

# Mindfulness Exercises for Preschool Families

## Balloon Breath



In this practice, use deep breathing and movement together to calm your mind and body. Show how to do it and have your child copy you.

- You can sit or stand up.
- Place both hands on top of your head.
- Begin to breathe in and out slowly. As you inhale, raise your arms above your head, like you are blowing up a balloon. When your lungs are full of air, your arms should look like a big, round balloon on top of your head.
- As you exhale, slowly bring your hands toward your head. Do your best to match the timing of your inhale with raising your arms up and the timing of your exhale with bringing your arms back down.
- Try to deepen your breath with each inhale as you're able.
- Continue with this breath and arm movement 2-4 more times.
- On the last breath, press your lips together and blow the air out, making a silly sound like a horse.

## Starfish Breathing



In this practice, use the sensations of breathing and touch to settle your mind and body. Show how to do it and have your child copy you.

- Choose a hand to be your starfish. Extend this hand, palm out, with fingers spread like a starfish.
- Use the pointer finger from your other hand to trace the starfish as you breathe. Start at your thumb, and as you breathe in, trace up your thumb to the top. Do this carefully, so your movement matches your inhale.
- Now, with your out breath, trace down the inside of your thumb. Again, move slowly paying attention to keeping the breath and movement together.
- Continue breathing up and down each finger, matching your movement with your breath. As you breathe and trace, notice the sensations of movement in your body – your chest and belly moving in and out and your finger moving up and down.
- When you come to the base of your wrist below your little finger, rest for a moment. Check in with yourself. Notice how you are feeling without overthinking or judging.
- Try this again with your other hand.

# Five Senses Exercise



Engaging our senses helps us focus on the present moment.

Notice how you and your child are feeling as you begin. Then, together with your child:

- Notice five things that you can see. Look around you. Notice and name five things that you can see.
- Notice four things that you can feel. Tune in to your sense of touch. Notice and describe the texture of four things you can touch.
- Notice three things you can hear. Listen carefully. Notice and name three sounds you hear in your environment.
- Notice two things you can smell. Notice and name two smells you recognize.
- Notice one thing you can taste. Focus and name one thing that you can taste right now. You can take a sip or bite of something, or simply notice the current taste in your mouth.

How are you and/or your child feeling now? Do you feel more connected to your surroundings and the present moment?

# Pleasure Gazing



This exercise helps you engage in calm co-regulation with a very young child.

- Start by taking a few deep breaths and notice how your body feels. You can use long, slow exhales, or even sigh out loud to help you ease any tension.
- Now, look toward your baby with kindness and curiosity. You might ask their permission to begin this interaction, noticing if they show any signs of interest or engagement.
- Start by using your sense of sight. Gaze at your baby—what do you see? Use your eyes to look closely at the features of their face with a gentle smile. What are all the different colors you see in their eyes? What is the exact shape of their smile? Look at their fingers and toes, taking time to notice small things you haven't noticed before. Go slowly, feature by feature. Notice the warm connected feelings that may arise as you pay close attention to your baby in this activity.
- Once complete, take a few deep breaths in and out and notice how you are feeling now.

# Calming Glitter Bottle



Make your own calming glitter bottle:

- Find a plastic bottle or jar.
- Fill the jar  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  full with glue. (Use Elmer's Clear School Glue or similar.) The more glue, the slower the objects will settle after shaking.
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of glitter.
- Fill the bottle the rest of the way with very warm water.
- Add food coloring (optional).
- Glue the cap on the bottle. Let the bottle rest to allow sealing glue to fully harden or the bottle may leak. You could use hot glue for a stronger seal.
- Once the cap on the bottle is dry, shake it and watch the glitter fall gently to the bottom. Notice how your mind and body feel before, during, and after this activity.

When we shake up a glitter bottle, the water becomes cloudy with all the contents swirling around quickly. We can think about our emotions swirling like this when we are worrying, angry or stressed.

As we watch the little bits of glitter fall slowly to the bottom, we become calmer. When we sit quietly and watch the settling, we give ourselves time and space to regain a sense of control and ease. Watching the glitter engages our senses and brings us into the present moment.

Seeing how the water becomes clear when all the contents are resting quietly also reflects our ability to see more clearly when we are in this calm state.

# Breathing with a Buddy



This exercise helps you engage your belly and diaphragm (the muscle at the bottom of your rib cage) to help calm your nerves and relax. It's a great exercise to do at bedtime, rocking your buddy to sleep with your breath.

- Select a stuffed animal to be your buddy.
- Lie down on your back with your legs straight and your arms at your sides. Take a moment to relax.
- Place your buddy on the soft part of your belly. Feel the weight of your buddy resting there.
- Now, rock your buddy by taking deep breaths:
- Take a long, slow breath into your belly making your buddy rise up, as you whisper "up."

- Breathe out even more slowly, feeling your belly and your buddy go down, as you say “down.”
- Close your eyes and continue this slow breathing for several minutes allowing yourself to rest and relax.
- Notice how your body is feeling after doing this deep breathing for a few minutes.

It's ok if your child falls asleep while doing this exercise.