

Mindfulness in our nurseries and schools

A number of nurseries and schools across Stirling Council have started to introduce mindfulness approaches, supported by the Educational Psychology service.

The aim of this project is to improve the long term emotional health and wellbeing of children, based on the robust evidence base surrounding the use of mindfulness skills. Each establishment will also have its own rationale for introducing mindfulness to their staff and children, and plans to track and evidence the impact of the project.

Useful links

- Mindfulness at Croftamie Nursery video <https://youtu.be/eoRBQygFLrM>
- Education Scotland – learning at home – supporting health and wellbeing – mental, emotional, physical & social wellbeing <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>
- NHS mindfulness <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mindfulness.aspx>
- Hands on Scotland http://www.handsontotland.co.uk/flourishing_and_wellbeing_in_children_and_young_people/mindfulness/mindfulness.html

For further information, please contact your school or nursery in the first instance.

Mindfulness

An information leaflet for parents and carers in Stirling Council



"[Mindfulness is]... the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment"

Jon Kabat-Zin

What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is a mental skill that can be developed and perfected which gives power and strength to your mind.
- Mindfulness teaches us how to pay attention to what is happening now, rather than thinking about the past or worrying about what is in the future.
- Practising mindfulness helps us to develop skills in observing our own thoughts, emotions and experiences without feeling compelled to act upon them. This allows us greater choice and control.

What are the benefits of Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness has the potential to enhance children’s attention and focus, and improve memory, self-acceptance, self-management skills and self-understanding.”

Hooker & Fodor (2008)



**Children’s Service:
Educational Psychology
Service**

“We need some space. We need it to be quiet, because you won’t hear what your brain says [otherwise]”
Nursery child

Research has found that practising mindfulness can have a positive impact on:

- Regulating emotions and behaviour
- Anxiety and depression
- Sleep
- Improving relationships, communication and social interactions
- Executive functions (ability to organise tasks, direct attention, manage time, set priorities and make decisions)

Neuroscience studies have found that practicing mindfulness can lead to more connections in areas of the brain associated with learning, memory, self-awareness, compassion & understanding your own thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness can make stress and anxiety reactions less automatic.

Mindfulness can change your brain!

How can I practice Mindfulness with my child?

The easiest way to start practicing mindfulness is to focus on your breathing. Young children often need a physical object to help them to understand their breathing. The following exercise uses a soft toy to introduce children to the idea:

Belly Breathing

Choose your favourite toy.
Lie down on your back.
Get comfortable.
Now, put your toy on your belly.
Look at the toy on your belly.
Let’s slowly breathe in.
Let’s slowly breathe out.
Watch your toy go up and down.
Slowly breathe in again.
Slowly breathe out again.
Watch your toy go up and down.
Now, let’s try breathing with our eyes closed.
Close your eyes.
Who felt their belly go up and down?

Over time, children can learn to use this breathing technique without the toy, when they are worried or upset.

See the video from Croftamie Nursery for Belly Breathing in action Hands on Scotland website for more ideas for activities with children (link on back page).