

Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness.



Care Pack
11–12 years



Introduction

—

As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the young people in their care as they grapple with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and appropriate response to the sense of overwhelm many of us are currently feeling.

Mindfulness has been practised for centuries and in many different cultures around the world. Academic research shows that when we pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, with openness and curiosity, and without judgement, we activate many wellbeing benefits including higher self awareness, higher emotional regulation and reduced stress. In addition to many other benefits, we can also improve our focus, concentration and creativity through regular mindfulness practice.

Integrating mindfulness into everyday life with the children in our care can have profound benefits for both adult and child. Smiling Mind offers a range of engaging evidence based experiences and activities designed by wellbeing educators. You are encouraged to experiment and explore the wide range of meditations and activities with your child.

This first module, Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness contains five foundational mindfulness topics to progress through with your child:

- Awareness as a foundation of mindfulness
- Attention as a key element of a mindful life
- Recognising and managing our emotions
- The senses
- Mindful movement

These first five topics combine to deliver a comprehensive toolkit to assist in supporting emotional wellbeing with your child.



Here is a step by step guide to get the best out of this module designed specifically for 11–12 year olds:

1

Take a few minutes to read the topic overview written for parents, carers and teachers.

- This will orient you to the purpose and intention of each topic and set up some background for conversations with your child.



2

Listen to the mindfulness meditation with your child in a quiet place without distraction.

- Spend a few minutes afterwards inviting your child to share their experience and their thoughts and feelings following the meditation.
- Share your own experience, thoughts and feelings with your child.



3

Ask your child to select one of the activities at the back of the book.

- Use the activity to collaborate and continue the conversation.



Awareness as a foundation of mindfulness

—

In the midst of a global pandemic, it can be a significant challenge to stay in the moment. Awareness of our thoughts and emotions, and how they are impacting our behaviour, is especially important at times like these. Developing the ability to observe our thoughts and emotions more objectively allows us to access a calmer and more mindful place.



Have you ever noticed your mind has wandered? Sometimes we find ourselves in a tangle of thoughts and emotions about the past or the future, not really knowing how we got there. The human brain is particularly good at thinking and has been honing this skill for a while now. About two million years ago, our ancestors began to develop the capacity to reflect, reason, anticipate, imagine and worry.

Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgment.

Practising mindfulness helps us become more focused and aware, and better able to direct our attention to where we want and need it to be. Awareness of how we spend our time thinking and tuning into the emotions that come along with this, is an important first step to creating a mindful life. Awareness enables us to see our thoughts and emotions more objectively and to be less pushed around by them. In this way, we can choose how we respond to different situations as opposed to simply reacting as if on autopilot. In doing so we get to live more in line with who we want to be and usually feel better.

Young people look to us in uncertain times and follow our lead. As we collectively navigate the current global health crisis, we may dive head first into media coverage, hoping to find certainty and reassurance that all will be okay. Often, however, we are left with even more uncertainty. As role models, being aware of our own thoughts and emotions and navigating them as effectively as possible, is important. We can then engage in gentle and supportive conversations with our 11–12 year olds. It is especially important to hold the space for children to share their thoughts and feelings at times like these.

Awareness connects our minds and our bodies in a way that brings us back to the present moment. The first step in awareness is tuning into how we are feeling right now. Asking ourselves “How am I feeling at this moment?” can help. By cultivating greater awareness of our own emotional landscape, we get better at noticing what is showing up for us as we traverse daily life, including our interactions with the young people in our lives.

Smiling Mind recommends that parents, carers and teachers engage in the mindfulness meditation with the children in their care. After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build awareness. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 11–12 year old to choose one as a finishing activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration with your child as they complete them.



Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: The Bubble Journey.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- The Bubble Journey

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/18/125/125/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Awareness of each and every moment

[This activity](#) encourages young people to consider mindful awareness as a way to move forward and experience life fully. It may assist in their own reflections of how they mindfully show up each day.

Awareness as a gateway to mindfulness

This exploration links mindful awareness to our growth and development. [The activity](#) encourages young people to understand that when their mind and body is connected, they can really move forward with purpose.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How do you make sure that thoughts and feelings don't push you around and be the boss of you?

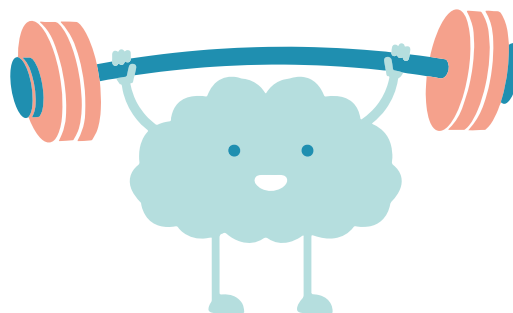
Do you sometimes remember to ask yourself "how am I feeling right now?"

How do you know when the mind and the body are communicating very well with one another?

Attention as a key element of a mindful life

—

Attention is a key element of living a mindful life. Mindfulness teaches us to attend to the present moment and the task at hand. This is especially useful in times of global uncertainty when our focus can be pulled in many directions, and often into the past or towards an uncertain future.



Young people are often asked to pay attention. This can be hard to do because our minds are very curious and hardwired to wander. We can be quite lost in our thoughts and emotions before we suddenly become aware that we have lost touch with where we are and what we are doing. Given that our body is always present, focusing our attention on our breathing is one of the most effective ways to return to what is happening right now.

The breath is a natural process with which we can all engage. It is always with us and each new breath offers an opportunity to become more self-aware and focused. When we attend to the present moment, we are more aware of how we are feeling and what we are doing. For young people, their ability to learn and grow depends upon being able to develop this important skill.

When big and uncertain events happen around the world and the news coverage is constant, our minds can quickly latch on to any information available. We usually do this in the hope of finding some certainty and reassurance that all will be okay. As role models, young people will look to us for guidance. Focusing our own attention on the present moment can help us to be better placed as a source of reassurance and balanced information for children.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build our attention. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 11–12 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration with your 11–12 year old as they complete them.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Daily Mindfulness Guide

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 103 – Awareness and Sounds
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – 5 Minutes

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/20/3/3/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets at the
back of this booklet:

In the Moment

Young people will be familiar with the phrase ‘being in the zone’. [This activity](#) encourages young people to consider how powerful we can become when we truly pay attention.

Returning to the Present Moment

This is a practical [activity](#) encouraging young people to compile a list of strategies for paying attention that they can draw upon later.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

What really works for you when it is time to be completely focused and pay attention very closely?

How do you feel the breath assists you to be in the present moment?

What is the biggest advantage of regularly taking really deep breaths, do you feel?

Recognising and Managing Our Emotions

As we move through the global pandemic, we have all experienced a wide range of emotions, sometimes many at the same time. The journey has been different for each one of us and a great reminder of how important it is to tune in to what we are feeling in any given moment. Mindfulness is the key to allowing us to identify and gently sit with our emotions as they unfold. For children, who are also experiencing a wide range of emotions at this time, adults can be there to assist.



Children come into the world full of curiosity. As they grow and develop, their awareness of feelings and emotions expands. Through facial expressions, gestures, actions, behaviours and words, children communicate to us how they are feeling. For us all, when we are able to notice and express how we feel, we can begin to make decisions about how we might manage our emotions effectively.

We each experience a whole range of emotions every day; some are pleasant and some are not so pleasant. Most of us spend a great deal of time caught up in our emotions, particularly difficult ones. When this happens, our behaviour is on autopilot and we can feel stressed and overwhelmed. We may miss important information and find it hard to see situations clearly. When we practise mindfulness, we tune into our bodies and become aware of how we are feeling and how those feelings are impacting us.

Mindfulness helps us to develop the ability to observe our emotions with more openness and curiosity, and with less judgement. By being able to observe them more objectively, we tend to be less pushed around by them. We are also better placed to be there for those still learning to understand what a wide range of emotions feels like for them. Mindfulness allows us to switch off autopilot and get back into the driver's seat. It also enables us to see our emotions are more like passengers in the back seat rather than the one driving.

We also learn that emotions come and go and will not last forever. This assists us to feel less overwhelmed in the present moment and role model effective ways to manage emotions as they arise.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build emotional regulation. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 11–12 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.



Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Body Scan.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 204 – Emotions
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Body Scan

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/29/150/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Reading My Emotions

[This activity](#) gives young people an opportunity to reflect on the wide range of human emotions and write about what they are learning about themselves.

An Emotional Time

Encouraging young people to explore and better understand the complexity of feeling many emotions at the same time builds emotional awareness. [This activity](#) highlights their own unique ways of responding to this.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

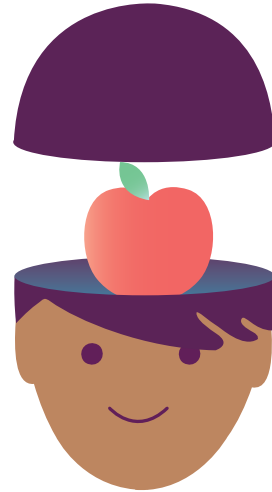
Can you think of a recent time when you felt many feelings and emotions all at once? I would love you to share with me what that felt like and how you responded.

Do you ever think about all the emotions you are capable of feeling? How might they be changing as you get older?

In what ways do you like to express your feelings and emotions (think of voice, gesture, movement and other ways)?

The Senses

We have five primary senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. When we are in touch with our senses we can begin to be more fully attentive to what we are experiencing in any given moment. Our senses are the way in which we interact with the world and learn about what is happening around us.



At the moment, in the midst of a global pandemic, our senses are being over stimulated. We are literally bombarded with sensory information as we move through each day and many of us, and many of our young people are feeling the effects of this overload.

Mindfulness helps us to train our mindfulness muscle and focus on one thing at a time. When we do this via our senses, two important things happen: we develop our sensory awareness and we increase our capacity to pay attention. When we pay close attention, we are able to calm our mind and let go of distracting thoughts. We then have an opportunity to open ourselves up to the world around us without getting too caught up in our thoughts and emotions.

Mindfulness gives us a pathway back to the present moment through our senses. For the young people in our care, the senses are a wonderful way to feel grounded and in the here and now. We can model this for them by tuning into our own senses and engaging with the world in the present. Having time to experience sensory activities together, such as a mindful walk outside can stimulate conversation and appreciation in both adults and young people.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build our sensory awareness and wellbeing. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 11–12 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration as they complete them.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Breath & Sounds.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 202 – Mindful Listening
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/27/154/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Sensory Journey – Dadirri

[This activity](#) encourages young people to take a mindful walk, disconnected from technology and tuned into their senses.

Sit Spot

Developing a sit spot is helpful in building mindfulness. [This activity](#) suggests finding a place outside to sit silently and activate sensory awareness. Young people can consider doing this regularly if they find it useful and calming.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

Tell me about how you feel your senses help you to learn and grow?

Tell me about a recent time when your senses really showed up all at once. What was that like for you?

When you feel very quiet and calm, how are your senses behaving in these moments?

Mindful Movement

—

The human body has been ingeniously designed to move. It is an extraordinary example of many interconnected systems working together to create coordination, strength and agility. We feel better when we move because it is what we've been engineered to do. Young children are especially at ease when moving and being active.



Sometimes, we may find ourselves very caught up in our heads. It is especially at these times that mindful movement can help us to reconnect with our bodies and activate some of the wisdom they contain. Being in the present and paying attention to the felt sensations in our body is an ideal gateway to mindfulness.

COVID19 represents a new and uncertain challenge to us all and one which has possibly seen us do a lot of mental work. As we grapple with the rapid changes to our way of life, the restrictions to our movements and the palpable sense of loss around the world, it is not surprising many of us are experiencing a wide range of emotions.

For adults and children, one of the ways in which we can manage our emotions is to mindfully drop down out of our heads and begin to pay attention to the sensations in our bodies. Our bodies are multi-sensory and provide us with so much 'present moment' information.

Children look to us as role models and guides on how to navigate change and handle new and possibly unsettling experiences. It is important to remember that humans learn the most through observing what others humans do. Children intuitively know that trusted and caring adults are a source of wisdom. Getting out and about and moving with your children can be a highly effective way to create feelings of calm and connection. We have this unique and powerful opportunity to show the children in our care a positively oriented approach to change and uncertainty through mindful movement.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness and movement can help build our wellbeing. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your child to choose one as a finishing activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we do encourage continued conversation and collaboration with your child as they complete them.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Mindful Movement

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 205 – Mindful Movement

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/30/165/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets at the
back of this booklet:

Moving Mindfully

Reflecting on a time when young people were enjoying mindful whole body movement and felt engaged and connected, [this activity](#) brings awareness to how important it is to foster a strong mind body connection.

Drop Down: Mind – Body Connect

[This activity](#) reminds young people to notice when they are so caught up in their thoughts and emotions that they lose connection with their body. Dropping down into our bodies is a useful way to come back to the here and now.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there
are no wrong answers:

What are your thoughts about how our mind and body
communicate with each other?

How do you feel in your mind when you are very active and
moving your body freely?

Do you ever wonder about the inner wisdom your body holds
and what it can teach us about our emotional wellbeing?

Awareness of each and every moment.



Being aware is a wonderful way to notice thoughts and emotions that may be clouding our way forward. Draw a pathway and write how it feels to be in the moment, aware and focused on where you are and what you're doing. Pack lightly as you head into each moment of each day.



Awareness as a gateway to mindfulness.



Imagine being able to design and create your own gateway to mindfulness. As you walk through your gateway, you are aware of your mind and body, and connected to where you are and what you are doing. As you draw yourself stepping forward, write about what it means to you to be more aware as you move mindfully through each day.

In the moment.



We know that what we focus on becomes the centre of our attention. Have you ever felt so in the moment that you got completely absorbed in the task? It feels pretty good. Write and draw about a recent time when you were truly in the moment. What were you doing and how did you feel? What did you learn about yourself in this moment?

A recent time when you were truly in the moment?

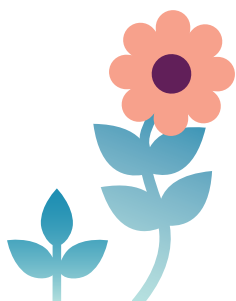
What were you doing and how did you feel?

What did you learn about yourself in this moment?

Returning to the present moment.



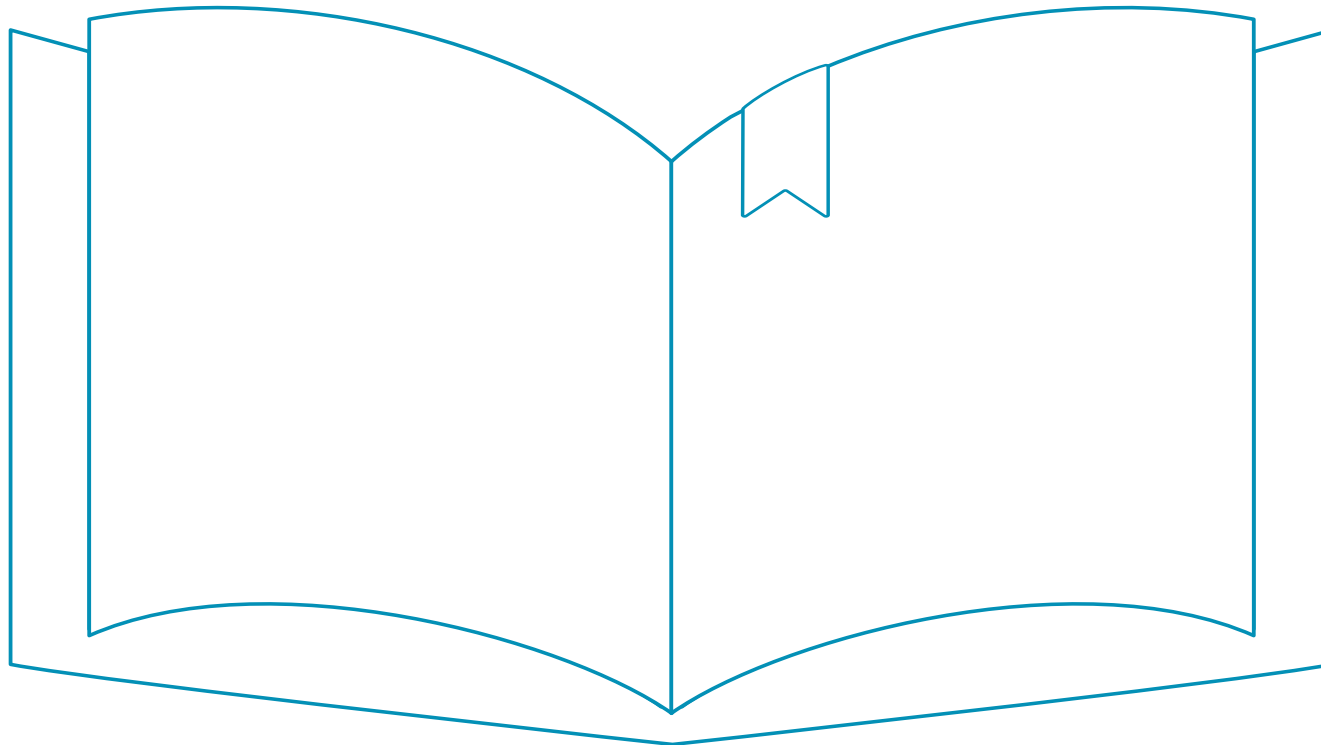
What helps you to return to the present moment when the mind wanders? Create a list of go-to strategies to bring you back when it is important to focus and pay attention.

A large, rounded rectangular frame with a scroll-like top and bottom edge, containing horizontal lines for writing. The frame is outlined in a light blue color and has a white background. It is designed to hold a list of strategies for returning to the present moment.

Reading my emotions.



Life brings so many experiences from every direction. As we dive into each experience, we feel a wide range of emotions. Being able to identify them and gently hold them in our awareness is an important skill to practise. Creatively record in this open book, using both words and images, the many emotions you have felt so far this year.



What am i learning about myself?

An emotional time.



When we can name our emotions, we can then begin to understand them better. Can you think of a time recently when you felt many feelings at once. Perhaps you were excited and worried and tired all at the same time. Our emotions always have important information to share with us. Write about a recent time you felt a variety of emotions. Can you name them and write about how you responded.

Felt Emotion

Sensory journey – Dadirri.



Indigenous Australians have a whole-body mindful walking practice called Dadirri. Dadirri means inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Imagine taking a Dadirri walk in nature, switching on all of your senses. Write and draw what you might experience.



Sit spot.



Sometimes we just need to slow down to allow our senses to come to life. Find a sit spot outside and sit for five or ten minutes in silence. Just notice what is happening around you. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste? Write and draw your observations.



Moving mindfully.

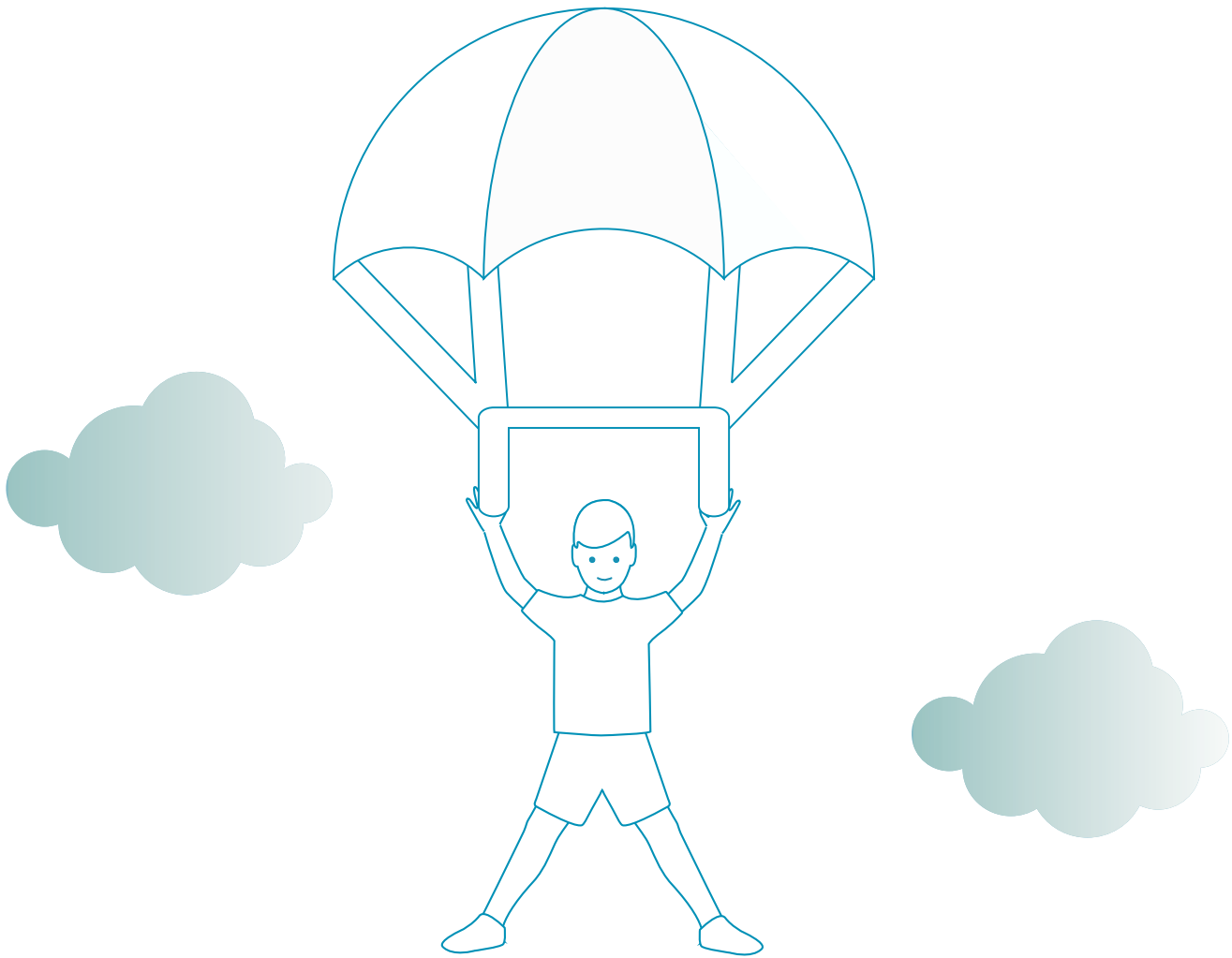


Think of a time when you were using your whole body and feeling fantastic. Perhaps you were swimming or running or actively engaged in sport. Draw your body feeling great and moving mindfully and write some of the feelings you felt as you moved and engaged.



Drop down: mind – body connect.

One of the ways in which we can manage our emotions is to mindfully drop down, out of our heads and begin to pay attention to the sensations in our bodies. Our bodies are multi-sensory and provide us with so much 'moment to moment' information. Write and draw about a time when you felt that your senses were fully alive. What were you doing and how did you feel?





Smiling Mind

info@smilingmind.com.au

smilingmind.com.au

Smiling Mind is a not-for-profit organisation that works to make mindfulness meditation accessible to all.

Visit us online or download the free app to get started.

