



## Mindfulness and relaxation ideas

Mindfulness is all about slowing down and paying attention to the present moment. When people are being 'mindful' they are taking active steps to reconnect with themselves.

Being more aware of the present can help our mental health and wellbeing as it lets us enjoy the world around us, as well as to understand ourselves and how we're feeling.

Here are some ideas for how you can relax and be mindful:

### **Try belly breathing**

By taking some deep breaths, we can help ourselves to feel more relaxed. If you do try one of these breathing exercises, pay attention to how you respond and stop if you feel uncomfortable or strange in any way.

Place one hand on your chest, and one hand on your belly (a few inches above the belly button) - try to breathe into the hand that is resting on your belly.

Place your hands on your lower ribs with middle fingers touching - if you are using your diaphragm, when you breathe in, the middle fingers draw away (just a few inches) from each other and when we exhale, they touch again.

Hug yourself with your hands on opposite shoulders (to stabilise the upper chest muscles and make it more difficult for them to be involved, which can help with sending the breath down).

Three-part inhalation (you can imagine taking three sips of air in) and a steady long exhalation. If you feel that the third sip strains your shoulders, feel free to do two instead.

### **Meditation**

Take some time to sit quietly and focus on your breathing, your feelings, and the world around you. You may find it helpful to pick a regular time when you will practice mindful meditations, and there are lots of apps like Headspace and Calm that can help guide you.

Don't worry about trying to draw something in particular or what you think things should look like. Just focus on the colours and how your pen or pencil feels against the paper. There are lots of mindful colouring books that you could try or images you could download too.