

Mindfulness for Mental Health

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Stressed, Sad, Anxious or Angry: Mindfulness and Mental Health

Feeling this way from time to time is perfectly OK. There is nothing to be afraid of or ashamed of in feeling **stressed, anxious, sad** or **angry**.

Everyone experiences these emotions – friends, family, parents and even teachers!

These feelings are often labelled as '**bad**' but there is **no such thing as a bad feeling or emotion**. Worries we have tend to come from our reaction to the emotion or feeling.

Stressed, Sad, Anxious or Angry: Mindfulness and Mental Health

If we do not understand these emotions and how they can affect us, they can affect our mood and our mental health.

Sometimes, our more challenging emotions can take over our life and we can find ourselves feeling **very sad and unhappy**.

Mindfulness teaches us to be aware of, and understand our emotions. By practicing mindfulness when we experience challenging emotions, it can help us to let them go.

There are no 'good' or 'bad' feelings!

What is Mindfulness?

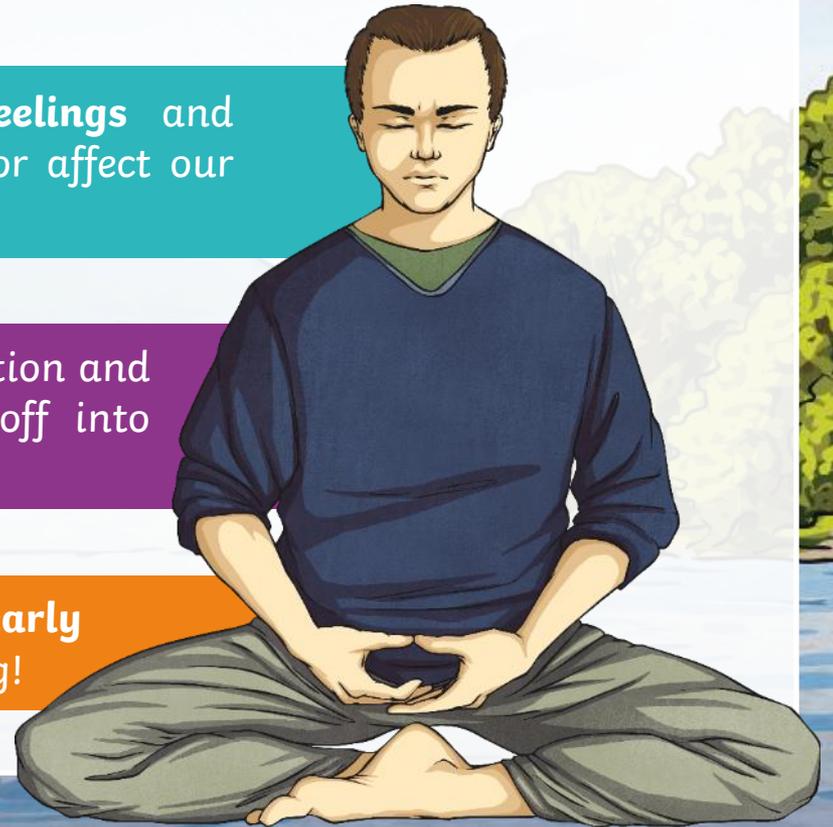
Mindfulness is a practice and discipline that allows us to explore our experience.

Mindfulness is a form of training where we train ourselves to be focused, settled and calm.

We learn to focus on our **thoughts, feelings** and **physical feelings** and see how they shape or affect our mood and behaviour.

In mindfulness we are learning to pay attention and to notice when our mind has wandered off into thinking and day dreaming.

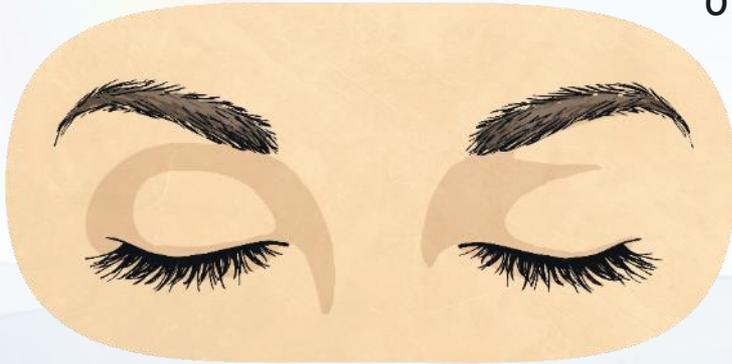
Psychologists have found that we spend **nearly half of our day** not focused but daydreaming!



The Scattered Mind

Our minds can be full of thoughts.

It is OK to be scattered but it can make it very difficult to concentrate on one thing.



Now open your eyes. What happened to your concentration?

Allow the memories of doing this activity to appear. Now try and keep focusing on this activity as I ask you to think about different things:

You have homework to do.

You need to tidy your bedroom.

Your brother, sister or friend is doing something that annoys you.

The Scattered Mind

Having a scattered mind is OK. Our minds will wander, we will get distracted.

However, a scattered mind affects more than our concentration. It can also affect how we are feeling.

The psychologists who discovered that we spend nearly half of our days **daydreaming**, found that when our minds are **scattered**, we are more likely to feel **stressed, anxious, sad** or **angry**.

An illustration of a young girl on the left and a young boy on the right, both with their hands on their chins in a thinking pose. The girl has dark skin and her hair is styled in braids. The boy has light skin and short dark hair. They are positioned on either side of a central teal circle containing text. The background is a soft-focus landscape with mountains and a body of water.

This is because instead of experiencing our life as it is, we get caught up in **thinking, worrying** and **being anxious** about **how things were** or **how they could be**.

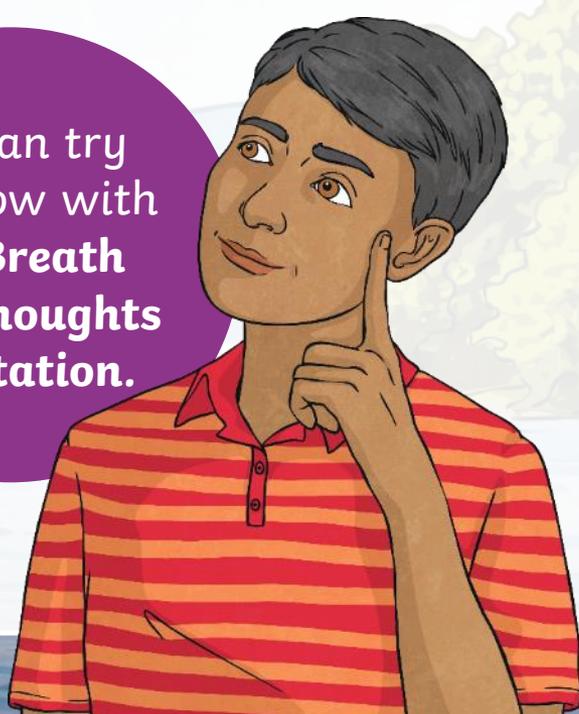
The Scattered Mind

Over time this can affect our mood, our behaviour and our mental health.

Learning to **settle** the **scattered mind** is a key part of learning to be calmer and happier.



Through mindful meditation practices, we can train our mind to be more calm.



We can try this now with the **Breath and Thoughts Meditation**.

Thought Clouds

Practicing mindfulness can be difficult. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to settle the mind, we keep getting caught up in our thoughts.

Instead of just noticing that we are thinking, our mind takes over and before we know it, we are stuck in a whirlwind of thoughts about all kinds of things.

Thoughts become more thoughts and they become more thoughts! Soon we can feel like all we have are thoughts!

To help us be more mindful, we can use the Thought Clouds to help us recognise and let go of thoughts.

This is a very important part of being mindful. We are not ignoring our thoughts, but we are not being carried away by them either.

Thought Clouds

Just stop for a few moments. Set aside five minutes to stop and sit, stand or lay still. Close your eyes if this helps.

Now, just focus on your breathing. Feel the sensations of breathing.

Each time you notice a thought, say to yourself (either out loud or silently in your head) 'I am thinking', open your eyes and then write the thought on one of the clouds.

Look at the thought for a few moments and then, 'let it go' (you can even gently move the card away from you or drop it).

Go back to focusing on breathing.



Thought Clouds

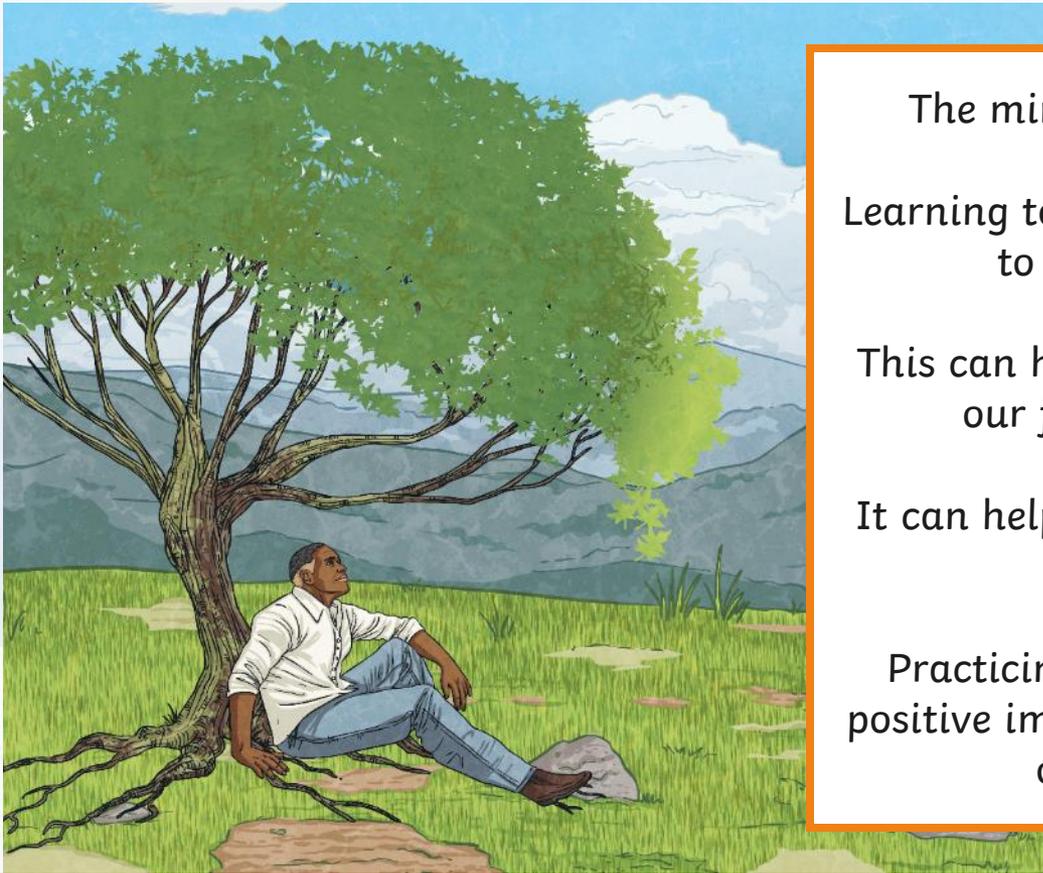
Each time you notice a thought, say to yourself (either out loud or silently in your head) 'I am thinking', open your eyes and then write the thought on one of the clouds.



Look at the thought for a few moments and then, 'let it go' (you can even gently move the card away from you or drop it).

Keep doing this for a few minutes before opening your eyes and getting back to your day.

Mindfulness Helps to Settle the mind.



The mind is naturally scattered.

Learning to focus the mind can help us to settle and feel calm.

This can help us to better understand our feelings and emotions.

It can help us to not get so distracted by our thoughts.

Practicing mindfulness can have a positive impact on how we feel and on our mental health.