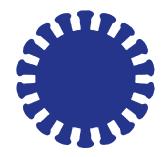


MOTIVACIÓ EMOCIONS COL·LABORACIÓ COMUNICACIÓ EQUIP COMUNICACIÓ RESPECTEAUTOCONEIXEMENTHABILITATS





COVID-19

16 mindfulness activities for youngsters and teenagers





### **Summary**

The main goal of the Fem tec! activities is to encourage students to see taking the initiative as a way of living their lives. We start by recognising non-formal education as a tool for transmitting concepts and values and for preparing young people for life.

We present 16 Mindfulness activities that are part of the guide How ART you? that aims to promote self-esteem by exploring artistic processes as tools for self-observation and the promotion of self-knowledge (english translation pending).

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mindfulness



#### **Brief introduction**

Despite considerable individual differences, the impact of the effects of Covid-19 and the period of lockdown on teenagers is directly opposed to the needs of their personal circumstances: at a point at which, more or less consciously, they seek to strengthen their relationships with their peers and distance themselves from their parents, lockdown forced them to isolate from the former and to spend time with the latter.

In general, it would be fair to say that many teenagers are missing their "old lives", are tired of following the rules of lockdown and the new normality, feel that it is hard to organise themselves, and need more personal space. During this period they have experienced a sequence of tolerance of frustration, adaptation and constant learning. Many people have sought refuge in virtual platforms offering TV series and films, where they can meet up with their peers, even if just by video call, and express themselves or feel In sense of unrestricted escape.

Each of the youngsters has during this period experienced situations of uncertainty, worries and losses that have seemed huge to them.

Emotional unease is the response in adaptation to such feelings. One resource to reduce emotional unease is to focus on the present and attempt to understand what is happening in our mind and body. As a resource to address this, we present these simple mindfulness activities devised to be undertaken with teenagers and young people.

#### Structure of the activities

All the activities follow the same structure. It would be a good idea to give a detailed explanation the first time you perform an activity. Practice will help the youngsters to internalise the activities, allowing them to do them on their own.

### Before beginning each activity, count to 3 following these instructions:

- When I say "1", that will be the signal to straighten your backs, with your feet flat on the ground and hands on your thighs (the mindfulness position).
- When I say "2", that will be the signal to take a **deep breath** (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth).
- When I say "3" the activity will begin, and will last about two minutes.
- When I say "stop", the activity will end.



You should typically suggest that the youngsters perform the activities sitting on a chair or somewhere similar, to facilitate a sense of trust. If necessary, they can also be done standing up, but not lying or stretched out on the ground, as this could cause them to relax too much, and the idea is specifically to focus on what they are doing.

The ideas we propose come in pairs. Conducting the activities in pairs helps to give the youngsters an initial idea of how the activity develops, to give them greater confidence in putting it into practice.

When the activity ends it would be advisable to spend a few minutes discussing together how it went and, where appropriate, to recognise how concentrating on what they were doing served to give them a much richer experience, and helped them to focus on the here and now. It may be that some youngsters find it difficult to concentrate on the present moment and to cast off the thoughts and judgments that occur to them while doing the activity. They shouldn't worry: with practice they will be bound to get the hang of it!

### The atmosphere while performing the activities

Before beginning the activities, it is a good idea to explain that they will be performing a mindfulness activity, in other words focusing on complete awareness. The idea is specifically to try to "empty" their heads of thoughts and focus on what they are doing, without judging or trying to change it. The exercise involves a twofold challenge: maintaining undivided focus and not judging. Performing these activities will help them to train both skills, which will be particularly useful in terms of living in harmony and achieving deeper self-knowledge.

In order to get the most out of the mindfulness activities, we suggest conducting them in as pleasant and open a space as possible, preferably outdoors, or at least with natural light. Music may prove a useful resource to facilitate a positive, calm atmosphere. We suggest some tracks that you can listen to on the **Youth Plan Office Spotify channel.** 





### Mindfulness 1: **Eat chocolate!**



**Observation:** As an exception, this activity uses materials. You will need a piece of chocolate, a sugar-free sweet or similar confectionery for each member of the group, ideally with a wrapper. If using chocolate or sweets proves awkward, the activity can be performed with anything else that can be simply eaten and savoured: even a glass of water can fulfil the function.

Explain to the group that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, requiring complete awareness in observing and describing what they feel, with curiosity but without judgment. We often eat without giving importance to the moment, while today they will be eating chocolate while focusing their awareness on what they are doing.

Explain that although we often rely on our eyesight to observe our surroundings, we have other senses that can also offer us valuable information. Invite the youngsters to try this out by observing a piece of chocolate (or whatever food you have chosen; the activity is described here with a piece of chocolate).

Tell the youngsters that you will be handing out a piece of chocolate to each of them, but **before eating the chocolate they should try to observe it** with their eyesight, smell, touch and hearing while they hold it in their hands: the sound (when the wrapper is removed or a piece snapped off), the form, the texture, the temperature, the smell, etc. Once they have finished, those who wish can eat it and observe what happens. Suggest that before chewing it, they try to wait for a moment: tell them how important it is to focus on the

sensations on their tongue, the need to chew, the sound it makes, how it feels on their teeth, the flavour they note as the chocolate melts into their saliva... or they could simply observe the chocolate in their mouth without taking any action.

Emphasise the importance of not eating the chocolate when you give it to them, but for everyone to eat it at the same time, following your instructions. The idea is to encourage the youngsters to engage in observation the whole time, and to overcome the impulse to put the chocolate in their mouth straight away.

Explain that before beginning the observation you will count to 3 with these instructions:

- When I say "1", that will be the signal to straighten your backs, with your feet flat on the ground and hands on your thighs (the mindfulness position).
- When I say "2", that will be the signal to take a **deep breath** (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth).
- When I say "3", you can begin your observation of the chocolate.

Once you have given this explanation, hand out the chocolate and give the instructions "1, 2 and 3" out loud. After a couple of minutes, say "stop" to end the activity.



# Mindfulness 2: Eat virtual chocolate!



Remind the youngsters that you will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that involves observing and describing what you feel, with curiosity and without judgment.

Explain to the group that they will be focusing on the mindfulness activity they did in the previous session, and repeating it while trying to remember what they felt at the time while observing the chocolate. Today, in order better to concentrate on their sensations, they will be doing the activity with their eyes closed. The youngsters shouldn't worry, because they are in a trusted space, and you are there to support them, but if anyone feels uncomfortable they can do the activity with their eyes open.

### Once you have given this explanation, give the instructions "1, 2 and 3" out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to straighten their backs with their hands on their thighs in the mindfulness position.
- "2": this is the signal to take a deep breath (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth).
- "3": imagine that you have the piece of chocolate in your hands again, and observe it: try to remember its smell, weight, texture, etc., and then eat it, observing the taste that you perceive, how it melts in your mouth, etc.

If anyone prefers to keep their eyes open, make sure they see that you are alert. If anyone shows unease you can approach them and put a hand on their back to calm them down. You can gently remind the youngsters that if they notice their attention wandering from where they should be focused (observing the imaginary chocolate) they need to redirect their mind to the point where they were, as by doing so they will be training their attention to focus on what they want.



### Mindfulness 3: Throw sounds!



Remind the youngsters that you will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be throwing sounds to one another, and playing at catching them. They should stand up straight in a circle (everyone looking towards the centre), and one by one use their voice to throw a sound to someone else, as if it were a ball. The person who catches the sound will repeat it and send a new sound to someone else, so on successively until everyone has received and sent a sound. Attention is very important in this activity. You will need to explain that they really have to be as one with the activity and set aside any judgments about themselves and other people, whether positive or negative. They must be 100% involved.

### Once you have given this brief explanation, remind them that you will prepare by counting to three:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": the monitor starts the activity off by sending a sound to one of the youngsters in the circle.

After a couple of minutes, say "stop" to end the activity.

Observation: If possible, this activity should ideally be staged outdoors, where the youngsters feel free to shout as loud as they like. In the case of larger groups, one way to make sure that everyone takes part in the activity is to follow the order of the circle itself when sending the sounds to the opposite side of the circle.



### Mindfulness 4: Throw flowers!



Remind the youngsters that you will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session. Rather than throwing sounds to one another, **they will be throwing nice words**.

As they did the previous day, they should stand up straight in a circle, and one by one use their voice to send a positive message to another group member. This should be a word or short message, thrown like a ball to another person. The person who receives the message will repeat it and send a new message to someone else, and so on successively until everyone has received and sent a message. Remember that attention is really important in this activity, and they must set aside any judgments about themselves and other people, whether positive or negative. They must be 100% involved!

### Once you have given this brief explanation, remind them that you will prepare by counting to three:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- **"2"**: this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": the monitor starts the activity off by sending a nice message to one of the youngsters in the circle.



# Mindfulness 5: **Observe your**

partner



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, requiring complete awareness to observe with attention, curiosity but without judgment.

Explain that they will today be trying out mindfulness by observing other people. To do this, each of them needs to find a partner, with the pairs being distributed around the space (ideally they should choose themselves, but if you see that the group cannot get organised, you can give some instructions such as: everyone should find someone born in the same month or on the same day of the week, someone of the same height, someone wearing the same colour clothes, etc.). Once the pairs have formed, explain that the activity will involve **observing their partner** carefully from head to toe, and after a minute, notify them that the members of each pair will have to turn back to back. Once they have turned back to back, each of them will change three things (such as putting their watch on the other wrist, taking their glasses off, changing their hairstyle, etc.). Then, when you give them the instruction, they will turn around and they have one minute to **spot the changes** that the other person made (one member of the pair will go first, and then the other).

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- "2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": they can begin observing their partner.
- After a minute, say: "turn around", and they will have to turn round back to back, and quickly **change three things**.
- After a few moments, again say: "turn around", and they should return to their initial position and try to spot the three things that their partner has changed.



### Mindfulness 6: **Words**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session. Rather than changing things, today they will form pairs (not necessarily the same as the previous day), and say quietly to the person opposite a word that their presence suggests ("encouragement", "happiness", "green" [because they often wear clothes that colour], "maths" [because everyone knows they are great at the subject], etc.). Both members of the pair will continue to alternate saying words, as in a dialogue, for a couple of minutes. It is important for the words to be spoken softly so as to maintain concentration and not to disturb the rest of the group.

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- **"3"**: they can begin the **word exchange** between the members of the pair.



### Mindfulness 7: **Tune your "radio"**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that involves observing and describing what you feel, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be trying out mindfulness by observing and describing sounds. Ask the participants to get comfortable, sitting on a chair or on the ground. Explain to them that they will be doing the activity with their eyes closed, imagining that there here is a radio that can be tuned to different stations. Then, during the activity ask them to listen to the sounds they can hear most in the distance; next, change station to listen to the sounds closer to the room or surroundings. Lastly, change station again to listen to the sounds within their own body (breathing, heartbeat, bones, digestive tract, etc.). Indicate the changes by saying: "change to the next station".

### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (a) **"2"**: this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": they will tune in to the station with the most distant sounds.
- After a few seconds, say: "change to the next station", and remind them that they have to try to tune their radio in to the **sounds** closest to them.
- After a few seconds, once again say: "change to the next station", and remind them that they need to tune in to the **sounds from** inside themselves.

You can gently remind them that if they notice their attention drifting from where they should be focused on listening to the sounds, they need to redirect their mind to where they were.



### Mindfulness 8: **Retune the "radio"**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that involves observing and describing what you feel, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session. Imagine you are in a shelter where you feel safe and comfortable. First, listen to the sounds from a long way away, and then closer sounds, and lastly the sounds inside you. Today, in order better to concentrate on their sensations, they should do the activity with their eyes closed. The participants shouldn't worry as you are there to support them, but if anyone feels uncomfortable they can do the activity with their eyes open.

If anyone prefers to keep their eyes open, make sure they see that you are alert. If anyone shows unease you can approach them and put a hand on their back to calm them down.

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": they will tune to the station with the sounds furthest from their shelter.
- After a few seconds, say: "change to the next station", and remind the youngsters that they have to try to tune their radio in to the sounds closest to them.
- After a few seconds, once again say: "change to the next station" and remind them that they need to tune in to the **sounds from** inside themselves.



### Mindfulness 9: **Listen to music**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that involves observing and describing what you feel, with curiosity and without judgment.

For this dynamic you will need to choose some music that is not familiar or popular among the youngsters in the group, so that it would represent a novel experience for most of them. It could be instrumental music from the soundtrack of an old movie, "light" jazz, folk music, etc.

Explain that they will be trying out mindfulness through music. What they will be doing is **listening to music consciously, observing it**. In this exercise they will listen to and respect the music, and mention that they will probably be unfamiliar with the music they will be listening to. The purpose of this activity is to listen to the music, the tone, the rhythm, the melody, the changes of volume, the instruments playing, the lyrics, or any other aspect that they can observe while listening, without judging it. If they notice that their mind is drifting from the music, they should refocus. If any positive or negative judgments about the music pop into their head, they should try to dismiss them and again listen to the music carefully.

Everyone can choose whether to do the activity with their eyes closed or open, however they prefer. It may be that the youngsters ask why

sometimes you ask them to close their eyes to facilitate observation, but not this time. You can mention that we live our lives with our eyes open, and can still do so while being fully aware. That can also be trained, and today will serve as a brief practice exercise.

### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- (3": play the music and listen carefully.



### Mindfulness 10: **Listen to our music**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that involves observing and describing what you feel, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session. Choose a piece of music that is popular amongst the group of youngsters. Invite them closely to observe this music that they have heard so often. If they focus fully on listening to it, they will probably discover new elements that they may never have noticed (backing vocals, the occasional word, or silence, an instrumental solo, etc.).

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": play the music and listen carefully.



### Mindfulness 11: **Breathe**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, requiring complete awareness and careful observation, with curiosity, but without judgment.

Tell them in advance that today they will be trying out mindfulness through breathing. Mention that we breathe continuously, and can always use our breathing as a point of focus for our attention. In today's exercise they will be observing each breath in and out, counting "1" in their head. On the next breath they will do the same, and so on successively. They should only focus on counting to 1 each time. Explain to the youngsters that if they suddenly realise they have reached 2, 5, 9, etc., then on the next breath they need once again to return to counting just to 1. Some of them might also find that a judgment comes to mind: they should observe it, let it go and refocus on counting to 1 as they breathe out (softly, each of them to themselves). It may also be that they become aware of movements such as blinking or other involuntary movements. They should observe them and return to their breathing.

Everyone can choose whether to do the activity with their eyes closed or open, however they prefer.

Lastly, before beginning this activity, emphasise the **importance of realising when they become** 

distracted, and remind them that it is as important to do so as to be able to focus on a specific thing. If they realise they are becoming distracted and can once again focus on their breathing, then they are strengthening their "observation muscles". You can suggest the following example: when you become distracted and lose track of an explanation, you aren't paying attention to what the speaker is saying. If you recognise that, you can refocus attention on the present. Over time, and with plenty of practice, these abilities will gradually become stronger.

### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (a) "2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": they can now begin the exercise of breathing and counting up to 1 each time they breathe out.



### Mindfulness 12: **Breathe up to one**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness exercise, requiring complete awareness and careful observation, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session. They will be **repeating the breathing activity, but this time they will be counting up to 1 in their head each time they breathe in**. Always up to 1. If they notice that they have reached a higher number, they should return to 1.

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": they will begin observing their breathing by counting up to 1 in their heads each time they breathe in.



### Mindfulness 13: **Build a story**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be trying out mindfulness by jointly narrating a story. Explain that everyone must play a full part by performing an action at a precise moment, and this action involves narrating a story that they will make up together as you will explain. Ask the group to form a circle, and each of them should, in the established order, add a word or phrase to the story when it is their turn. The person leading the activity will begin the story, followed by the youngster to their right, and so on successively around the circle. The key is to practise individual participation, and be able to wait until it is their turn to decide the word or phrase they will say. They may have certain judgments about what is said by the others, or by themselves, or even have the impulse to criticise some contribution. If that happens they should simply show understanding, and then once again focus on the story. Spend enough time on the activity to see where the story that they are making up all together takes them.

Explain that the first aim in this activity was to maintain concentration while building the story, in which they can only take part when it is their turn.

The other aspect you aim to train is the ability to avoid any judgments that might pop into their head during the activity, and if they arise, be able to dismiss them.

### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- **2"**: this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": the person leading the activity will make the first contribution to the story which will then gradually be built up together.

After two or three minutes, say "stop" to end the activity.



# Mindfulness 14: **Redo the story**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session: invent a different story altogether. So as to be able to concentrate better on the sensations they feel while listening and preparing their own contribution, they should try to do the activity with their eyes closed. The youngsters should not worry, as you are there to support them, but if anyone feels uncomfortable they can do the activity with their eyes open. If anyone prefers to keep their eyes open, make sure they see that you are alert. If anyone shows unease you can approach them and put a hand on their back to calm them down.

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- "3": the person leading the activity will make the first contribution to the story.

After two or three minutes, say "stop" to end the activity.



# Mindfulness 15: **Sing!**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Tell them first of all that today they will be trying out mindfulness by **singing**. Explain that this complete awareness activity involves full participation and will be all about singing, but how? We all have different singing abilities, and feel comfortable to different degrees when we sing. Today they will be practising participation and non-judgment, and aiming to blend as much as possible with the moment of the song. Use a video of a song that you think most of the group would be familiar with, and that has the lyrics superimposed (a karaoke-type YouTube video).

Explain to the group the before they start they should spend a few seconds imagining themselves singing the chosen song, taking part in the activity 100%, in a straightforward and non-judgemental manner. If any judgments crop up, such as "I'm a terrible singer", "Look at the state of him/her", etc., you should just acknowledge them, let them go and return to the activity, going with the flow of the song.

#### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- (3": it's time to put the video on and sing!

When the song ends, say "stop" to finish the activity.

Observation: In dynamics of this kind that call for 100% participation from the youngsters, it is important to remember that as the group leader you provide the model for their participation, so it is a good idea to practise the song before the session to make sure that you can throw yourself fully into it, irrespective of what the group do.



# Mindfulness 16: **Enjoy!**



Remind the youngsters that they will be doing a mindfulness activity, an exercise in complete awareness that means getting involved by going with the flow, with curiosity and without judgment.

Today they will be doing a variation of the activity from the previous session: they will be singing as loud as they can and dancing to a song that they all know. Remind them that what you are looking for is full participation, without any judgment about what they might see or how others might see them. The idea is to practice participation without judgment, blending as much as possible with the moment of singing and dancing. Use a simple song that everyone in the group knows: if they have an anthem, then that, or otherwise songs such as "Baa-baa black sheep" or "London's burning" (they may seem like childish songs, but that's the whole point: letting themselves go without any complexes!).

Explain to the group that before they start they need to spend a few seconds imagining themselves singing and dancing to the chosen song, taking part in the activity 100%, in a straightforward non-judgemental manner. If any judgments arise, such as "What a load of nonsense!", "That's a kids' song", etc., you should just acknowledge them, let them go and return to the activity, going with the flow of the song. In this

activity it is important that the group leader also takes part 100%, irrespective of what the group

### Once you have given this explanation, say "1, 2 and 3" and the other instructions out loud:

- "1": this is the signal to adopt the mindfulness position.
- (2": this is the signal to take a deep breath.
- ⇒ "3": it's time to sing and dance!

When the song ends, say "stop" to finish the activity.

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