

The benefits of mindfulness

As the world becomes increasingly fast paced, bombarding us with information and technology; it is becoming increasingly important to slow down, pause and connect with each other and our environment. Western cultures are increasingly reliant on technology in all aspects of our lives, and we tend to be sedentary and passive in our engagement with each other. There is growing concern about the lack of time children and young people spend in nature and the consequences of this disconnect.



The practices of mindfulness and meditation offer people of all ages an effective path to develop healthy responses to the chaotic world around them and inside them. One key benefit of meditation and mindfulness is developing greater awareness of our own internal states. Providing opportunities for children to recognise, verbalise and manage their feelings and emotions is critical in supporting wellbeing, emotional intelligence and resilience. Other benefits include improved attention, concentration and focus, as well as the ability to simply be calm and still.

It is important to clarify the differences between relaxation and mindfulness:

- **Relaxation:** Activities such as reading a book, eating an ice-cream or lying in the shade can be considered relaxation activities.
- **Mindfulness:** These same relaxation activities can become mindful activities by becoming more aware. Learning to observe the self and bringing attention fully to the present moment is key to mindful activities. Mindfulness requires practice (although some would argue that the same could be said of relaxation!)

You can use mindfulness activities anytime of the day, but they may be useful to assist children to settle first thing in the morning, after lunch, a transition between an active and quiet activity (coming from outside to inside) or at the end of the day. The more often you practice mindfulness the more benefits you will see.