



Self-help Guide
to Mindfulness
for Teens

This self-help guide is designed to give you some ideas of how to practice mindfulness, which may help in reducing worries and managing other difficult emotions.

There is no right or wrong way to do this so work at your own pace. It may be useful to this with someone close to you or share parts of this.



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?



- ✚ Mindfulness can be described as simply paying attention and noticing what is happening right now.
- ✚ This means taking notice of your senses: what you see, smell, taste, and also how your body feels.
- ✚ Emotions can be felt through your body during this time; such as a tightness in your chest or feeling really light and relaxed.
- ✚ Mindfulness is also about noticing what your mind is doing, noticing your thoughts without judgment.

WHY SHOULD I TRY MINDFULNESS?

- ✚ When you stop to notice what is happening around you, you begin to focus on your senses. This can help you to calm down when you are angry, upset or experiencing difficulties in managing emotions.
- ✚ Mindfulness is a basic life skill that can help you to manage and cope with tough emotions. It has been proven to be very helpful for young people that have a lot of worries and anxiety.

HOW DOES IT WORK?



- ✚ Mindfulness begins with paying attention to your breathing to help focus on the here and now (not what might have been worrying you).
- ✚ This is to help you become aware of your thoughts and observe these without immediately reacting to them.
- ✚ The goal is to find your “still quiet place”; becoming aware, observing your thoughts and feelings and beginning to choose how you react to these (choosing your behavior).

NOW FOR THE SCIENCE BIT

- ✚ Research has shown that mindfulness can help to strengthen the brain particularly against anxiety. It can help change the brain just like exercise helps change our bodies.
- ✚ Mindfulness does this in 2 ways:
 1. It strengthens the connections in our brains; particularly between the amygdala (main part of the brain for emotions) and the prefrontal cortex (functions such as planning and reasoning). The stronger the connections the better we become at calming ourselves down.



OTHER MINDFUL EXERCISES FOR YOU TO TRY

✚ Choose one of these mindfulness task cards to do each day:

<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Place your hand on your belly. Take 10 deep breaths and notice your hand moving up and down as you breathe.</p>	<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Sit very still and notice one thing that you can see, hear, feel, taste and smell.</p>
<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Close your eyes and spend one minute thinking about the happiest day of your life. Try to remember as much about that day as you can.</p>	<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Close your eyes and think about how you are feeling. Happy? Sad? Mad? Scared? Excited? Something else? Think about how you know you are feeling this way.</p>
<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Close your eyes and sit quietly. Notice the way that your clothes feel on your body. Notice your shirt, pants and shoes. Do you notice anything you didn't notice before?</p>	<p>Mindfulness Activity Card</p> <hr/> <p>Sit quietly and place a small object in your hand. A pencil, eraser, or something else. Notice how heavy the object is. Think about what it feels like in your hand. Notice one new thing about this object.</p>

BREATH STAR

1. Spread one hand out like a star.
2. Use the index finger on your other hand to trace the outline of your star hand.
3. Take a deep breath in as you move your tracing finger to the top of your thumb.
4. Breathe out as you move your tracing finger down between your thumb and first finger.
5. Take another breath in as you move to the top of your first finger.
6. Breathe out as you move down between your first and second fingers.
7. Continue this pattern, tracing each of your fingers until you have taken five slow, deep breaths.
8. Repeat on the other hand.



Just One Breath

BREATHING ACTIVITY



Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.

Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.



Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.

Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.



The Worry Waterfall

Listen to your mind and body.



Notice the worry.



Take a deep breath.



Ask yourself, "What am I worrying about?"



Ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to make the worry go away?"



No



Let go of the worry. It is out of your control.



Yes



Make a plan.

What can I do? When can I do it?



Now!



Do it! Take action.



Let go of the worry.



Reflect on how you feel.



Later!



Decide when.



Let go of the worry.



Reflect on how you feel.