

LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS

# Practical Teacher Guide

## Mindfulness in Preschool Education

*Short, ready-to-use activities for focus, emotional regulation and calm classroom routines*

A few intentional minutes can help children notice, breathe, move, listen and recognize how they feel.



## About This Guide

This practical guide was developed within the LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS project to help preschool educators integrate short, developmentally appropriate mindfulness moments into everyday kindergarten practice. It translates the project's Teacher Training Curriculum, activity materials, Train-the-Trainer model and piloting evidence into one accessible classroom resource.

The guide is not a clinical or therapeutic programme. Its purpose is educational: to support attention, emotional awareness, body awareness, self-regulation and calmer participation through playful, voluntary experiences.

**FOR TEACHERS:** You do not need a silent classroom, special equipment or long sessions. Begin with one activity, keep it short and repeat it consistently.

## How the Guide Was Developed

- Needs identified through teacher consultation and project development work.
- A seven-module Teacher Training Curriculum focused on knowledge, practice, adaptation, observation and sustainability.
- Twenty partner-contributed activities reviewed and harmonised for practical use.
- Classroom piloting with 27 teachers in Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania.
- Final adjustments based on requests for more ready-to-use scripts, simplified instructions, games and visual examples.



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**QUICK NAVIGATION** Each activity uses the same sequence:

**Choose → Prepare → Say → Do → Observe → Adapt.**

PART 1

# Understanding Mindfulness in Preschool

A short foundation for confident, developmentally appropriate practice.



**IN THIS PART** Practical guidance designed for immediate use in real preschool settings.

## 1. What Mindfulness Means in Early Childhood

In early childhood education, mindfulness means helping children notice what is happening now - their breathing, bodies, emotions, movement, sounds and surroundings - through simple and playful experiences. It is not long meditation, perfect silence or an expectation that young children remain still.

Relaxation aims primarily to calm the body. Mindfulness also develops awareness and attention. A child may therefore practise mindfulness while stretching slowly, listening for a sound, noticing a texture or naming a feeling.

**REMEMBER** The goal is not perfect performance. The goal is a brief experience of noticing with curiosity and without judgement.

## 2. Why It Matters

| CLASSROOM SITUATION                | MINDFULNESS CAN SUPPORT                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| High energy after active play      | A gradual shift in pace and attention.                |
| Frustration or impulsive reactions | Noticing feelings and pausing before responding.      |
| Difficulty sustaining attention    | Focusing on one sound, movement or sensation.         |
| Busy transitions                   | A familiar cue that connects one routine to the next. |
| Uncertainty about emotions         | Language for bodily signals and feelings.             |

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### 3. The Teacher as a Calm Model

Children learn regulation not only from instructions but from the pace, tone and emotional presence of adults. Speak slightly more slowly, model the action, leave a pause after each instruction and accept different forms of participation.

**30-SECOND TEACHER PAUSE** Feel both feet on the floor. Let your shoulders soften. Take one comfortable breath. Decide on one clear instruction before you begin.



PART 2

# Creating a Mindful Classroom

Start small, use familiar routines and make participation safe.



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## 4. Start Small: The First Two Weeks

| WEEK   | PRACTICAL APPROACH                                                                                                                  |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1 | Choose one 2–3 minute activity. Use it at the same routine point two or three times. Model without demanding uniform participation. |
| Week 2 | Offer two familiar activities. Add one short reflection question. Notice what helps the group and adjust duration or movement.      |

## 5. When to Use a Mindful Moment

- At morning circle, to arrive and notice.
- Before a group learning task, to gather attention.
- After active play, to change pace gradually.
- During transitions, using a familiar sound or movement cue.
- After tension or conflict, once immediate safety and emotional support are established.
- Before rest, using breathing or body awareness.
- Outdoors, through listening, looking and nature-based movement.

## 6. Prepare the Environment

- Choose a safe space with enough room for the planned movement.
- Reduce unnecessary stimulation, but do not wait for perfect silence.

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- Place materials within reach before beginning.
- Use a consistent visual or sound cue.
- Offer a quiet corner as support, never as punishment.
- Allow children to sit, stand or observe when this keeps participation safe.

## 7. Language That Supports Mindfulness

| USE                                       | AVOID                           |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Let us notice what we can hear.           | Everyone must be silent.        |
| You may keep your eyes open or look down. | Everyone must close their eyes. |
| There is no right or wrong way to feel.   | Stop feeling angry.             |
| If your body needs to move, move gently.  | Sit completely still.           |
| Let us try this together.                 | You are not doing it correctly. |

PART 3

# Choosing the Right Activity

Match the practice to the moment, not only to the timetable.



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## 8. Quick Activity Finder

| I NEED AN ACTIVITY...              | START WITH                                                 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| To begin the day calmly            | Flower Breathing or a Golden Listening Moment              |
| After energetic play               | Falling Leaf or Animal Yoga                                |
| Before a learning task             | Drawing Your Breath or a sensory focus activity            |
| During a transition                | Clapping Rhythm Transition or Freeze, Notice & Move        |
| When feelings are strong           | Drawing Anger or Glitter Jar Calm-Down                     |
| For children who dislike stillness | I Am the Driver or Nature Yoga Story                       |
| With almost no preparation         | Flower Breathing, Body Relaxation or Freeze, Notice & Move |



## 9. Activity Categories

**BREATHE & PAUSE** Breathing, pausing and body settling.

**MOVE & NOTICE** Slow movement, balance and impulse control.

**LISTEN, LOOK & SENSE** Attention through sound, sight and touch.

**RECOGNISE & EXPRESS** Noticing and expressing emotions safely.

**TRANSITIONS & ROUTINES** Short cues that support changes in pace.



PART 4

# Ready-to-Use Activity Scripts

Open, choose and guide: each activity follows the same practical sequence.



**IN THIS PART** Practical guidance designed for immediate use in real preschool settings.

The activities are grouped by their main function. Repeat familiar activities before introducing many new ones. **Duration is a guide, not a target.**



ACTIVITY 01 • BREATHE & PAUSE

# Flower Breathing

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING               |
|-----|---------|-----------------------|
| 3–6 | 3–5 min | Circle • Quiet corner |

**PURPOSE** Calm breathing, concentration and emotional regulation.

## Prepare

Invite children to sit or stand comfortably. No child is required to close their eyes.

*Materials: A real or pictured flower (optional).*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Imagine you are smelling a gentle flower.”

**SAY** “Breathe in softly through your nose.”

**SAY** “Now breathe out as if a light breeze is moving the petals.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Model one comfortable breath.
2. Repeat three or four times at an unhurried pace.
3. Finish by noticing one change in the body.

## Observe

Breathing becomes slower; shoulders soften; attention returns to the teacher.

## Adapt It

Ages 3–4: use only two or three breaths. Ages 5–6: invite children to name how their body feels.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Do not ask children to hold or force their breath. Stop if anyone feels dizzy or uncomfortable.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “The Calm Flower Breathing”, Domnița Maria Secondary School, Romania.*



ACTIVITY 02 • BREATHE & PAUSE

# Teddy Breathing

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING                  |
|-----|-------|--------------------------|
| 3–6 | 3 min | Classroom • Quiet corner |

**PURPOSE** Body awareness, calm breathing and emotional regulation.

## Prepare

Provide personal space. Children may lie down or sit.

*Materials: One small soft toy per child, if available.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Place Teddy gently on your tummy.”

**SAY** “Breathe in and watch Teddy rise.”

**SAY** “Breathe out and watch Teddy come down.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Model with your own toy.
2. Guide three to five comfortable breaths.
3. Invite children to sit up slowly and notice their bodies.

## Observe

Children watch the toy, slow their movement and transition more smoothly.

## Adapt It

If lying down is uncomfortable, place a hand or toy on the tummy while seated.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Never ask children to hold their breath. Ensure the floor is clean and children have enough space.

*Source note: Adapted from the ECIESC activity contribution and WeAreTeachers.*



ACTIVITY 03 • BREATHE & PAUSE

# Drawing Your Breath

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                |
|-----|---------|------------------------|
| 3–6 | 4–6 min | At tables • Quiet area |

**PURPOSE** Connect breathing, visual expression and focused attention.

## Prepare

Place one sheet and drawing tool in front of each child.

*Materials: A4 paper and crayons, pencils or markers.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Imagine your breath can become a line.”

**SAY** “Let your hand move while you breathe in and out.”

**SAY** “What changes when your breath becomes slower?”

## Guide the Activity

1. Notice two natural breaths.
2. Draw freely in time with breathing.
3. Experiment briefly with faster and slower lines.
4. Finish with one slow line and a body check-in.

## Observe

Sustained attention, smoother movements and curiosity rather than concern about the final picture.

## Adapt It

Younger children may draw one continuous line. Older children can compare two breathing patterns.

**KEEP IT SAFE** There is no correct drawing. Avoid judging the picture or breathing style.

*Source note: Adapted from the ECIESC contribution; Mehloimakulu, Creativity in Therapy.*



ACTIVITY 04 • BREATHE & PAUSE

# My Body Is Relaxing

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING               |
|-----|-------|-----------------------|
| 5–6 | 5 min | Quiet corner • Circle |

**PURPOSE** Recognise the contrast between muscular tension and relaxation.

## Prepare

Children may lie down or remain seated.

*Materials: Mats or rugs (optional).*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Squeeze your hands gently... and let them soften.”

**SAY** “Lift your shoulders a little... and let them drop.”

**SAY** “Notice the difference between tight and soft.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Tense and release hands once.
2. Repeat with shoulders and legs, without strain.
3. Finish with two comfortable breaths.

## Observe

Slower movements, relaxed posture and increased body vocabulary.

## Adapt It

For younger children, use only hands and shoulders and describe them as “strong” and “soft”.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Use gentle effort only. Never press or adjust a child’s body.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “My Body Is Relaxing”, Domnița Maria Secondary School, Romania.*



ACTIVITY 05 • MOVE & NOTICE

# Animal Yoga Movement

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING          |
|-----|-------|------------------|
| 3–6 | 5 min | Circle • Outdoor |

**PURPOSE** Body awareness, balance, controlled movement and focus.

## Prepare

Select three simple animal shapes and check spacing.

*Materials: Animal pictures or cards (optional); open space.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Stretch tall like a giraffe.”

**SAY** “Move slowly into your animal shape.”

**SAY** “Can you breathe while your body is still?”

## Guide the Activity

1. Show one animal image or name it.
2. Model a simple shape.
3. Hold for one or two comfortable breaths.
4. Transition slowly to the next animal.
5. Finish seated or standing with one breath.

## Observe

Children control speed, follow transitions and notice balance.

## Adapt It

Offer standing and seated versions. Reduce holding time for younger children.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Avoid complex poses and competition. Children choose their comfortable range.

*Source note: Adapted from the ECIESC contribution and Twinkl animal yoga resources.*



ACTIVITY 06 • MOVE & NOTICE

# Nature Yoga Story

| AGE | TIME     | SETTING             |
|-----|----------|---------------------|
| 3–6 | 5–10 min | Classroom • Outdoor |

**PURPOSE** Combine imagination, memory, movement and calm attention.

## Prepare

Plan a very short story with three nature characters.

*Materials: Open space; mats optional.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “A small seed is resting in the ground.”

**SAY** “Slowly it grows into a tree.”

**SAY** “A quiet cat walks past and stretches.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Introduce one character at a time.
2. Model the matching simple movement.
3. Pause for one or two breaths in each shape.
4. End by sitting quietly and remembering the story.

## Observe

Children remember the sequence, regulate movement and remain engaged.

## Adapt It

Use two characters for younger children; invite older children to suggest the next nature character.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Do not force poses. Support choice and stop if a child is tired.

*Source note: Adapted from the Nature Yoga partner contribution, Lapsepõlve Akadeemia.*



ACTIVITY 07 • MOVE & NOTICE

# The Falling Leaf

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                |
|-----|---------|------------------------|
| 3–6 | 3–5 min | Classroom • Transition |

**PURPOSE** Calming through slow movement, body awareness and self-control.

## Prepare

Create enough distance between children.

*Materials: None; gentle music optional.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Your arms are a leaf moving in a soft wind.”

**SAY** “The leaf floats slowly toward the ground.”

**SAY** “When it lands, it rests for one quiet moment.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Begin standing with soft arm movements.
2. Gradually reduce the size and speed of movement.
3. Lower toward the floor or a chair.
4. Pause for five seconds and finish with a stretch.

## Observe

Movement slows, children notice space and the group changes pace together.

## Adapt It

Children who do not want to lower to the floor may “land” on a chair or remain standing.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Prevent sudden drops and ensure enough space.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “The Falling Leaf”, Domnița Maria Secondary School, Romania.*



ACTIVITY 08 • MOVE & NOTICE

# Freeze, Notice & Move

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING              |
|-----|-------|----------------------|
| 3–6 | 3 min | Open space • Outdoor |

**PURPOSE** Listening, impulse control, reaction and body awareness.

## Prepare

Define safe boundaries and demonstrate safe speed.

*Materials: None.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “When you hear ‘freeze’, stop in a safe shape.”

**SAY** “While frozen, notice your feet.”

**SAY** “When you hear ‘move’, begin again.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Let children move freely at a safe pace.
2. Alternate “move” and “freeze”.
3. During each freeze, name one body sensation.
4. End with a slow stretch rather than a fast final round.

## Observe

Faster response to cues, controlled stopping and increased listening.

## Adapt It

Replace running with walking or seated hand movements.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Avoid slippery surfaces and crowded spaces.

*Source note: Adapted from the Freeze & Move partner contribution, Lapsepõlve Akadeemia.*



ACTIVITY 09 • MOVE & NOTICE

# I Am the Car, I Am the Driver

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING                  |
|-----|-------|--------------------------|
| 3–6 | 5 min | Open classroom • Outdoor |

**PURPOSE** Self-regulation, safe movement, listening and changes in activity level.

## Prepare

Mark the movement space and explain “safe speed”.

*Materials: Teacher voice or music; boundary markers optional.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “You are the car and also the careful driver.”

**SAY** “Notice the space in front of you.”

**SAY** “Slow engine... and now a full, gentle stop.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Children choose an imaginary vehicle.
2. Move at the rhythm set by the teacher.
3. Change between slow and moderate speed.
4. Practise stopping and checking space.
5. Finish with a quiet parked-car breath.

## Observe

Children regulate speed, avoid collisions and stop on cue.

## Adapt It

Use hand motions while seated when space is limited.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Do not use elimination or shame. Pause the whole group if the space becomes unsafe.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “I Am a Car, I Am a Driver”, Lapsepõlve Akadeemia.*



ACTIVITY 10 • LISTEN, LOOK & SENSE

# Golden Listening Moment

| AGE | TIME  | SETTING             |
|-----|-------|---------------------|
| 3–6 | 3 min | Circle • Transition |

**PURPOSE** Auditory attention, calm focus and self-control.

## Prepare

Test the sound level. Children may keep their eyes open.

*Materials: A soft chime, bell or singing bowl.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Listen from the beginning of the sound to the very end.”

**SAY** “Raise one finger when you can no longer hear it.”

**SAY** “What can you hear after the chime?”

## Guide the Activity

1. Take one comfortable breath.
2. Make one gentle sound.
3. Wait without rushing.
4. Notice the quiet and one background sound.

## Observe

Children orient toward the sound, wait and listen for longer.

## Adapt It

For sound-sensitive children, use a quieter instrument or visual signal.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Avoid loud, sudden sounds. Never ring close to a child’s ears.

*Source note: Consolidated from “Take a Golden Moment” (ECIESC) and “Listening to Silence” (Domnița Maria Secondary School).*



ACTIVITY 11 • LISTEN, LOOK & SENSE

# Glitter Jar Calm-Down

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING               |
|-----|---------|-----------------------|
| 3–6 | 3–5 min | Circle • Quiet corner |

**PURPOSE** Visual focus, patience and a concrete metaphor for busy thoughts.

## Prepare

Seal and test the jar before children use it.

*Materials: A sealed transparent plastic jar with water and glitter/glitter glue.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “The moving glitter can be like busy thoughts and feelings.”

**SAY** “Let us watch without needing to make it stop.”

**SAY** “As it settles, notice your breathing.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Shake the jar once.
2. Place it where everyone can see.
3. Watch the movement and breathe naturally.
4. When it settles, invite one observation.

## Observe

Longer visual attention, slower movement and calmer transition.

## Adapt It

Use a smaller group or let one child observe from the quiet corner.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Use plastic, seal the lid and prevent ingestion. The jar is a focus tool, not a punishment.

*Source note: Consolidated from ECIESC “Glitter Jar Calm-Down” and the Romanian “Calm Jar”; informed by Mindful.org.*



ACTIVITY 12 • LISTEN, LOOK & SENSE

## Colour Pattern Focus

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                  |
|-----|---------|--------------------------|
| 5–6 | 5–8 min | Tables • Learning centre |

**PURPOSE** Sustained visual attention and deliberate, unhurried action.

### Prepare

Choose a short two- or three-colour pattern and use large safe pieces.

*Materials: Large coloured beads, caps or cubes; pattern cards; mats.*

### Teacher Says

**SAY** “Look first. Notice the order.”

**SAY** “Choose one piece at a time.”

**SAY** “If attention wanders, return to the next colour.”

### Guide the Activity

1. Observe the model silently for a few seconds.
2. Name or point to the pattern.
3. Arrange pieces slowly.
4. Pause before checking and correcting.

### Observe

Children maintain visual attention and correct without rushing.

### Adapt It

Use larger pieces and shorter patterns. Pair children when appropriate.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Avoid small objects where there is a choking risk. This is a focused-learning extension, not a calming requirement.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “Color Patterns”, DG 6 Shtastlivo detstvo, Bulgaria.*



ACTIVITY 13 • RECOGNISE & EXPRESS

# Drawing Anger

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                |
|-----|---------|------------------------|
| 3–6 | 5–8 min | Art area • Small group |

**PURPOSE** Recognise, express and transform the experience of anger safely.

## Prepare

Have a calm alternative space available. Do not require children to explain personal events.

*Materials: Paper and crayons, pencils, markers or paint.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “If anger had a colour or shape, what might it look like?”

**SAY** “Your picture can be lines, a storm, a creature or anything else.”

**SAY** “Would you like to change, soften or add something to it?”

## Guide the Activity

1. Briefly name bodily signs of anger.
2. Invite free drawing without evaluation.
3. Offer a choice to transform, fold or leave the picture as it is.
4. Close with grounding: feet on the floor and one breath.

## Observe

Children use colour and image to communicate and return gradually to the group.

## Adapt It

Children may choose an emotion card instead of drawing.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Do not make the child relive an incident or destroy the picture. If distress increases, stop and provide individual support according to safeguarding procedures.

*Source note: Adapted from “Draw Anger”, DG 6 Shtastlivo detstvo, Bulgaria.*



ACTIVITY 14 • RECOGNISE & EXPRESS

## Emotion Bingo: Notice and Name

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING              |
|-----|---------|----------------------|
| 3–6 | 5–8 min | Circle • Small group |

**PURPOSE** Recognise facial expressions and expand emotional vocabulary.

### Prepare

Choose a small set of clear, culturally inclusive emotion images.

*Materials: Emotion bingo cards, matching picture cards and large tokens.*

### Teacher Says

**SAY** “What do you notice in this face?”

**SAY** “Can more than one feeling look similar?”

**SAY** “Find the matching picture, then show the feeling with your own face if you wish.”

### Guide the Activity

1. Give each child a card.
2. Draw one emotion image.
3. Notice facial clues together.
4. Children cover a match.
5. Finish by choosing one feeling word for the day.

### Observe

Children attend to facial cues and use more precise emotion words.

### Adapt It

Use four images for younger children; add body clues and situations for older children.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Avoid labelling a child’s actual emotion from appearance alone. Keep performance and imitation voluntary.

*Source note: Adapted from “Emotional Bingo”, DG 6 Shtastlivo detstvo, Bulgaria.*



ACTIVITY 15 • TRANSITIONS & ROUTINES

# Clapping Rhythm Transition

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                 |
|-----|---------|-------------------------|
| 3–6 | 2–3 min | Circle • Any transition |

**PURPOSE** Synchronise attention, regulate energy and create smoother transitions.

## Prepare

Decide whether the group needs to slow down or gently energise.

*Materials: None.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Listen first, then join my rhythm.”

**SAY** “The rhythm is becoming slower.”

**SAY** “One final clap... hands rest.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Begin near the current group energy.
2. Invite children to echo the rhythm.
3. Change speed gradually.
4. End with a predictable quiet pattern linked to the next routine.

## Observe

Children synchronise, follow changes and move into the next activity with less prompting.

## Adapt It

Children may tap knees or watch instead of clapping.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Keep volume comfortable and stop if rhythm increases overstimulation.

*Source note: Adapted from the partner contribution “Clapping Rhythm Transition”, educator experience.*



ACTIVITY 16 • FOCUSED LEARNING EXTENSION

# Sound-to-Letter Sensory Focus

| AGE | TIME     | SETTING         |
|-----|----------|-----------------|
| 5–6 | 8–10 min | Learning centre |

**PURPOSE** Apply mindful pacing and tactile attention during early literacy work.

## Prepare

Prepare one clear target sound and corresponding letter.

*Materials: Object pictures, letter mats, large pipe cleaners/string and safe tracing channels.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Listen to the first sound.”

**SAY** “Find the letter, then trace it slowly.”

**SAY** “Notice what your fingers feel as they move.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Model one word and sound.
2. Choose a picture.
3. Identify the target sound.
4. Trace the matching letter slowly.
5. Pause, name the letter and notice the tactile experience.

## Observe

Children sustain attention across listening, matching and tracing.

## Adapt It

Use only initial sounds and larger materials. Provide individual support.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Supervise loose materials. This is a curriculum-linked attention task, not a core mindfulness practice.

*Source note: Adapted from “Sounds and Letters”, DG 6 Shtastlivo detstvo, Bulgaria.*



ACTIVITY 17 • FOCUSED LEARNING EXTENSION

# Mindful Pathfinding: Is This a Home?

| AGE | TIME    | SETTING                       |
|-----|---------|-------------------------------|
| 4–6 | 6–8 min | Learning centre • Small group |

**PURPOSE** Practise deliberate visual scanning, spatial attention and reflection.

## Prepare

Select a short route and ensure images are clear and culturally accessible.

*Materials: Simple grid worksheets, picture landmarks and pencils.*

## Teacher Says

**SAY** “Pause and look at the whole path.”

**SAY** “Move one step at a time.”

**SAY** “When you arrive, notice what makes this a home for the animal or person.”

## Guide the Activity

1. Name the starting image.
2. Scan the route before drawing.
3. Trace one step at a time.
4. Reach the destination and answer one reflective question.

## Observe

Children slow their visual scanning and explain choices.

## Adapt It

Use larger grids, fewer steps or physical floor tiles.

**KEEP IT SAFE** Offer support without turning the task into speed or performance. This is a focused-learning extension.

*Source note: Adapted from “Is This a House?”, DG 6 Shtastlivo detstvo, Bulgaria.*



PART 5

# Adapting Activities for Every Child

Participation can look different while the shared purpose remains the same.



**IN THIS PART** Practical guidance designed for immediate use in real preschool settings.

## 10. Adapt by Age and Development

| ELEMENT           | AGES 3-4                | AGES 5-6                           |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Starting duration | 1-3 minutes             | 3-5 minutes                        |
| Instructions      | One step at a time      | Two connected steps                |
| Language          | Concrete and playful    | Concrete plus short reflection     |
| Movement          | Frequent                | Movement followed by focused pause |
| Reflection        | Point, show or choose   | One short verbal response          |
| Repetition        | Same activity regularly | Introduce small variations         |

## 11. Support Different Ways of Participating

- Eyes may remain open.
- Standing, sitting or observing can all be valid.
- Movement can replace stillness when it preserves the purpose.
- Visual cues can support children who need less verbal information.
- A child may pass on sharing an emotion.
- Small-group practice may be more accessible than whole-group practice.
- Sensory intensity - sound, touch, light and proximity - should be adjustable.

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**INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE** Adapt the activity, not the child. Shared participation does not require identical performance.

## 12. Mixed-Age Groups

Give one clear shared instruction and vary the expected duration, reflection and movement. Older children may demonstrate a choice, but should not evaluate younger children. Keep the group together through a common opening and closing cue.

PART 6

# Classroom Challenges and Practical Solutions

Respond to what happens with curiosity, not pressure.



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## 13. When Things Do Not Go as Planned

| WHAT HAPPENS               | TRY THIS                                                        |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children laugh             | Accept the reaction. Keep the first attempt brief and familiar. |
| Children cannot stay still | Begin with movement and end with a short pause.                 |
| One child refuses          | Offer observation or a different body position.                 |
| Attention disappears       | Reduce the script to one clear instruction.                     |
| There is no time           | Attach the practice to an existing transition.                  |
| Energy increases           | Lower the stimulation and simplify the activity.                |
| No visible effect          | Repeat consistently before deciding it does not help.           |



## 14. What Mindfulness Should Never Become

- A punishment or condition for rejoining the group.
- Forced silence or forced eye-closing.
- A competition or test of “good behaviour”.
- A label for children considered difficult.
- Compulsory disclosure of feelings or personal experiences.
- A substitute for safeguarding, psychological or medical support.



PART 7

# Planning Mindfulness in Daily Practice

Use rhythm and repetition to turn activities into familiar classroom tools.



**IN THIS PART** Practical guidance designed for immediate use in real preschool settings.

## 15. A One-Week Starter Plan

| DAY       | MOMENT            | ACTIVITY                   | TIME  |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| Monday    | Morning circle    | Golden Listening Moment    | 3 min |
| Tuesday   | After active play | Teddy Breathing            | 3 min |
| Wednesday | Outdoor time      | Nature Yoga Story          | 5 min |
| Thursday  | Transition        | Clapping Rhythm Transition | 2 min |
| Friday    | Closing circle    | Flower Breathing           | 3 min |

## 16. Four-Week Implementation Plan

| WEEK | FOCUS                          | TEACHER ACTION                                                 |
|------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Familiarisation                | Use one activity two or three times.                           |
| 2    | Consistency                    | Repeat at the same routine point and shorten instructions.     |
| 3    | Choice and adaptation          | Offer two familiar options and adjust for participation needs. |
| 4    | Independent use and reflection | Notice which cues children recognise and record one next step. |

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## 17. Mini Lesson Plan: From Energy to Calm

1. Opening (2 min): Name the group's current energy without judgement.
2. Movement (5 min): Guide Freeze, Notice & Move.
3. Slowing (4 min): Transition into The Falling Leaf.
4. Focused pause (3 min): Use one Golden Listening Moment.
5. Reflection (2 min): Children show with hands whether their body feels faster, the same or slower.
6. Closing (1 min): Link the final quiet cue to the next classroom activity.

**PLANNING RULE** One purposeful practice repeated well is more valuable than many activities introduced too quickly.

PART 8

# Observation Without Extra Paperwork

Notice patterns, adjust practice and avoid turning mindfulness into assessment.



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## 18. What Progress May Look Like

- Children enter familiar transitions with fewer prompts.
- Attention remains with one sound, movement or object for slightly longer.
- Children use more words for feelings and bodily sensations.
- A child accepts a pause or breathing cue with support.
- Children request or initiate a familiar activity.
- The group recovers its shared rhythm more quickly.

## 19. Simple Weekly Observation

PROMPT

SHORT NOTE

Activity and classroom moment

How children participated

What appeared helpful

What needed adaptation

One change for next time



## 20. Five Reflection Questions

1. Did the activity match the children's energy level?
2. Were my instructions short and clear?
3. Did children have a meaningful choice in how to participate?
4. What did I notice without interpreting too quickly?
5. What will I keep or change next time?

### What the Pilot Suggests

Across the 27 participating teachers, 96.3% observed at least some improvement in attention, 92.6% observed at least some improvement in emotional regulation, and 96.3% reported calmer transitions at least sometimes. Movement, breathing, visual focus and short sensory practices were especially well received. These are teacher observations rather than clinical measures, but they provide strong practical support for continued classroom use.

PART 9

# Peer Learning and Sustainability

Share practice supportively and keep it embedded in everyday kindergarten life.



**IN THIS PART** Practical guidance designed for immediate use in real preschool settings.

## 21. The Mindfulness Ambassador

A Mindfulness Ambassador is a peer facilitator and role model - not a supervisor or inspector. The role is to demonstrate activities, support classroom adaptation, encourage reflection, collect practical feedback and help new colleagues use the guide confidently.

## 22. A 60-Minute Peer Learning Session

| TIME   | STEP                                                 |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 min | Welcome, purpose and classroom context.              |
| 15 min | Demonstrate one breathing and one movement activity. |
| 15 min | Practice in pairs or small groups.                   |
| 10 min | Discuss likely challenges and adaptations.           |
| 5 min  | Each teacher chooses one classroom practice.         |
| 5 min  | Feedback and next exchange date.                     |



## 23. Keeping the Practice Alive

- Share one tested activity at a staff meeting each month.
- Keep printed activity cards in an accessible place.
- Introduce new staff through demonstration, not documents alone.
- Discuss adaptations without evaluating colleagues.
- Use the online activity library for continued access and updates.
- Integrate short mindfulness moments into routine planning rather than treating them as special events.



## About the project

The "LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS" project aims to enhance preschool education by equipping teachers and parents with mindfulness techniques to support children's focus, emotional regulation, and self-discipline, creating a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Unlike traditional early childhood training programs, this project takes a dual approach, focusing on both educators and parents to create a consistent mindfulness learning environment. The integration of arts, yoga, and sensory play-based techniques makes mindfulness engaging and developmentally appropriate for preschoolers. The project's train-the-trainer model ensures sustainability, empowering trained teachers to mentor others, creating lasting impact beyond the project's duration.

The project will lead to:

- Improved attention span, emotional regulation, and classroom engagement among preschool children.
- Teachers equipped with structured mindfulness strategies, leading to more inclusive and effective classroom management.
- Parents are actively involved in supporting children's focus and emotional well-being at home.
- A sustainable, scalable approach to mindfulness education in early childhood, with potential for integration into national ECEC policies.

The Specific Goal is to develop and implement structured mindfulness-based training for kindergarten teachers and parents, integrating arts, yoga, and sensory play techniques to help young learners improve their attention, emotional well-being, and classroom engagement.

Objectives:

- Empower kindergarten teachers with research-based training and practical tools to integrate mindfulness strategies into early childhood education.
- Support parents in reinforcing mindfulness practices at home through the "5-Minute Mindfulness at Home" guide.
- Create an inclusive learning environment that improves children's self-regulation, attention span, and emotional resilience while supporting diverse learning needs.

## The partnership

- KINDERGARTEN "SHTASTLIVO DETSTVO" - Bulgaria
- ECIESC - Bulgaria
- MTÜ LAPSEPÕLVE AKADEEMIA - Estonia
- SCOALA GIMNAZIALA "ION CREANGA" BACAU - Romania

All materials are available for free download and use through the project website.

**[www.little-minds.eu](http://www.little-minds.eu)**



## Appendix A — Printable Quick Activity Cards

Cut or copy these condensed prompts for everyday use. Full safety and adaptation guidance remains in the corresponding activity pages.

### **Flower Breathing** • 3–5 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Calm breathing, concentration and emotional regulation.

**Begin:** “Imagine you are smelling a gentle flower.”

### **Teddy Breathing** • 3 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Body awareness, calm breathing and emotional regulation.

**Begin:** “Place Teddy gently on your tummy.”

### **Drawing Your Breath** • 4–6 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Connect breathing, visual expression and focused attention.

**Begin:** “Imagine your breath can become a line.”

### **My Body Is Relaxing** • 5 min • Ages 5–6

**Purpose:** Recognise the contrast between muscular tension and relaxation.

**Begin:** “Squeeze your hands gently... and let them soften.”

### **Animal Yoga Movement** • 5 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Body awareness, balance, controlled movement and focus.

**Begin:** “Stretch tall like a giraffe.”

### **Nature Yoga Story** • 5–10 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Combine imagination, memory, movement and calm attention.

**Begin:** “A small seed is resting in the ground.”

### **The Falling Leaf** • 3–5 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Calming through slow movement, body awareness and self-control.

**Begin:** “Your arms are a leaf moving in a soft wind.”

### **Freeze, Notice & Move** • 3 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Listening, impulse control, reaction and body awareness.

**Begin:** “When you hear ‘freeze’, stop in a safe shape.”



**I Am the Car, I Am the Driver** • 5 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Self-regulation, safe movement, listening and changes in activity level.

**Begin:** “You are the car and also the careful driver.”

**Golden Listening Moment** • 3 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Auditory attention, calm focus and self-control.

**Begin:** “Listen from the beginning of the sound to the very end.”

**Glitter Jar Calm-Down** • 3–5 min • Ages 3–6

**Purpose:** Visual focus, patience and a concrete metaphor for busy thoughts.

**Begin:** “The moving glitter can be like busy thoughts and feelings.”

**Colour Pattern Focus** • 5–8 min • Ages 5–6

**Purpose:** Sustained visual attention and deliberate, unhurried action.

**Begin:** “Look first. Notice the order.”



## Appendix B — Mindful Classroom Checklist

- ☐ The activity has one clear purpose.
- ☐ Instructions are brief and age-appropriate.
- ☐ Children have enough physical space.
- ☐ Participation is voluntary and flexible.
- ☐ Eyes may remain open.
- ☐ Sound and sensory intensity are comfortable.
- ☐ There is a clear closing cue.
- ☐ The practice is not used as punishment.
- ☐ I know what I want to observe.
- ☐ I will adjust duration before adding complexity.



## Appendix C — Supporting Project Resources

The following teacher-focused resources form the methodological and implementation foundation of this guide. Final versions will be available for free download from the LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS website: <https://little-minds.eu>

| PROJECT RESOURCE                                      | PURPOSE                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher Training Curriculum                           | Seven modules covering foundations, daily integration, practical activities, inclusion, observation, peer learning and sustainability. |
| Teacher Training Materials and Activity Collection    | The complete partner-contributed activity templates from which the harmonized scripts in this guide were developed.                    |
| Train-the-Trainer Guide: Mindfulness Ambassador Model | Guidance for peer facilitators delivering local training and supporting classroom implementation.                                      |
| Pilot Teacher Training Analysis Report                | Results from 27 teachers in Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania, including usability, observed outcomes, challenges and recommendations.     |
| Online Activity Library                               | A growing collection of classroom activities, adaptations and downloadable teacher resources.                                          |

**ONLINE ACCESS** Visit [little-minds.eu](https://little-minds.eu) for the final downloadable versions and language editions. Links in this guide should point to stable resource pages rather than directly to replaceable files.

## References

### Project materials

LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS. (2026). Teacher Training Curriculum. Project resource.

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### Selected activity sources

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### Partner contributors

Activity contributions were supplied and piloted by project partners and educators from Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania. Individual contributor attribution is retained in the source notes accompanying each activity.



## Closing Note

*Mindfulness in preschool education does not begin with perfect silence. It begins with a teacher who slows one moment down, offers one clear invitation and notices what children need.*

**Choose one activity. Keep it short. Repeat it with care. Adapt it without pressure.  
Share what works.**

**LITTLE MINDS, BIG FOCUS**

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