



## *Mindfulness*

Mindfulness does not have to be complicated, require hours of our time or even cost money. Simply put, mindfulness is being aware of what is going on around us at the moment and what are the intentions we are trying to fulfill. Mindfulness can help children and adults focus, cope with stress and in a way, quiet the chaos that is our life at the moment. Simple mindfulness activities look like contracting the muscles, belly breathing, meditation, coloring or listening to music. Other ways to practice mindfulness is to use what we have around us all the time, technology. Below are different apps for iOS and Android to help children (and their parents) in practicing mindfulness.



### **Smiling Mind**

Smiling Mind offers hundreds of mindfulness activities for all ages. In addition to breathing meditations, the app has sensory exercises, like listening to music. There are programs for kids in different age groups, as well as for schools, workplaces, and sports. The app also keeps track of when kids meditate. Smiling Mind was created by a nonprofit with the mission of improving mental health in Australia. So the app uses voices with Australian accents. Since the app has so many options, your child may need your support to use it.

Price: Free Available for: Android, iOS



### **Three Good Things: A Happiness Journal**

Although not for meditation, this free journaling app can help kids build mindfulness based on a simple premise: If kids write down three good things that happen to them each day, they'll feel happier. The app is very easy to use. After kids enter their name, they're asked to write a few words about something good that happened that day, then a second and third thing. They can use the app to set a reminder to write each day, and they can look over past journal entries.

Price: Free. Available for: iOS

### **Stop, Breathe & Think**

Stop, Breathe & Think is a simple meditation app for kids in middle school and older. It has guided meditations and breathing exercises, as well as written instructions on how to meditate. Kids can share how their mind and body are feeling, and the app suggests a meditation based on that. The app also tracks total meditation time and how “settled” kids report they feel.

Price: Free to try (\$9.99 per month subscription) Available for: Android, iOS



### **Forest**

Forest is a simple game that rewards kids (or adults!) for not using their phones. Here’s how it works. Your child plants a seed in the ground. Within 30 minutes, the seed can grow into a tree. But if your child exits the app to use the phone, the tree dies. While the tree grows, the app displays messages like “Put down your phone” and “Leave me alone!” It keeps track of how long your child has waited for each tree and how many times your child put the phone down over time.

Price: \$1.99. Available for: Android, iOS

Flora Version free



### *Mindfulness Videos*

Boundaries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqZiBugq4ts>

Procrastination

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGLkU>

How Mindfulness Empowers Us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss>

For more information on mindfulness, relaxation or boredom busters, visit our Counselor’s corner at <https://sites.google.com/svusdk12.net/counselingcorner/home>

## Sensory

Mindfulness teaches us how to be more aware of our environment which we achieve through different activities. Sensory play allows us to explore our world through the sense of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch. By narrowing our intention to one of our senses, we can engage our focus and attention naturally. Some sensory activities include calm down jars, coloring books, putty/slime/play dough, glow sticks, animal walking, heavy loads (moving laundry baskets/large but soft items from one side of the house to the other) and finger painting. Like with mindfulness, when our sensory system needs are met, we can better attend and respond to a number of tasks and engage in positive social interactions as it helps with emotional regulation.

## Sensory Activities

**Set up Sensory Activities** -When your child gets overwhelmed, have them take a break with a sensory activity depending on what they need—to release energy, calm down, or be alone.

Activities with Kinetic sand <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuYaH12pNFI>

Sensory Crafts- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cih4U17ph8A>

**Fine Motor Skills**- Items you already have in your home can also easily be repurposed as sensory tools. Spray shaving cream on the kitchen table and let your kids spread it around, draw images, or write words and numbers to release energy while boosting fine motor skills. You can also let your kids rip, fold, and crinkle different types of paper such as wrapping, tissue, and magazine paper.

Sensory Bags-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LEvgbyJ4EE>

**Sensory Bin**: Sensory bins, or any container filled with items that stimulate one or more of the five senses, offer a relaxing, low-demand activity for children, and can be made by filling a container with items like dry beans, rice, or pasta, and cotton balls, for example. Add tools like measuring cups, sifters, and shovels to encourage kids to explore. For an added element of fun, you can make colored rice with your kid using a bag of store-bought rice and food coloring.

Colored Rice- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Az7WnGa9hrM>

Sensory Bottles- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7zp7KbxbKY>

**Sensory Path**: Sensory paths, or a path made with common items like cut-out arrows, pillows, and furniture, can prompt your kid to walk, bend, and hop, which will help to regulate their bodies and transition them to the next activity. Go through the obstacle course with your child beforehand, so they'll know what to do when. For older children, using things such as punching bags, battling ropes, or more difficult obstacle courses to achieve the desired effect.

Sensory Paths ideas- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDefbr7Vlro>

**Pressure**: Some children benefit from feeling pressure on their body, which helps activate their parasympathetic response, lowering the heart rate and reducing stress. Other than a simple hug or squeeze, children find “burrito rolls” relaxing, aptly named for looking like a burrito once rolled

up inside a blanket or sheet. You can also have a child sit with a set of heavy books in their lap or make a weighted lap pad by filling a large sock with rice.

Sock Snowman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnHMK7m9ztk>

### *Parent Tip*

Mindfulness has many benefits we can utilize during this time (or anytime really) and as parents, there are many different ways we can incorporate it into distance learning. Some ways to maintain or integrate mindfulness is

- Use mindfulness apps, or mindfulness techniques throughout the day
- Practice mindfulness as a family and when everyone is calm
- Engage in sensory play to help regain and sustain attention
- Be creative with incorporating school activities, exercise and social emotional learning

In the midst of this pandemic, distance learning, quarantine and uncertainty, it is vitally important you remember your own self care (you as in a parent/adult/human). Take time to fill up your own cup in order to be the best provider you can be. Adjusting to change can be hard, takes time, and requires patience. Remember, we're here for you.

-Your SVUSD team

