

QUICK BYTES

TRAUMA NETWORK FOR CHILDREN



Mindful Moments: Keeping Calm in Stressful Times Part 2: Tips for Teenagers

Brought to you by the PTSS team (KKH) · May 2020

The global outbreak of COVID-19 has caused major changes in every aspect of our lives, including school, work, and even leisure. Routines have been upended, and it is difficult to tell when or how things will return to normal. In these uncertain times, we may feel anxious, confused, and worried about the changes happening around us, and what they mean. The stress, coupled with being away from our friends can make it seem harder for us to cope with the constant changes. One way we can all manage our fears and anxieties is to incorporate mindfulness into our daily lives.

Mindfulness is about being fully present in the moment without placing judgements on how we are feeling. Practising mindfulness helps to quiet our minds and sharpen our focus, so that we can better handle unexpected or distressing situations that come our way. Mindfulness has been gaining popularity over the past few years, and many schools all over the world have been incorporating it into their curricula to help their students cope with everyday stresses and worries.

Mindfulness is best thought of as a daily routine, as opposed to an activity that you do only on some occasions. By incorporating mindfulness in your daily life, you increase the chances of mindfulness strategies being your 'go-to' method in managing stress, fears, and worries.

Here are some mindfulness strategies that you can try:

1. Mindfulness of Breath

Aim: Encourages calmness, which can be especially helpful in reducing anxiety (e.g. about the ongoing changes).

- Sit comfortably and ensure that there are no distractions around (e.g. phone, television, etc.)
- As you breathe in, bring your attention to the breath and observe it as you breathe in and out.
- Notice that the breath is warmer when you are breathing out than when you are breathing in.
- Continue to breathe in and out, and notice the breath as it moves in and out.
- When a thought appears in your mind, label it as a thought and then allow it to float out of your mind like a cloud floating across the sky, or a leaf floating down a stream.
- Bring your attention back to your breath, and just notice the breath.
- Our minds are busy, and we may find that we have many thoughts that appear — this is completely normal. Everyone goes through this.
- Each time you have a thought that comes up, label it, allow it to float away, and then bring your attention back to the breath.
- Allow at least two to three minutes of practice to feel the full effects of this exercise — if you can do it for five minutes or more a day, go for it! You may want to practise mindfulness of breath before bedtime, to help you fall asleep.
- Practice daily — the more you practice, the better you become at it! It is very much like trying to learn your favourite activities, such as the guitar, football, or video games!



2. Informal Mindfulness Practices

Aim: These can be incorporated into most parts of your daily routine, and is a good way to include mindfulness practices throughout the day.

- Think about your routines and chores, and pick one that you do every day (e.g. brushing your teeth, having a shower, making your bed, etc.).
- Whichever activity you choose, the main aim is to direct your full attention to what you are doing — focus on the touch, what it feels like, the sights, the sounds, the taste, the smell, and how your body moves.
- For example, if you have decided to incorporate mindfulness in your routine of brushing teeth, you can start with focusing on how the toothbrush feels in your hand as you pick it up.

- Then, notice the sound of the running water as you wet the brush. When you pick up the tube of toothpaste, notice how the tube feels like in your hand, the amount of pressure you may have to exert to squeeze the toothpaste onto your toothbrush.
- Before you brush your teeth, bring your toothbrush close to your nose and take a deep breath in. Notice the smells present.

- As you start brushing your teeth, pay attention to how the paste feels in your mouth and how it changes its texture from a paste to a foam.
- Notice how the paste has also changed in its appearance if you can look into a mirror.
- Notice what you can taste in your mouth as you brush your teeth.
- Notice how your arm and hand are moving as you brush your teeth.



- Notice how your mouth feels as you spit out the paste.
- Pay attention to the sound that occurs as you spit out the paste.
- Notice the paste that you spit out into the sink, and how that falls into the sink and slides towards the drainage outlet.

- Observe the sound of running water as you wash your toothbrush.
- Notice how the taste in your mouth changes, as you rinse your mouth with water.
- Pay attention to how the water swishes around in your mouth — how it feels and how it sounds.
- Whenever a thought appears in your mind, label it as a thought, and allow it to float away. Then bring your attention back to your chosen activity.
- Our minds are busy, and we may find that we have many thoughts that occur — this is completely normal.

As you start feeling more comfortable with the introduction of mindfulness activities in your life, you may consider incorporating more activities. We have listed a few of the popular options below — some may work better than others for you. Just keep to what works best for you!

Useful Resources

- COVID-19 Resources for Self-help, Parenting, Clinical Practice, and Teaching - this weblink has many resources for general mindfulness strategies that you can use: <https://www.guilford.com/covid-resources#stream>.
- Insight Timer - this is a free resource with access to over 40,000 different types of tracks for mindfulness strategies. This is suitable for children, teenagers, and adults. You can access the various tracks on the website, or obtain the download link for the app from here: <https://insighttimer.com/>
- Mind Yeti - this is a Spotify podcast which children and teenagers can use to practice mindfulness techniques: <https://open.spotify.com/show/2raVdnpdHFB1txPZiu19c9>
- Mindfulness for Teens - this is a weblink that contains audio recordings of mindfulness strategies catered to teenagers: <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/guided-meditations/>
- Smiling Mind - this is another free resource with mindfulness strategies. This is suitable for children, teenagers, and adults. You can obtain more information from the website, and obtain the download link for the app from here: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au>.



Trauma Network
for Children



The Stay Prepared – Trauma Network for Children (TNC) programme is a joint collaboration between KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and Temasek Foundation. It aims to enhance the psychosocial capability of the Singapore community to support children and youth after crises or traumatic events.