

Mindfulness Activities for the Home



The world needs mindfulness; and in this fast paced, stressed and distracted world, the children of today probably need it more than any previous generation.

Prof Craig Hassed

Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, everyday life has changed and will continue to change for most people in the United Kingdom and the rest of the world. Children may struggle with significant adjustments to their routines (e.g., schools and child care closures, social distancing, home confinement), which may interfere with their sense of structure, predictability, and security. Young people—even infants and toddlers—are keen observers of people and environments, and they notice and react to stress in their parents and other caregivers, peers, and community members. They may ask direct questions about what is happening now or what will happen in the future and may behave differently in reaction to strong feelings (e.g., fear, worry, sadness, anger) about the pandemic and related conditions. Children also may worry about their own safety and the safety of their loved ones. Introducing and/or developing a mindfulness practice with your children at home can have huge benefits to their emotional health during these difficult and uncertain times.

In order to help parents and carers do this, the Educational Psychology Service has created this document which includes mindfulness activities you can try at home.

What is Mindfulness?

There are many interpretations of what mindfulness is, and it means different things to different people. A universal definition from Jon Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness as ‘paying attention on purpose in a particular way: in the present moment, non-judgementally’. It is a way of being that gradually cultivates more calm and awareness in our lives. Research has shown that after a short period of practising mindfulness there is increased activity in the part of the brain to do with emotional regulation, so we can see how practice can help us to be more in touch with life without being overwhelmed. The activities included in this document are built upon the following 6 principles of Mindfulness:

Awareness – being aware of whatever you are experiencing in the present moment as you go through your daily life. What do you feel in your body? What are you seeing, hearing, doing right now?

Curiosity – the desire to learn or know about anything. When you’re curious, problem solving becomes easier because you see more options, paths and ways of solving a problem than your non-curious counterparts. You question more; you gather more opinions; you don’t stop at the first solution – which can lead to greater possibilities.

Kindness – deal gently, kindly and patiently with yourself and others. Rather than judging, or condemning, really listen and try to understand your own and other people’s experiences. Kindness is about allowing yourself to connect and empathise with your own and others’ experiences.

Acceptance – a willingness to see things the way they are. By fully accepting what each moment offers, we are able to experience life much more completely. By accepting things as they are we don’t try to force or change reality to fit our beliefs.

Gratitude – the practice of gratitude sharpens our attention for the good and the positive in our lives, which helps us appreciate things that we tend to take for granted.

Resilience – the ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity.

Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice that strengthens and develops important cognitive skills related to learning, such as attention, concentration and memory. It provides a

foundational awareness and understanding of thoughts, emotions and behaviours and how to self-regulate. It also reduces emotional reactivity, behavioural issues, anxiety and depression. Mindfulness also provides a calmer and more peaceful environment which is very beneficial to the whole family.

Mindfulness at Home

Whether your children are learning mindfulness in school or not, you can try to have a mindfulness practice at home. This should be done daily, or every odd day, at around about the same time, where possible.

If this will be your children’s first go at mindfulness it’s better to begin by explaining to them what mindfulness is. You can watch the following video together https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k_R7R1gldA and start by doing some mindful breathing.

Below, you’ll find several other examples of activities you can all try after having explained mindfulness to your children. When possible, engage the whole family in the mindfulness practice as this will have a positive impact on all of you.

Suggestion: Make a plan similar to the following one and have it on your fridge door (you don’t necessarily have to do the activities in the specific order they are outlined in this document but try to do at least one a day (or every odd day) as previously mentioned)

May 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 10h Introducing
2 10h Mindful Seeing 	3 10h30 Rainbow walk 	4 10h Mindful Colouring 	5 10h30 Mindful Eating 			

If your children are older, you may find that some apps like Headspace or Calm are useful to guide them through their mindful practice. More apps are mentioned on the last page of this document.

Information and activities adapted from Educational Psychology Service, Zen Schools programme.

Activity: Mindful Seeing

Aim: Awareness

Best for: Children age 8+

Approximate time: 5 min

Materials Required: Outdoor space



Instructions:

1. Find a comfortable space outdoors if you can, or this can be adapted for indoors as well.
2. Ask your child to sit quietly and look at everything there is to see. Ask them to notice the colours, the patterns, the shapes, the movements.
3. They should try and see the world from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with these sights.
4. If you notice them becoming distracted gently remind them to just be aware of the world around them.
5. After 5 min ask them what they've noticed. (The colour of the bird, the shape of the tree, the flower moving with the breeze, etc.)

Activity: Rainbow walk

Aim: Awareness

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 20 min

Materials Required: None



Instructions:

1. This is a simple activity that will teach children to be mindful of his or her surroundings, before you begin, have a quick discussion to your child of the colours of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet).
2. Then step outside if you can. Alternatively try adapting this for indoors.
3. Throughout your walk outside or around the house, ask your child to find something to represent each colour of the rainbow. They can take a small notebook with them to jot down their answers, or can simply take note of them in their mind.
4. Depending on the surroundings, some colours will be more difficult to locate than others; this is part of the fun! Try to keep walking until they've found an example of every colour.
5. Afterwards, ask how it felt to be mindful of the surroundings. Was it fun? Was it calming?

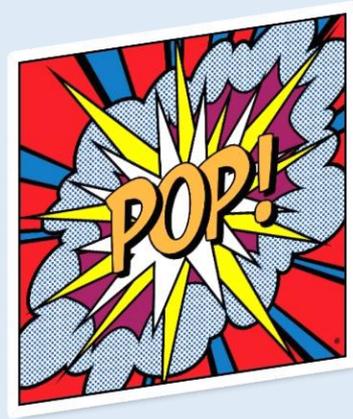
Activity: Pop and Breathe

Aim: Awareness

Best for: Children age 6+

Approximate time: Variable

Materials Required: None



Instructions:

This can be done anywhere and can last for 30 seconds, 3 minutes or whatever time you feel is appropriate. With your child, try to get into the habit of pausing, tuning into the environment that we are in by noticing the sounds, the light, colours, etc. Then we can bring attention to sensations such as temperature, feelings of contact with the floor or sensations in the hands. Notice what is happening in the body – is it tired? Restless? Nervous? Encourage your child to notice how they are feeling without judging and then allow 3 or 4 mindful breaths before returning to the activities of the day.

P: Pause a moment – stop whatever you are doing.

O: Open your senses – notice what you see, smell, hear, feel

P: Pay attention to what is going on in your body and how you are feeling.

BREATHE – and enjoy 3 mindful breaths.

Adapted from: [Mindfulness for Parents programme by Veronica Ellis and Lorna Walker](#)

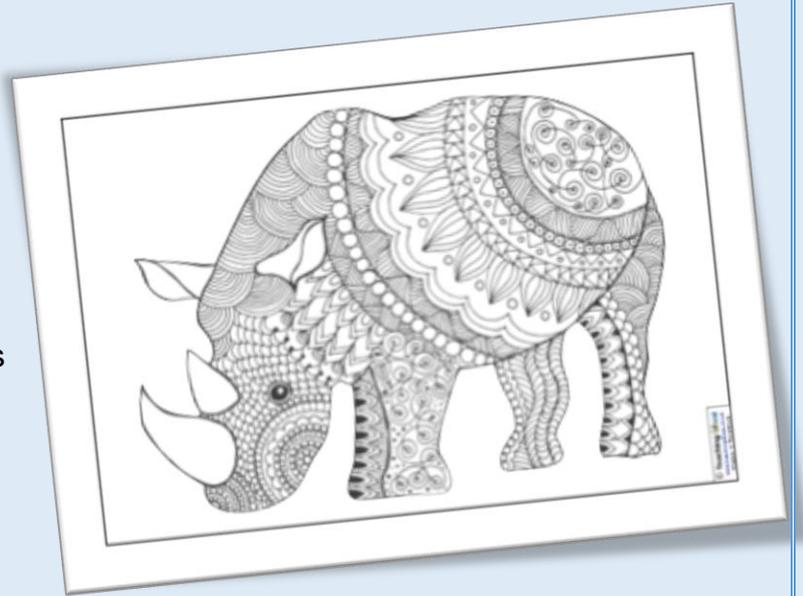
Activity: Mindful Colouring

Aim: Awareness

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 15min

Materials Required: Colouring sheets



Instructions:

- Let your child colour the printouts (Appendix A-F) as a way to keep calm.
- Ask them to let go of their thoughts and just be aware of the present moment by colouring the printouts using different colours or different shades of one colour.
- Have the printouts readily available in the home for them to pick up when they feel they need some calm.

Activity: Mindful Eating

Aim: Curiosity

Best for: Children aged 5+

Approximate time: 10 minutes

Materials Required: Maltesers



Instructions:

The mindful eating meditation is a great way to practice mindfulness through the process of eating. You will need to verbally guide your child through this meditation.

1. At first, watch this YouTube clip with the child:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guXTS1YFf-0> to model the process and show your child exactly what do.
2. Then, tell them to pick up their malteser and look at it. Ask them to think about its size and texture.
3. Direct them to feel the malteser between their fingers. Is it soft or hard? What does the weight of the malteser feel like in their palm?
4. Have them bring the malteser to their nose. Does its smell remind them of anything? How does it smell different from other foods?
5. Ask them to bring the malteser close to their ear and to squish it gently. Is there a sound to be heard?
6. Next, tell them to put the malteser on their tongue...but tell them not to take a bite just yet! Does the texture feel different when it's in their mouth compared to when they've held it in their hand? Is there more than one flavour?
7. Ask them to bite into the malteser, and to pay attention to the sound it makes (if you're doing this in a group, **ask all children to bite into their maltesers at the same time**, they tend to find the noise it makes funny).
8. Finally, tell them to swallow the malteser. Ask them to determine what flavours are left lingering in their mouth.

Adapted from 60 Mindfulness Minutes, The Nurture Group Network

Activity: Mirror of Erised

Aim: Curiosity

Best for: Children age 10+

Approximate time: 10/15 minutes

Materials Required: Mirror, Post-it notes



Instructions:

1. The Mirror of Erised is a special mirror featured on the Harry Potter series, which reflects the deepest desires of those who look at it.
2. Ask your child to look into a mirror and to think about their deepest desires.
3. Ask them to write on a post-it note what came out of this exercise and to think about one thing that they can do to see this desire come true.

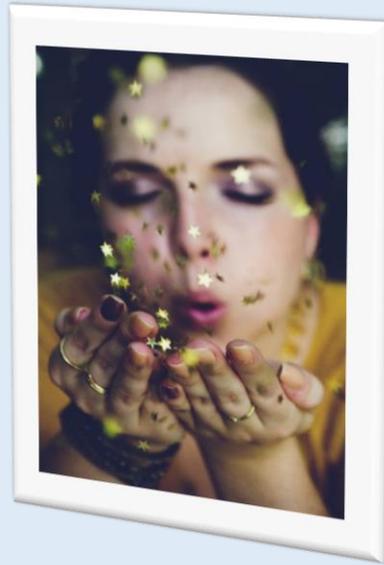
Activity: Wishing upon a star

Aim: Kindness

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 10 min

Materials Required: Post-It notes



Instructions:

1. Ask your child to imagine they could see a falling star and they get to make two wishes. One for themselves and one for someone they care about.
2. Have them write this down on a piece of paper and think of ways they can make the wishes come true.
3. Tell them to pay attention to how it feels to wish these kind of things for themselves and others.

Activity: Blow the unkindness away

Aim: Kindness

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 5 min

Materials Required: Bubbles



Instructions:

1. Ask your child to think about unkind thoughts or unhelpful thoughts they might have.
2. Ask them to blow them into bubbles and watch them drift away.

Adapted from 60 Mindfulness Minutes, The Nurture Group Network

Activity: Random acts of kindness

Aim: Kindness

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 10min

Materials Required: None



Instructions:

1. Ask your child to think about how they can be kind today.
2. Give examples: Smile to someone, give a compliment, open a door, help with a chore, send someone a letter, etc.
3. Ask them to commit to one act of kindness today.

Activity: Emotions Board

Aim: Acceptance and awareness of feelings and emotions

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 20min

Materials Required: Paper, pencil and/or colours



Instructions:

1. Ask your child to close their eyes and think about how they are feeling. You might need to offer some words to give them ideas (happy, disappointed, silly, scared, angry, etc.).
2. Once they've done the thinking bit, ask them to draw how they are feeling.
3. Invite them to name their emotions and write the word on the picture (if they are comfortable with it).
4. Display the drawings on an Emotions Board which can be stuck up on the wall.

Adapted from <https://www.mother.ly/child/ease-your-anxious-child-6-simple-mindfulness-exercises-to-try-today>

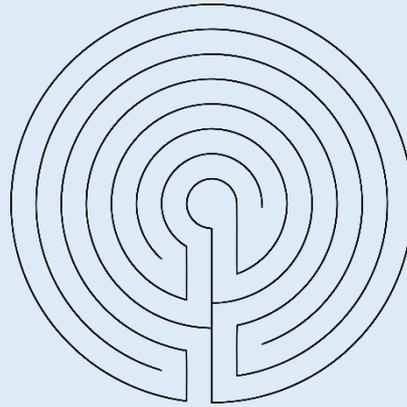
Activity: Finger Labyrinths

Aim: Acceptance

Best for: Children age 8+

Approximate time: 10min

Materials Required: Labyrinths



Instructions:

1. Ask your child to take deep breaths and begin to relax and focus on the entrance to the labyrinth (Appendix G).
2. Ask them to place their pointer finger from their non-dominant hand on the entrance of the labyrinth. If they find it too awkward at first, they can use their dominant hand. However, over time, prompt them to use their non-dominant hand. This helps keep the mind focused on the meditation due to the challenge it presents.
3. Ask them to slowly trace the pattern of the labyrinth with their finger allowing their mind to clear from extra thoughts and focus solely on following the path of the labyrinth.
4. Prompt them to “walk” to the centre of the labyrinth and rest momentarily, taking deep breaths and observing how they are feeling. Reinforce that it’s ok to feel different feelings, even sadness or anger.
5. Give them a minute and ask them to retrace their path out of the labyrinth.
6. Prompt them to sit back, breathe deeply, relax and observe how they are feeling again.

Activity: Glitter bottle

Mindfulness Principle: Acceptance

Best for: Children 5+

Approximate time: 10 mins

Materials Required: 1 bottle or jar, glitter, glue, water

Instructions: Make up glitter bottles with children using as much glitter as you wish. You can even add sequins, shells or pebbles.

What you need

A 500ml bottle

Warm water

60ml glitter glue

3 drops of gel food colouring

60g-80g glitter

Method

1. Add warm water to your bottle until it reaches a third of the way up.
2. Add glitter glue and stir until it combines with the water.
3. Add 3 drops of food colouring and stir.
4. Pour in the glitter, add sequins if you wish.
5. Top up the bottle with warm water and stir.
6. Pop the lid on and shake!



Once it's done, shake the bottle vigorously then let it settle. Explain that the bottle represents our mind while the glitter represents all our thoughts and feelings. Like the glitter in the water, when we get caught up in our thoughts and emotions, it can be difficult to see clearly, which impacts how we see the world and how we make decisions. If left unchecked, our thoughts, stress and strong emotions have a tendency to build momentum. Practising mindfulness will help us become aware of this process, create some space between our thoughts, emotions and reactions, and allow ourselves the opportunity to settle.

Often when something is not right and we take the time to sit and let the mind settle, eventually our mind will become clearer and more still, just like the glitter in the bottle

Adapted from 'Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom – A practical guide to teaching happiness' by Adrian Bethune, 2018

Activity: Flower breathing

Aim: Acceptance

Best for: Children 5+

Approximate time: 5 minutes

Materials Required: None



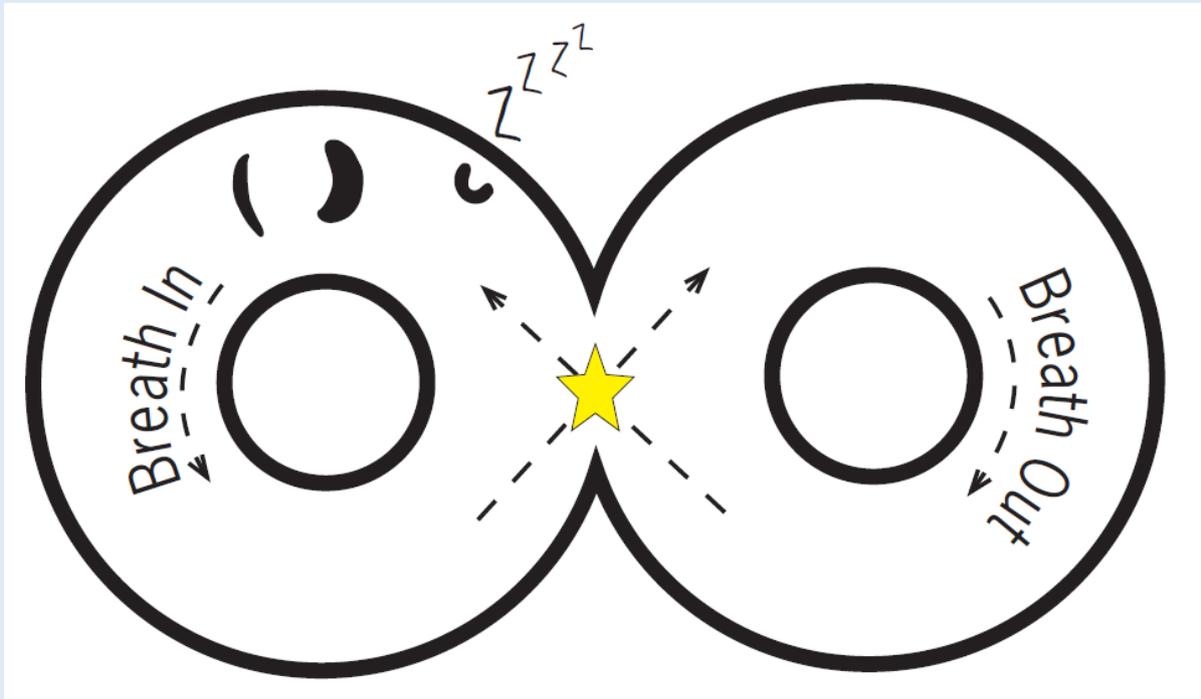
Instructions:

1. Ask your child to sit still and quiet and to focus on their breathing. Prompt them to just breathe in through their nose as if they were smelling a flower and out through their mouths pretending to be blowing a leaf.
2. Lazy 8 Breathing and The 6 Sides of Breathing are exercises you might like to try aswell.

Note:

Use music to help your child focus on their breathing. You can find examples of [Tibetan Singing Bowls](#) on You Tube.

Lazy 8 Breathing

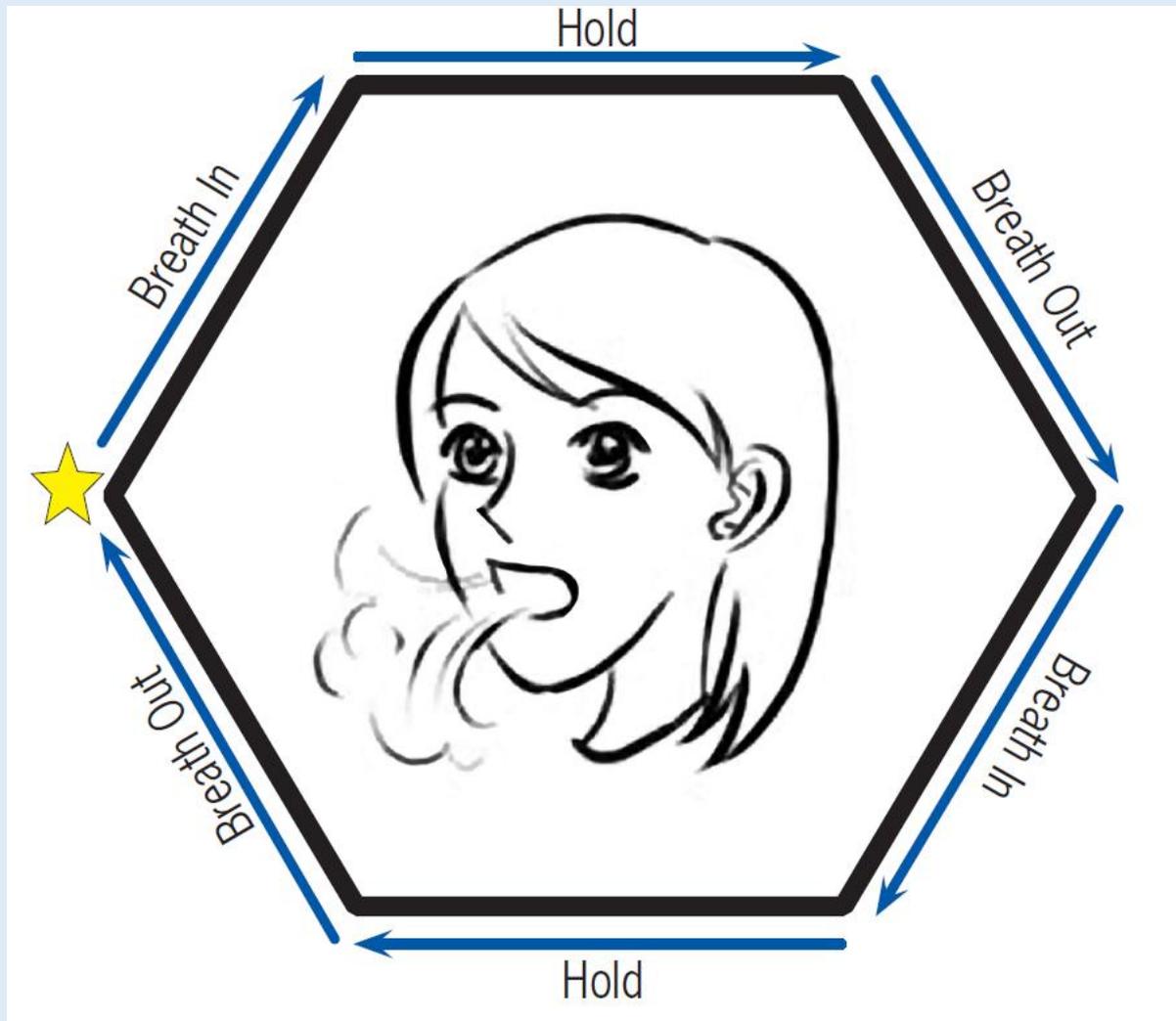


Trace the Lazy 8 with your finger starting at the star and taking a deep breath in.

As you cross over to other side of the Lazy 8, slowly let your breath out.

Continue breathing around the Lazy 8 until you have a calm body and mind.

The 6 Sides of Breathing



Starting at the yellow star, trace with your finger around the six sides of the hexagon, taking a deep breath in, feeling your shoulders rise as the air fills you.

Trace over the next side as you hold your breath for a moment.

Slowly breathe out as you trace the third side of the hexagon.

Continue tracing around the bottom three sides of the hexagon as you complete another deep breath.

Continue the 6 sides of breathing cycle until you feel calm and relaxed.

Adapted from Kuypers, L. (2011). *The Zones of Regulation* Think Social Publishing

Activity: Gratitude Jar

Aim: Gratitude

Best for: Children age 5+

Approximate time: 15 minutes

Materials Required: Jar, Post-it notes, glitter, etc.



Instructions:

1. Sit down together with your child and discuss the meaning of gratitude.
2. Then, if they are old enough, ask them to write down on Post-it notes things they are grateful for and how they are expressing their thanks. If they aren't old enough then you can help them with the writing, or they can draw pictures.
3. When ready, fill a jar with gratitude. Any jar will do ... but you could make the jar really nice by writing on it or adding stickers and glitter.
4. Go through the Post-it notes with them and have a discussion on how many things they have to be grateful for.
5. You can do this weekly. You may also like to try creating a positivity jar where children write down what the best part of their day was or a positive message about themselves.

Variations:

You may like to pin small gratitude notes on a wall in their bedroom.

Activity: Expecto Patronum

Aim: Gratitude, inner peace

Best for: Children age 10+

Approximate time: 5 minutes

Materials Required: Room



Instructions:

1. Has your child heard about the defensive charm (expecto patronum) used in the Harry Potter books? If they haven't, explain it's a defensive charm used by wizards to protect them against Dementors by summoning one's happiest memories.
2. Ask them to close their eyes and think about a happy memory they have.
3. Prompt them to think about the smells, sounds, textures and/or tastes associated with that memory.
4. Give them 2 or 3 minutes and then ask them to open their eyes and describe how they are feeling.
5. Tell them that this happy memory can be summoned every time they feel sad, afraid or angry.

Activity: Journaling

Aim: Gratitude

Best for: Children age 6+

Approximate time: 15 minutes

Materials Required: Journal



Instructions:

Encourage your child to keep a gratitude journal and to write one or more things they are grateful for in it, every day. There are examples of ready-made gratitude journals available to buy online e.g. www.happyselfjournal.com or you could ask your child to pick out a favourite notebook and make their own.

Adapted from: <https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>

Activity: Make NICE moments REAL

Aim: Gratitude

Best for: Children age 6+

Approximate time: 5 minutes

Materials Required: None



Instructions:

- N:** Notice that we are having a good time.
- I:** Intensify the feeling by allowing ourselves to feel it fully. Make it more vivid by staying with it.
- C:** Connecting with the body and let the feeling sink into the body – noticing the sensations and how it feels in the body.
- E:** Enjoying and remembering how good this feels.

This is a helpful acronym to remind you and your child to savour the good times. When we pay attention and intensify the feeling by connecting with the body it stays with us for a longer time. It gets ‘logged’ into the body and can become quite a strong memory. As we do this we are also starting to create new neural pathways for happiness. We start to make happiness a habit!

Adapted from: [Mindfulness for Parents programme by Veronica Ellis and Lorna Walker](#)

Activity: Gratitude letter

Aim: Gratitude, inner peace

Best for: Children age 6+

Approximate time: 15 minutes

Materials Required: Pen and paper



Instructions:

Encourage or help your child to write a gratitude letter to a friend or relative.

Remember to include why or what it is that they are grateful for.

Adapted from: <https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>

Activity: Ice-Cube Exercise

Mindfulness Principle: Resilience

Best for: Children 8+

Approximate time: 10 minutes

Materials Required: 1 ice-cube and a cup



This is a fun and powerful way to demonstrate to your child how mindfulness can help them when they experience difficult emotions. This then enables them to create more space and freedom, regaining their self-control and helping to develop their resilience.

Instructions:

Give your child a cup with an ice-cube inside and explain that you will be doing the exercise together. **The two main rules are that they can put the ice cube back in the cup at any time and they must also put it back in immediately when they are asked.**

When you are ready your child must put the ice cube in the palm of their hand, paying attention to the sensations on their hand, in the meantime holding the cup underneath to catch any drops. Check how your child is reacting and after a short period of time ask them to put the ice back in the cup. Discuss what they noticed.

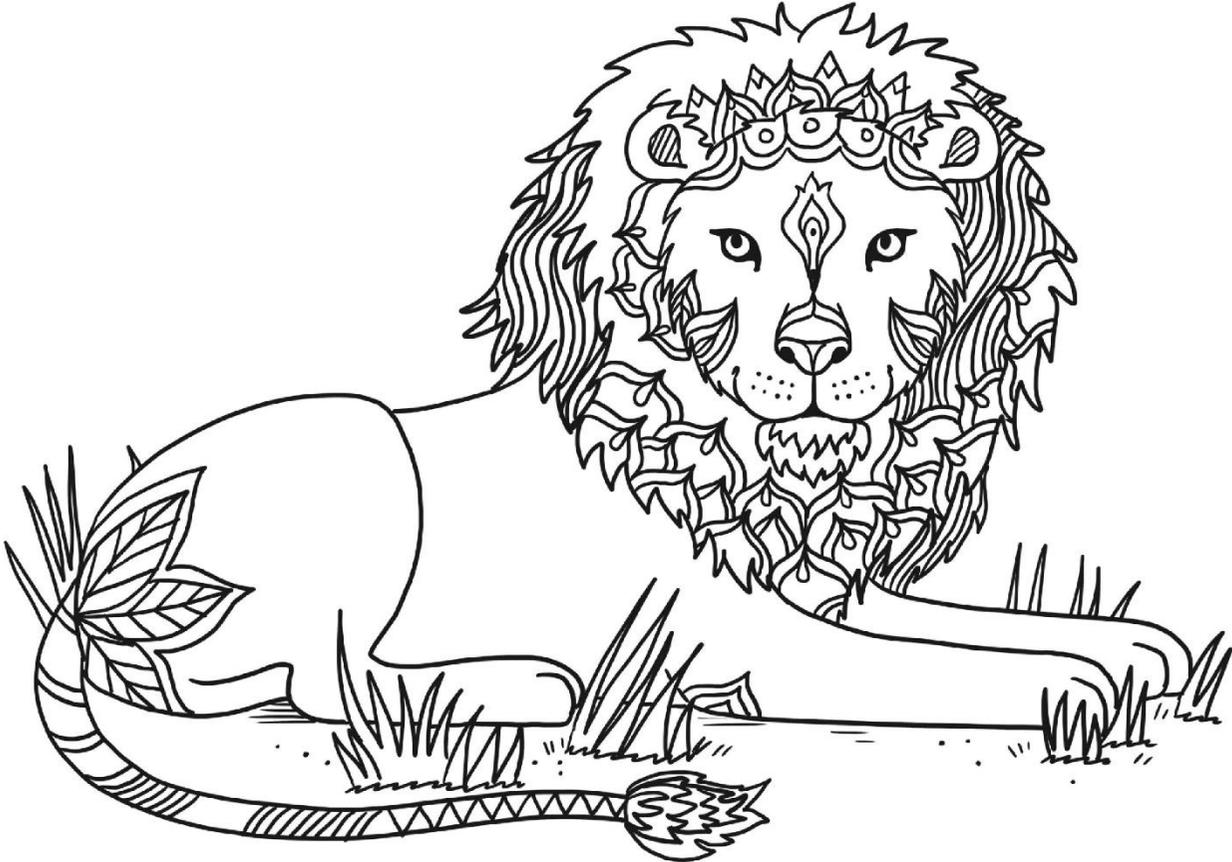
Now try the exercise again, but this time with a *mindful attitude*. This means paying attention to the breath, perhaps counting the breaths, and really *feeling* the sensations without reacting. Hopefully they can see that they can hold the ice cube for longer. Discuss what they noticed and how it was different from the first time, in the mind and in the body. Although the ice cube was cold, wet and made our palms a bit numb, when we are being mindful and concentrating on our breathing we become more resilient and able to hold on for longer. Discuss the fact that the same techniques can be used when something scary, worrying or even painful happens. We can try not to over-react and use our breath and awareness of our body to stay calm. This can help to stop ourselves from being too overwhelmed.

Adapted from Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme

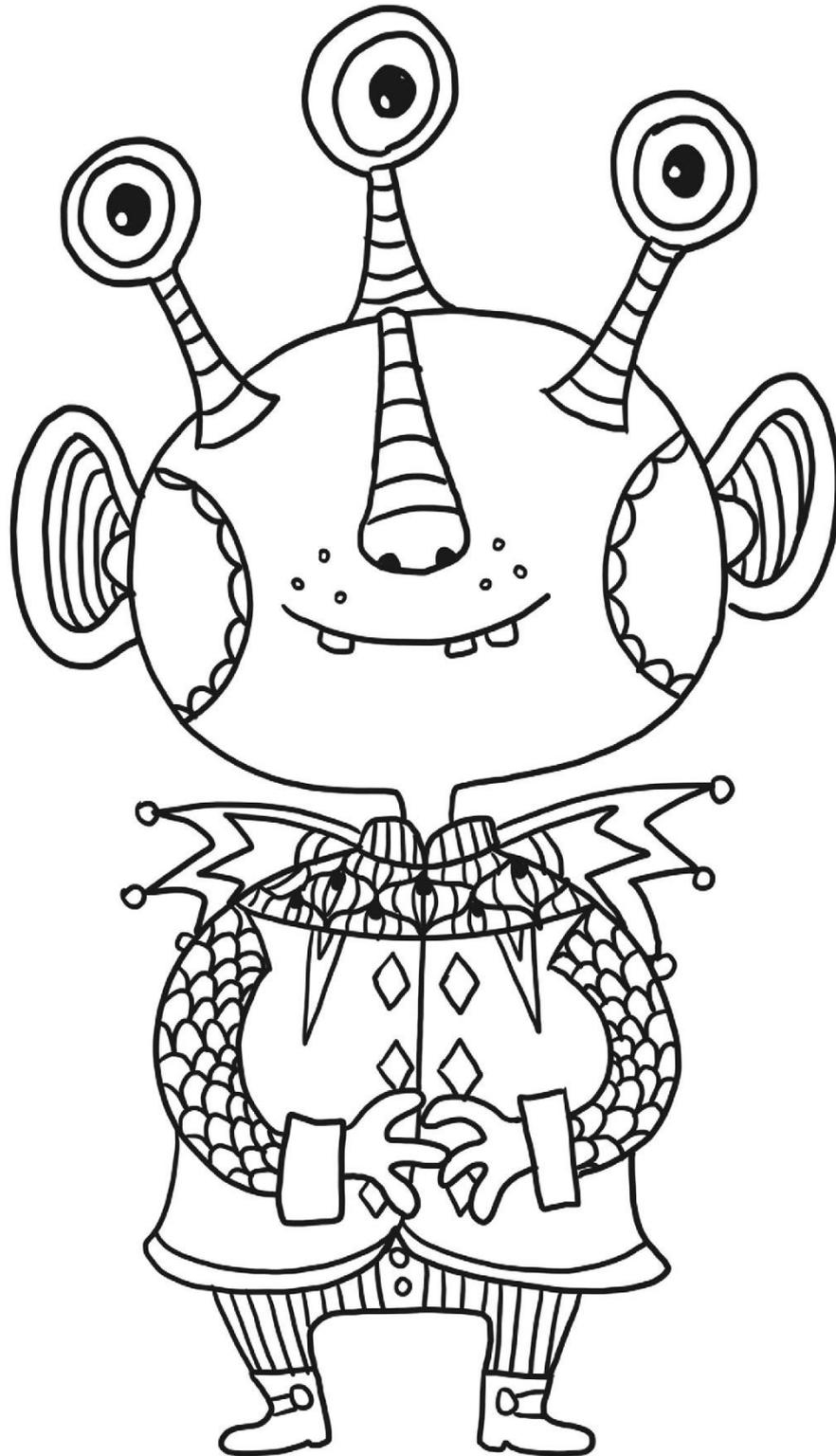
Appendix A: Dinosaur Colouring



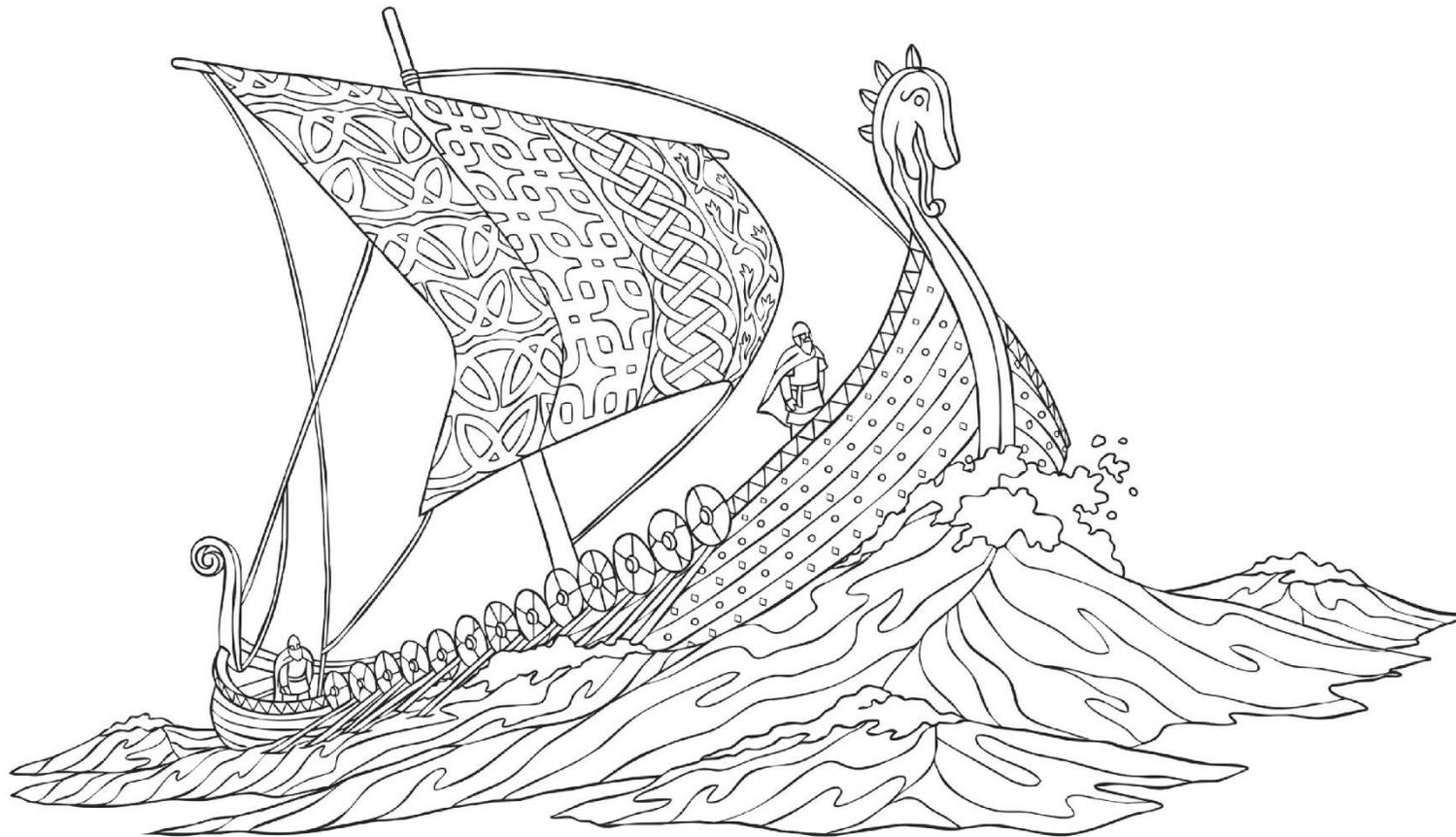
Appendix B: Jungle Colouring



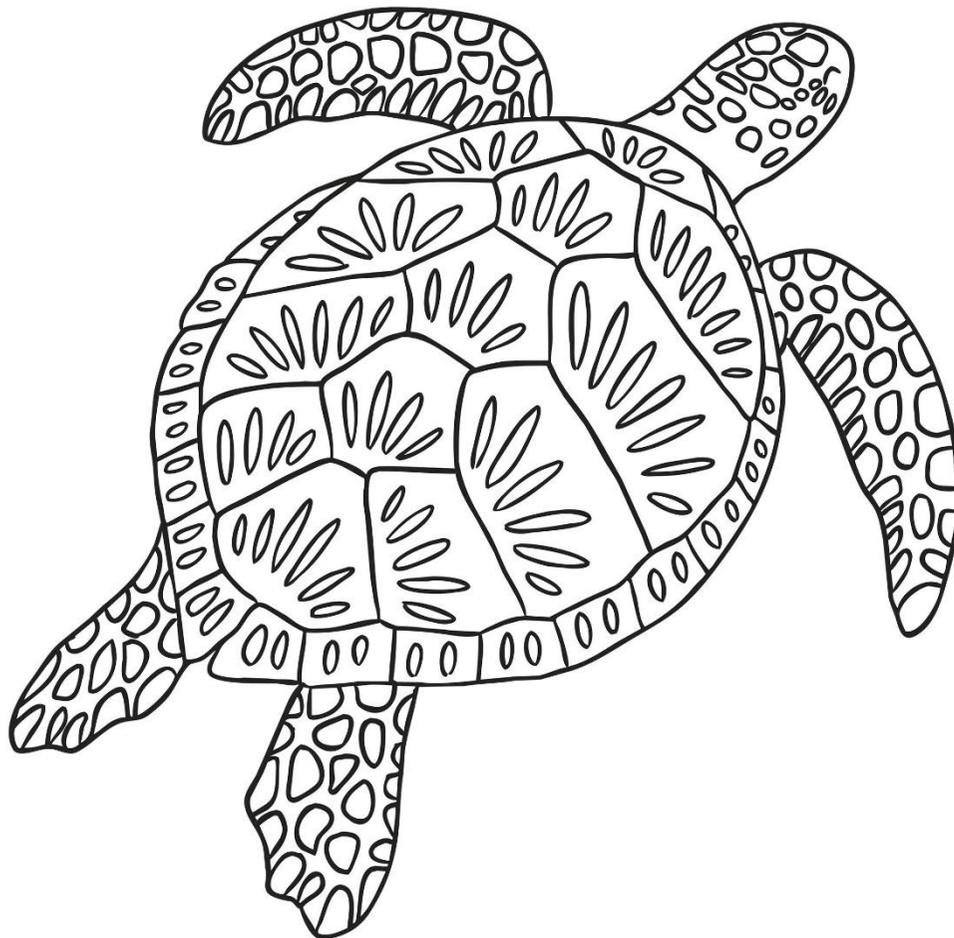
Appendix C: Space Colouring



Appendix D: Viking Colouring



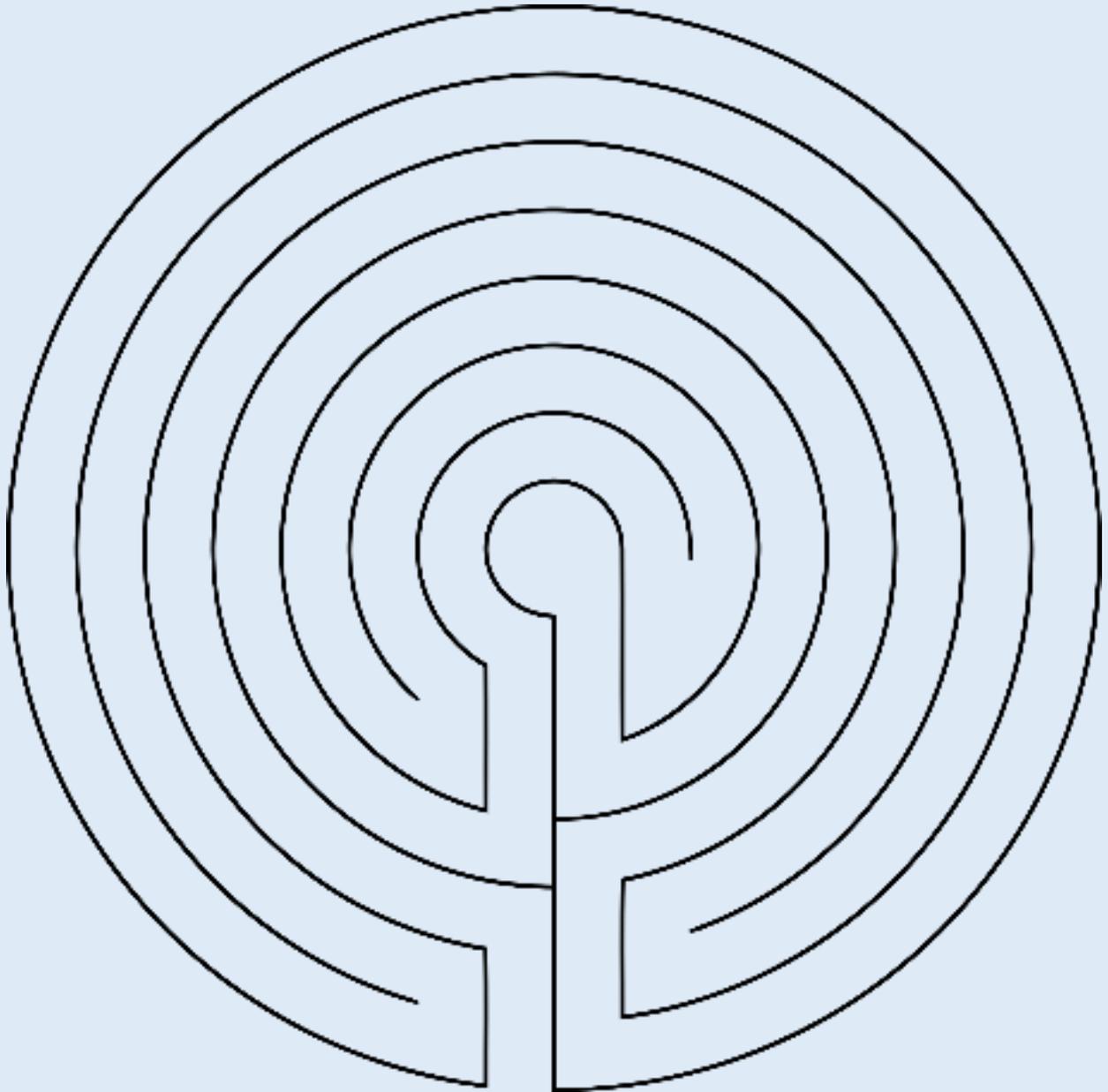
Appendix E: Under the Sea Colouring



Appendix F: Fairytale Colouring



Appendix G: Finger Labyrinth



Video Clips

The following video clips talk children through calming meditations. You may find it helpful to do these alongside your child as a fun activity.

[Kindness meditation](#) is a 6 minute clip that children can listen to help them relax and learn to be kind to themselves.

[Balloon meditation](#) is a 5 and half minute clip to help us gain control of our stressful energy when it becomes too hard to handle.

[Breathing meditation](#) is a 9 and half minute clip to help children explore their breath in order to remain calm and relaxed.

Apps

The following are links to Apps that may be useful when implementing mindfulness based approaches within in the home.

www.calm.com

www.headspace.com

www.insighttimer.com

www.stopbreathethink.com

www.serenitymeditations.co.uk

www.smilingmind.com.au

[www.weeseeds.co.uk \(for younger children\)](http://www.weeseeds.co.uk)