

Calming down activities

All ages

Blowing bubbles

This is a lovely way to slow things down. Encourage your children to breathe in and out slowly. Notice as they become engrossed in the slow, gentle movement of the bubbles they blow. If your children are too young to learn how to blow bubbles, you do it for them and watch them follow them as they float away. This is a sensory experience for body and mind and takes them away from the analytical mode of learning.

Another bubble activity

Talk to the children about what it feels like to be upset, angry and worried. Discuss how you can feel tight inside. They can clench their fists or grimace their faces to illustrate. Talk about the need to calm down and gain control. One way to do that is take a deep breath and then let it out slowly. It's a little like blowing bubbles.

Let the children take it in turns to blow bubbles, talking about how it has to be a deep, slow breath. Watch the bubbles float away – it's like blowing out the 'grumpies' and letting them float away in a bubble.

Pin wheels

This is a breathing practice that captures their visual senses and slows things right down. Easier and more colourful than blowing bubbles, it galvanises their focus, develops concentration and encourages stillness.

Playing with balloons

Use one balloon per child and nudge them gently into the air with your hands, trying to keep them afloat. This is a good way of slowing down more active kids who still might need a little more movement to keep them engaged in mindful games. Their whole body and mind is engaged on a single focus. You can help keep the game going by keeping the balloon in play if it floats out of their reach.

Texture bag

This is a tactile guessing game that engages their attention and curiosity and you can change the items each time you play. Place a collection of small, familiar objects of various textures into a bag (a rock, stick, leaf, marble, a squashy and fluffy toy etc). Ask each child to reach into the bag and feel something without taking it out of the bag. Ask them to describe it and guess what it is.

Tracing fingers

This is a calming, breathing exercise, good for after playtimes and as an end of the day activity. It can help children and adults to be more mindful. The children hold one of their hands out and slowly trace around with 1 finger. Get them to take a deep breath in as their finger slides up and breathe out when it slides down the finger.

If you can bring a gentle, light-hearted approach to these games your children are more likely to do them again and again. And you will be able to develop their mindfulness habit!