



# Self-help Guide to Mindfulness for Teens



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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.



**This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**



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## 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.



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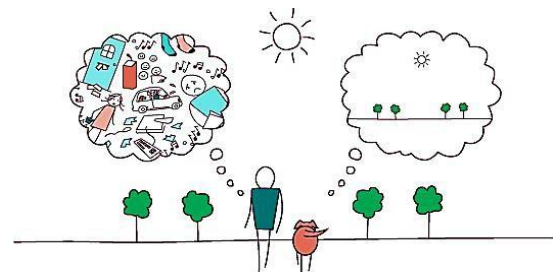


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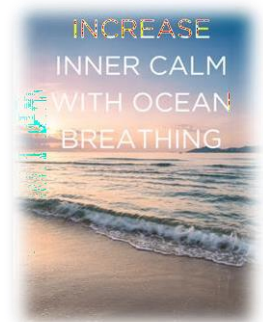
2. Mindfulness teaches our brains to stay in the present, anxiety is usually driven by thoughts of the future. It has also shown to help with ability to focus, improve concentration and help with stress and depression.

## TIME TO PRACTICE!

- ✚ Becoming mindful takes practice, research tells us that our mind tends to wander up 50% of the time, sometimes you might feel like you are on autopilot and may not remember even doing a task or activity-this can be thought of as having our minds full!
- ✚ Practicing mindfulness does not mean that you can stop intrusive thoughts but rather acknowledge that they are there and gently bringing your focus back to the present (what you see, smell, taste, and your breathing).
- ✚ **Walking** is a good way to practice (mindful walking), rather than having your mind-full, try for a couple of minutes to look around you, what do you see, hear, sense. Notice your breathing, take note of the sensations of your feet and arms as you move. If your mind wanders, bring your attention back to the present.
- ✚ You can try mindfulness with anything that you do, from eating crisps, getting dressed or lying on your bed listening to music. When you are doing any of these, or anything else you can think of, try to focus your attention on what you are doing right now. Use all of your senses to help you focus, what do you see, hear, feel, smell and taste as you do this?
- ✚ **Ocean breathing**: find a place to lie down, outside on the grass or on your bed might be good places. Once you are comfortable, slowly breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth (like you would through a straw). Notice how the slow and steady breathing sounds like ocean waves, gently crashing to the shore. Try to do this for one to two minutes.
- ✚ **Remember**: it is natural for your mind to wander even when you are practicing mindfulness! Focusing on the present is not just for when you are practicing mindfulness but a skill that can help when you are feeling anxious (possibly because your thoughts are focused on the future), it can help to simply bring your mind back to the present.
- ✚ **Breathing**: focusing on your breathing can be one of the most effective ways to help with anxiety and stress. Paying attention to your breathing is a useful tool that you can use anywhere and at any time, and can help take your mind of anxious thoughts and can cause your breathing to become slow and deep, helping you relax!



Mind Full, or Mindful?



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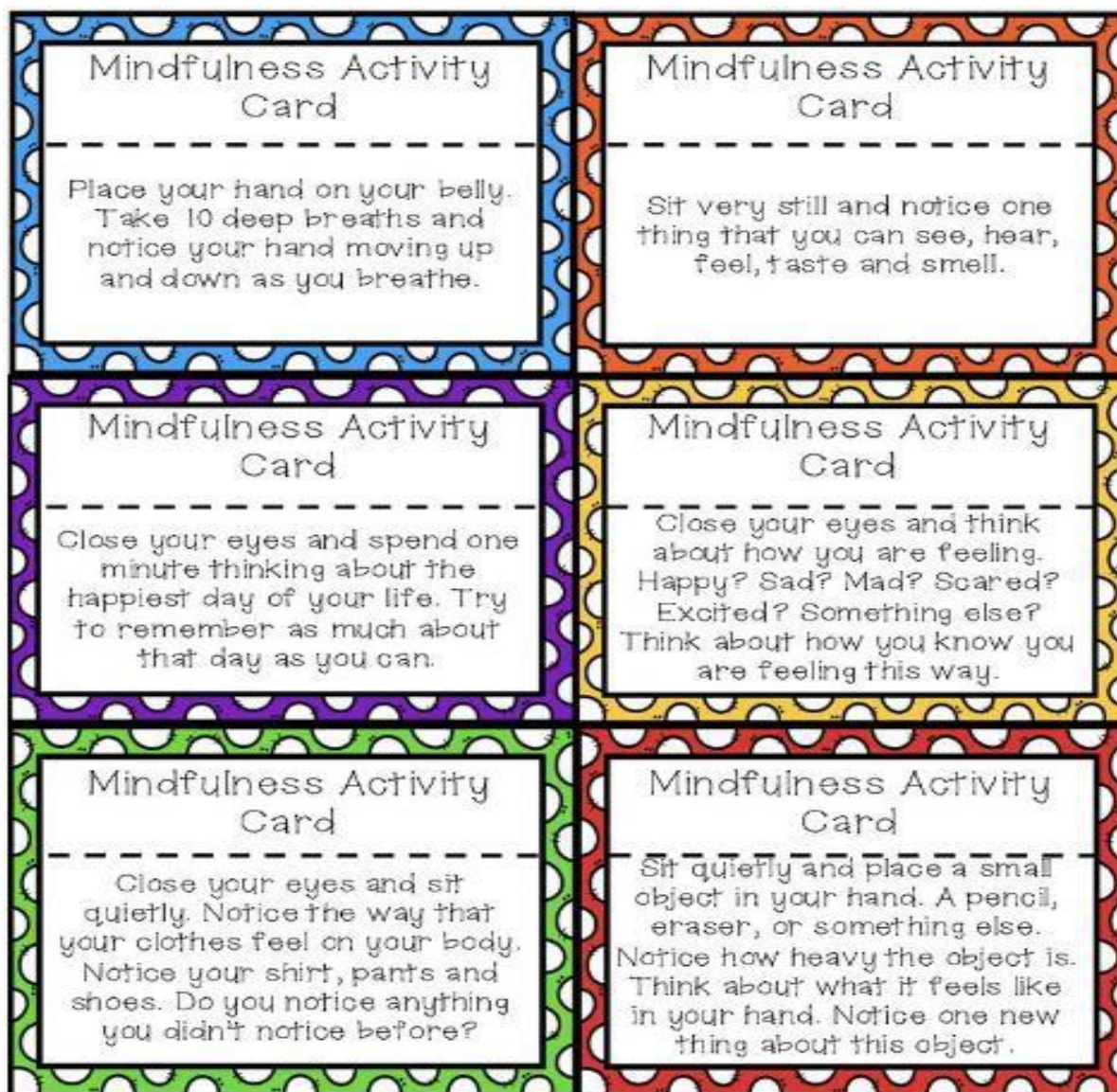
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## OTHER MINDFUL EXERCISES FOR YOU TO TRY

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



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# 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

Yes

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

Make a plan.

What can I do? Well, I can do this?

Now!

later!

Do it! Take action.

Decide when

Let go of the worry.

Let go of the worry.

Reflect on how you feel.

Reflect on how you feel.



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# 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.



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# 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.



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## USEFUL RESOURCES

### APPS



[Smiling Mind](#) - a free app with tailored programs for all ages



[MyLife Meditation](#) – free mediation and mindfulness app that helps you find your quiet place



[Insight Timer - Meditation, Sleep, Music](#) – Free app for guided meditation practice.



[Mind Shift app](#)- free app to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.



[Headspace](#) – a recommended NHS app for mindfulness and meditation, to help build resilience and reduce stress.

### WEBSITES AND VIDEOS



[Stressed Teens](#) : website with lots of resources to help manage stress along including mindfulness exercises.

[Every Mind Matters](#)- YouTube videos on mental health along with mindful breathing exercise video



[Kelty Mental Health](#) – mindfulness section with videos of other teens speaking about their



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experiences with mindfulness, includes also podcasts and guided meditations.



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