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# MINDFUL SUMMER ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUR KIDS

by Sarah Rudell Beach of Brilliant Mindfulness and Left Brain Buddha

The following activities are **mindful** in the sense that they are helping our kids learn to **pay attention** (to their bodies and their minds) and to **understand their feelings**. You don't even have to use the word mindfulness – make it a fun activity and the learning will happen organically!

# 10 Mindful Activities for Outdoor Summer Fun

## 1. The Popsicle Challenge

The next time you eat a popsicle on a hot day, challenge your kids **to be silent until their popsicle is entirely gone**. Encourage them to really notice all the different tastes (one of those three-flavor popsicles would be great for this).

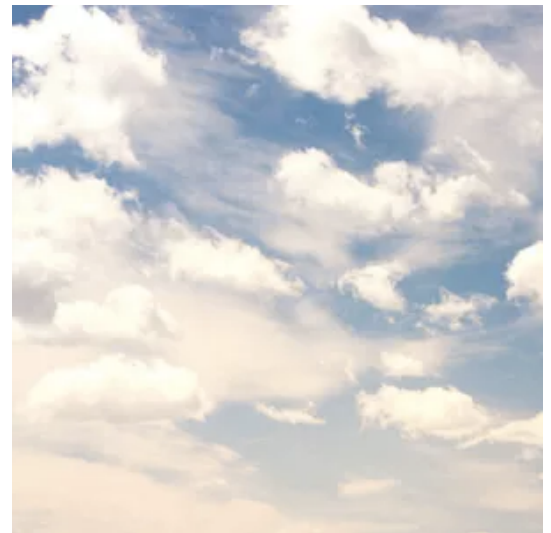


What flavors do they notice? Does the popsicle start to feel different in their mouth as it starts melting? What temperature changes do they notice? Was it hard to stay quiet the whole time? There are lots of things you could talk about when you finish the challenge!

## 2. Sky Study

Put a blanket down on the lawn and spend some time **staring at the clouds**. What shapes do they see? Animals? People?

Spend at least 10-15 minutes studying the sky – and notice how the clouds gently move along. Notice how the cloud that first looked like a pig now looks like a cat. This is a great way to introduce the idea that our minds are kind of like the sky – thoughts float through on their own, and they change on their own. We can watch our thoughts in our minds like we watch the clouds!



### 3. Noticing Walk

Go for a walk in your neighborhood and ask your kids to try to notice 10 things they've never really paid attention to before – perhaps the color of the neighbor's shutters or the flowers along the boulevard. You could also try to listen for new sounds, too. Ask them why they think they've never noticed them!

### 4. Slow-Fast-Slow

With mindfulness, we practice slowing down, so we don't feel so rushed all the time. The next time you're at the playground, try playing "Slow-Fast-Slow." Whatever your kids are doing – playing in the sand, running through tunnels – have them try to do it slow, then fast, and then slow again.

Talk about what it felt like to do something slowly. Did it feel different? Did you notice something you hadn't before when you were playing fast? Did you like moving more slowly, or do you like to be quick?

### 5. Free Lemonade Stand

My kids LOVE having lemonade stands in the summer (my daughter thinks she's going to make enough money for an iPhone through her lemonade and cookie business). But what about doing a **free** lemonade stand? Talk to your kids about generosity and heartfulness and the joy of doing things for others without expecting something in return.



## 6. The Mindful Zoo

The next time you go to the zoo, you can turn it into a mini-lesson on the reptilian and mammalian parts of our brain! What differences do kids notice between the frogs and the ferrets?

Observe the play and nurture that takes place between mammals (with whom we share basic emotions and a social engagement system). Notice the stillness and solitude of the snakes (from whom we get our “freeze” response to stress).



## 7. 5x5 Senses

Go outside and activate your superpower senses! For each sense (sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing), identify five things they notice in the environment. This can be a very helpful practice when kids feel overwhelmed – by focusing on what their senses can detect, they orient themselves in the present moment, and they’re able to distance themselves from their thoughts.



## 8. Nature Art

Appreciate the beauty of nature through art. Stack some rocks. Make a collage with grass and weeds and shells. Make a rock sculpture.

## 9. Care for the Earth

Go for a walk around the block and pick up litter. Talk to your kids about the importance of taking care of our planet.

## 10. Become an Impressionist

Impressionists don't paint water "blue;" the water is blue and yellow and red and green as it reflects the sky and the sun and the flowers and the leaves. Take your paints outdoors (just like Monet did!) and ask your kids to really see. What color IS the sky? What color IS the tree in the backyard? Make a masterpiece.



# 10 Mindful Activities for a Rainy (or Way-Too-Hot) Day

## 1. Mindful Reading

The next time you read a story with your kids, take some time to engage in conversation about the feelings of the people (or animals) in the book. It can be hard for children to talk about their own emotions, so sometimes it's easier to talk about fictional characters. You can ask questions like, "What do you think the girl is thinking about?"; "Why do you think he is sad?"; "How do you think you would feel if that happened to you?"; or, "Have you ever felt like that before?"

## 2. Organize Your Photos or Make a Scrapbook

Have your kids help you sort through old photos. This can spark some great conversations about their favorite memories (if you've seen [Inside Out](#), you could ask kids what they think their "core memories" are). Create collages that represent core memories or the different "islands" that make up their personality. Use stickers and other scrapbooking items to create some cool pages. [You can read about how we do this here.](#)

## 3. Make Mind Jars

This is one of my favorite mindfulness activities for kids. Using glitter and water, you can make a "mind jar" – the glitter represents all the thoughts and emotions in their minds (and when the jar is shaken they go crazy!) But if you stop moving it and breathe for a few moments, the glitter settles and the water becomes clear. [You can read my post about making mind jars here.](#)



## 4. Play Emotion Charades

It's just like it sounds! Make cards or slips of paper with an emotion on each one ([you can find a good list here](#)). Then take turns acting out the emotions – pay attention to facial expression, posture, body language, and the other physical clues to how we are feeling. Since emotions are usually physical before they are cognitive, this can help us develop our emotional awareness.

## 5. Train Your Brain!

Attention is like a muscle – the more you use it, the more you strengthen it! Have a fun collection of jigsaw puzzles, word finds, crossword puzzles, and matching games available. These types of games train your attention – you have to focus on them while tuning out the irrelevant stimuli.



## 6. Watch Inside Out

This movie is SO good. They even consulted neuroscientists at top universities when they made this film so they could be as accurate as possible. Watch the movie together and talk about the emotions depicted in the film. [You can find my complete list of Inside Out activities here.](#)

## 7. Color

When we color, we focus our attention on a single activity, and that can feel really pleasant. This is probably why so many adults are coloring now! Join your kids in coloring time, perhaps with a cool mandala coloring book or one with intricate designs. Enjoy the calm that can arise from single-minded concentration.



## 8. Recycled Art

Save your empty cereal boxes, soda bottles, paper towel tubes, etc., and give your kids some tape and markers and let them go crazy with their creativity. Build a robot, construct a house, make some musical instruments – the possibilities are endless!

## 9. Learn About Mindfulness Together

[Watch this video of my son \(age 6\) teaching some mindful breathing strategies.](#) Practice the different breathing exercises and talk about how they make you feel. Which one is your favorite?

## 10. Dance Party!

Crank up the tunes and dance! Get out of your head and into your body. I love dancing with kids – there's no self-consciousness. It's just pure movement and joy and self-expression. We can learn a lot from them!



Have a  
mindful,  
joyful  
summer!