

OBJECTIVE

To know that it is important to be kind to myself as well as to others.
To be able to generate a feeling of kindness and calm within myself.

RESOURCES NEEDED

Guided breathing exercise audio.

WARM-UP

Ask the children to discuss these questions with a partner: if kindness was a colour, what colour would it be? If kindness was a shape, what shape would it be? If kindness was a sound, what sound would it be? If kindness was a texture, what would it be?

ACTIVITY

Share the following information from the power-point slides:

Today, we're going to try a short breathing exercise. This is a great way to be kind to yourself as it's really good for your mind and body. Gentle, calm breathing activates your parasympathetic nervous system which switches your body into a calm state, lowers blood pressure, and eases stress.

Lots of different people find that breathing exercises help them. For example, some sports people find it helps them to stay calm and focused. Here is the Italian racing car driver, Fabio di Giannantonio. And here he is taking a moment to calm himself just before the start of a big race (*video of driver meditating before race*).

But you don't have to be a racing car driver to benefit! You can take a short break to breathe and calm your mind and body at any time.

When you are doing this breathing exercise, you can also think kind, loving thoughts. Thinking kind thoughts releases oxytocin which we know is good for us and helps us to feel at ease.

Let's give it a go....

(The guided meditation can be done sitting on the carpet or on chairs.)

Listen to the Guided Breathing Exercise (or read script below).

How did you feel? Which bits did you like or find difficult? It is ok to find bits difficult and just by having a go you're showing yourself kindness. With this exercise, the more you do it, the easier it gets, so we will practise a few times this week. When would be the best time of day to do this exercise? Perhaps before lunch time so our bodies are nice and calm to digest our food? Or maybe after playtime to help us to calm down so we are ready to learn?

PLENARY

Explain that it is important to be kind to yourself as well as to other people - you can give yourself the same kindness you would give to a friend. Display the **positive words poster** on the board and ask the children to choose a compliment from the board to give to themselves!

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Try the guided meditation with the class a couple of times during the week. Discuss how they feel afterwards. If you would like to read the meditation yourself, the script is below.

2. Practise mindful breathing:

Explain to the class that sometimes when you want to be kind to someone, the best thing you can do is spend some time with them. When you want to show your mind and body some kindness, you can spend a little bit of time with yourself. This means giving your attention to yourself.

A good way to do this is to bring your attention to your breathing which can help you to feel calm. Imagine your attention is like a spot light – you can focus it on things around you, or you can direct it inside of yourself to become aware of the feelings and sensations inside your body. Close your eyes and send your attention to your breathing - where do you feel it? Maybe in your nose, your chest or your tummy? Where is most comfortable for you to focus your attention? When you are observing your breathing, there is no need to change your breathing, just rest your attention lightly on the sensation of breathing. Observe how it feels.

Now, play ‘**Mindful musical statues**’ – The children are to walk around the space slowly and carefully. They are to concentrate their attention outwards, looking for space, thinking about making sure they don’t bump into anybody, concentrating on their path as they move. Then when you say “**stop**”, they are to stand still and focus their attention inwards onto their breath. How quickly can they move their attention to their breathing? Can they follow three whole breaths, all the way in and all the way out? (No need to change the breath, just watch it.) When they have done this, can they put their hand on their heart and take a moment to send themselves kindness. Try a couple of times. Then make it harder... ask the children to carefully walk backwards so they have to concentrate even more! Can they still bring their attention to their breath when you say stop? In conclusion, remind the children that they can take a pause to focus on their breathing at any time and it can help them to feel calm.

3. Try having a mindfulness bell in the classroom. Every time you sound the bell, everyone closes their eyes and takes three gentle and kind breaths.

4. Try our other guided meditations.

5. Create a piece of art to show what kindness looks and feels like – thinking about colour, texture, line, shape.

6. If kindness was an animal/creature what would it look like? Can you draw it?

GUIDED MEDITATION SCRIPT:

We're going to try a short kindness breathing exercise. This is a really great way of showing your mind and body a bit of kindness. It can help you to feel calm and relaxed. But don't worry, you can't get it wrong, just having a go is enough!

Sitting comfortably – So make sure you are sitting comfortably on the floor or on a chair. Your back and neck should be fairly straight and your shoulders nice and relaxed. If comfortable let a gentle smile rest on your lips.

Elephant breaths – We're going to start by taking 3 breaths, just a little bit deeper and slower than the breaths you would normally take. We call these elephant breaths because as we breath in, we raise our right arm slowly up like an elephant's trunk, and as we breath out, we move it back down again nice and slowly. If it's comfortable, breath in and out through your nose and keep your lips gently together. Demonstrate (out breath slightly longer than the in breath). And let your breathing return to normal.

Sunshine relaxation – Now, place your hands in your lap and gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable. Imagine a lovely warm sun shining down on you. As you feel the lovely warm light on your skin, feel the muscles in your body begin to relax. Imagine the warm light shining on your face and let your face relax – feel your jaw loosen, your eyelids relax and even your tongue feel a little bit softer. Feel the warm light on your shoulders and let any tightness in your shoulders ease, feel your shoulders drop a little. Keep your back fairly straight and let the warm light move down your body, over your chest and your back, the tops of your arms and even down to your fingers. Feel the warmth on your tummy and legs and as the sun shines on you, feel any tightness or tension in your body melt away. Let your whole body soften and relax.

GUIDED MEDITATION SCRIPT:

Sending kindness – Now, you're going to send kind thoughts to your body. We'll start with your heart. Your heart works really hard pumping blood around your body and keeping you healthy. Send kind thoughts and a smile to your heart – say thank you heart for all that it does. Next, send kindness and a smile to your lungs. Say thank you to your lungs for helping you breathe in fresh air every day. And now moving to your tummy which digests your food every day providing you with lots of energy... send a smile and lots of kindness to your tummy to say thank you for all that it does. Say thank you to your arms and your hands for allowing you to draw, write, make things, stroke your pets and give hugs to the people you love. Send your arms and hands love and kindness. And finally, say thank you to your legs and feet for whatever movement they give you, send them kindness.

Surrounded by kindness – Now, place one hand over your heart. Imagine your heart filling with kindness and then that kindness spreading out to fill your whole body. Say to yourself 'breathing in, I am calm, breathing out, I smile to my body' [leave a few seconds and repeat]. Send love and kindness to every part of your body. Feel yourself surrounded by love and kindness. Now gently place your hands back into your lap.

Kind breaths – And to finish, we're going to take a moment to rest with some gentle breaths. There's no need to change your breathing, just see if you can notice it. Maybe you can feel your breath coming gently in and out of your nose? Maybe you can feel your chest calmly rising with your in-breath and falling with your out-breath? Perhaps you can feel your tummy moving very slightly in and out and you continue to gently breathe. Just notice your breathing wherever feels comfortable to you, noticing the 'in breath' and noticing the 'out breath'. Enjoy these lovely, calm, kind breaths allowing your body to be relaxed as you breathe. (Pause for about 2/3 breaths).

End – And now, to end, slowly open your eyes. You might like to give yourself a hug! Let's have a stretch – stand up, reach up, tickle the sky. Touch your shoulders, hips, knees, toes. Put your hands on your hips make a circle. And take a seat again.

Well done. This kindness exercise is really good for your mind and body. Give yourself a pat on the back and say thank you to yourself for taking time to be kind to yourself!