

MENTAL HEALTH & MINDFULNESS

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL



PINWHEEL BREATHING



Information about the Project

This unit is part of an EU financed project 'Every Move Counts' that was initiated in our schools as we could see that the majority of our students spent a lot of their free time using gadgets, staying indoors and less time being physically active. Alongside this, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue as well as creating mental health issues amongst young and old alike. We felt it was important to tackle these issues.

Six schools from six countries are taking part in this project: Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. Our participating students are aged between 13 - 16 and attend different types of schools including one SEND special educational needs school.

This exercise allows us to see how different ways of breathing affect how our mind and bodies feel.

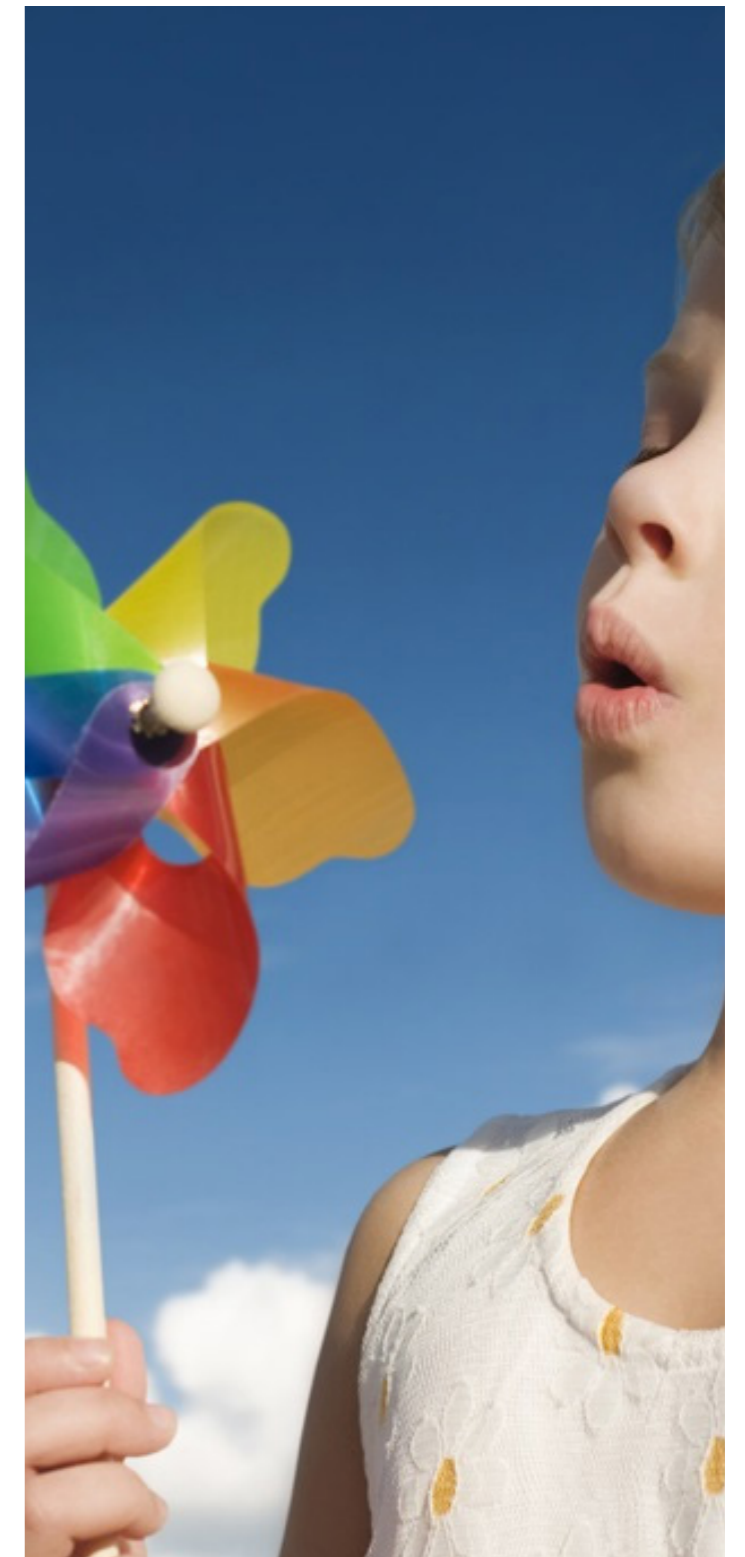
Step 1 With a pinwheel, sit with your back straight and your body relaxed.

Step 2 Blow on your pinwheel using long, deep breaths, and notice how you feel. Do you feel calm and relaxed? Is it easy or hard to sit still?

Step 3 Now blow on the pinwheel using short, quick breaths. How does your body feel now? Do you feel the same way after breathing quickly as you did after breathing slowly?

Step 4 Now blow on the pinwheel normally. How does this feel?

Step 5 What did you notice about how different ways of breathing makes you feel?



I don't need to worry. I can try again.

FIVE SENSES EXERCISE

Use this Five Senses Exercise as a simple, versatile way to evoke a mindful state wherever you are. The goal of this exercise is to practice being aware in the present moment throughout the day whenever formal mindfulness practice such as meditation or a body scan might not be practical.



Notice five things that you can see.

Cast your eyes around and bring your attention to five things you might not normally notice. Choose something you wouldn't ordinarily pay attention to, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.



Notice four things that you can feel.

Bring your awareness to four things you are currently feeling, like the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.



Notice three things that you can hear.

Try to tune in to the sounds of your surroundings. What can you hear in the background? This might be a bird singing, the low hum of the refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic from a nearby road.



Notice two things that you can smell.

Tune your senses into smells you might usually gloss over, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. Perhaps the breeze is carrying the scent of pine trees if you're outside, or the smell of cafe from the sidewalk.



Notice one thing that you can taste.

Focus on one thing you can taste right now, in this moment. You can take a sip of coffee, savor some chocolate, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open it to search the air for a taste.

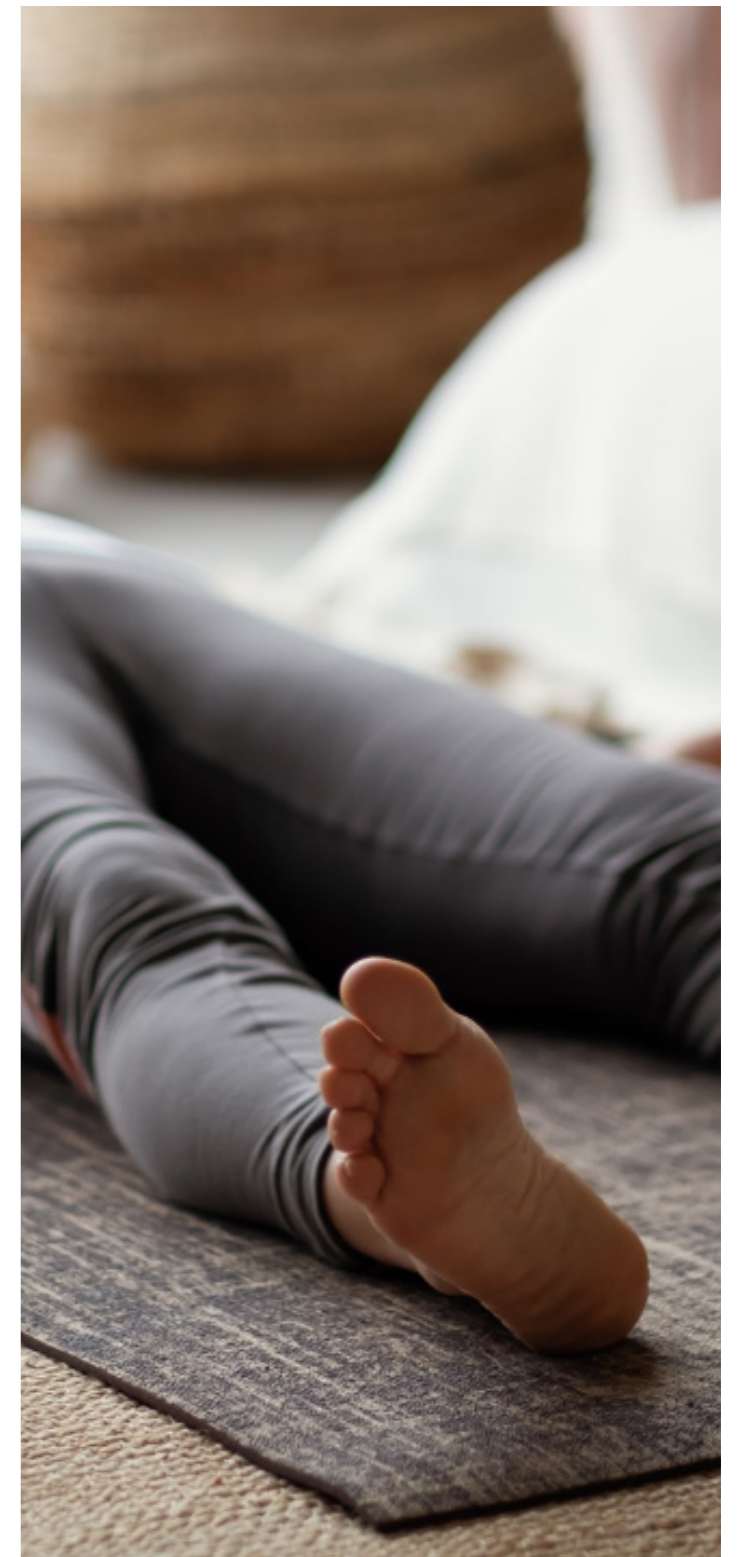
TENSE & RELEASE

Muscle Relaxation.

Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.

Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.

Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.



MINDFUL EATING

In this activity, use all of your senses to investigate your food. Slow down and take notice of every part of the experience.

What colors and shapes do you see?
Does your food make a sound?
Is it smooth, bumpy or rough?
What does your food smell like?
Place the food on your tongue but don't chew it just yet. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Do you taste anything yet? Start to chew, does the flavor change? How many different flavors are there?

Other tips for mindful eating:

- Take a deep breath or take a second to be thankful for their meal before eating.
- Think about how hungry you are before a meal.
- Eat without distractions such as the television or computer.
- Put down your fork in between bites.
- Wait 15 minutes after eating to decide if you are still hungry for seconds (it takes about 15 minutes for your brain to register if you're full or not).
- Allow enough time to eat.



FEATHER BREATHING

If you can use real feathers or cotton wool for this activity, that would be great. Otherwise, you can use your imagination.

Sit comfortably on a chair and imagine that there is a feather or ball of cotton wool in front of you.

If you have a feather or cotton wool, place this in one of your hands and hold your hand out in front of you.

Breathe in through your nose and breathe out slowly through your mouth, in order to make the object float.

Repeat this a few times.



DEEP BREATHS

Lie down flat and place your hands on your belly.

Close your eyes and take ten deep breaths.

Notice your hands moving up and down as you breathe.

Do you feel relaxed?



CREATE A GLITTER JAR

1. Find a jar
2. Decorate the jar
3. Fill the jar 3/4 full
4. Add glue, food colouring and glitter
5. Seal the bottle

Shake the glitter jar and remain quiet and still while the glitter is settling.

As you breathe deeply watch the glitter float around in the jar and finally settle on the bottom.



I have full confidence in myself and my abilities.

I am attentive to opportunities and seize them as they arise.

SQUARE BREATHING

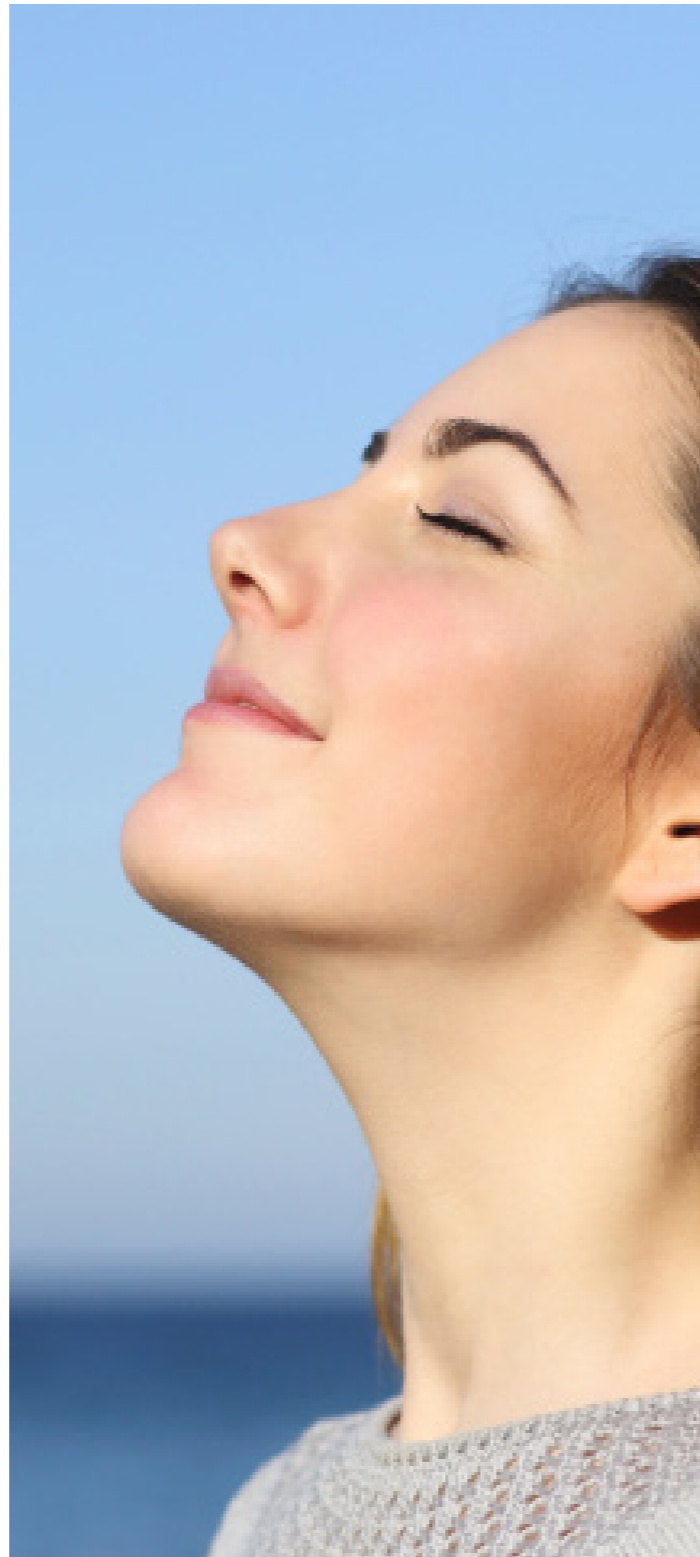
Breathe in for four

Hold for four

Breathe out for four

Hold for four

Repeat the process



MINDFUL POSING

Doing fun poses can help you to feel strong, brave and happy.

Find somewhere quiet and familiar, a place you feel safe. Try one of the following poses:

The Superman: this pose is practiced by standing with the feet just wider than the hips, fists clenched, and arms reached out to the sky, stretching the body as tall as possible.

The Wonder Woman: this pose is struck by standing tall with legs wider than hip-width apart and hands or fists placed on the hips.

Think about how you feel after a few rounds of trying either of these poses. You may be surprised.



I am not held back by regret or mistakes from the past.

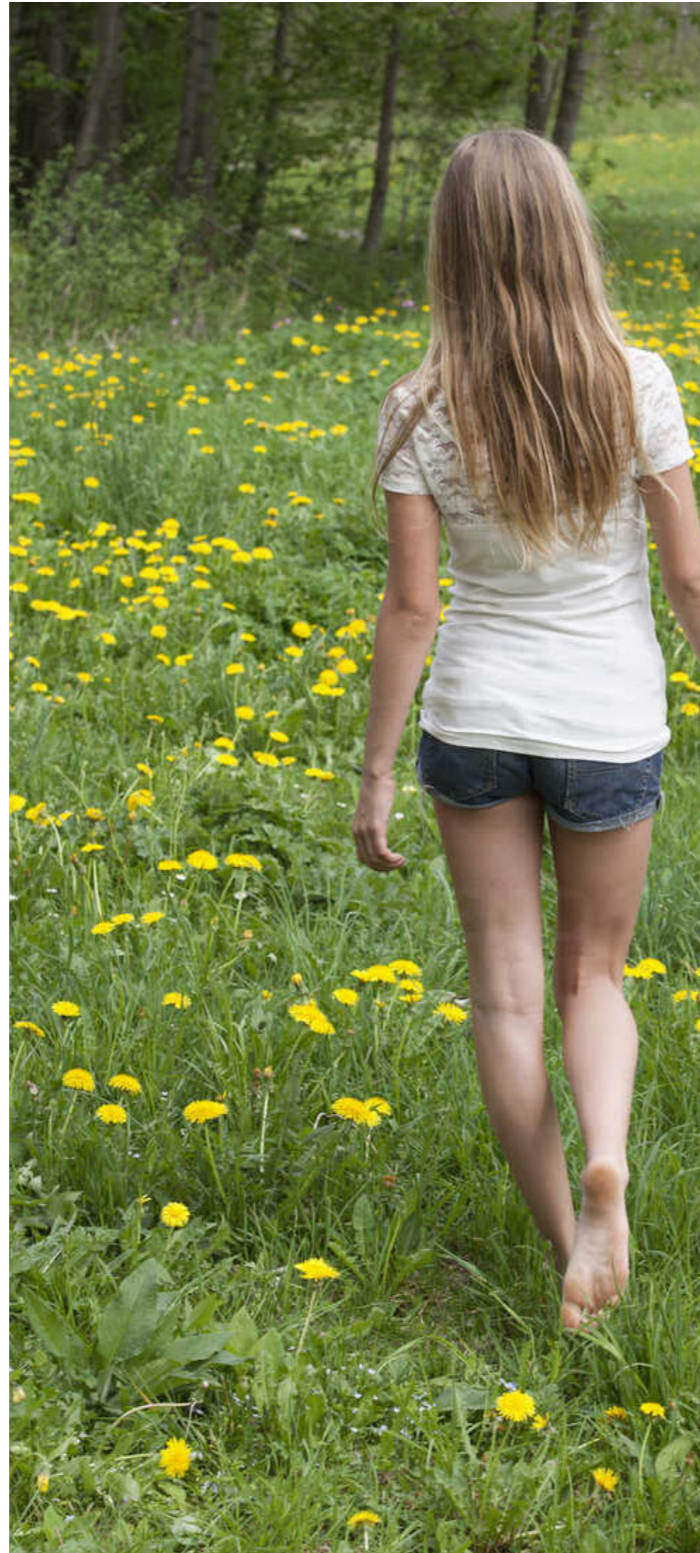
I am moving forward daily.

SAFARI

This activity turns an average, everyday walk into an exciting new adventure.

On your walk, your goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, creepy-crawlies, and any other animals as you can.

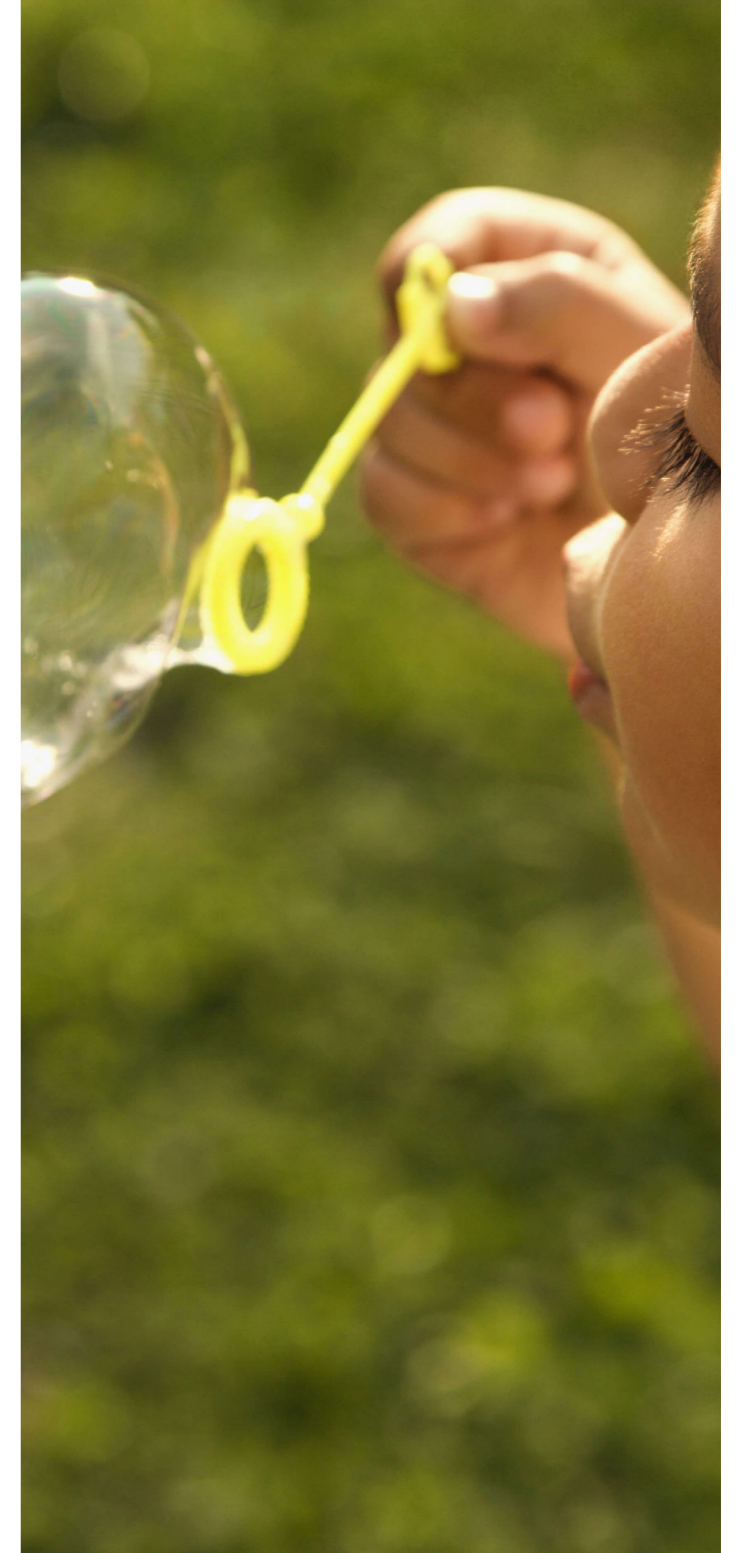
Anything that walks, crawls, swims, or flies is of interest, and you'll need to focus all of your senses to find them, especially the little ones.



BLOWING BUBBLES

Focus on taking in a deep, slow breath, and exhaling steadily to fill the bubble.

Pay close attention to each bubble as they form, detach, and pop or float away.



FALLING BALLOONS

The aim of this game is to keep the balloon off the ground.

You must move slowly and gently.

If it helps, you can imagine the balloon as being very fragile.

Don't allow the balloon to touch the floor.



TEXTURE BAG

Have someone place several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects in a bag.

Reach in and touch an object, one at a time, and describe what you are touching.

Make sure you don't take the object out of the bag, this forces you to use only your sense of touch to explore the object.

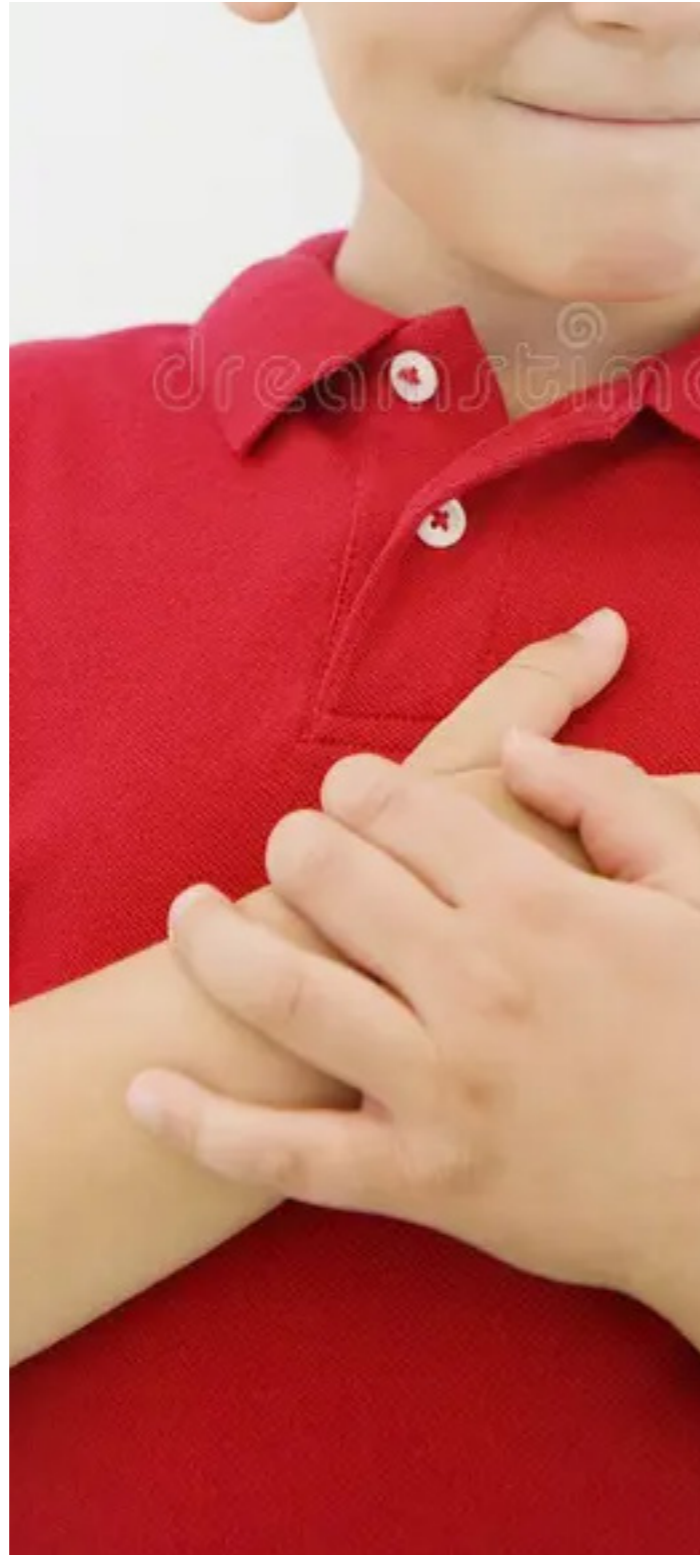


HEARTBEAT EXERCISE

Stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.

At the end of that minute, place your hand on your heart and pay attention to how your heartbeat and breathing feels.

As you monitor your heartbeat and breathing after exercise, you'll learn to become mindful of how your body feels.



POSITIVE SELF TALK

We don't often listen to our positive self-talk, but even worse, we always listen to our negative self-talk.

Think of 3 positive qualities you have. When negative thoughts arise, remember or silently repeat these 3 positive qualities.

The worst bullies you will ever encounter in your life are your own thoughts.



I am smart, amazing, and powerful.

I am full of great ideas and thoughts.

TRY THIS DAILY CHALLENGE

Try the challenge below every day for one week and tick your progress using the boxes.

Good morning gratitude

Think about three things that you are grateful for.

First taste

Really notice the taste of the first sip of your drink in the morning.

Mindful brushing

Notice how the brush moves over your teeth and the taste of your toothpaste. Slow down and really notice every sensation that occurs.

Heading out

When you walk, pay attention to how you walk. What does walking feel like in your body? The lifting of your foot, moving to the other foot etc.

Kindness to another

Do or say something nice to someone else today for no reason. Notice what it feels like.

Mindful Waiting

If you find yourself waiting today, either pay attention to something you would normally ignore, OR, look for your favourite colour.

Before bed

Put away your gadgets and sit without distractions for at least five minutes.

Focus on your breathing

Let go of your worries and to do lists for one minute; simply be still.

Can you remember what the first sip of your drink tasted like at the start of today?

JOURNAL / NOTES

Use this page to note the exercises you have found effective. Have you any new ideas?

I have the confidence to be myself.

I am important and special.



Every Move Counts 2020-2023



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union