

Mindfulness Exercises for Children

The Feeling Exercise



Collect a number of interesting objects such as feathers, putty, stones, or anything else that might be interesting to hold. Give each child an object, and ask them to spend a minute just noticing what it feels like in their hand. They can feel the texture, if their object is hard or soft, and the shape. Afterwards, ask the children to describe what they felt. With bigger groups, pair children off to take turns completing the exercise together.

The Seeing Game



Ask the children to spend one minute silently looking around the room. Their goal is to find things in the room that they've never noticed. Maybe there are some big things like a poster or a picture, or just little details like cracks in the ceiling or an interesting pattern on the door. After the minute is up ask the kids to share the most interesting new things they noticed.

Ocean Breathing



Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Ask everyone to slowly breathe in through their nose, and then out through their pursed lips (as if they are blowing through a straw). Point out that the slow and steady breathing sounds like ocean waves, gently crashing on shore. Let the children continue breathing and making the ocean sound for one to two minutes.

The Power of Listening



Ring a bell, a wind chime, or anything else that creates a long trailing sound. Ask each child to listen, and silently raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound. After the ringing ends, ask the children to continue listening to any other sounds they can hear for the next minute. When the minute ends, go around the room asking everyone to tell you what sounds they heard.

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Build a Stress Ball



If you're feeling brave, and are prepared to clean up a mess, provide the children with balloons, flour, and funnels to build their own stress balls (you may want to double-layer the balloons). Some other filling options include rice, small beads, or the leftover dots from punched paper. Once the kids have built their own stress balls, try using them with *The Feeling Exercise*.

The Body Squeezing Exercise



Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and ask them to squeeze and relax each of the muscles in their body one-by-one. They should hold each squeeze for about five seconds. After releasing the squeeze, ask the kids to pay attention to how it feels when they relax. Children understand this exercise better if you help them visualize how they can squeeze a particular muscle using imagery, such as the following:

1. Curl your toes tight like you are picking up a pencil with your feet.
2. Tense your legs by pretending like you are standing on your tippy-toes, trying to look over a fence.
3. Suck in your stomach as if you are trying to slide through a narrow opening.
4. Make fists with your hands and pretend like you are trying to squeeze all of the juice out of an orange.
5. Pretend like a bug landed on your nose, and you're trying to get it off without using your hands. Try to scrunch your face and move your jaw to make it fly away!

The Five Senses Exercise



Take the children outside if the weather is nice, and have them lie silently in the grass. Begin to call out each of the five senses in turn (sight, smell, sound, taste, touch), and ask the children to notice everything they can with that particular sense, until you call out the next one. This exercise can also work well on walks, and in a number of other situations.