

# MENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS



Just like adults, children need self-care activities to help balance out the worry and stress that they experience. Adding these activities into their daily routine can improve lifelong mental wellness.

## **Belly breathing**

Lie on your back and place your favourite stuffed animal on your belly. Inhale through your nose and stick your tummy way out, until the stuffy looks like it's sitting on top of a hill. Then exhale through your mouth and suck your tummy in, letting the stuffy fall.

## **Sensory play**

Spend some time playing with water, sand, goo/slime, dry pasta, beads, cotton balls, finger paints, or anything with a strong sensation involved. Let your child choose a sensory experience that they really enjoy and that makes them feel calm and happy.



## **Mindfulness scavenger hunt**

Make a list of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sensations (i.e. a purple flower, a bird chirping, the smell of a barbecue, the feeling of wind on your skin). Then go out on a walk and see how many you can experience together, naming and savouring each one.





### **Movement**

Guide your child to move in ways that involve the whole body, require heavy/intense effort, and increase their heart rate. Dancing, playing at playgrounds, playing tag, swimming, yoga for kids, biking and sports are all great options!

### **Grow something**

Nurturing and caring for something else can build self-esteem, help with being in-the-moment, and counter negative thoughts. A plant, a flower, part of the garden, a fish, a snail, or even a pet rock are some ideas to get started with.



### **Create something**

This could be a piece of music, poem, story, painting, drawing, knitting/sewing/crocheting, baking, cooking, or anything else your child can imagine. Flexing the brain's "creative" muscles can help to ensure they grow stronger than the "stress" muscles.

### **Read**

Reading can be regulating for kids. A comic book, magazine, or book will do – as long as it's paper rather than a screen! Reading before bed can improve sleep quality.

### **Quiet time/quiet space**

Work down time into your daily schedule to allow your child to re-set. Carve out a space with comforting down-time tools like a favourite chair, special lights, stuffed animals, music, and anything that is comforting and calming.

