

Supporting Children's Emotional Wellbeing Through Mindfulness.



Care Pack
5-7 years



Introduction

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As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the children in their care as they too grapple with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and helpful 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. 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 5–7 year olds:

1

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

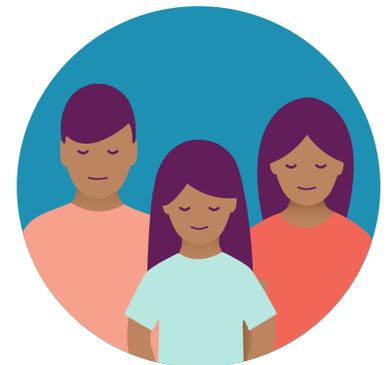
- This will orient you to the purpose and intention of each topic and set up some background for conversations with your child.



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



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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.

Children 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 children. 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 children in our lives.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation with your child about how the experience felt and how mindfulness can help to build our awareness. 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 an 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
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- The Bubble Journey

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/2/2/2/>



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

How am I feeling in this moment

This activity is all about bringing awareness to how feelings show up inside us each and every day.

Bubbles of Awareness

This activity encourages children to spend time reflecting on how today has unfolded in terms of moment to moment awareness.



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

Where in your body might you feel calm and happy feelings,
how about sad and upsetting feelings?

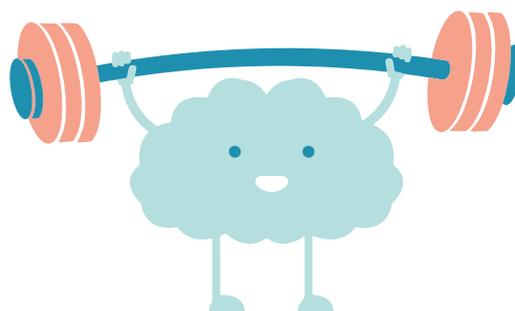
What do you love to notice when you are at home and school?

Can you tell me all about what caught your attention today
and why?

Attention as a key element of a mindful life

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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.



Children 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 breath 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 children, 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, children 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 child to choose one as an 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:
Balloon Bellies.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Balloon Bellies

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1204/>



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

Deep Breath

[This activity](#) encourages children to reflect on how the breath might be imagined and captured with colours and shapes.

Focus on the Breath

[This activity](#) invites children to recall a very focused time for them recently and explore how that felt.

Shining a Torch

[This activity](#) is about imagining how we can switch on our attention like a torch and shine a beam of light on the present moment.



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

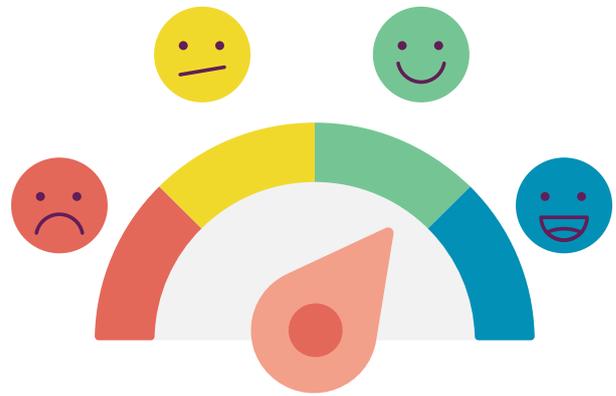
What does it feel like for you to take a really big breath and where do you feel it?

Can you tell me what happens in your mind and body when you are very focused?

How might we switch on our attention when we need to?

Recognising and Managing Our Emotions

As we've moved 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 awareness. 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 an 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:
Breath & Sounds

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 208 – Self Compassion
- Daily Mindfulness Guide – Breath and Sounds

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/17/154/154/>



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

Many Emotions

This activity encourages children to reflect on how they have felt today and to then express their feelings with shape and colour ideas.

Gently Holding My Emotions

This activity is designed to reassure children that we can all experience many emotions at the same time, and holding them gently comes with practice.



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

Can you think of a time when you felt many feelings and emotions all at once? I would love to hear all about it.

Do you ever think about all the feelings you have inside you? Where might they be?

What other ways besides using our voice, can we show our feelings and emotions?

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 children 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 children 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 children.

After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build 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 an 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: Sounds of The Outback.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Sounds of The Outback

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1212/>



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

My Senses Teach Me About The World

[This activity](#) highlights for children the role of our senses in every moment of every day.

Sensory Me

[This activity](#) encourages children to consider how our senses can come to life within our minds and bodies.



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

What senses do you really like exploring and using outside?

Tell me about a recent time when your senses taught you something important?

When we are very quiet and calm, what might our senses be doing?

Mindful Movement

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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 can help to build 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 an 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:
Let's Go On Safari

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 03 – 06 Year Olds
- 05 – 06 Year Olds
- Let's Go On Safari

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/434/1196/>



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

Moving Mindfully

[This activity](#) encourages children to reflect on how their mind and body combine to create wonderful movement.

Mind – Body Connect

[This activity](#) gently introduces the concept of feeling disconnected from our bodies at times, especially when we have a busy mind. It encourages children to imagine a totally connected mind and body.



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

How do you think our mind and body communicate
with each other?

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

Do you ever wonder how your body just knows so much
about how to help you in every moment?

How am I feeling in this moment?



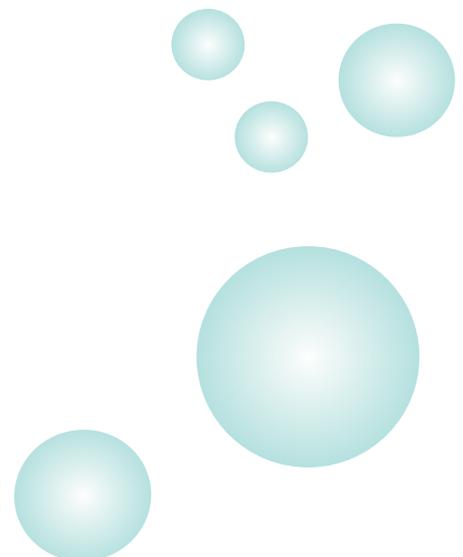
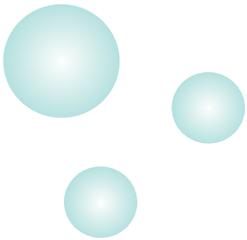
Think of a time when you felt calm and happy. See if you can notice those feelings somewhere in your body. Draw yourself in that moment/place.



Bubbles of awareness.



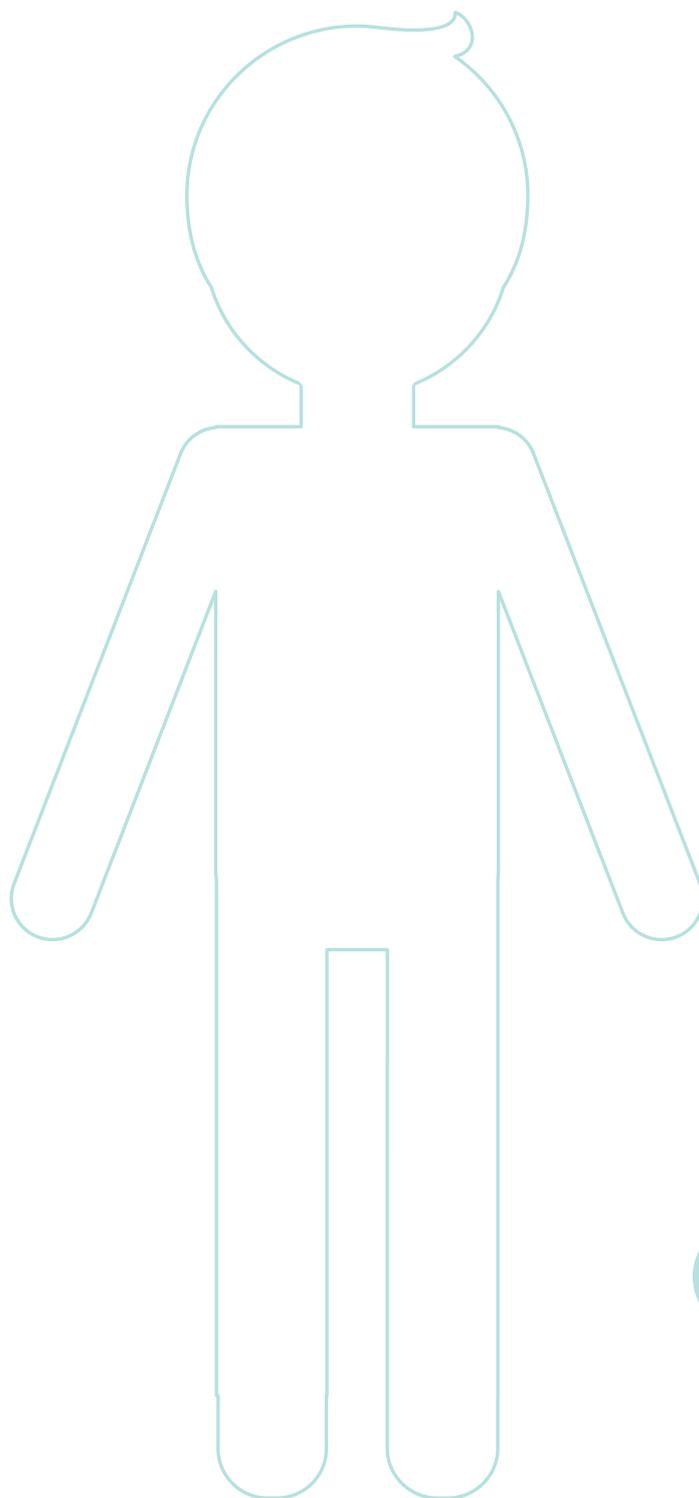
Draw some big bubbles on this page and take a moment to think of some moments today when you really noticed things around you. It may have been a warm smile someone gave you, something you ate or drank, or something in nature that caught your attention. Draw these moments of awareness inside the bubbles.



Deep breath.



Belly breathing helps us to remember to fill our bellies with every breath. Fill your body with deep breaths and use colours and shapes to show how it feels.



Focus on the breath.



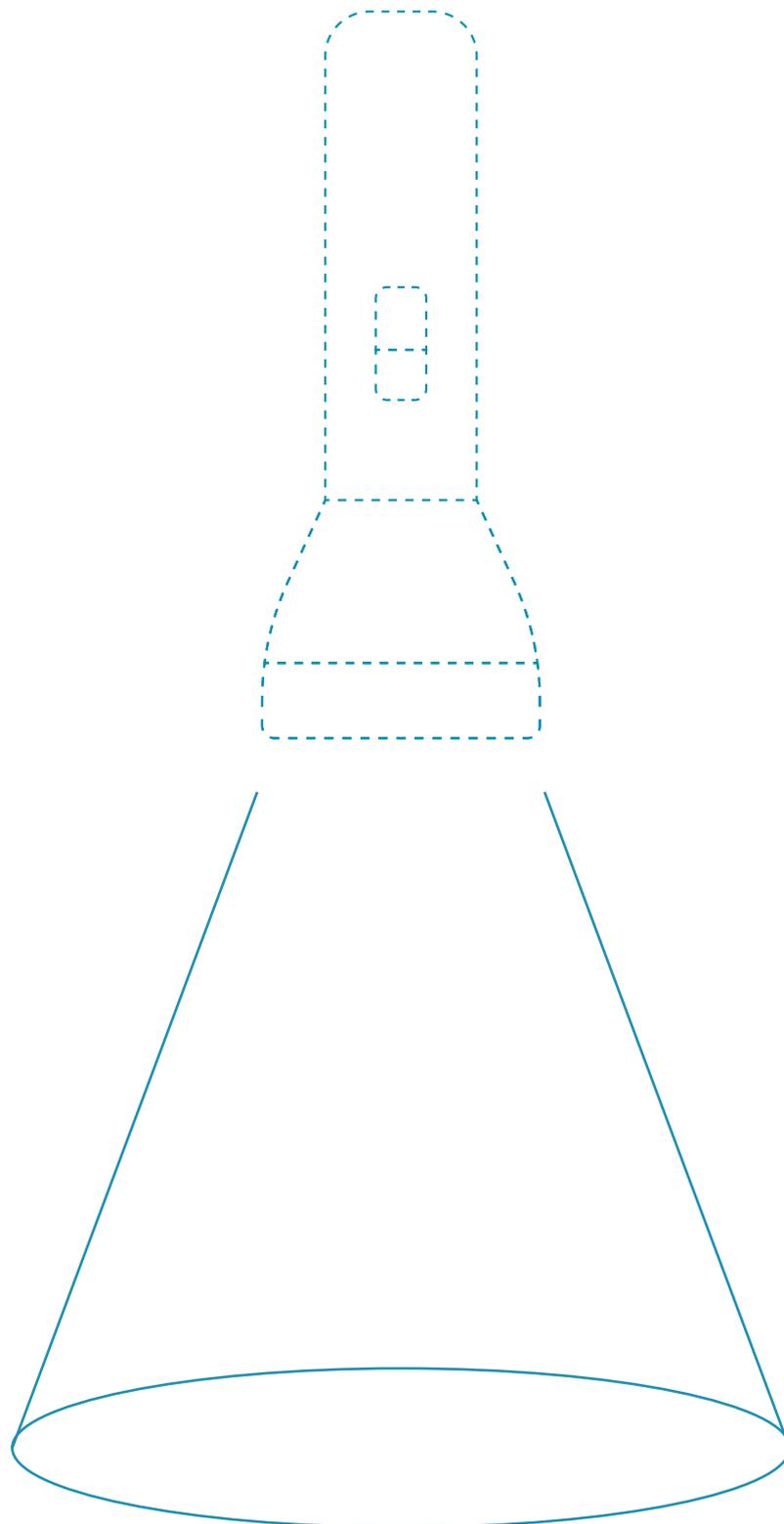
Each new breath is an invitation to return to the present moment. Think of a time recently when you were really focused on what you were doing. Write and draw what you were doing and how you felt.



Shining a torch.

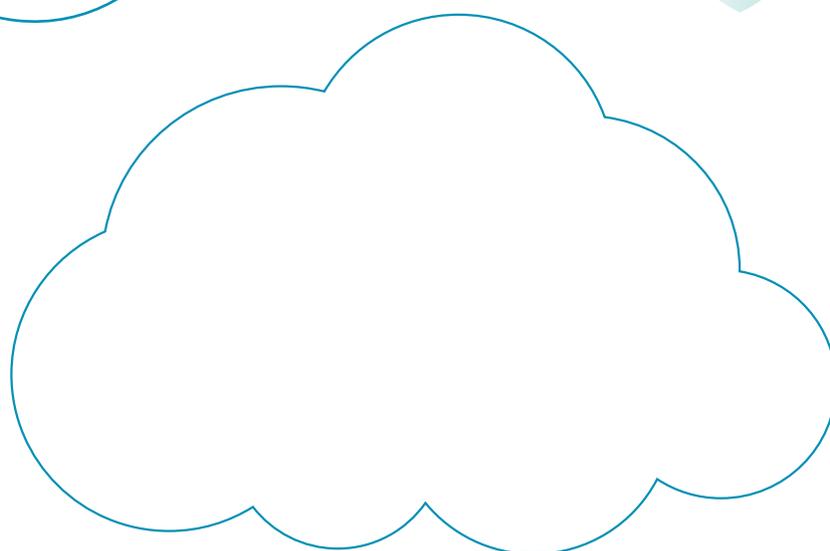
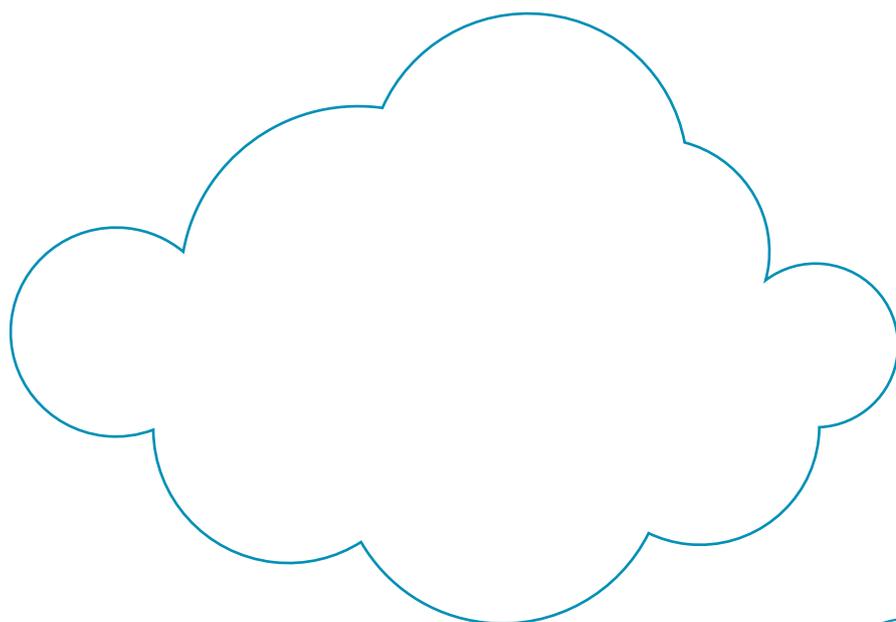
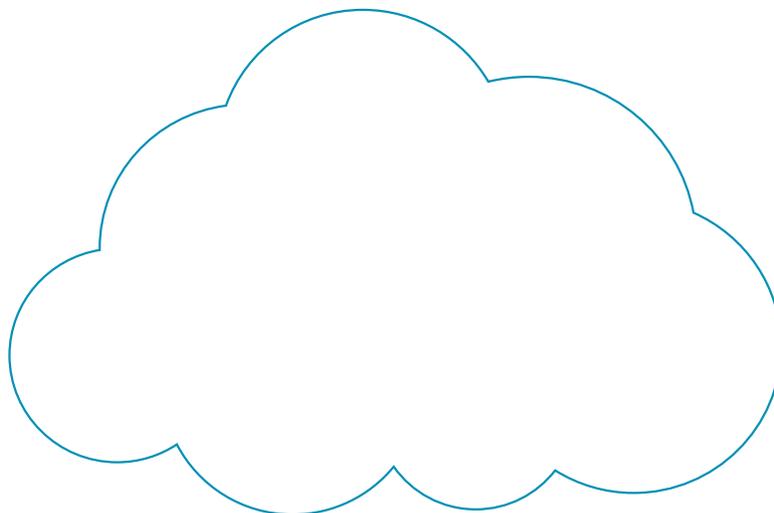


When we shine a torch, we can see something clearly. Draw a magical torch and shine it on the present moment. Draw yourself in the torch beam and write some words to describe how you are feeling in this moment.



Many emotions.

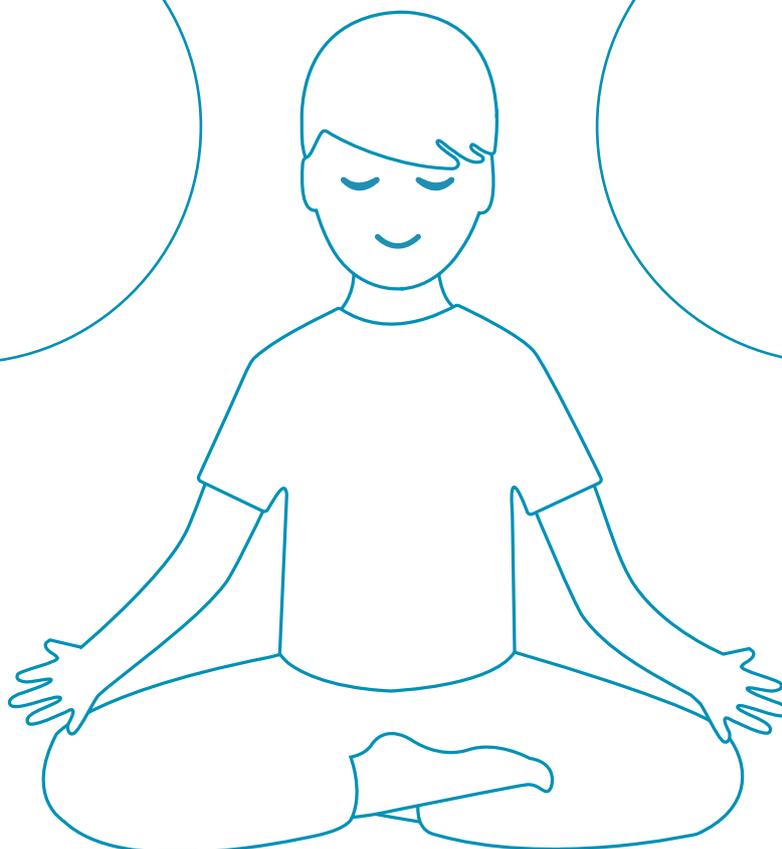
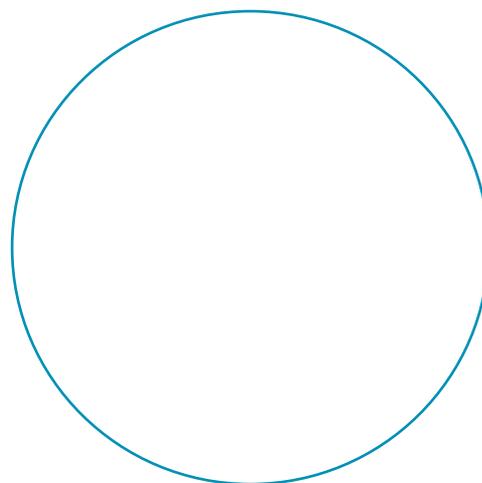
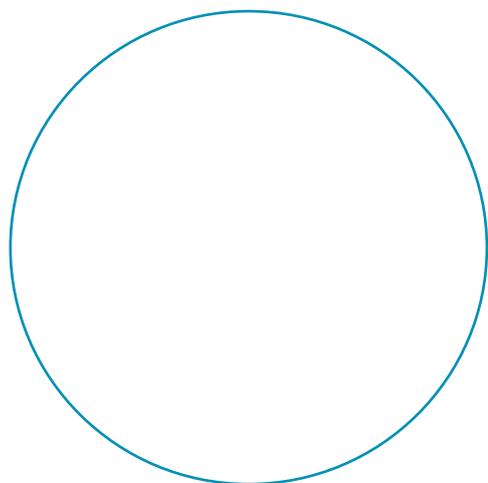
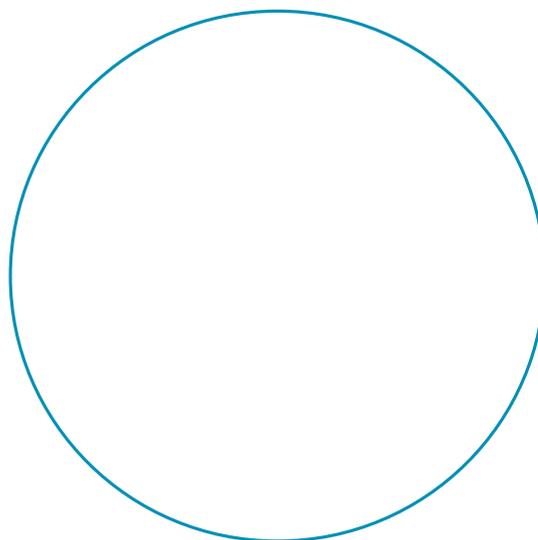
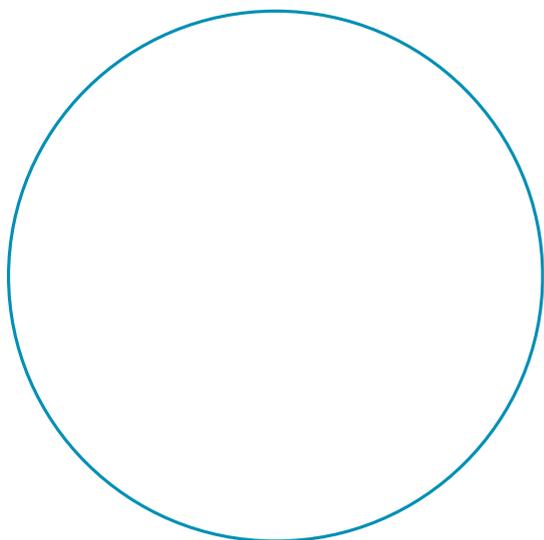
We all feel lots of emotions every day. We can notice and name them. Draw three emotions you have felt today. Do they have shapes and colours?



Gently holding my emotions.



Have you ever felt lots of feelings all at once? Emotions turn up in our minds and our bodies every day. We can notice and name them. Then we can hold them gently until they are ready to move on.



My senses teach me about the world.



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Draw yourself somewhere you love to be. What are your senses telling you about the world around you? What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?

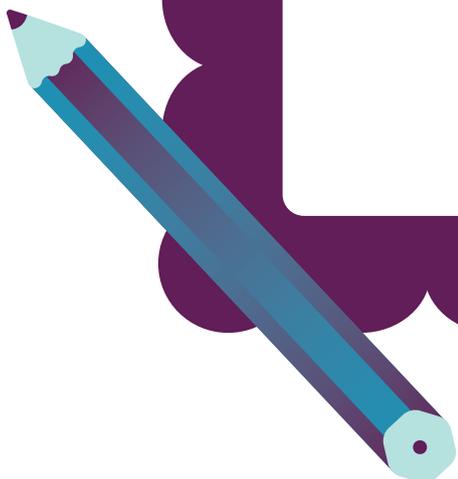
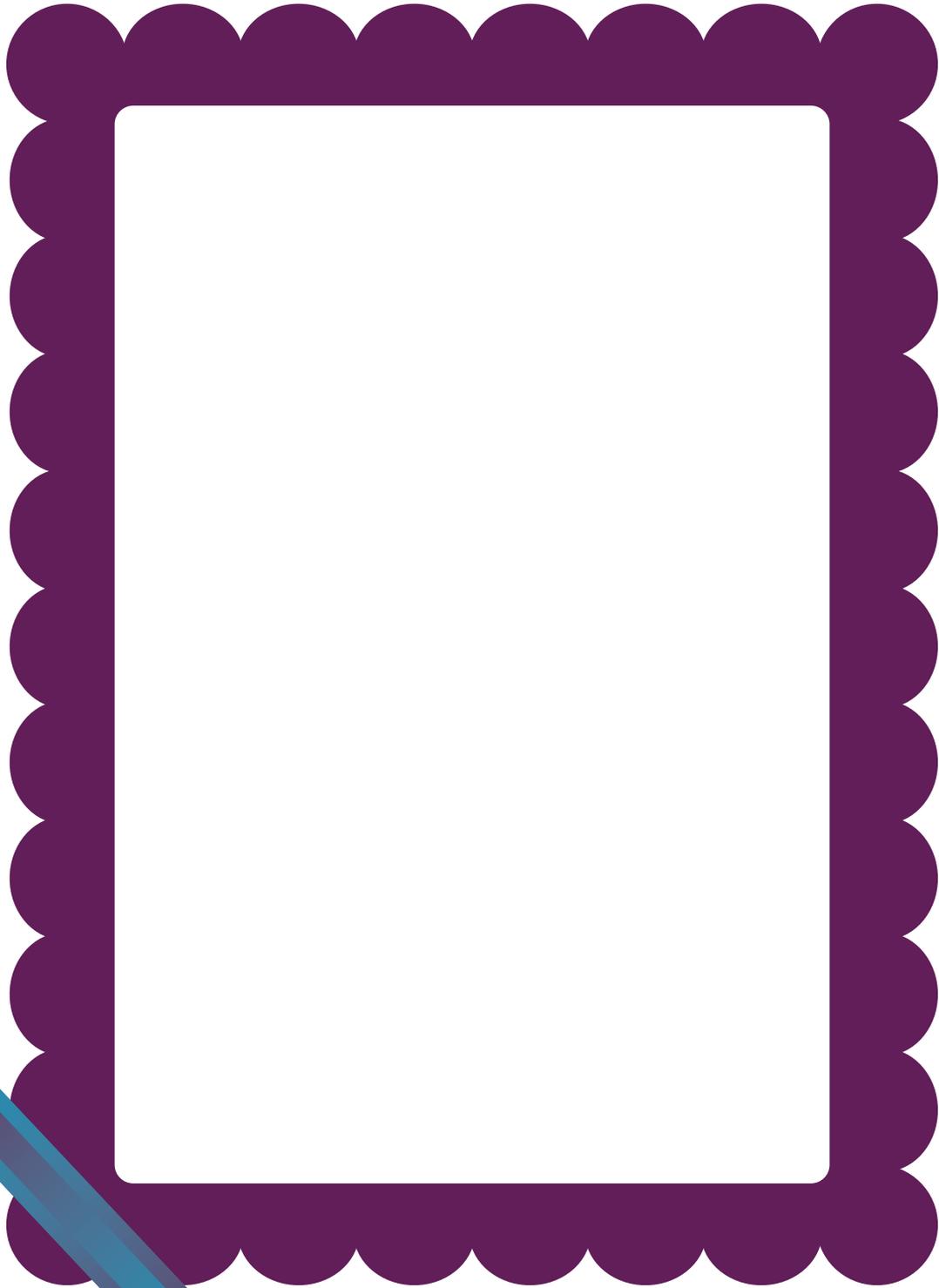


Sensory me.



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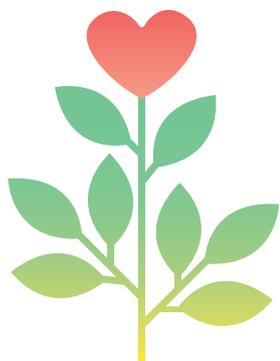
Draw yourself in this photo frame doing something that switches on your five senses. What can you see, hear, smell, touch and taste?



Moving mindfully.



Think of a time when you were using your whole body and feeling fantastic. Perhaps you were swimming or running or playing an active game. Draw your body feeling great and moving mindfully and write some of the feelings you felt at the time.



Mind-body connect.



Sometimes we get so busy inside our heads, we forget that our bodies are attached... oops! Draw yourself at a time when your head and body are working and moving together like a wonderful machine!

What are you doing and how are you feeling? Think of some emotion words to add.





Smiling Mind

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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.

