

Make any moment Mindful

Connect with the Smells,
Sounds, sights, tastes &
Sensations around you.

In our Heathland community we encourage each other to use our senses. This helps the practice of engaging in mindful activities with our children. Being mindful is about being in the present and not thinking about the past or the future.

Here are some of the activities you can do with your children to get into the practice of being more mindful.



LISTENING MONDAY

The Sound Count

Close your eyes and count the sounds you hear far away, nearby and inside yourself. Compare what you hear with your child. Notice how much more aware and present you are after doing



SMELLY TUESDAY

Mystery Smells

Present a variety of hidden smelly items (pleasant and unpleasant) and see if your child can guess what they are. Use this activity to activate your child's senses and heighten their



TOUCHING WEDNESDAY

Body Massage

Moving from your head to your feet, take time to massage your body gently and slowly. Do what feels good to both awaken and calm your body. Discuss relaxing feeling words with your child.



LOOKING THURSDAY

I Spy with My Little Eye

Play 'I spy' to help everybody focus together. You could pick items by colour, size, shapes, texture, or distance from you. Practise giving helpful hints and asking thoughtful questions.



BREATHING FRIDAY

Bee Breath

Practise this humming breath to encourage your child to be aware of the sound of their breath inside their head. Cupping both ears at the same time helps to intensify the sound, helping them to focus.

Mindful Listening

Help children understand that they can choose what they listen to and focus on (even when there are many sounds competing for their attention) will help them manage their behaviour, mood and social relationships. Practise it anywhere; the benefits will translate into other settings. “Did you hear the wind whistling through the trees?”

Mindful Smelling

The sense of smell is strongly linked with memory— the memory and smell centres in the brain are located near each other. In addition, different smells impact mood and energy level. Some stuffed animals are now coming with lavender in them to calm a child or help them sleep. How can you use a calming scent to help soothe your child?

Mindful Tasting

Taking time to savour our food and appreciate the flavours, the textures and the temperature is a pleasure that is available to us every day but rarely enjoyed. Eating mindfully has implications for our health and well-being. With obesity on the rise, examining our eating habits can act as a protective factor. “Wow, this carrot is so crunchy and sweet!”

Mindful Seeing

Training your child to observe visual details requires coming from a posture of curiosity and the discipline of really looking at something you think you’ve already seen. Regardless of how familiar we are with something, there is always more to see. “I’ve never noticed how bright the colours in that plate are. Have you?”

Mindful Movement

There are few things in the world that are beyond dispute. One is that exercise and moving our bodies is valuable for all of us. The physical benefits have been chronicled for many years: lower blood pressure, less risk of type 2 diabetes, healthier hearts, etc. Newer on the horizon is a body of research that confirms a significant link between physical exercise and positive academic, mental health and social outcomes. No matter what it looks like for your family, how can you “move a body” every day?

Perspective Taking

We are social beings and our brain is a social brain. As parents, we know that our children must be able to connect with others, feel empathy and understand the perspectives of their peers in order to have a fulfilling life. What we now know from science is that in order to do this, they must first be able to self-reflect and understand their own thoughts, feelings, experiences and impact on others. We can help our children develop perspective taking and empathy, while increasing our own perspective taking skills. Like any skill it requires modelling, practice and feedback.

Remember the story of the “Big Bad Wolf?” Put yourself into the perspective of the Big Bad Wolf character.

- Think of a time you were seen as the “Big Bad Wolf”
 - Why did others see you as the “Wolf?”
 - How did you see yourself at the same time?
 - Write your reflections below:
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Savoring Happiness

“Focusing on happiness is not a frivolous pursuit; it is one of the emotions that can inform the trajectory of our lives.” (Goldie Hawn). We actually have the ability to train our brains to actively savour happy experiences in order to reap the benefits. Focusing on the positive is not just a “sentimental idea” but is actually grounded in current neuroscience. Our brains release dopamine (a feel-good neurotransmitter) when we remember a happy moment in the same way as if we were actually experiencing it. Nurturing this practice overtime actually changes the way our brains are wired and impacts how we feel, think, and behave.

Let's make our own individual Happy Memory Mini-Movies! Together, we are going to savor a personal happy memory, and “see” it behind closed eyes like we would a movie.

- Bring all your attention to your happy experience/memory
- Start the mini-movie in your mind
- See the people involved, notice the things that make you happy. Notice your thoughts and how your body is feeling
- Picture the way your happy memory ends, and focus on how it makes you feel

Taking Mindful Action in the World

When parents are asked what they want for their children, a common answer is “I want them to be happy and I want them to contribute to their community.” Mindful awareness, compassion, optimism and gratitude come to maturity when we integrate these qualities and take mindful action in the world. Volunteering as a family helps kids see themselves as activators and change agents. That pro-active, problem-solving posture can show up in all areas of life going forward. Service-oriented families are more compassionate, less isolated, more tolerant, less egocentric and feel more connected to their communities.

Brainstorm as a family ways you can make a powerful impact for good for another family, a school, your neighborhood, your community, or even across the world. In order to make your family volunteer experience successful, ask yourselves the following:

1. Who are we helping and why?
2. What tasks will we be doing?
3. How much time will we spend?

