



EMOTIONAL HYGIENE

FOR CHILDREN



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THE EMOTIONAL HYGIENE KIT FOR CHILDREN

HELPING SMALL CHILDREN
MANAGE BIG EMOTIONS

Our children live in a world that is influenced by busy parents, school challenges, lots of lessons, video games, and now Lockdown. We generally don't tend to think of these influences as stressful for our kids, but often they can be.

With the added stress this season has brought for them - disrupted routines, pressures of being cooped up at home and kept away from friends, the effect of Lockdown and Covid-19 can be damaging, if not addressed appropriately and deliberately.

Chat, Play and Read (CPR) – You have the power to influence your child's future in a real and positive way by chatting more, playing together and reading aloud with them. It's so interesting to realise how these three components shape a child. Later in this kit, I explore CPR in more detail.

The emotional hygiene kit – for children, contains curated information, tools and exercises that you can do daily to help keep your young children's psychological wellbeing and emotional hygiene in tip top shape.

I've included some everyday wellbeing essentials in the form of Important information, tips and exercises to help you keep on track and contribute to your child's development.

Dr Mike Kelly



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SECTION ONE

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHATTING

We tend to build a lot of our relationships with others by chatting. Chatting to your child supports their development. Engaging in lots of encouraging and positive talks will help you build a strong and lifelong bond with your child. Chatting also equips your child with necessary skills required for communicating effectively and aids in building healthy relationships.

It's great to start talking with your child as early as you can. In fact, from birth your baby absorbs a huge amount of information about the world - just from listening and watching you talk.

Encouraging your baby's small talk aka baby talk as their way of communicating with you, are important first steps toward speech. The more your baby practices making sounds, the clearer they will become. Children will attempt to mimic you, so please be aware of your own language and behaviour, so that what is copied is healthy and good for your child.

The more often you talk with them, the better, so try to talk as much as you can during the day, it helps their cognitive development and can help children do better at school when they're older.

Chatting with your child is the best way to introduce them to new words. Research studies have shown that by the age of 5, conversant children from talkative families have significantly more words in their vocabulary and has had more words directed to them, as compared to those from less talkative families.

As your child gets older, use the time spent in the car, on the bus, whilst shopping or in the park as an opportunity to talk and build their vocabulary. Try and make it fun. For example: - Talk about how 'close' means to be near to someone or something as well as it means to shut something. Let them think of other homonyms. Remember to make it fun and keep eye contact where possible.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

When children are asked what their favourite thing to do is, often playing is somewhere near the top of their list. In fact, playing is vital, it helps them enjoy their childhood as well as it aids them in their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Play helps to build your child's confidence and helps them to feel loved, happy and safe. Playing with others develops their social skills, language and communication as well as learning about caring for others and the environment.

Playing can also develop physical skills like strength, balance, fine motor skills and coordination.

Unstructured play is a really good type of play for young children. This is play that just happens, it isn't planned and it lets your child use their own imagination. This type of play could vary from moment to moment. Observing and partaking in your child's unstructured play will teach you so much about your child and you never know... they may teach you how to dream and really use your imagination in return.

Here are some fun unstructured play ideas for toddlers which encourage development – These ideas won't cost you much money – if any at all, the chances are they are already in your household.

- Cardboard boxes, buckets or blow-up balls can encourage your child to run, throw, build, push or pull.
- Lively music can encourage jumping, spinning, rhythm, hopping and running.
- Pillows are good for climbing on, balancing, and rolling around on.
- Dress up games with scarves, hats and so on are good for imagination and creativity.
- Outdoor activities, hills, grass, sand and the park can encourage physical activities like crawling, walking running and exploring.

Structured play is different. It's more organised and happens at a fixed time or in a set space. It's often led by a grown-up. The next few pages are dedicated to structured play ideas for you and your child.

COLOUR ME IN – ADULT



A black and white line drawing of a tropical scene. The background is filled with various palm fronds and leaves, some pointing upwards and others downwards. A banner with a scalloped edge runs horizontally across the middle of the image. The text on the banner is arranged in five lines, reading from top to bottom: "Chat", "More,", "Play", "Together", and "Aloud".

Chat

More,

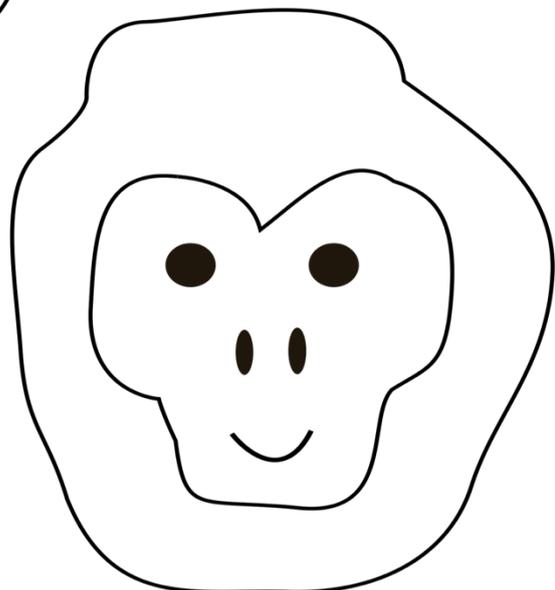
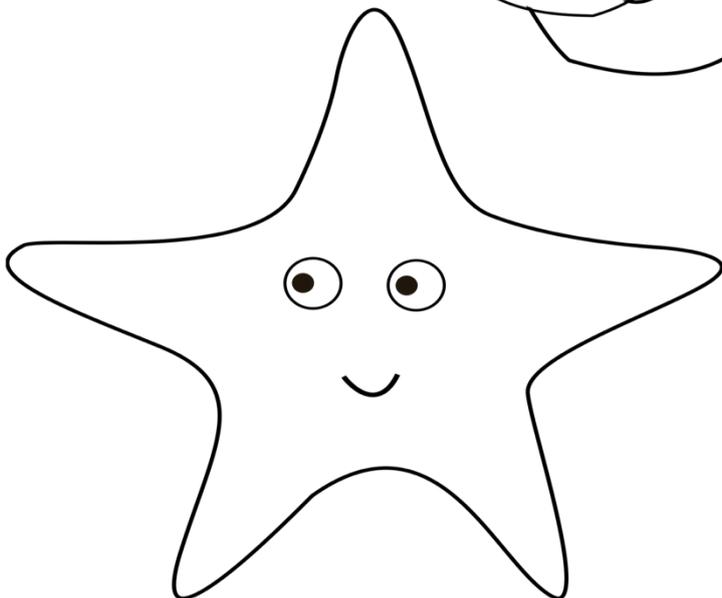
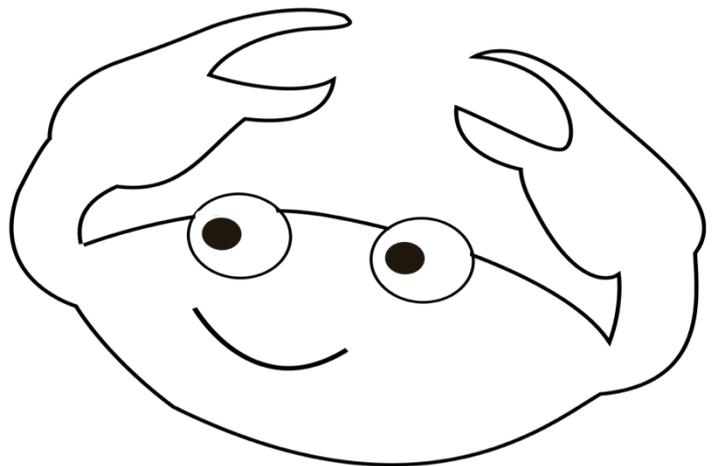
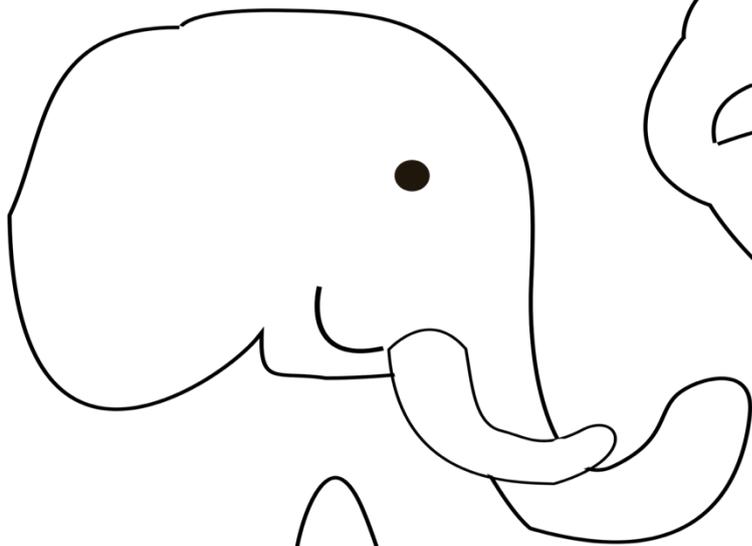
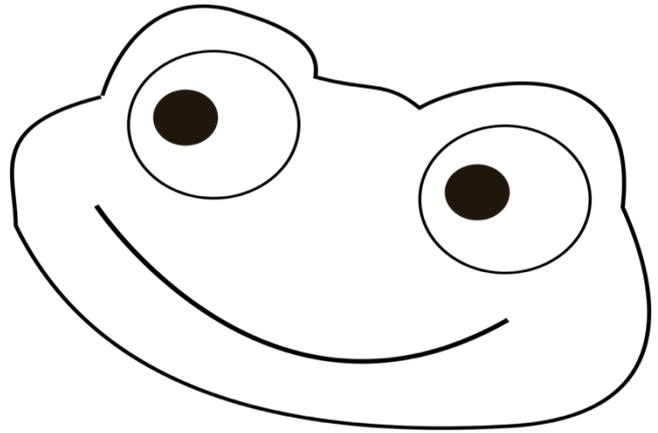
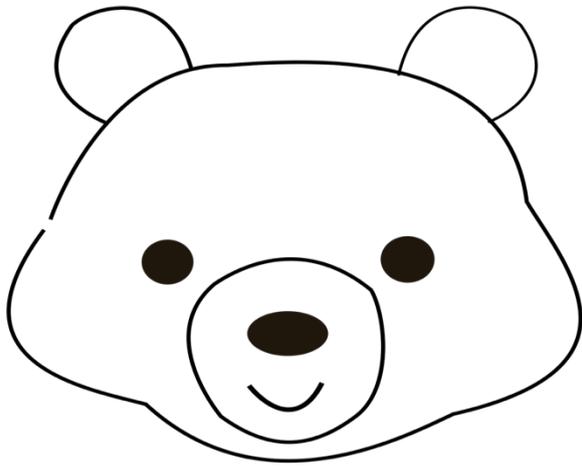
Play

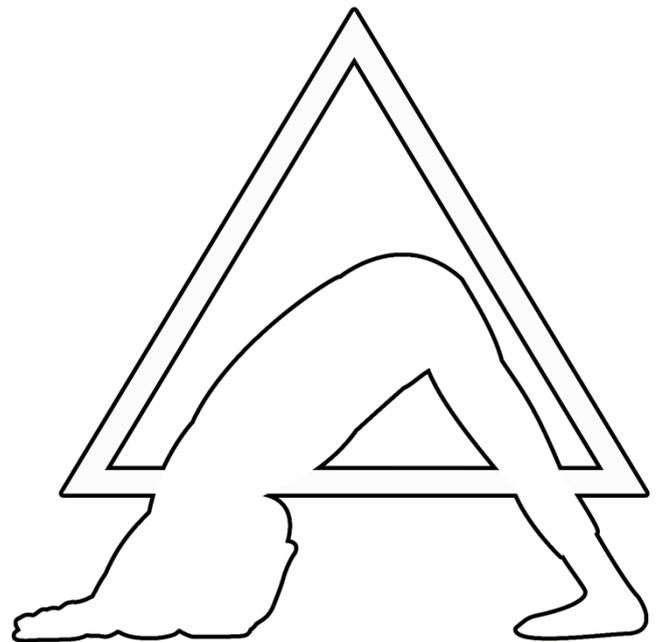
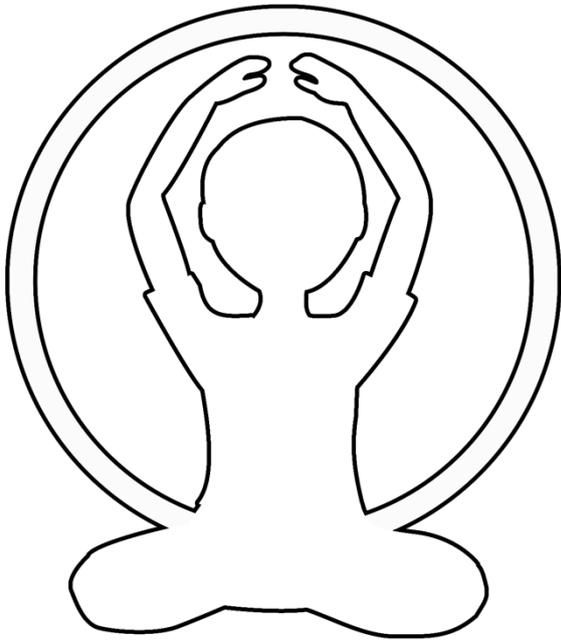
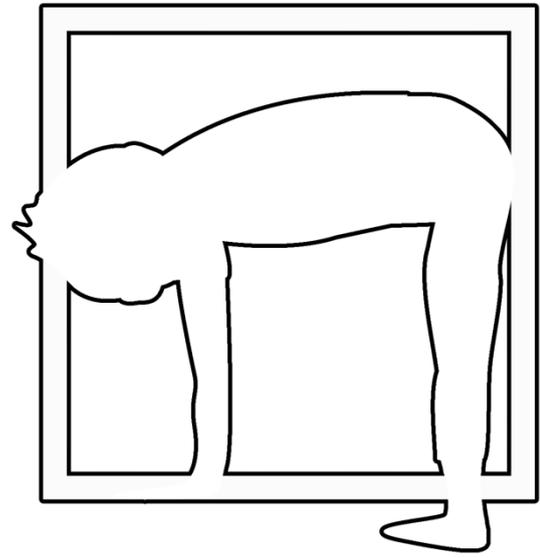
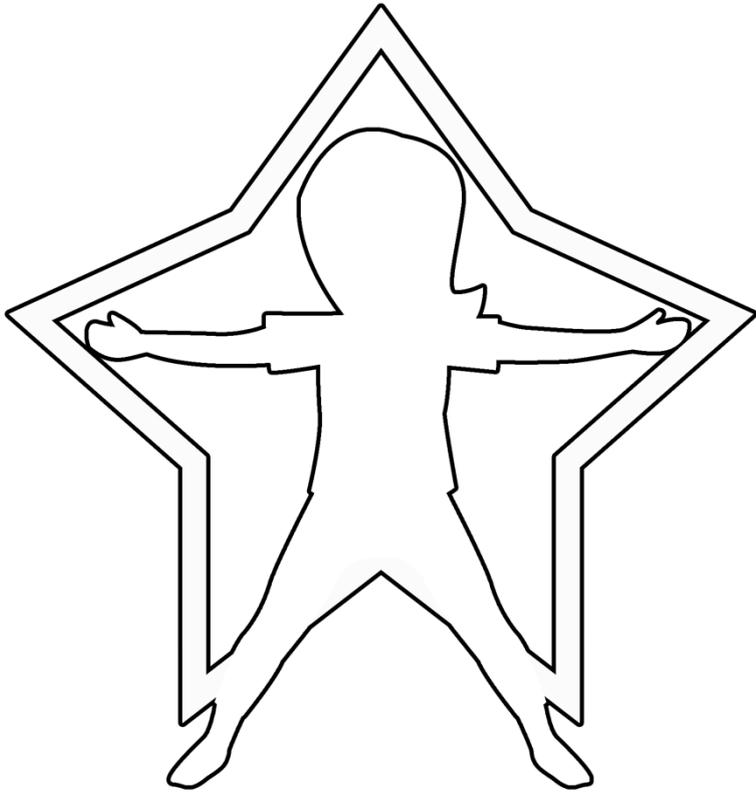
Together

& Read

Aloud

COLOUR ME IN - CHILD





EXERCISE LIKE AN ANIMAL

6 MINUTE WORKOUT

Set a timer and do each exercise for 45 seconds.
Have a 15 second rest in between. Try to do as many as you can!



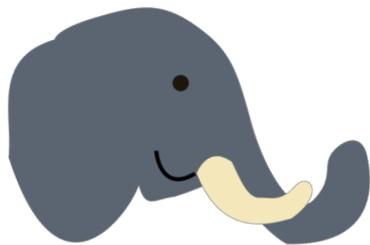
BEAR WALK

Hands and feet on the floor, hips high
Sway from left to right



JUMPING FROGS

Hop around the room like a frog



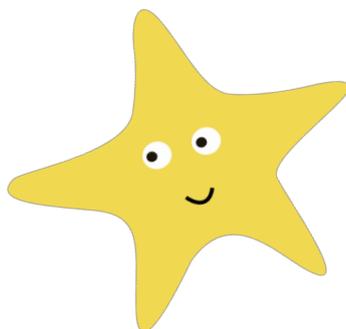
HAPPY LOUD ELEPHANT

On your hands and knees lifting each arm
high above your head pretending it's the
trunk



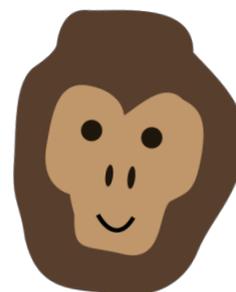
CRAB CRAWL

Sit and place your hands on the floor
behind you. Lift your hips and crawl



STARFISH MOVES

Jumping on the spot with your arms and
legs stretched wide



APE DANCE

Shuffle around the room, beating your
chest and growling.

GRATITUDE HUNT

Gratitude is such an important action and a great attitude, it's not just sentiment to have when everything is going great but something to demonstrate even when things are going badly for you. Gratitude feels good and is good for us. Research shows that positive emotions are good for our bodies, minds, and brains. Feeling good has a beneficial impact on our wellbeing.

This game is a great way to develop your child's problem-solving skills as well as cultivating a healthy attitude of gratitude. Write down their answers beside the task. Might be a good idea to date it so you can review in the future with your child.

FIND SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR...

... in nature

... that makes you happy

... that smells nice

... that makes you laugh

... that makes a beautiful sound

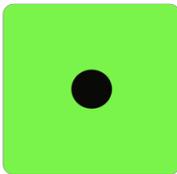
... that tastes good

... that is your favourite colour

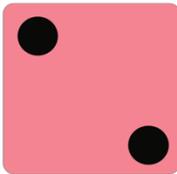
... that you can share with someone

ROLL THE DICE AND MOVE YOUR BODY

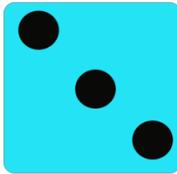
Grab a die and start rolling – Take turns with all the family members. Do the corresponding activity to the number you roll. For example, if you roll a two everyone has to climb an invisible ladder.



Make big circles with your hips



Climb an invisible ladder



Hop on the spot from one leg to the other



Put your arms out to your side and twist one way then the other



Swim across an invisible river



Play a song and do a silly dance

TIPS FOR READING WITH YOUR CHILD

Expect your child to be active whilst listening to a book - Children love to move about and often they literally perform the stories that's being read to them, sometimes by hopping, making faces or being very animated. This is often a sign that they are enjoying the story. They are listening whilst moving.

Learn songs and sing together - Allow your child to grow in their confidence whilst singing by allowing them to complete a part, or it may simply be a word. Once your child knows the song, poem or rhyme, try catching them out by saying the wrong words and see if they correct you. It can be fun.

Stimulating books - Books about everyday experiences, with interactive stories that feature bright pictures, characters, the moon, sun, machines and pets invite your child to engage in the interactions. Books with pop out pages, and a range of colours or hidden pictures grabs your child's attention. Books with recurring themes or words can be quite stimulating. Allow your child to be vocal and again make movements to emulate what's going on in the book. Perhaps they can dress up and pretend to be one of the characters. Read over and over your child's favourite book as often as you can.

Little and often – Younger children tend to have shorter attention spans, so it's important that you keep the reading time short, but you can do it multiple times in a day. Try different stories, look for text that is easy to read and encourage your child to turn the pages. Make sure it is fun.

Encourage play - Get involved, why not set up a village that is run by clever stuffed animals. You could create a petrol station and all the toy cars could visit and fill up. Put your child's imagination to work and allow them to lead.

Ask lots of questions – This allows your child to develop a train of thought and express their thoughts in the most creative way. Listen carefully to your child's answers it will give you fascinating insights into what makes your child buzz and help you understand their opinions, ideas, likes and dislikes.

CREATING ROUTINE

This current season of lockdown, restrictions, social distancing and the inability to socialise freely has brought about lots of change and uncertainty to our lives. While change is often a learning opportunity, it can also be stressful for children. Creating a new normal routine can bring comfort and consistency to a child's life, especially when things seem chaotic and out of control.

Consistency at home can make children feel more settled, connected, safe, secure and cared for, especially during difficult times or when they are negotiating key stages of development. By creating a daily routine, children will learn what to expect or predict events during the day. They will experience a sense of preparedness, order and even a sense of achievement when they complete these tasks.

A simple daily routine provides a foundation for children to learn from and develop other life skills such as basic hygiene, time-management, confidence organisational ability, responsibility, self-control and independence. From getting changed in the morning, or knowing when it is reading time, routines establish a trend and build constructive habits.

Consistent routine will help your child and their body clocks with many day-to-day basics such as:

- Ability to take naps during the day and sleep well at night
- Eat healthy, full meals at regular times
- Regular bowel movements
- Expectant at playtime, which boosts creativity and helps regulate mood
- Observe quiet and down times during the day

DAILY SCHEDULE

Use this as a guide to create a schedule that suits you and your child. Try to be consistent.

7 AM	WAKE UP, EAT BREAKFAST, GET DRESSED
8 AM	INDEPENDENT PLAYTIME
9 AM	ACTIVITY – READ, CRAFT, SENSORY PLAY, HAVE A SNACK
10 AM	GET OUTSIDE – PLAY, GO TO THE PARK OR GO FOR A WALK
11:30 AM	PACK UP AND HEAD HOME FOR LUNCH
12 PM	EAT LUNCH
1 PM	AFTERNOON SLEEP/OR QUIET TIME
2 PM	AFTERNOON SLEEP /OR QUIET TIME
3 PM	WAKE UP, SNACK, PLAY OUTSIDE
4 PM	INDEPENDENT PLAYTIME
5 PM	DINNER TIME AND FAMILY TIME
6 PM	FAMILY TIME AND UNWIND
7 PM	BATH TIME, GET READY FOR BED, LIGHTS OUT

WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

This meal planner takes the stress out of food time by setting out your child's meals for the week. This way you can plan nutritious meals with different tastes. Textures and colours. This will also help with budgeting.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snacks	Dinner
M				
T				
W				
T				
F				
S				
SU				

SECTION TWO

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a useful popular practice that emphasises paying attention to the present moment. It has been taught to diverse groups and is practiced across a wide spectrum of people to include managers leaders and sports personalities. More recently it has been taught in schools to young children with positive effects.

At each stage of a child's life, mindfulness can be a useful tool for reducing stress, temper tantrums, and focussing more clearly, especially on things that make them happy. Mindfulness can help with a distracted or a wandering mind and can help bring positive emotions to the forefront of the mind like gratitude, empathy and compassion.

Mindfulness, a simple technique that can be embodied as a lifestyle by parents and carers. The best way to teach a child mindfulness is to practice it yourself. Try it – it may work for you and your child. Remember, mindfulness can be fun.

I've included the following exercises to help you to introduce mindfulness to your child's daily routine.

- Mindful Breathing
- Mindful Mantra
- Mindful Movement

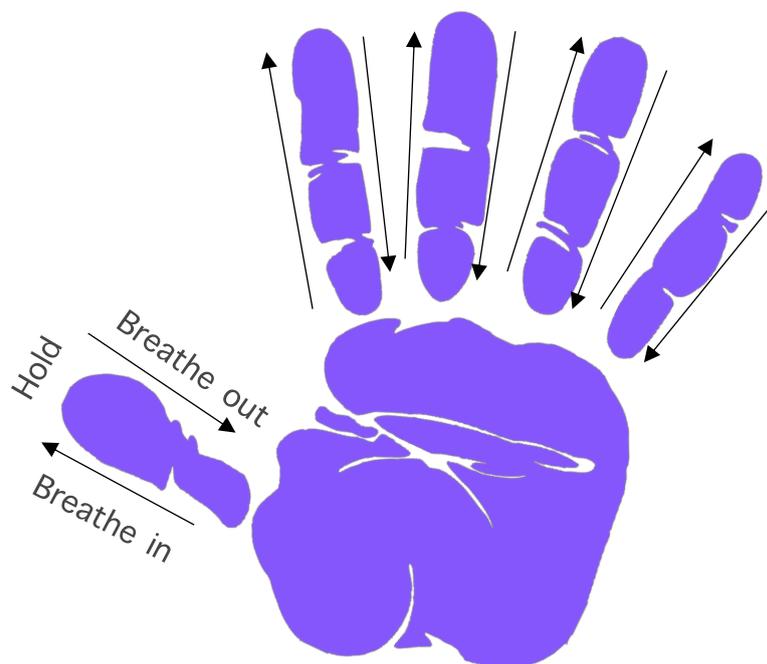
MINDFUL BREATHING

5 BREATHS TO FEELING CALM

This mindful breathing exercise is a great way to switch off. It brings the body back into balance, heightens your awareness of your breathing, deepens the breath whilst slowing down the heart rate. Mindful breathing is simple, free, and you can use it anytime – especially in difficult situations. The more you practice the easier it becomes.

Use this as a guide to teach your child -

- Spread your hand and stretch your fingers out like a star. Use the finger of your other hand to trace around the outline of your fingers.
- Slide your finger up your thumb, pause at the top, and then slide your finger down the other side. Now up your first finger, pause, and slide down the other side. Continue tracing your fingers up, pause, and down.
- Slide your finger slowly, watch it move and notice how it feels. Keep going until you have finished tracing your pinky finger.
- Now add some breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Keep it slow and steady.
- Breathe in as you slide up your thumb, and hold. Breathe out as you slide down. Breathe in as you slide up your first finger, and breathe out as you slide down. Keep going until you have taken five slow breaths.
- How does your body feel now? Do you feel calm or would you like to take another five?



MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Mindful movement at an early age encourages self-esteem and body awareness. It's a physical activity that enhances strength, flexibility and coordination. It also helps to improve concentration, awareness and sense of calm and relaxation.

Firstly, identify the shapes, see if your child can name each shape. Explore and practice the poses that you and your child will be doing as you start to make shapes with your bodies. Copy each other it will be loads of fun.

Find a safe space where you can do this activity, set the mood and tone by playing some relaxing music. Start by asking your child to sit, close their eyes.

After a minute or so, calmly announce the first shape/pose. The idea is to hold each pose for as long as your child can (depending on their age). Guide your children while simultaneously allowing freedom to play.

Think of yourself as a child and playmate rather than a teacher.

As you introduce each pose, remind them to breathe deeply whilst holding the shape.

STAR



SQUARE



RECTANGLE



CIRCLE



TRIANGLE



MINDFUL MANTRA

This age-appropriate positive mantra is a terrific tool that children can use to support themselves. It helps them to develop a healthy sense of self, as well as a positive mental-social-emotional mindset.

Repeat aloud multiple times throughout the day until it becomes a natural aspect of your child's self-talk.

I am **KIND**

I am **STRONG**

I am **BRAVE**

I am **SAFE**

I am **FRIENDLY**

I am **WISE**

I am **LOVED**

SECTION THREE

RESILIENCE

Helping children build resilience is not about eliminating obstacles and challenges from their lives. In fact, doing so does not necessarily benefit them because the challenge that they needed to help them develop resilience and fortitude is taken away from them.

A little challenge here and there helps them to develop the skills they need to grow and flourish. Help your child by nurturing within them strategies that will help them deal with difficulties and resist the urge to give in too quickly.

I've included the following exercises to help you with resilience practices:

- What is the hard part?
- Do something tricky
- Tips for teaching children resilience

WHAT IS THE HARD PART?

Problem Solving

When your child goes into meltdown because they feel discouraged or is about to give up, try asking them, “What’s the hard part?”

Once your child has identified what is difficult for them, repeat the difficulty back to them in your own words. This helps your child feel a sense of congruence and that they are understood.

After you both have recognised the challenge, ask your child what they could do differently or what can they do to fix or achieve doing ‘the hard part.’ It might help by breaking it down into more manageable tasks.

Usually, they’ll eventually arrive at an answer and understand that problems often can be solved if they persist and take the time needed to think and adopt a different approach, in order to work through the problems.

Don’t be quick to give your child the answer.

Helping your child figure out ‘the hard part’ and creating a way to overcome the challenge is an extremely effective way to teach them about resilience, commitment, endurance and problem solving.

DO SOMETHING TRICKY

This exercise pushes limitations, choose a moment in your day to set aside specifically for this task

- The task is for each family member to do something hard or tricky, something that can be enjoyed, completed, something that requires practice and something that can be showcased at the start, middle and at the end. You may want to use a camera or a journal to record your activities, it's very important to monitor your progress.
- It is important for each person to challenge themselves and pick their own task. Be creative - for your child, it could be simply painting within the lines or doing something that develops their fine motor skills.
- The 'tricky thing' can be an instrument, a sport, a foreign language, knitting, painting, creating a video story book, baking and so on.

The aim is to finish something difficult and tricky. You will notice the connection between passion and perseverance. You will also heap up huge amounts of psychological reward, especially when you and your child's tasks are completed.

Your child will also share your experience of happiness and will have improved at something that was challenging. This will build their confidence, self-esteem, and teach them about resilience.

TIPS FOR TEACHING CHILDREN RESILIENCE

Children learn through exploring and trial and error. Boundaries are very important, so as you create that safe environment - please do allow them to explore their environment fully.

Help your child to be well rounded by introducing new experiences which will help them step outside their comfort zone, such as playing with children who are from another race and who may not look like them, or they speak another language etc. Also experiment with trying new foods and experiencing new cultures.

Don't squash your child's dreams by doing for them what they want to do for themselves. Don't assume that things are too hard for them, give them a chance to find a way to achieving their challenge. For example, opening a container, packing away their toys, helping to spread their beds, and climbing around at soft play.

Teach your child the skill of waiting patiently when required e.g., in a restaurant, during a long car ride or whilst dinner is being prepared.

Do not give your child every single physical thing they desire e.g. toys, electronic devices, food, clothes, etc. This builds patience, self-control, restraint and respect.

Encourage your child to give away toys and clothes regularly to charity and those families that would appreciate it. Teach them to be kind and help them to have a balance perspective on material possessions.

Teach your child to identify struggles as challenges to overcome, and not to avoid them. Encourage your child to maintain a positive attitude about chores or homework by teaching them creative ways to find fun in work.

Resist the urge to run to your child and take over as soon as you see them having trouble doing something. Give them time, they may sort it out themselves.

FINALLY - FOR NOW

Whilst we're following the guidelines, and performing good personal and emotional hygiene, it can be difficult to be creative with your children especially as many outdoor activities have been shut. That said it is vital to help keep your child's emotional wellbeing in tip top shape.

Children's minds are like sponges and will soak up their environment. We are aiming for a positive home learning environment BUT we also appreciate that things are not always perfect. It is important that you are ok, so that they are ok. If you are experiencing overwhelming difficulties as a parent, please do speak to a healthcare professional or seek counselling at the earliest convenience.

Finally, here are **four** key points:

- Promote safety
- Create a creative routine
- Create an environment of comfort, calm and learning.
- Chat more, play together and read aloud. Most of all have fun

All the very best.



Dr. Mike Kelly
Think well, Live well and Be well.

