



# Journeys in the Spirit

Children's work

Additional resource 120.A

Getting Ready

Tips for adults



Some useful tips and ideas to enable children to cope with stress, anxiety and other mental health issues

According to the Mental Health Foundation (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>), nearly one in ten children and young people aged five to sixteen are affected by a mental health problem. The good news is that early identification of signs of anxiety or depression, along with positive intervention, can prevent small problems become big issues as a child grows and develops. Equipping children with an invaluable set of coping mechanisms and relaxation and distraction skills, that they can tap into at any time, will strengthen their resolve and give them the confidence to take on some of life's less welcome challenges. Indeed, looking after one's mental health is as important as looking after one's physical health, so any child is likely to benefit from learning straightforward relaxation techniques and perhaps, being open to the practice of mindfulness.

## How to spot the signs of anxiety in children

When anxious children cannot always express or understand what they are feeling.

Signs of anxiety may include:

- Having bad dreams
- Not sleeping well or waking in the night
- Wetting the bed
- Becoming irritable, tearful, or clingy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Angry outbursts
- Eating problems
- Signs of diminishing confidence with everyday tasks.



## **Mindfulness**

Briefly, this is about being present in the moment - stopping and being aware of your thoughts, environment and body. It is possible to improve mental well-being by paying more attention to the present moment. Rather than losing touch with the way your body is feeling and being caught up in your thoughts, the practice of mindfulness develops an awareness to help reconnect your thoughts and feelings with your body. This awareness to see the present moment clearly, makes it possible to positively change the way you see yourself and your life.

### Basic mindfulness-based exercises for children

1. Learn active listening - ring a bell or singing bowl, and ask your child/children to listen closely to the vibration of the ringing sound and to keep quiet until they no longer hear those sounds.
2. Pay attention to the breath - any kind of meditative exercise involves paying attention to the breath. A good way for a child to pay attention to their breathing is to lie on the floor with a cuddly toy placed on the tummy. As your child breathes in and out they can silently watch teddy moving up and down whilst also being aware of anything else that they can see, hear or feel.
3. Focus on the positive - take time every day to find and name three things you or your child are grateful for. We often spend so much time yearning and craving, that we forget all the things we do have.

### **Useful helplines:**

Headspace website: <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids> - fun ways to learn about the basics of mindfulness.

Young Minds free parent helpline: on 0808 802 5544. Open Monday to Friday 9.30am-4.00pm.

