



# Being Well

## From My Mind To Yours

A Free EBook for the Primary Classroom

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# Introduction

Hello Friends,

Firstly, thank you for downloading this free eBook. It is just a little compilation of wellbeing lessons that can be used in the primary school. Many ideas may be familiar to you already but hopefully, there are some new activities for you to try to support you with introducing wellbeing science into your classroom.

Mindfulness and meditation came into my life quite a long time ago, as I was looking for something to bring balance into my life at a time where I knew I wasn't feeling as mentally well as I could have. Fast forward a few years and I have completed my master's degree in Applied Positive Psychology and coaching, as I wanted to learn more about the science of being well.

It is a dream of mine to bring what I've learned into the lives of children and their grown-ups, through resources based on positive psychology. I truly believe, that every child, should be given the vocabulary and preventative tools to support their mental wellbeing and to promote flourishing in life.

I do hope this eBook is useful for you.

Take Care and Be Well,

Ashley





# Stilling the body – Briefly!

## Overview

Using Tibetan Bells, a singing bowl or a good old-fashioned triangle, you can begin laying the foundations for mindful practices – even with children as young as three! By playing the instrument and making just one sound, the children can begin to train their bodies into being still for short periods of time.

## Purpose

Over time children will be able to build on top of this practice of stilling their body, which will eventually enable children to recognise sensations and thoughts mindfully as they get older. This activity may only last a few seconds but is the initial building block to begin a beautiful, mindful awareness. Concentrating on the sound will encourage the development of listening and attention in the children.

## Session

Initially the instrument can be introduced into continuous provision or during a circle time, allowing the children to become familiar with the sound. To start the activity, you can begin with little groups before eventually trying a whole class session.

Playing a sound with the instrument ask the children what they **notice**. Is it loud, quiet, short, or long? Explain that when you play this sound, sometimes you will ask the children to sit still for the length of time that the sound plays.

Ask the children to sit cross legged with their hands on their knees with a straight spine. Tell them that when they first hear the sound to close their eyes and open them when they can't hear the sound anymore. The goal isn't to make them sit 'still' as such, but more to become aware of their bodies and thoughts.



## Growing the Practice

You could choose one child to watch the others as the sound plays to see who managed to focus on the sound - almost like a mindful, music free ,musical statues! Children also love to be the one to play the sound for their friends. Perhaps the instrument can be placed in a 'Calm Corner' or somewhere accessible to children to be used independently as and when they feel they might need to rest the wriggles! Eventually, a focus on breathing deeply can be introduced replacing the sound for listening to breath.

# Teddy Bear Belly Breathing

## Overview

All that is required is a favourite teddy and a tummy! This little activity helps children 'see' their breath in a visual way and begins the process of understanding the benefits of deep breathing.

## Purpose

Babies breathe freely, their tummies expand and contract so naturally. However, as we get older there can be a tendency to begin breathing more into our chests, not filling our lungs to full capacity. Diaphragmatic breathing can be defined as an "efficient integrative body-mind training for dealing with stress and psychosomatic conditions." (Xiao Ma et al, 2017). This fun session helps children see the expansion of their tummies and their continuous practice will enable children to employ deep breathing techniques when life evokes the need for relaxation responses.

## Session

Children can begin by introducing their teddy friends to their classmates, what a lovely way to start the day or begin a teddy bear's picnic! This session can be done with little groups or as a whole class session.

Have a little discussion about breathing and air. The yogis among us might even throw in the word 'pranayama' which translates from Sanskrit as 'life force' and it is a breathing practice that emphasizes that without air, there is no life. Deep. Encourage children to chat about which body parts move when they breathe.

To show the children which is the best place on the body for all the air to go, you can demonstrate lying on your back with a teddy on your tummy. As you breathe deeply through your nose into your stomach, the teddy will rise and then fall as you exhale. Be prepared for lots of giggles as the teddy falls by the side at times. Although the children may find this really funny and silly, eventually they will understand the message – belly breathing is good for you. This can be built upon with various practices as children get older.

## Growing the practice...

You can encourage children to do this activity when they appear a little stressed or anxious; deep breathing can be a huge part of self-regulation and calming. Have a 'breathing teddy' for this purpose. Using smaller objects such as a piece of Lego will eventually remove the visual to a more internal, mindful practice.

# But It's BUBBLES!

## Overview

Everyone loves bubbles. No matter who you are, you admire them floating past you before the urge to pop them becomes just too much and then – pop! You did it. This little session uses bubbles to introduce the concept of self-control to little ones and is also, just really good fun.

## Purpose

Asking kids not to pop bubbles sounds bonkers but after some time, they really can surprise you – don't they always! This activity is a great visual to introduce the concept of self-control to the children and a good talking point to remind those who lose theirs at times. I've brought it up again many a time 'Remember that time you controlled your actions with the bubbles? I know you can make the effort to do that now instead of (insert any number of scenarios here).

## Session

Have all the children sitting on the carpet without explaining what is going to happen next. Let them know all you ask is for them to be aware of the others around them. Then, blow the bubbles and see what happens! Children shouldn't bump into each other if you have reminded them to be aware of those around them 😊 Talk about what happened (I imagine many will have jumped up to try and pop the bubbles!). What does it feel like when your actions take over? Explain that you are going to blow the bubbles again but this time, even if a bubble floats right past their nose, you want them to try and control their actions and not pop it (some definitely still will). By the third time, pretty much everyone can control their actions while the bubbles float past. Such a great activity to refer back to time and time again.



## Growing the practice...

This activity can be demonstrated to the children and then left in continuous provision for children to do. It will be a lovely insight into those whose interest in mindfulness may be piqued. And into who loves blowing bubbles 😊. Perhaps, throughout the week you can ask children to be the one blowing the bubbles for the others. Or, if you have a particularly lively bunch, you could blow the bubbles before a carpet session, just to remind them of the power they have to focus their bodies.



# Calm Cloud Watching

## Overview

When is the last time you stopped to smell the roses? Or watch the clouds for that matter? I know curriculums don't usually cater for 'cloud watching' but throw caution to the wind and try it – weather permitting! Watching clouds for a few moments on a nice day gets children (and you) out in nature for a revitalising brain break.

## Purpose

Children can **notice** and share different shapes they can see in the sky when watching the clouds. This helps them focus their attention on one thing for short periods of time. Eventually as children get older, this session can be used for children to notice thoughts that appear, gently acknowledge what is coming up for them non-judgementally, allowing the thought to drift on for the time being.

## Session

You can begin with a discussion about clouds and what the children know about them. You might spend a little time talking about how they drift and float through the sky sometimes. Explain that you will go outside and cloud watch for a while. What would be the best way to do this? Allow the children to plan how to do this best, for example, there may be a grassy area they can go to or they might need to take a rug or cushions. Once the children are lying down comfortably looking at the clouds you can guide them into some deep breathing. Gently encourage them to just watch the cloud and notice what they see. Explain that if a thought pops in their head, imagine it is a cloud and let it float on. This can be difficult to begin with for little ones but remember, it is starting their practice to even just becoming used to this type of language is wonderful!

## Growing the practice...

Children can chat to a partner after watching the clouds for a while and talk about the shapes that they saw. Eventually you can discuss any thoughts that they noticed and allowed to drift through their minds.

# Emotions Run High! – Card Games

## Overview

A basic set of emotions cards which can be used in a variety of ways. Build upon basic snap, with matching to corresponding text to activity cards based on the picture cards. Older children can then create their own games for each other, or younger children, based on the emotions.

## Purpose

Kids love learning through play, even when they become more grown up. The 12 emotion cards are a starting point to enable children to use 'emotion vocabulary'. Simple snap games to start gets the children thinking about what the emotions are. The activity ideas which follow on encourage the children to think deeper about the emotions and how they experience them.

## Session

Introduce the 'Emobean' emotion cards (visit [www.mindfulmissgreen.com](http://www.mindfulmissgreen.com) to download) to the children and talk about what emotions actually are. This might be a good time to talk about what emotions look like when someone is experiencing them, eg. Tears when someone feels sad or a frown when someone feels angry.

Otherwise, there isn't much to these sessions, so - put your feet up! (If only...) Let the children play snap 😊. Then, let them match the picture to the correct sentence (the second sheet of word cards). Once they have a hold on the definitions of each emotion, the children can try the simple activities, which is the last set of cards. All they do here is pick an emotion card, then find the corresponding activity. I'm sure the children will then be able to use their own creativity to come up with new games that could be played with the cards. They might even design their own emotion snap cards.

Be sure to chat to the children about what they have come up with, you might benefit too!



## Growing the practice...

Depending on the age of the children you could begin delving a little deeper into the emotions. It's worth explaining that although some of the emotions are not always desirable to us, they are just as important as the pleasant ones because we can learn from them. Explore this theory with the children.



# Gratitude –Three Good Things

## Overview

Every afternoon before home time, children can write down three things they are grateful for from that day. It does not have to be three particularly huge events; it could be something so simple like the banana they enjoyed at snack! On the morning of the first day, a discussion about gratitude and what it means can take place to prepare the children for their little gratitude wellbeing booster!

## Purpose

Gratitude is well-researched concept, particularly in the field of positive psychology. Empirical studies generally suggest subjective well-being can be increased by recognising things to be grateful for in life, no matter how small they might be. This is particularly evident in a study by Emmons and McCullough (2003) which was later extended further by Seligman (2005) who asked participants to write down three things they were grateful for each morning and reflect on their personal role in bringing about these things. This activity may deepen the understanding of gratitude for the children and encourage them to exercise a gratitude attitude more often in their day to day lives, hopefully enhancing their overall wellbeing as a result.

## Session

Begin the week with a discussion about gratitude. Share what it means to you too. Explain that one of the important aspects of gratitude is noticing the little things in life and appreciating them for what they are. Children are pretty good at being grateful for things such a family, food and a home to live in but take the time to point out that gratitude can be felt for little things personal to them such as pancakes on a Sunday morning or the sound of rain on the window when they are cosy in bed.

Explain briefly that practising gratitude for a short period of time can increase wellbeing. Then share the activity with the children and allow them to choose where they think would be best to record their 'three good things' each day. Make sure they are given time for this before home time for the rest of the week; children could possibly do this over the weekend too before coming together at the start of the next school week to discuss how they feel the activity went.



## Growing the practice...

You might choose to 'rerun' this activity again at some point in the year but this time, you can deepen it using Seligman's (2005) variation where the participant reflects on what they did to bring it about the thing for which they are grateful. For example, a child might be grateful for scoring a goal at break time and reflecting in this way might help them to realise that the goal happened because they tried their best, played well in a team or have been practising more at home. This reflection in itself can be really rewarding.

Perhaps you could make a class gratitude tree that the children can add to freely throughout a term using labels to hang on or leaves to a wall display.

For those who really enjoy the activity, have an accessible class gratitude journal or jar to add to. Children could teach younger year groups about the concept through specially written stories.

# Strong Strengths

## Overview

There are so many things you can do to help children recognise their strengths, but the main thing is to introduce them to the vocabulary. Use a pack of character strength cards to bring the strengths language into the everyday classroom (Packs are available at [www.mindfulmissgreen.com](http://www.mindfulmissgreen.com)). Once children are familiar with their own strengths and areas they'd like to work on, they can then begin to recognise strengths in friends and teachers. Please visit [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org) to learn more about the strengths. You can take your own free survey too to find out the order of your 24 characters strengths.

## Purpose

Knowing your personal strengths can boost self-esteem and confidence. When you know what your personal strengths are you can begin to apply them more purposefully to everyday situations, they can be used to your advantage to grow and earn. This initial session is to begin learning which each VIA Character Strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) means.

## Session

You can begin with a discussion about the words strength then character and what they may mean combined. Ask children to share what they think their personal strengths might be. How could they apply these strengths to learning or friendships?

Show the children the strengths cards, or typed up word cards, and give them time to work together to research what each word may mean. Do they recognise any of these strengths in themselves or others? Can the children sort the cards into the correct categories?

Children can use the cards to pick their top three strengths and chat to a partner about why they have chosen them. Their friend in turn can pick three strengths they have witnessed in their partner and explain why. How lovely for the children to hear what their friends think of them using such strong vocabulary.



## Growing the practice...

There is a strengths based survey for students which can be found online at <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/registerteacher>. I would encourage you to find your own strengths first! As a teacher you can then find out your students strengths and where possible, praise them when you see the strengths being used or even teach them using strengths to help them learn. Link strengths to mindset; how can a growth mindset be applied to build on their strengths? A complex thought but a great chance to link learning for the children and encourage some real deep reflection and thinking.

# Marvellous Mandalas

## Overview

Guided mindful colouring for little ones. Or this can be part of your continuous provision.

## Purpose

Mindful colouring is everywhere but the purpose is sometimes left unexplained. Colouring brings the focus and attention into the moment and when little ones are guided, they can tap into and become aware of thought processes, a starting point for mindfulness. In Sanskrit the word Mandala literally translates to 'circle', the patterns often have a circular theme and they are beautiful to look at. Colour mandalas as an introduction to this form of meditation.

## Session

Begin by showing the children mandalas (quick google search) and talk about what the children notice.

Simply demonstrate basic skills and colouring between the lines. You can ask the children simple questions to help guide their awareness such as, 'why did you choose that colour?' and 'how do you feel as you colour?', this activity may only last a very short time but again, think of these sessions as time for the children to 'just be'. As children get older, they will begin to understand the benefits of mindful colouring and apply them to different areas of life.



## Growing the practice...

Children can share their thoughts with a partner or even try to design some of their own mandalas. Older children may be able to use various apps and technology to design more complex mandalas. Also, they might like to research them and learn more about the origins.



# Mindful Munching – An Appetiser

## Overview

This is a gentle introduction to eating mindfully. Children are encouraged to **notice** different elements of their food using their senses, guided by an adult through a short session.

## Purpose

A high percentage of Serotonin (the happy chemical) is made in our dietary tract, therefore a healthy diet and a positive nurturing relationship with food is of course, valuable; especially for little bodies and brains. Eating mindfully has many benefits including sharpening focus and attention, better digestion, eradicating ‘mindless eating’ (e.g. when you sit in front of the TV and before you know it a WHOLE tub of ice cream has disappeared! Hey, no judgement here!) and helping children begin to notice when they are full, which in time reduces tendencies to overeat.

## Session

As children are being introduced to eating mindfully – start small. Choose a small group or go all in with the whole class and just before snack, explain that you are going to start learning about ‘mindful munching’. Share with the children that ‘mindful munching’ means eating in such a way that helps them begin to notice things about their food that they had never noticed before. You could even introduce this after doing the ‘Raisin Activity’, helping them to make the connection.

Every day for a week, ask the children to pick one thing from their snack box and for just a few moments, ask them to look at it closely and shout out adjectives to describe what they see (Be prepared for lots of unexpected vocabulary 😊). Then, allow them to eat – hungry little ones can’t hold back from eating their snack for long! They next week, for the first bite of snack focus on the other senses. What can they smell, hear, feel and taste each day (Yes – hear. Apparently, raisins squeak!)

Eventually, for the first bite of snack each day, you can guide the children through the senses mindfully before saying the words ‘Ok, enjoy the rest!’.

Children love this session, when you forget to lead them through this at snack time, they surely remind you!



## Growing the practice...

Once children are used to this practice, you can ask one of them to lead the short session. You could begin to do this at the same snack time every day. Once a week or once a month, children could eat a whole snack this way or even a whole meal when they are much older. Children will be able to easily transfer the benefits of focus and attention learned during mindful munching to other practices.

# Mini Mindful Movement

## Overview

Mini mindful movement begins introducing children to focusing their attention on sensations in their body as they move and stretch. You can do this for only a few moments at a time and it helps the little ones begin their mindful vocabulary through self-awareness of their physical body.

## Purpose

Children can begin to **notice** different sensations in their physical body as you guide them through a short series of movements or very basic yoga postures. Moving this way can begin preparations for meditation later in life and also encourage children to sharpen focus and attention. Young children may find it difficult to focus their thought processes only to the physical but remember, this is only an introduction. Eventually they will begin to allow thoughts to pass through non-judgmentally when they are a little older and return to focusing the movements.

## Session

To introduce mini mindful movement, start with little groups before moving to a whole class session.

Begin with just standing up straight arms by the side, shoulders back and breathing deeply. Ask children to **notice** their tummies expand and contract with each breath. To continue the practice, suggest on the next breath for children to interlock fingers and stretch them up to the sky. Encourage children to focus on the sensations in their arms and fingers. Allow the children to call out what they notice in whatever words are comfortable to them, for example, stretchy, sore, weird, tickly etc.

Do the same process through a variety of movements such as side stretches, tiptoes, lunges, tree pose, cat/cow pose, or any other movements your class are familiar with as long as they are slow, deliberate and mindful with continuous guidance to notice any sensations which arise.



## Growing the practice...

Eventually mindful movements can be done with only hands or arms before handwriting instead of the usual warm-ups as children get older. Children can lead the groups or class sessions or even teach a partner from another class. Sessions can be lengthened too.



# Please Welcome to the Stage...Gratitude

## Overview

Children love to ask questions so why not allow them to role play a talk show on news report. With minimal props (a plastic pound shop microphone – OR - go big and create a 'set', whatever you fancy) children can interview each other and record this on iPads or fill in a mini 'report' on their friend's answers.

## Purpose

This session can encourage the children to think more about gratitude in a light-hearted and fun way. It also deepens connections with others as they share the things, they are grateful for. Children will enjoy listening to their friends and they may realise that they too can be grateful for the things their friends suggest, which they may not have considered before. Research has shown that those who practice gratitude, typically have a greater sense of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011).

## Session

Start with a whole class discussion about gratitude and what it means to each person. Talk about the big things everyone is grateful for such as family, food, water etc but then spend some time sharing the little things to be grateful for (Kid President has some great videos on YouTube to show this).

Explain the talk show/news report interview theme and possibly show some videos of this in action. Allow the children to come up with ideas of how to do this in pairs as long as gratitude is the theme.

Children can share their videos or short reports with the rest of the class when everyone has completed the task.

What did they learn overall? How do they feel hearing about the gratitude of others?



## Growing the practice...

This can be a class project and children can filter the idea into the rest of the school. Perhaps they could begin interviewing students from other year groups, teachers and parents. Older children may be able to create a montage of videos using tech skills which could be shared with the greater community.

# Stop, Drop and Breathe

## Overview

Not to be confused with an 'attention getter' (although I hold my hands up, sometimes I use it this way amidst a noisy classroom!) this quick little activity literally, stops everyone in their tracks, allows them to drop whatever they are doing to sit on the spot and breathe for a few moments. You can join the children too!

## Purpose

This allows children to stop and just chill for a minute at any point in their jam-packed day. Encouraging them to do this and focus on their breathing can centre the children and possibly bring them to a calmer space. Although some people may not want to disrupt the learning flow in the classroom, I'd encourage you to begin this during transitions to encourage a calm start to your next lesson.

## Session

Choose an instrument that will signal your 'Stop, Drop and Breathe' time. During a circle time introduce the sound and explain to the children that whenever they hear the sound play, they freeze, put everything down and sit on the floor with hands on their knees. Then they will close their eyes and focus on the flow of their breath until the sound plays again. A dramatic demonstration from the teacher may be in order to show the children what this activity will look like!

Playing the sound three or four times is a good signal for this activity and initially, you might want to guide the children's thoughts with a few short sentences such as, 'Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Feel the warm air touch your lips as you breathe back out your mouth'.

Eventually, when the ending sound plays, children carry on about their business, but you will notice there will be a little more **calm** in the air.



## Growing the practice...

You can encourage children to come and tell you when they think the class as a whole may benefit from this activity. You can also ask a child to play the special 'Stop, Drop and Breathe' sound as the children become more familiar with it. As children get older, a leader in a collaborative group could decide when their group might benefit from a calming moment during their task.

# You Can Never Have Too Much Glitter...

## Overview

Kids love glitter. Fact. So why not encourage them to make their own calming glitter jar. Easily accessible somewhere in the classroom, they can sit down, shake the jar and peacefully watch the glitter settle, particularly when they are having a 'moment'. You know which kind of moment I mean.

## Purpose

Children can begin regulating their own emotions with this little activity and independently **notice** when they might need some time out by themselves. Not the timeout where they sit on a step until they decide not to be a monkey anymore but the kind where they know it is ok to just take a breather.

## Session

This activity can be demonstrated to the children and then left in continuous provision for children to do. It will be a lovely insight into those whose interest in mindfulness may be piqued. And into who loves glitter.

Ask children to bring in little jars from home. Jam jars are perfect. However, depending on your class you may prefer having plastic jars instead to ensure safety. Children simply write their name, or, make their mark on a sticky label, to be stuck on the top of the jar before selecting their glitter/sequins etc and popping it inside. Next, they fill the jar with water and then let you know when they need help to check the lid is on tight. Voila! You have a glitter jar.

Have a little basket or tray with the jars in so the children know where to access them as and when.



## Growing the practice...

As a starter, you can use the glitter jars during circle time and encourage children to focus on breathing until the glitter settles. As children become more in tune with their own feelings and can independently use the glitter jar, they can then begin suggesting this activity to friends when they see they may need some calm time too. Beautiful.



# Planting the Growth Mindset Seeds

## Overview

Carol Dweck's (2006) book is a fantastically good read about Mindsets. Introducing children to the mindset language at an early stage, lays foundations which can be built upon throughout their primary education. This gives them an insight to their own thought processes, often highlighting to them that they have more power over their life than they think!

## Purpose

There are two main mindsets a person may have; fixed or growth. Of course, you may feel that you fall into both categories for different reasons but ultimately, you may lean towards one. Doing a little reading may help you find out more about your own mindset before beginning to discuss the concept with the children.

Some children may already be in a fixed mindset, where they think they have a natural ability or are even already a genius! (Yes, I had a 5-year-old tell me this repeatedly, he even offered to teach my class!) Although this confidence is wonderful, it could potentially set them up for a fall; something will eventually be difficult. A growth mindset child innately understands effort is required to obtain success and they see value in the learning whereas, when things do not come so naturally to a fixed mindset child anymore, these setbacks can be really detrimental.

We can introduce this concept and reinforce that mistakes are a good thing and effort is more important to us than the end result. ('But we need to make the grades!' I hear you cry. Well, let's aim for both – we are masters at spinning plates anyway 😊 )

## Sessions

Below are just some ideas which can be developed or combined however you see fit. This is just a short skeleton layout of how you might introduce the concepts to KS1.

- 1) Begin by just introducing the word mindset to children during a short session. Chat about the mind, brain and all things the children can tell you about them. You could even record as a class or start a big poster using post-its round an image of a brain!
- 2) Introduce the terms 'fixed mindset' and 'growth mindset' allowing children time to discuss what they might mean. Using some examples of what people in each mindset might say or think (Using two puppets or soft toys might be good for this), you can close the session with the following (KS1 friendly) definitions;

Someone with a fixed mindset might think some things are easy but if it gets too hard, they might start to get worried and not want to do it anymore.

Someone who has a growth mindset might keep trying and put in lots of effort, even when things seem really tricky. They know that learning is important to help the brain grow!

Here is a great little Class Dojo [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zrtHt3bBmQ&feature=youtu.be) tool! (Growth Mindsets for students - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zrtHt3bBmQ&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zrtHt3bBmQ&feature=youtu.be))



- 3) Use the little statement cards (download free from [www.mindfulmissgreen.com](http://www.mindfulmissgreen.com)) and children can sort the sentences by deciding whether it belongs in a fixed mindset pile or a growth mindset one. Chat as a whole class about the statements and children can move any around that they misplaced. This might be a good time to see if any particular children are more prone to fixed mindset thinking!
- 4) You can start another session by reading out some previous statements and children walk to one side of the room if they think it is a fixed mindset statement or the other side if they think it is a growth mindset statement. Then on the board simply allow children to write (or be scribed for) a sentence for each mindset on post-its, to put in the correct place. This whole class display is a great talking piece.



### Growing the practice...

Although it can be a new concept for everyone in the classroom, it will be great for the children to see growth mindset in action pointed out by the teacher for example, when someone puts in extra effort to write a digraph correctly or doesn't give up with addition. If you spot a fixed mindset in action you can gently ask the children just one to one, how might a growth mindset help in the situation? Reinforcing it is ok to make mistakes is key. To continue developing an understanding of growth mindset, you might read out just one of the statements each morning asking the children to decide which mindset it is. Or during the next term you might repeat the activity with a variety of more complex statements. Always discussing how a fixed mindset can be turned around is helpful. After the language is embedded into the classroom maybe you could begin asking the children to reflect on the day or week and think of a time where they have used a growth mindset or maybe even a fixed one that they could have turned around.



# Nurturing the Growing Growth Mindsets

## Overview

After planting the growth mindset seeds, the natural next step is to nurture their growth. Revisit previous sessions and statements before building on what the children already know. Begin linking growth language to lessons and encourage children to point out growth mindset in friends to help each other flourish and grow (with a reminder not to point and shout 'FIXED MINDSET!' when they inevitably see it 😊).

## Purpose

These sessions will encourage the children to deepen their understanding of a growth mindset and hopefully enable them to continue developing their thought processes, resilience and effort. We can continue emphasising the importance of the actual learning journeys that take place day to day. Hopefully, nurturing the knowledge of the children will lead them to bloom into a more independent growth mindset.

## Sessions

These sessions are best after working through the previous activities found in the 'Planting the Growth Mindset Seeds' plan. Children should be comfortable with the terms and have a basic understanding of terms fixed mindset and growth mindset.

- 1) Allow the children to share something they would like to achieve. Spend some time explaining that although this might be the end goal, it isn't necessarily the most important thing. Encourage the children to set learning steps to reach this achievement, emphasising that a growth mindset learns from the journey whilst a fixed mindset only focuses on the end result. Learning is constant; enjoy the journey.
- 2) Discuss mindset in real time. For example, when children are doing an assessment where they have access to the score, such as a spelling test, ask the children about their initial reaction. Dweck's research suggests those with a fixed mindset will only see the end result and don't give much time to the feedback which can help them improve. Discuss with the children how to develop a growth mindset in this situation.
- 3) Clear up any misconceptions that hard work = less intelligent. Give the children a ten minute 'practice time' to practice something which they want to get better at. The science of expert practice discussed in Martin Gladwell's book Outliers suggests that world class performers don't always practice the way everyone else does. Although he suggests experts complete around 10,000 hours of practice in their field, short bursts of pure focus and concentration on one skill seems beneficial. Giving children ten minutes to begin deeply concentrated practice encourages growth mindset in action.
- 4) Using problem solving time can help nurture a growth mindset. Encourage the children who seem to give up after trying the same method a few times, to try a



different approach, something which you will already be doing; present it as an opportunity to grow!

- 5) Ask the children to help you become a growth mindset teacher. To encourage children to have a growth mindset, it is important for us to praise the effort the children put in, not just label them by saying 'clever girl' etc. Ask the children to come up with a bunch of phrases you could use to encourage their learning. This will be enjoyable for you to read but the process also helps nurture their understanding of growth mindset.



### Growing the practice...

Hopefully after spending some time nurturing a growth mindset in yourself and with the children, it might become a more natural way of thinking. There is no time limit, these sessions could take place over the whole school year. However, watering the seeds will eventually lead the flowers to bloom. To help grow the practice, encourage conversations about mindset when possible. Use the language when studying texts, solving maths questions or discussing learning steps with the children.

# Flourishing Growth Mindset Flowers

## Overview

Once children are comfortable with developing their growth mindset and this concept is beginning to bloom in the classroom, we can help the children flourish further by helping them make connections between mindset and other concepts you may have touched on such as mindfulness and character strengths.

## Purpose

These sessions give the children time and space to possibly increase their own subjective wellbeing. Mindfulness might help them recognised fixed mindset thoughts and practising a growth mindset may deepen character strengths.

## Sessions

I'd suggest trying these ideas after the class has worked through the 'Planting the Growth Mindset Seeds' and 'Nurturing the Growing Growth Mindset' plans. You might even revisit the sessions the children did during the previous year before starting. Also, children will have to have worked a little on character strengths and practised some mindfulness. These sessions are quite open ended. There can be lots of time for the children to discuss what they think. Although you might not have the answers to all their questions, demonstrate a growth mindset by finding out together!

- 1) Have the terms 'mindset', 'mindfulness' and 'character strengths' displayed somewhere. Ask the children to work in small groups to see if they can define each term and then decide if there are any connections between them all. It would be lovely to share all the ideas as a class at the end of the session.
- 2) The children could prepare short lessons about mindset to teach younger children who are just starting the mindset journey. This would be a really nice collaboration between key stages, allowing the older children to really appreciate what they have learned and share it with the younger children in a language the little ones will understand.
- 3) Remind the children that mindfulness helps them notice when thoughts are passing through. Sometimes these thoughts will be from a fixed mindset. Pick a day and after chatting about this, encourage the children to mindfully notice fixed mindset thoughts they have that day and once they switch to a growth mindset thought, check in with how it makes them feel. At the end of the day, discuss what experiences the children had. Although this might be quite challenging to begin with it will help deepen understanding of both concepts.
- 4) If children have completed the 'Introducing Strong Strengths' plan, take time to revisit the VIA strengths using the student survey or the character strengths cards. Each child can choose a strength they would like to develop further. Using a





growth mindset, give them time to either complete some of the activities on the back of the card or come up with their own learning steps to do this.

- 5) Use the resources from Carol Dweck which are free to use ([www.mindsetworks.com](http://www.mindsetworks.com)). Children can read the Brainology © and MindsetWorks © resources to further their knowledge and understanding.



### Growing the practice...

If children have managed to get through most of the sessions over the three plans, that's pretty good going and testament to the teachers as well as the students. To further grow the practice, children might be given time to think what their next steps could be. Can they use growth mindset to transition into secondary school? How?

## Final Thought

I hope you have found this little eBook valuable. I would be delighted if you share it with other teachers too. Do please visit my website [www.mindfulmissgreen.com](http://www.mindfulmissgreen.com) where there are free guided meditations that can be used in the classroom or with children at home. You will also find some blog posts and other wellbeing ideas alongside some of the resources I have made. You will also see my first children's book, 'The Emobeans and the Feelings', which encourages children and those who read with them, to talk about feelings and emotions with someone they trust. It is crucial we encourage children to know it's ok to say. It is a good reminder for us too.

I truly believe that we can support children, educators and parents to improve their overall wellbeing by sharing ideas, science and working together; this is why I made this eBook free. Do follow me and get in touch via social media channels below and be sure to subscribe to my newsletters on the website, your support means the world to me.

Remember, the absence of mental illness does not constitute complete mental health. Just because a person is not experiencing a condition, anxiety or depression for example, it does not mean that they cannot flourish further, even beyond the feeling of contentment.

Teachers – I see you, keep doing the wonderful things that you do for the children – you are love personified and it shines through your work.

Ashley



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