can hear

3 things they can feel

2 things they can smell

1 thing they can taste

This can help to bring your child to regulate their heightened feelings and bring them into the here and now.





Movement

Movement is a very effective tool in helping the body to use the extra adrenaline created by stress and filling it with endorphins that help us feel happy and energised.

Dancing is a great activity for helping to move into a more positive mood. Gentle stretches and yoga moves can also help to calm the mind and the body. [Cosmic Kids](#) yoga YouTube channel has a wide range of excellent yoga classes for children.



Get Outside

When emotions are running high, simply changing the environment and moving from inside to outside can have a powerful and often immediate effect on ours and our children's mood. Take a walk in nature or simply stand on your doorstep and listen carefully, what can you hear? Can you feel the wind/rain/sun on your face? What can you see when you look around?



Gratitude

Cultivating gratitude is a fantastic way to help children and adults alike to focus on the small things in their lives that bring joy. We can do this by sharing with your child 3 things that made you happy today. Ask them to do the same. This helps to shift the mind into a more positive mindset, helping them to feel calmer and happier.