

Mindfulness for Emotional Regulation

Mindful Practices and Tips for Supporting Emotional Regulation

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and aware of our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgment. It helps us understand and navigate our emotions.

Why is Emotional Regulation Important?

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, understand, and support our emotions. It allows children to:

- Express their feelings clearly
- Use coping strategies when feeling overwhelmed
- Build resilience and adapt to new situations
- Improve relationships with others.



Mindful Practices to Try

1 Deep Breathing Exercises

How to Practice: Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose, hold for a few seconds, then slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat this several times.

Tip: Use a counting method (e.g. inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts) to help focus.

2 Mindful Observation

How to Practice: Choose an object (a flower, a toy, etc.) and observe it closely. Notice its colours, shapes, and textures. Talk about it with children.

Tip: Encourage children to describe what they see, feel, and think about the object.

3 Creating a Mindful Space

How to Practice: Designate an area in your room or outside filled with natural light and engaging elements such as suncatchers, windchimes, and ribbons blowing in the breeze. This space invites relaxation and reflection.

Tip: Encourage children to engage in relaxing experiences in this space, like listening to the sounds of the windchimes, observing how the light interacts with the suncatchers, cloud watching or creating art with clay, etc.

4 Mindful Walks

How to Practice: Go for a walk and encourage children to notice their surroundings. Ask them to describe what they see, hear, and feel.

Tip: Collect interesting items (leaves, stones) during the walk and talk about them later or take some art resources and create art while on Country.

5 Using Ice to Support Regulation

How to Practice: Introduce ice as a sensory tool to help children cool down and reduce stress. They can play with ice, drink ice water, or enjoy a water ice block as a way to physically cool the body and regulate emotions.

Tip: Ice experiences can also be used to provide a sensory break during stressful moments, helping children shift their emotional state.

6 Vibrational Experiences

How to Practice: Introduce vibration into the environment through humming, vibrating sensory resources, or using materials like vibrating toys or instruments.

Tip: Encourage children to feel the vibrations in their bodies, which can help calm and center them.

Tips for Supporting Emotional Regulation

1 Encourage Open Conversations

Talk about feelings regularly. Use feelings cards, mirrors, songs or books to help children articulate their emotions. Validate their feelings by acknowledging and revisiting them.

2 Model Mindfulness

Share your own mindfulness practices with children. Show them how you take deep breaths or pause to reflect on your feelings.

3 Practice Coping Strategies

Teach children strategies for calming down when they feel overwhelmed, such as breathing, recognising how their body is feeling, counting to ten, squeezing a stress ball, or taking a break in their mindful space.

4 Use Visual Aids

Display photos of feelings or use feelings cards to support children to recognise and express their emotions.

5 Incorporate Mindful Moments

Set aside time each day for a “Mindful Moment,” where you and children can practice deep breathing, reflection, or any mindfulness experiences together.

Supporting Educators in Their Own Mindfulness Practice

It's important for educators to also practice mindfulness in order to model emotional regulation for children. Here are some tips for you:



1 Body Check-Ins

Regularly check in with your own body to notice where you may be holding tension. Take mindful breaks throughout the day, using breathing exercises, stretching, or sensory experiences to release stress.



2 Mindful Breathing

Practice breathing techniques similar to those you introduce to the children. Set aside moments to breathe deeply and center yourself, especially when feeling overwhelmed.



3 Co-Regulation

Use mindfulness practices to co-regulate with children. When you stay calm and centered, it provides a sense of security and helps children mirror your emotional state.

Remember

Mindfulness and emotional regulation are skills that take practice. Be patient with children and yourself as you explore these techniques together. Celebrate the small successes along the way!

