



## Mindfulness for mentors (and kids)

Mindfulness is “**the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us**” (Mindful Staff, 2014).

Mindfulness can be defined in simpler, easier-to-understand terms for children. For example, mindfulness expert David Gelles defines it as “***the simple practice of bringing a gentle, accepting attitude to the present moment***” (n.d.).

## What are the Benefits of teaching KIDS TO BE MINDFUL?

Many of the benefits of mindfulness for children are the same as the benefits for adults, including:

1. Improving physical health (e.g., reducing pain, lowering blood pressure, improving symptoms of conditions like psoriasis and fibromyalgia).
2. Improving mental health (e.g., helping to address substance abuse issues, stress, anxiety, and depression, and improving sleep).
3. Enhancing important social and emotional skills (e.g., the ability to feel in control, to make and maintain meaningful relationships, to accept reality, to manage difficult feelings, and to be calmer, more resilient, more compassionate, and more empathetic).
4. Increasing intellectual skills (e.g., improved sustained attention, visuospatial memory, working memory, and concentration; (Weare, 2012).

However, there are some benefits specific to children, including:

5. Improved cognitive outcomes (e.g., better attention and focus, higher grades).
6. Improved social-emotional skills (e.g., emotion regulation, better behaviour in school, higher empathy and perspective-taking, and better social skills).
7. Greater well-being (e.g., lower test anxiety, lower stress, fewer posttraumatic symptoms, and less depression; Mindful Schools, n.d.).

In response to COVID 19 a wealth of resources are available to teach children how to be mindful. Here are a few examples:

## **Resources:**

### Smiling Mind

Website: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/mindfulness>

**Smiling Mind** is a lovely Australian mindfulness meditation smartphone app to experience, for both adults and kids. It was created as a non-profit initiative to improve the lives of Australians through increasing clarity, calm and contentment and reducing stress via mindfulness instruction and encouragement.

Research has indicated that this program can assist with students' sleep, wellbeing, managing emotions, concentration and classroom school behaviour. There is an app that you can download. There are also some great activities that are quick and easy to use with students. You can also read about the research.

### Teaching your child mindfulness

Website: <https://www.healthline.com/health/childrens-health/mindfulness-for-kids>

*With kids, the goal of mindfulness is to help them move beyond thoughts of the past or future that may be draining, negative, or worrisome. Instead, it's giving children the tools they need to connect with what's going on in their world at the present moment. It's about empowering them to accept their current thoughts and feelings and to form healthy habits for coping with all the big emotions they may have.*

In this site there are strategies children from toddlers to teenagers.

For example for school age children: **Guided imagery is useful**

School-age kids still may have trouble with traditional meditation. Using guided imagery exercises helps bring their focus to their thoughts and breath in a fun way.

If your child has trouble with long exercises, consider starting out with something short and building over time as your child adapts to the practice. It can be a short simple activity where you place a small object in a child's hand and you ask them to look closely at it. Then get them to tell you about it – its colours, size, smell, etc. It could be a pebble, a flower, a strawberry. It is just about settling them down and getting them to focus and relax.

### 18 Mindfulness Games, Worksheets and Activities for Kids

Website: [positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-kids](https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-kids)