

Focusing on the Positives.



Care Pack
8–10 years



Introduction

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As we all move through these challenging times together, parents, carers and teachers have the added responsibility of supporting the young people in their care as they grapple with rapid change and uncertainty. Mindfulness is an active, practical and appropriate response to the sense of overwhelm many of us are currently feeling.

Mindfulness has been practised for centuries and in many different cultures around the world. Academic research shows that when we pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, with openness and curiosity, and without judgement, we activate many wellbeing benefits including higher self-awareness, higher emotional regulation and reduced stress. It can also be a very useful tool that allows us to focus on the positive elements of life as they happen.

Integrating mindfulness into everyday life with the children in our care can have profound benefits for both adult and child. Smiling Mind offers a range of engaging evidence-based experiences and activities designed by wellbeing educators. You are encouraged to experiment and explore the wide range of meditations and activities with your child.

This third module, Focusing On The Positives contains four specific mindfulness topics to progress through with your child to assist them to turn towards the positive, especially in times of challenge:

- Stepping Forward to School
- Taking in the Good – Savouring and Gratitude
- Optimism
- Growth Mindset

These four topics combine to deliver a comprehensive toolkit to assist in supporting and boosting the emotional wellbeing of your child.



Here is a step by step guide to get the best out of this module designed specifically for 8–10 year olds:

1

Take a few minutes to read the topic overview written for parents, carers and teachers.

- This will orient you to the purpose and intention of each topic and set up some background for conversations with your child.



2

Listen to the mindfulness meditation with your child in a quiet place without distraction.

- Spend a few minutes afterwards inviting your child to share their experience and their thoughts and feelings following the meditation.
- Share your own experience, thoughts and feelings with your child.



3

Ask your child to select one of the activities at the back of the book.

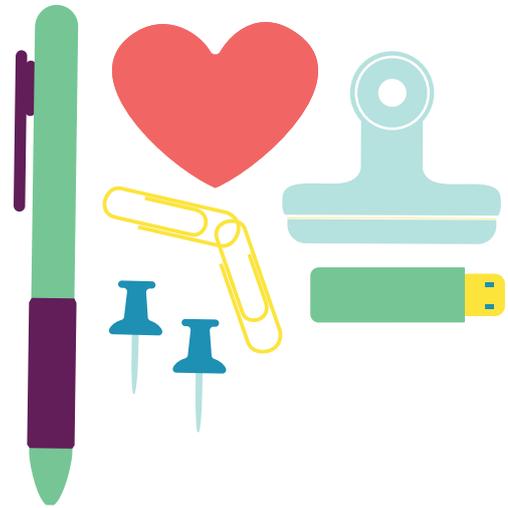
- Use the activity to collaborate and continue the conversation.



Stepping Forward To School

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As parents, carers and teachers, we have found ourselves in the midst of uncertainty during the global health crisis. As we resume our regular school routines, a swirl of mixed emotions is completely normal and to be expected. Some of us can't wait to be back in the social field of a classroom. Others have relished the time at home and found it a welcome respite from the busyness of everyday life. Making a successful transition will be assisted by stepping forward mindfully and with purpose.

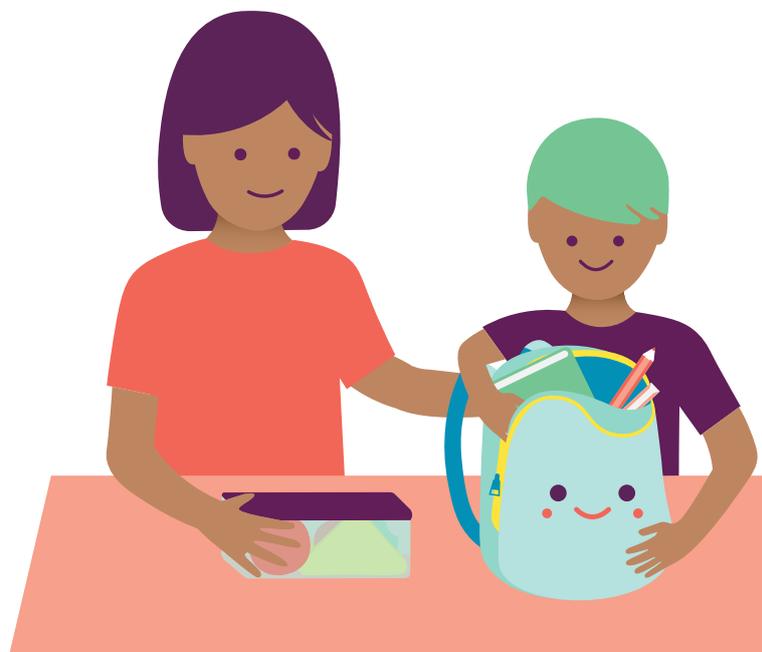


A common response to uncertainty is to imagine all kinds of possible scenarios playing out. Our children may feel worried about the virus, for example. They may also find it difficult to be separated from parents and carers who have supported them through this journey so far within the familiar surrounds of home. This is where mindfulness can play a role. When we attend to the present moment, we begin to become fully aware of how we are feeling and what we are doing. For the young people in our care, their ability to learn and grow depends upon being able to develop this essential skill.

Our children observe us closely and take their cues from us, especially in times of uncertainty. Now is the time for us to model stepping forward and re-establishing routines. What might this look like? We can purposefully create time and space for children to express thoughts and feelings and open the door to gentle and supportive conversations. Regular opportunities for mindfulness as a shared activity will bring benefit to both adults and children.

Together with our children, we can gently remind ourselves to bring our full awareness to the present moment – which is always fresh and ready for us to attend to with curiosity. In doing so, young people develop a greater capacity to focus on where they are and what they are doing. This can lead to cultivating sustained attention back in the classroom.

Stepping forward to school may bring challenges after extended time at home and as adults, we can support young people as they make this transition. Alongside conversations and reassurance, mindfulness practice will keep us in the present moment as we travel the journey together. After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build awareness. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 8–10 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we encourage conversation and collaboration.





Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Curiosity and Play

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 201 – Curiosity
- Curiosity and Play

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/10/37/37/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets at the
back of this booklet:

Stepping Forward to School

[This activity](#) encourages children to reflect on what they have missed about being at school and fosters a positive mindset and curiosity.

Welcome Back

It is natural to feel many emotions about returning to school. [This activity](#) gives children an opportunity to consider and express them.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there are
no wrong answers:

What are some of the things you missed about school when you were home?

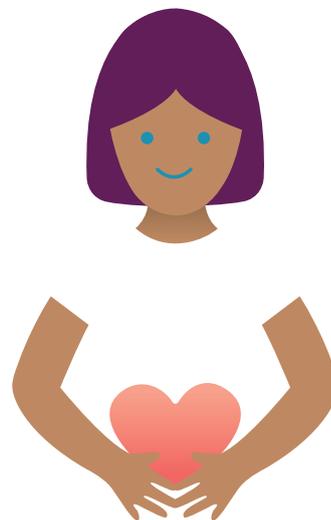
How can you be a great friend to others as you all return to school and get back into the routine?

How do feelings show up for you when you walk into school each morning?

Taking In The Good: Gratitude and Savouring

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Taking in the good doesn't always come naturally. The human brain is like velcro for negative experiences and teflon for positive. Scientists call this the negativity bias. The stickiness of negative experiences was adaptive and has helped ensure our survival as a species. Once upon a time we needed to be on the constant look out for threats and danger. There are fewer dangers in our world, but the hardwiring of our brains hasn't changed.



Cultivating gratitude and savouring are ways to velcro the positive. They can serve as an antidote to the natural tendency to take the positives in our lives for granted. They help us get full bang for buck from the good stuff.

Gratitude is being thankful for the good things in our lives. When we appreciate people, places and experiences, we begin to pay more attention to what brings us joy.

Savouring is all about deliberately focusing on enjoyable experiences by tuning into them mindfully and with appreciation. We can savour looking forward to a special experience, as it is unfolding in the moment, or later as we recall it in our minds.

Gratitude and savouring are essential elements of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to train our ability to focus on one thing at a time. This present moment awareness is a way to tune into our minds and bodies and become more aware of positive experiences in our lives. When we focus on feeling grateful, our bodies may fill with warm and happy emotions. Areas of the brain associated with connection and building relationships are activated. Savouring helps us to take in and really absorb the positive details of an experience.

As parents, carers and teachers, we can model this by focusing our own attention on the positives in our lives. When we are grateful, feelings of joy can increase both within us, and in our immediate environment. The more we savour and practise gratitude, the happier we tend to be.

Children can be gently encouraged to practise gratitude and savouring on a daily basis. As they do this, they begin to take in the good and notice the little moments of joy that can be easy to miss.

Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build awareness. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 8–10 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we encourage conversation and collaboration.



Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Gratitude

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 07 – 09 Year olds
- Mindfulness 207 – Gratitude
- Gratitude

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/16/97/97/>



Continue the conversation using
one of the activity sheets at the
back of this booklet:

Savouring and Gratitude ABC

This activity encourages children to think about all of the ways in which we can be grateful. This is an ideal way to build a bank of ideas to tap into at any time.

Creating A Chain Of Gratitude

This activity helps children to see that when we focus on gratitude, we are more able to see it in our lives every day.



Deepen the conversation
by exploring these questions
together. Remember, there are
no wrong answers:

Tell me about what it feels like to really look forward
to something?

How can we make sure we notice the little moments in every
day that make us feel good?

How does it feel inside when we are thankful and happy?

Optimism

—

When we think optimistically, we often positively place ourselves in the future. Optimism is a future-minded emotion that assists us to build a positive perspective about something that is yet to happen. When we are optimistic, we expect good things to happen to us, even when we face challenges.

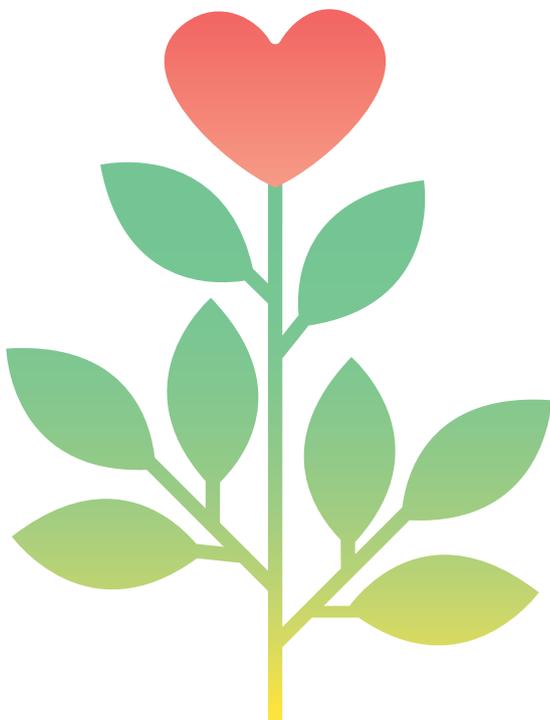


Research shows that when we are optimistic, we are more able to cope with stressful happenings in life. We tend to take a problem-solving approach and mindfully plan our way forward. Alongside this behaviour, we begin to see the best in a situation and move towards the positive in our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Optimism is a strength we can build and practise from early childhood onwards. Children in our care look to trusted adults and model what they see, hear and experience. Being aware of our own thoughts and emotions is therefore very important. When we model a positive outlook, we demonstrate an ability to mindfully navigate challenges effectively without becoming stuck in the negative implications. Children witness this perspective taking and learn to consider the same positively oriented actions in their own lives.

Cultivating an optimistic outlook begins with mindfulness. Through awareness and attention, we can begin to notice our thinking patterns. Acknowledging and supporting positive thoughts and acknowledging and then letting go of negative thoughts is a great place to start. This does not mean that we pay no attention to the negative or challenging aspects of life. Rather it is about gently unhooking ourselves from negative thought patterns in order to provide room for a more optimistic outlook.

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Listen to a mindfulness meditation. A good one for this topic is: Gratitude

App Location:

- All Programs
- Classroom
- Primary Year 3 – The Mindfulness Curriculum
- Lesson 9 – Optimism
- PRACTISE – Catching Butterflies 3

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/311/678/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Flip Side Optimism

Helping children to see that things don't always go our way is a useful practice. [This activity](#) looks at turning a negative experience around with optimistic thinking.

Looking For The Lesson

[This activity](#) helps children to see that when we have challenges, there are lessons to be learnt and remembered for next time. It is useful in encouraging optimistic thinking.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

How can we move towards positive thinking when we get stuck with a problem?

How do you think positive thoughts help us to learn and grow?

Can you think of a time when you were feeling negative and then were able to change direction?

Growth Mindset

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Growth Mindset is the belief that with effort, we can train our brains to grow and develop. We can build the neural connections in our brains because they are neuroplastic – able to develop and change across our lifespans. The more we challenge our brains, the more neural connections we make, leading to a smarter and stronger brain. Growth mindset is one of the essential elements of mindfulness. Mindfulness is all about paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgement.



When we practise mindfulness, we create much needed space within our minds to learn and grow. Combining mindfulness and growth mindset helps us to develop a mind that is open to possibilities and challenges. It enables us to cultivate what's referred to as 'beginner's mind', a mind that is willing to see everything as if it was for the first time. A mind that is completely available to the moment. Think of a scientist making a new discovery, or a child examining a new insect or playing in puddles for the first time. This is captured nicely in an old zen proverb:

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are but a few”.

For many of us, focusing on what we don't know or can't do can become an unhelpful pattern of thinking. Some of us may also find it challenging to do things in a new way. We call this a fixed mindset. Building a growth mindset does the opposite, expanding our awareness to how we can try things out and improve through learning, even if we make mistakes along the way.

As parents, carers and teachers, we can model a growth mindset by focusing our own attention on the possibilities for growth and development in our own lives. When we demonstrate that we are able to learn from our mistakes and challenges. We show the children in our care that giving up is not productive and things improve with effort and persistence. Always aiming to do our best, is a key attitude to model. This can be particularly important if you have a tendency towards needing perfection.

Children can be gently encouraged to have an open mind on a daily basis. As they do this, they are more likely to persist and believe in themselves. Cultivating a growth mindset begins with mindfulness as we pay attention to the present moment with curiosity, tuning in to all it has to offer us.

Engaging in mindfulness practice with the children in our care provides a calming and collaborative shared time. After sharing the mindfulness practice together, have a conversation about how it felt and how mindfulness can help to build awareness. After taking time to share thoughts and feelings, we suggest downloading the companion activities appropriate to this topic and inviting your 8–10 year old to choose one as an added activity. These resources can be found towards the end of the booklet. While the activities are designed so they can be done without adult support, we encourage conversation and collaboration.



Listen to a mindfulness meditation.
A good one for this topic is:
Rock the Boat

There are boat-building instructions in the Origami Mindfulness Activity.

App Location:

- All Programs
- Kids & Youth
- 10 – 12 Year Olds
- Mindfulness 101 – The Land of Mindfulness
- Activity – Rock the Boat

Web App Link:

<https://app.smilingmind.com.au/sessions/18/127/1195/>



Continue the conversation using one of the activity sheets at the back of this booklet:

Origami Mindfulness

Origami takes perseverance and time. [This activity](#) encourages children to carefully and mindfully work through a series of steps and keep going even when it gets tricky.

Open Mind, Open Heart

[This activity](#) reminds children that there are people around them who encourage and support their efforts. The origami heart folding will assist them in perseverance and mindful focus.



Deepen the conversation by exploring these questions together. Remember, there are no wrong answers:

When things get tricky, what do you say to yourself to keep trying?

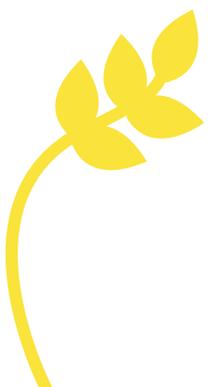
How can we be our own best friend when we are struggling with something difficult?

Who encourages you at home and school when you are working on a task that is difficult?

Stepping forward to school.



Close your eyes for a moment and remember times at school when you felt curious and playful. What can you see, who is there with you, what emotions are you experiencing in this moment? When we recall happy times, we get a second boost of positive emotion and it can help us plan happy times in the future. Recall three curious and playful moments at school you are excited about experiencing again soon.



Savouring and gratitude ABC.



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List something you are grateful for OR love to savour for every letter of the alphabet. If you get stuck, just get a dictionary out to give you some ideas.

Creating a chain of gratitude.



Gratitude is a social emotion that builds relationships. With your family, begin a chain of gratitude. Using these coloured strips, invite your family to write and draw some things you feel grateful for and then make a chain of gratitude. You will need a glue stick to join each loop. You can add to your chain each week. Add colour and hang it up where all can enjoy it.



A series of six horizontal rectangular boxes, each outlined with a dashed line of a different color: red, orange, yellow, blue, purple, and green. These boxes are intended for writing and drawing gratitude notes.

Flip side optimism.



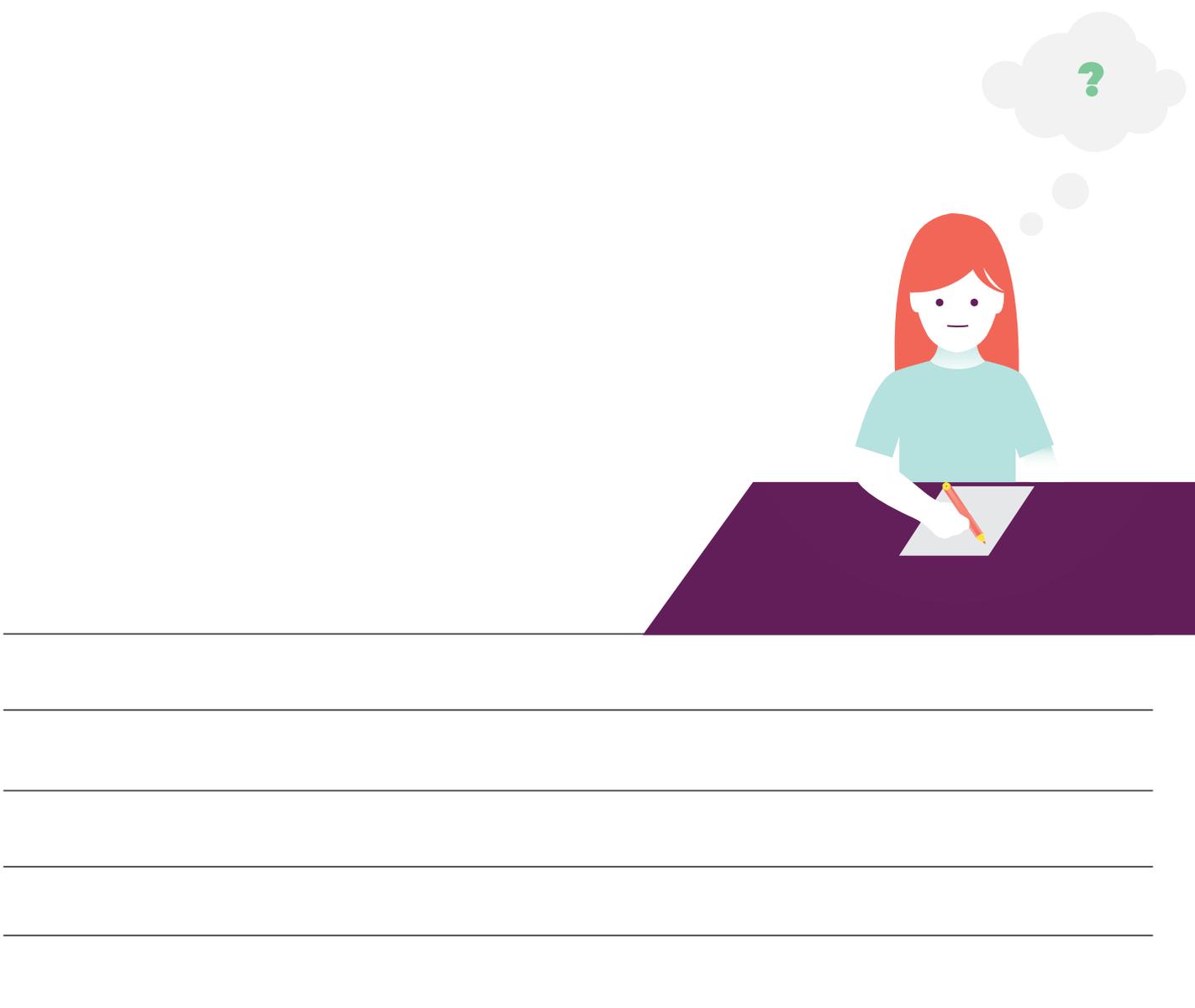
Can you think of a recent time with things did not go your way? What happened and how did you cope? Sometimes, we can flip our thinking like a pancake, to the positive and find solutions. Write and draw about a time when you were able to do this. Add thoughts and emotions to your drawing.



Looking for the lesson.



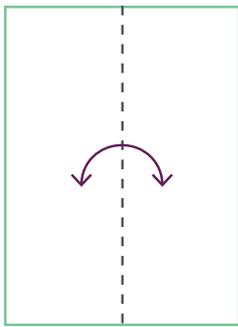
Optimistic thinkers find lessons in difficult times and do things differently next time. Can you think of a recent time when you got stuck in a negative place in your mind. Maybe you had a fight with a friend. Maybe you did not do as you were asked by a parent or teacher. What lessons can we learn for next time when this happens? Write and draw about your example.



Origami mindfulness.

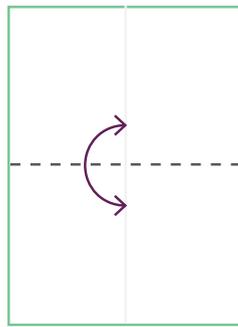


Have you ever tried making origami? Origami is a wonderful growth mindset activity. You will need an A4 piece of paper to make this little boat shaped origami and may need an adult's help. Then do the Rock The Boat meditation together. Make more little boats together and see if they can float in water. Keep trying if they don't, you'll get there!



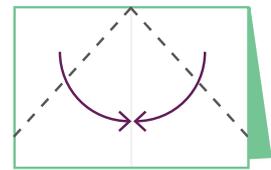
1.

Fold in half



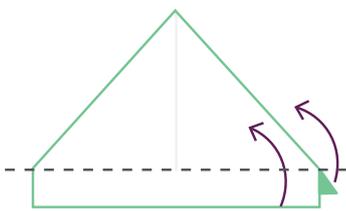
2.

Fold in half again



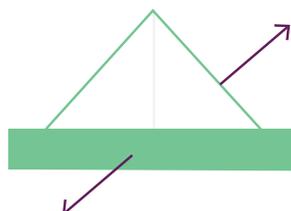
3.

Fold in corners



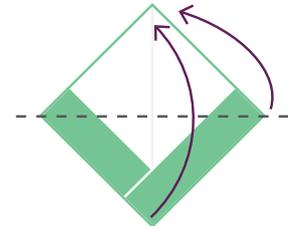
4.

Fold up edges on both sides



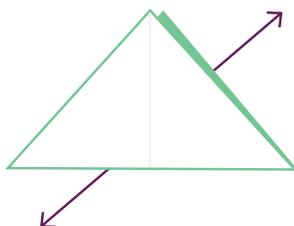
5.

Pull the sides out and flatten



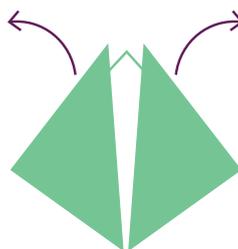
6.

Fold front and back layers up



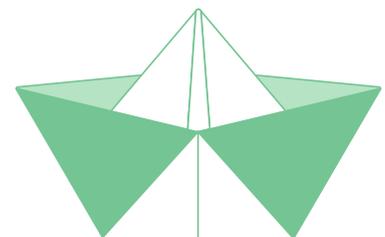
4.

Pull sides apart and flatten



5.

Pull top flaps outwards

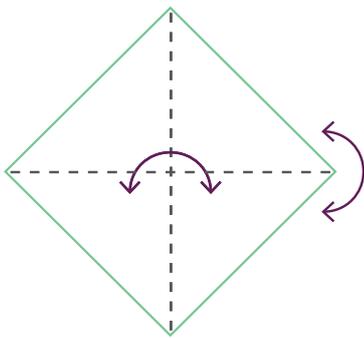


6.

Squish the bottom and pull the sides up. Tada!

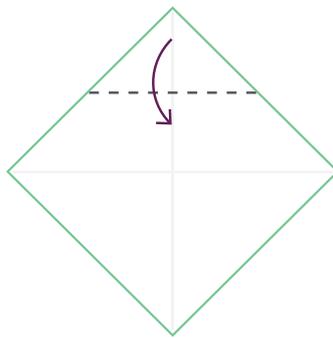
Open mind, open heart.

Think of recent times when you have done your very best and felt proud of your efforts. Using a square piece of paper, make an origami heart for each time. Reflect on how it feels to try hard and keep going even when things are tough. Write some encouragement words you say to yourself on each heart., make an origami heart for this person.



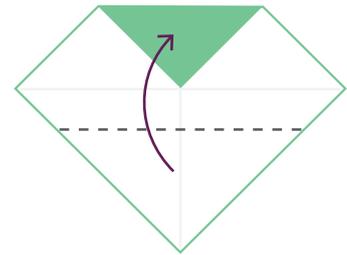
1.

Fold in half in both directions



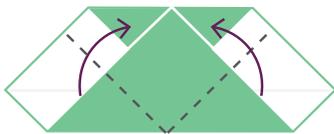
2.

Fold the top corner down



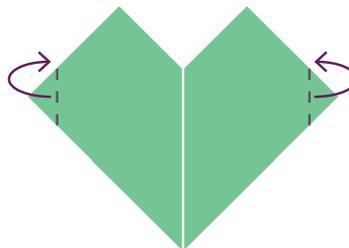
3.

Fold the bottom corner up



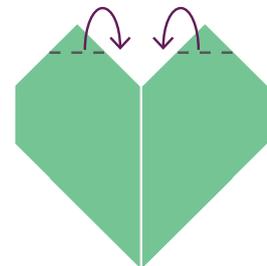
4.

Fold each edge inwards



5.

Fold the corners on the side



6.

Fold the corners on the top





Smiling Mind

info@smilingmind.com.au

smilingmind.com.au

Smiling Mind is a not-for-profit organisation that works to make mindfulness meditation accessible to all.

Visit us online or download the free app to get started.

