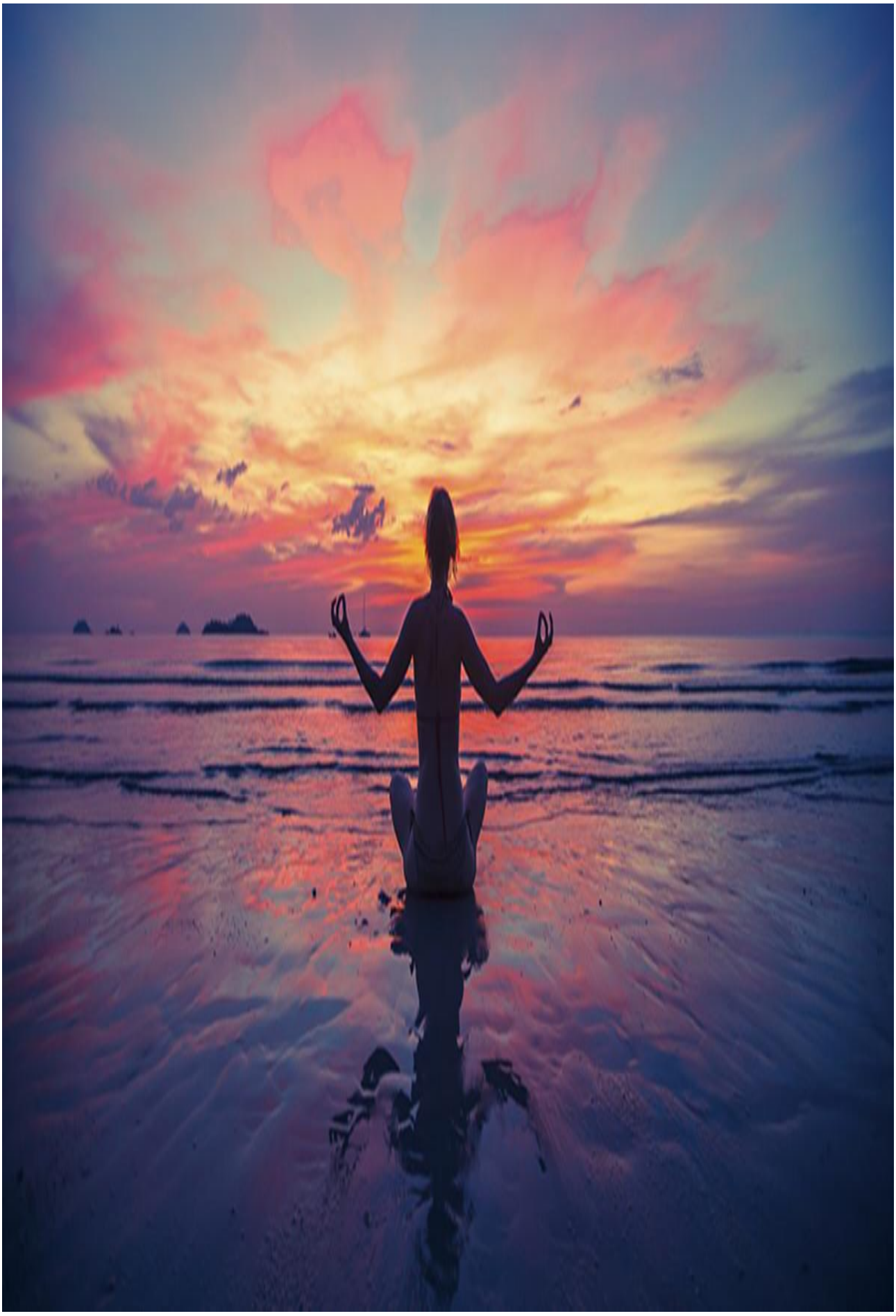
Meditation and Mindfulness



Importance of Mental Well-being and Good Mental Health

Good mental health gives you the ability to learn, the ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions.

The ability to form and
maintain good relationships with others.

The ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty.

How do we stay mentally healthy?

- Talking about feelings
- Exercise
- Eating a well-balanced diet with reduced sugar
- Avoiding alcohol and caffeine
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Relaxing
- Focused thinking
- Practicing positive thinking
- Focusing on realistic outcomes
- Reducing time on social media
- Listening to relaxing music
- Focused activities
- Mindfulness
-

Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to be completely dedicated to whatever you are doing, intentionally giving that task, person or event your complete focus. It is 'paying attention on purpose' (Kobat-Zinn). Practicing mindfulness can help you concentrate better, in lesson or even just in conversation.

Mindfulness can even help you relax better, helping you to focus better in all aspects of your life. Mindfulness can help you to really assess a situation and respond calmly and appropriately. It can help you to reduce anger and anxiety. Mindfulness can mean anything, from brushing your teeth to writing an essay.

Mindfulness can help you to focus on:

- **Your mental well being**
- **How to focus your attention**
- **How to concentrate fully**
- **How to reduce stress and anxiety**
- **How to be entirely focused on a given task or moment**

Try mindful breathing

The primary goal of *mindful breathing* is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. Breathing is something that we all do, all of the time – yet we are often not aware of how it feels in the moment.

By bringing our focus intentionally onto the breath we can ground ourselves in what is happening right now. We can practice observing without reacting, experiencing each breath as it happens without feeling a need to change it.

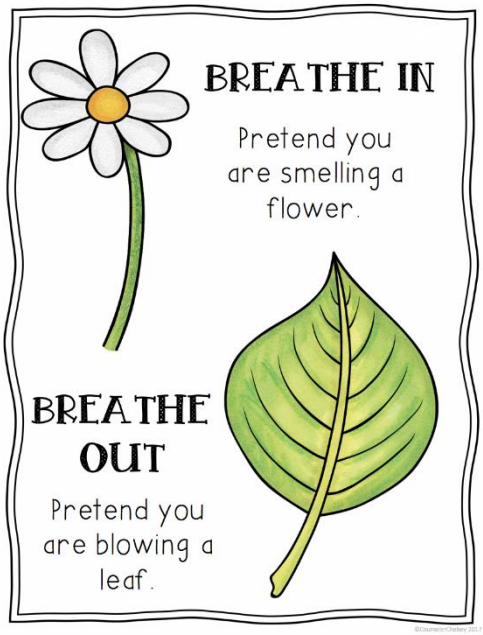
Try:

Breath in 1, 2, Breath out 1, 2

Breath in 1, 2, 3 Breath Out 1, 2, 3

Breath in 1, 2, 3, 4 Breath out 1, 2, 3, 4

Breath in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Breath out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5



TOP APPS:

- **Aura**
- **Breethe**
- **Buddhify**
-

(For more about mindfulness and meditation- pick up Miss Kincell's mindfulness top tips booklet)

Mindfulness- Focused Thinking – 1 minute

1. Close your eyes.

2. Repeat in your mind the same word and a matching picture over and over. Try to use something with little meaning but quite calming.

3. If your mind starts to wander… let it, acknowledge it and say to yourself 'I'll get back to that afterwards' and then get back to your word.

Candle

Flower

Ball

Lamp

Mindful Breathing

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Take 5 Breathing is a wonderful way to switch off the stress response.

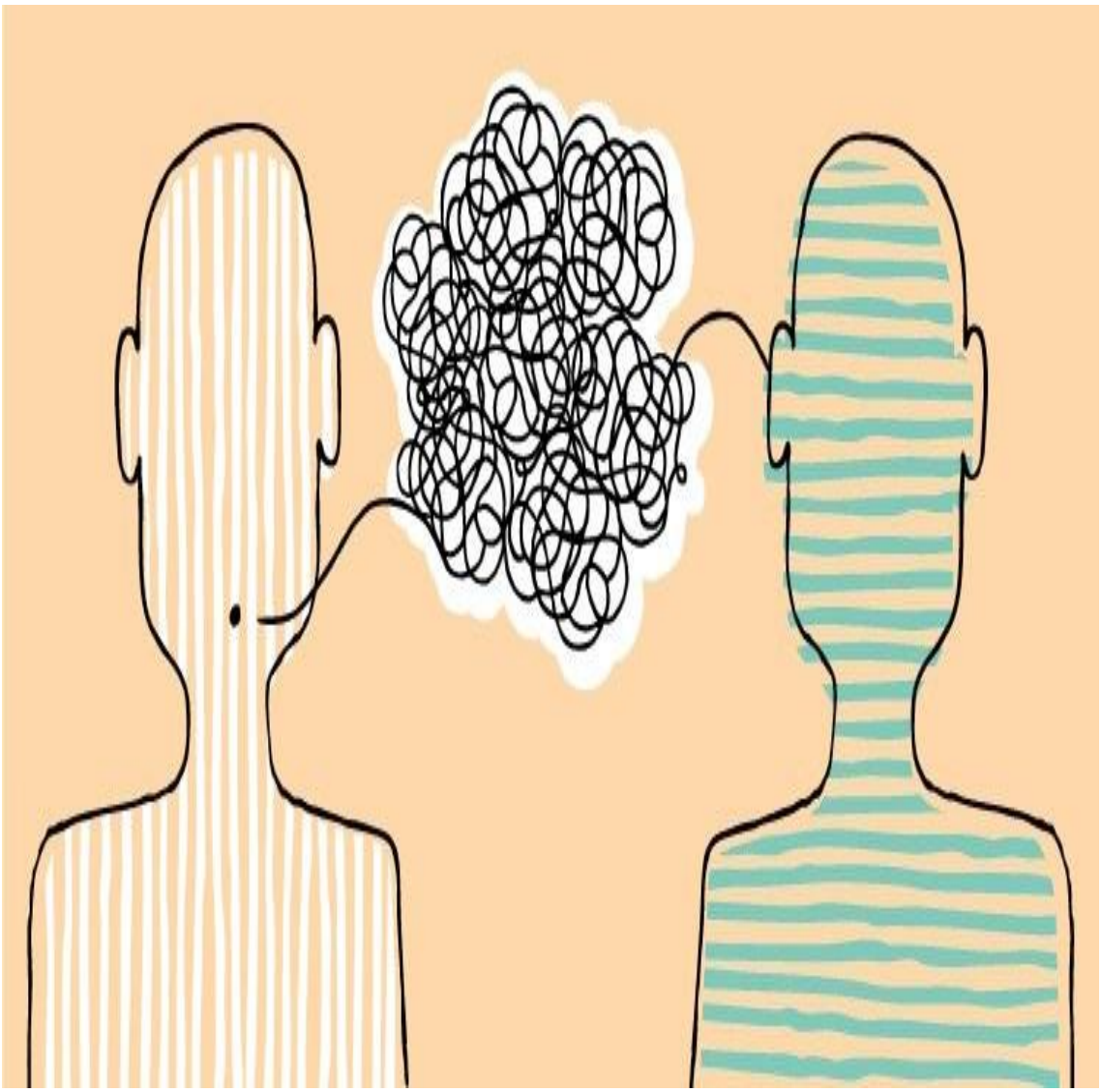
1. Hold one hand out, palm facing up and fingers stretched out.
2. Use the finger of your other hand to trace up and down each finger.
3. Breathing in through your nose tracing upwards and breathing out through your mouth as you trace downwards.

TOP APP: Breethe

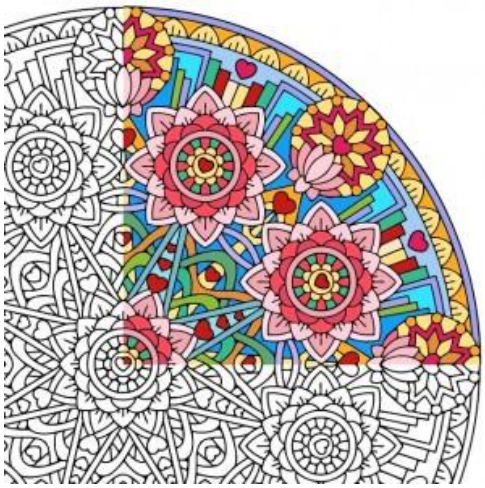
Mindful Listening

Training your mind to really listen can help you be fully present in the moment. You will learn more efficiently, and communicate more effectively if you are really listening.

- In your next lesson, in your mind repeat everything your teacher says to you.
- In your next conversation with a friend or parent, repeat everything they say in your mind.
- Ask yourself, are you relating to people better and taking information in more effectively.



Mindful Colouring



Mindful Colouring is a way to practice focusing your attention. However, this is more difficult than you might imagine. Just like focused thinking, your mind will wander very easily.

Try this for 1 minute sections first, try to fully concentrate for the entire minute.

Try to think like this: 'I am going to use the blue colour. I am going to fully colour in this section, up and down and then in circles'

And if your mind wanders 'I only need to fully concentrate for one minute, I can get back to that afterwards'.

Benefits of mindful colouring:

- Your brain experiences relief by entering a meditative state.
- Stress and anxiety levels have the potential to be lowered.
- Negative thoughts are expelled as you take in positivity.
- Focusing on the present helps you achieve mindfulness.
- Colouring can be done by anyone, not just artists or creative types.

Use any colouring book, even if it is not specifically for mindfulness, you can even download these from google images and print them out.

Go to a quiet place, put your phone on flight mode and spend time alone.

This can be taken with you wherever you go. If you are undergoing a stressful journey or going somewhere you will have time to really relax take these with you.

Yoga

Yoga increases body awareness, relieves stress, reduces muscle tension, strain, and inflammation, sharpens attention and concentration, and calms and centres the nervous system.

Research shows when we incorporate mindfulness practice into our day-to-day activities, shape our brain and improve the quality of our life experiences.

The meaning of yoga is union- to unite the body and the mind.

When we coordinate movement with the breath, paying attention to the sensations in the body as we move, yoga becomes a mindful exercise in itself and it becomes a meditative practice.

Respect your body's inner wisdom and limitations.

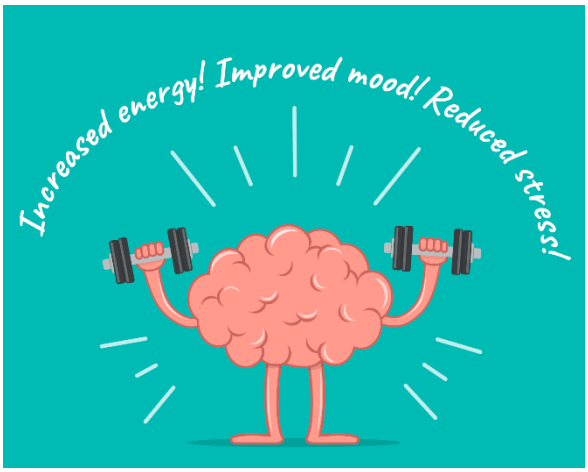
Don't push yourself to do anything that feels dangerous or wrong for you.

This is 'Ahimsa', the practice of non-harm, which is essential to skilful and beneficial practice of yoga.

TOP Website:

You tube: Day 1 - Ease Into It - 30 Days of Yoga

Mindful Exercise



Exercise can help to alleviate symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress. Exercise promotes neural growth and new activity patterns that promote feelings of calm and well-being.

Exercise releases endorphins, powerful chemicals in your brain that energize your spirits and make you feel good.

Finally, exercise can also serve as a distraction, allowing you to find some quiet time to break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that feed depression. Lots of people find burning off lots of additional energy prevents it becoming negative energy and stress.

TOPTIPS:

- Go for a jog
- Join a gym
- Go for a swim
- Attend a local exercise class
- Speak to the PE department about how you can get involved in school
- Just go for a walk, even walking is closely associated with mental well-being.

TOPAPPS:

- Noom
- Gixo
- Couch to 5K

Mindful Eating

It's no secret that eating a well-balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables makes us feel good.

- Greens - Broccoli, spinach
- Berries – Strawberries, Blackberries, Blueberries
- Eggs
- Yoghurt
- Fish – especially salmon
- Seeds and nuts – especially Brazil and chia.
- Plenty of water

- Caffeine- coffee, 'diet' drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks.
- Sugar, fizzy drinks, sports drinks.
- Alcohol

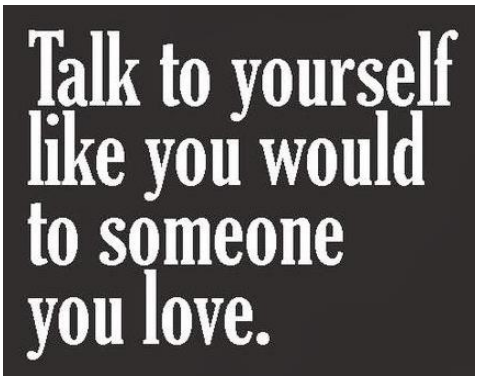
Practising mindful eating simply means being present when we eat. Paying attention to it and being aware of it. Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the experience of eating and drinking, both inside and outside the body.

After a few bites we want to grab a book, to turn on the TV, to call someone, or go on social media. We notice the impulse and instead return to just eating.

We should pay attention to the colours, smells, textures, flavours, temperatures, and even the sounds (crunch!) of our food.

Positive Self Talk

Positive self-talk is a powerful tool for increasing your self-confidence and curbing negative emotions. It can be to encourage yourself, reassure yourself or even forgive yourself. It requires you to encourage yourself in a way you might encourage others.



Imagine what advise or encouragement you would give to a friend and then give it to yourself.

Imagine something you are worried about or were worried about, or something you aren't happy with yourself about. Imagine your friend told you that they were worried about it/had done it. What would you tell them?

Write a letter to yourself, in the way you would write to a friend. Give yourself encouragement and confidence. Or give yourself the reassurance and forgiveness or positive productive advise on how to resolve the situation.

TOPTIPS:

- If you find yourself having negative thoughts, write yourself a kind letter.
- If you are nervous about something, give yourself an imaginary pep talk.
- Tell yourself negative self-talk will not help anything.
- Think 'what would I tell a friend?'

TOP APP:

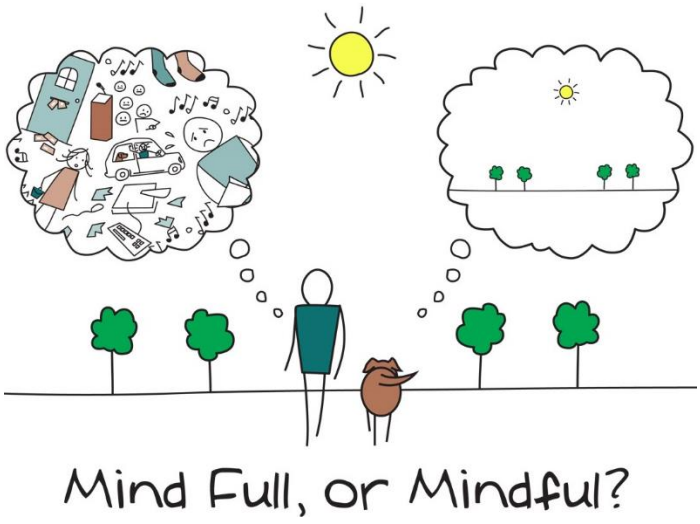
Download the ThinkUp App. The App suggests positive self talk phrases, or you can create your own. You record them in your own voice, add music and you can play the appropriate one when you need it.

The Attenborough Approach

The picture means everything you miss when you are not present.

Being present means not ruminating about the past and not stressing about the future just living in the present moment.

You can miss so much by simply concentrating on the past and future.



Avoid missing out and try the Attenborough approach. Attenborough explains every detail for the watcher, he is notices and describes everything.

Go for a walk! See nature, remind yourself of all of the beautiful things in the world.

Do a narration in your head, how would you describe it in detail?

Try and do it all of the time, instead of having your mind full, be mindful.

Absorb every aspect of where you are, what are all the little aspects and details?

Practicing Gratitude

A Simple Mindful Practice to Ground You is Gratitude. When we appreciate what's good in our lives, there's a powerful feeling of connection with one another, the planet, and ourselves.

Psychologists have found that those who had kept a gratitude journal experienced significant psychological, physical and social benefits a 25% improvement in overall health and wellbeing.

Life goes up and down- this is normal!

Everyone has days which are better than others and some which are worse. It's about noticing that every single day there are always things to be grateful for.

Write down 5 things which you are grateful for today.

You can even begin with:

- **You are lucky to have an education.**
- **You are grateful to have eaten today.**
- **You are grateful for those you consider to be your family.**
- **You are grateful you have clean clothes to wear.**

Whilst these may seem usual, many people in the world don't have these things to be grateful for.

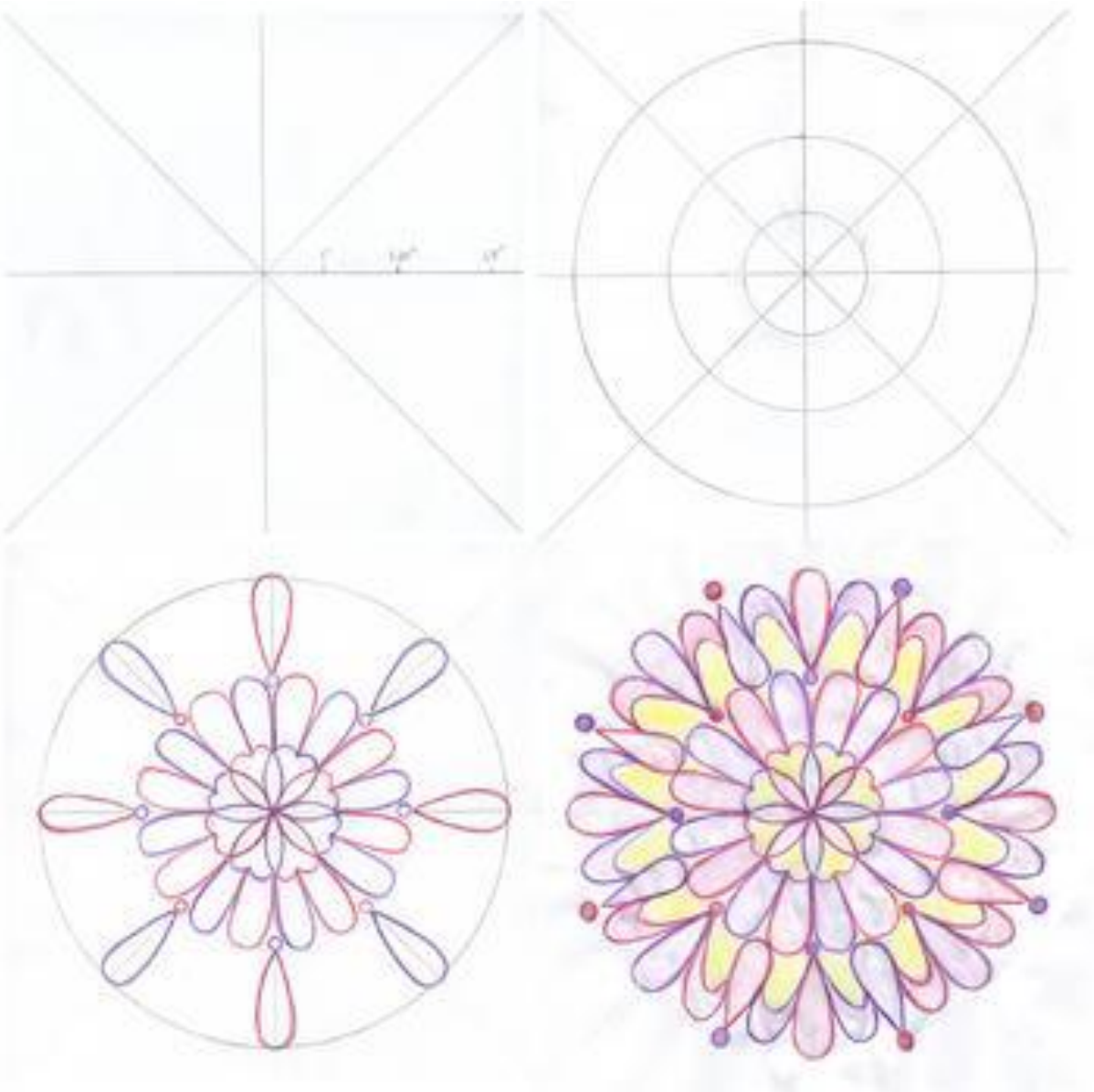
TOPTIP:

- Wake up gratitude- Each morning in the mirror, tell yourself things which you're already grateful for- you've had a bed to sleep in, had a roof to sleep under, and so grateful for a new day full of opportunities.
- Stairs gratitude - On your way up to bed, take the stairs slowly and on each step remind yourself of something you are thankful for that day.
- Going to sleep gratitude - Go over your day, count every single aspect you were grateful for.
- Reminder gratitude - When you experience a hassle, counter balance it with the aspects of the day you are grateful for.

Creating Mandalas

Mandala is a Sanskrit word that loosely translates to mean "circle" or "center." We often associate the word mandala with the circular designs that have repeating colors, shapes, and patterns radiating from the center.

Mandalas can be precise, carefully measured, geometric, and perfectly symmetrical, or in contrast, free flowing, organic, and asymmetrical.

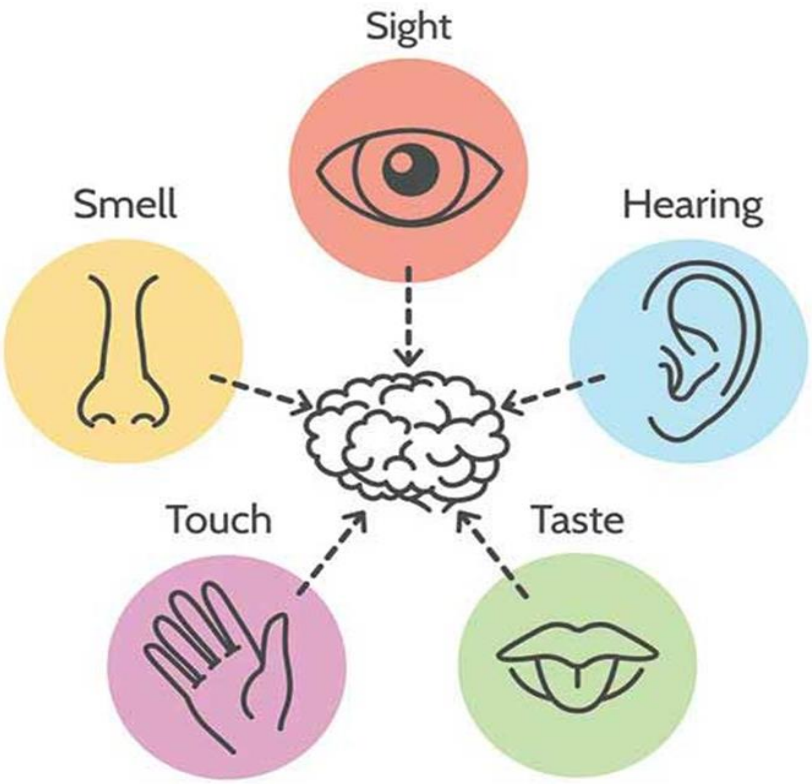


Spidey Senses

"Spidey senses", are the super-focused senses of smell, sight, hearing, taste, and touch that Spiderman uses to keep tabs on the world around him.

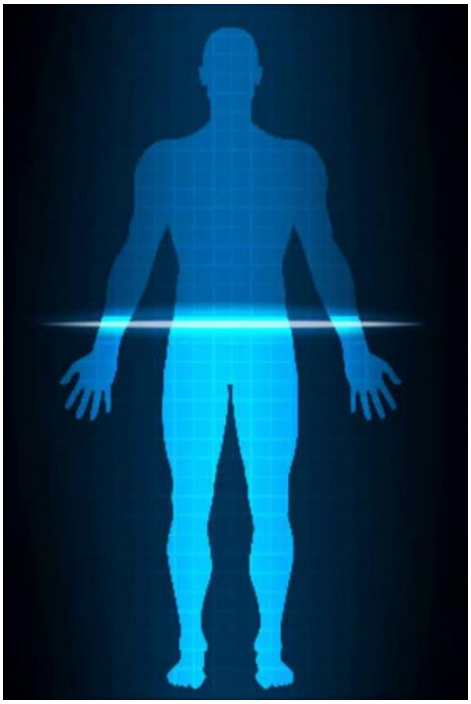
Thinking about the use of Spidey senses can help to encourage you to pause and focus your attention on the present, opening your awareness to the additional information your senses bring in, which you may usually miss.

Each day, try to approach at least one activity mindfully and think about how you could use ach of your senses like a super hero.



Stop and think at different opportunities- have you immersed yourself? Are you listening to everything you can? Have you seen everything? Smelt everything?

Mindful Body Scan



The body scan is a great starting practice because it fundamentally trains so many aspects of working skilfully with experience.

1. **Rest** into the position, sitting or laying down.
2. **Breathe**.- Focus your attention on your breathing for a few minutes.
3. **Move** your attention through your whole body, step by step.

   Shift your attention from your breathing down to your toes. Feel whatever sensation you can feel. Gradually move your attention up through your feet, lower legs, upper legs, lower torso, upper torso, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms and hands. Then up to your neck, face, back of your head and finally the top of your head.

   This whole process can take 15 to 30 minutes. Each time your mind drifts, notice what it was focusing on and bring your attention back to your breathing. Imagine your breath going into and out of each part of your body as you're being mindful of it.
4. **Imagine that your breath is sweeping up and down your body**.

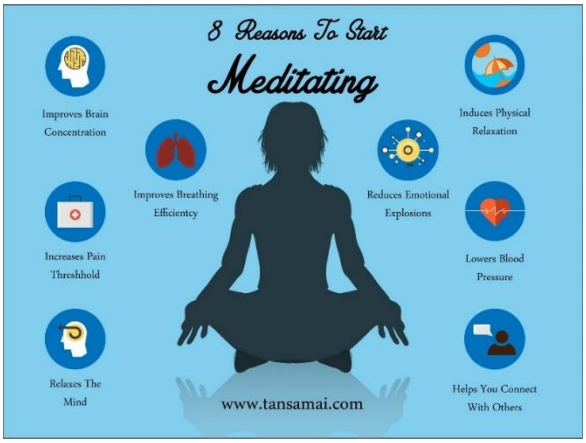
   As you breathe in, imagine your in-breath starting at your toes and reaching the top of your head. As you breathe out, your out-breath sweeps from the top of your head down to your toes. This sensation can feel healing or relaxing.
5. **Just be**.

   For the last few minutes of this meditation, try letting go of all effort to be mindful and just be. Rest in your own inner sense of aliveness, of presence, of being.
6. **Stand up slowly**.

   Gently bring the meditation to a close. Hopefully, this has been a deep and nourishing experience, so avoid jumping up straight away or you may feel dizzy. Get up gradually and mindfully, feeling the sensations in your body as you do so.

Practice Meditation

Studies say that practicing meditation can **improve focus and concentration** while studying.



Giving your mind some space can make you feel more relaxed and calm when you are faced with stressful situations such as the GCSEs.

Meditation can mean lots of different things. Meditation can mean just lying on your bed and breathing.

Meditation can mean listening to relaxing music or even your favourite song.

1. Sit or lie comfortably. You may even want to invest in a **meditation** chair or cushion.
2. Close your eyes. ...
3. Make no effort to control the breath; simply breathe naturally.
4. Focus your attention on the breath and on how the body moves with each inhalation and exhalation.

Benefits of meditation:

- Can alleviate symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.
- Improve concentration and focus.
- Increases confidence and self-esteem.
- Improves sleep and relaxation
- Release negative thoughts and anger
- Reign in the 'monkey mind' (the need to jump from thought to thought).
- Improves academic focus.
- Reduces stress during assessment.

TOP APPS:

- Mindfulness App
- Calm
- Smiling Mind

TOP Websites:

Youtube: 'BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MEDITATION » for a positive & productive day (part 1)' (there are lots of options on youtube and on apps, have a research and find what works for you).

(For more about mindfulness and meditation- pick up Miss Kincell's mindfulness top tips booklet)

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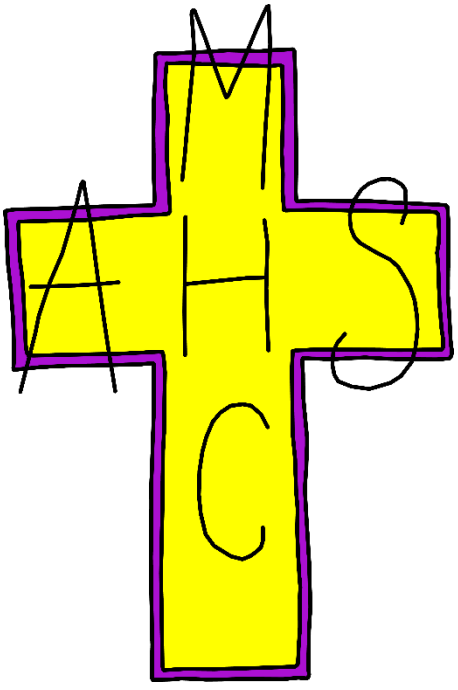
archbishop holgates school
mental health champions