Toy Time

Training our mind to be strong, calm and focussed can make it easier to cope with worries and difficult times, whether we are an adult or a child. It takes practice and if someone practices using it when they feel calm, it can make it easier to use the skills when they feel anxious or upset.

It can be really helpful to take a moment (aim for around 5 minutes, but even the shortest time can help) just to focus on one thing. Let your pupils know that should any other thoughts come into their head to just let them drift off but focus and return their thoughts to this one thing.

For this activity, you’ll need a selection of small objects, enough for one each for your group of pupils plus some extras so that everyone has a choice. It doesn’t matter what it is so long as it’s small enough for them to hold.

Click on the link to hear Susan read this guided mindfulness activity. Hopefully you can join in with the activity (perhaps with another member of staff keeping an eye on your class).

*Let’s try this and just be curious about what you notice…*

*It might be best to turn your chair to face the front of the room and sit with your feet flat on the floor with your body fairly relaxed. Just finding a way of sitting that feels comfortable and steady. Sitting with your object in your hands.*

*Have a really, good look at the object. Use your eyes to notice details about it. Check out the colours, shapes. Are there straight edges? Curves? Explore your object with your eyes. Really look at it, noticing any details that you were not aware of before*

*Now use your fingers and hands to have a good feel of the object. Look for where it might be rough or smooth, cold or warm to touch, hard or soft. If you like, close your eyes and feel the object as if you as discovering something new. If you find that your thoughts are wandering, it’s ok. Just let those thoughts drift away and bring your focus back to what you are doing with your object.*

*Maybe you could hold the object up to your nose. Does it smell of anything? It is a nice smell? Maybe the smell reminds you of something? Maybe it’s very familiar, maybe not. Just take your time and breathe that smell in.*

*Now if you are ok with it, close your eyes and imagine you can see the object in front of you. If not, you can continue to breathe in the smell. Imagine that your object can speak to you. It has a voice and that voice says nice things to you. It tells you how safe it feels being with you. It feels safe and calm in your hands. Take your imagination to wherever it wants to go with the object speaking to you.*

*Now have your noticed anything about your object that you hadn’t noticed before? Have you noticed anything about how you are feeling? Have you got any words to describe how you are feeling right now? Maybe it’s difficult to think of words to explain it, that’s ok, it doesn’t matter. All that matters is that you are taking time and thinking about those feelings.*

This takes practice and for some young children, staying still or quiet can be too much of a challenge. The main thing is not to force it. You may be able to increase the mindful time as your pupils get used to the activity.

Come back to this activity as often as you like (perhaps once a day). Mindfulness is a way of focussing on what is happening right now – using all your senses to experience it. You may also want to assure your pupils that it’s ok for the mind to wander and practice makes it easier to bring back the focus. There is no ‘wrong’ way to do this. Even simply sitting and noticing our breathing for a few minutes (or even a few seconds, if you are usually very active) has a calming effect on our brain and body.

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