



Guide to Using Sesame Street's Mindfulness Practices

with Children in Early Childhood Settings



Supported by



National Center on
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety

A creation of



Sesame Workshop is the global impact nonprofit behind *Sesame Street* and so much more. For over 50 years, it has worked at the intersection of education, media, and research, creating joyful experiences that enrich minds and expand hearts, all in service of empowering each generation to build a better world. Beloved characters, iconic shows, and outreach in communities bring playful early learning to families in more than 150 countries and advance Sesame Workshop's mission to help children everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder.

Learn more at sesame.org and follow Sesame Workshop on Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok.

Developed in partnership with



National Center on

Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety

This resource is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$8,200,000 with 100% funded by ACF. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACF/HHS or the U.S. Government.

Mindfulness means ...

really slowing down and paying attention to the world around you. The practice can help children and staff feel happier, healthier, and more in control.

Mindfulness works best when it becomes a regular part of your routine. This guide offers specific suggestions on incorporating lessons

from these podcasts in your program using repeated, everyday moments with children.

The first time you **Listen and Do**, gather children in a circle. This can be in an open-floor space, outdoors in the grass, or anywhere you can relax your bodies. Once you have learned the strategies below, you can use them in lots of different settings and during transitions.

Whole Body Listening with Elmo

LISTEN AND DO

- **Say:** “You know that ears are for listening. But did you know that we can also listen with our whole body? Let’s learn how to do **whole-body** listening with Elmo!”
- **Do:** Together with children, sing along and move your bodies.
 - Sing “Ears are hearing what you have to say” and point to ears.
 - Sing “Eyes are watching what you do today” and point to eyes.
 - Sing “Voices are quiet” and put finger to lips.
 - Sing “With calm bodies too” and give yourself a hug.
 - Sing “This is how our whole bodies listen to you.”
- **Discuss:** After listening, tell children, “We can use whole-body listening any time, especially when someone needs to focus and pay attention.”

REPEAT AND EXTEND

- Make a routine out of listening and doing. Pick a day of the week to use this podcast to start circle time in the morning, to end the day together, or during both times.
- Once children learn the song, sing it together when it’s time to focus as a group, like coming back from outside time or before reading a story together.
- Insert words from children’s home languages, when possible.



SCAN AND LISTEN!

Self-love with Grover

LISTEN AND DO

- **Say:** “You are all great at showing your love for other people. But did you know, it’s just as important to show love for yourself? Let’s be kind to ourselves with Grover!”
- **Do:** Together with children, listen and follow Grover’s instructions.
 - Say “I love me!” and give yourself a hug.
 - Say “I am kind!” and place your hand on your heart.
 - Say “I am brave!” with your hands on your hips.
 - Say “I am growing every day!” while making a big muscle.
 - One more time, say “I love me!” and give yourself a hug.
- **Discuss:** After listening, ask children to share some specific things they love about themselves.

REPEAT AND EXTEND

- Use the words “I love me, I am kind, I am brave, I am growing every day!” as a final shared reflection at the end of each day.
- Model talking to yourself in kind and loving ways during everyday routines, like snack time or circle time. Help children get into the habit of naming positive things about themselves.
- Insert words from children’s home languages, when possible.



SCAN AND LISTEN!

Notice with Cookie Monster

LISTEN AND DO

- **Say:** "Noticing is when we really look at something to see every little detail it has. Let's listen to Cookie Monster and learn a way we can notice things around us."
- **Do:** Together with children, listen and follow Cookie Monster's instructions.
 - Encourage children to make "binoculars" or "glasses" with their hands.
 - Say "Wiggle your fingers when you see something red!"
 - Say "Stomp your feet when you see something blue!"
 - Say "Blink your eyes when you see something yellow!"
- **Discuss:** After listening, continue noticing different colors, shapes, and textures. Tell children that they can use their noticing binoculars whenever they want.



REPEAT AND EXTEND

- Listen to the Notice podcast before you start a group learning activity. Help children use their noticing eyes so they will have more focus and attention.
- You can use noticing binoculars anywhere. It's a great game for wrapping up any outdoor play because there are **tons** of things to notice in the natural world!
- Insert words from children's home languages, when possible



SCAN AND LISTEN!

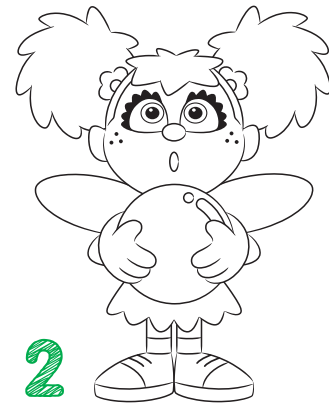
Bubble Breathing with Abby

LISTEN AND DO

- **Say:** “Deep breaths are so helpful. They can help us calm down and focus our attention — and they just feel good! Let’s learn one way to take deep breaths with Abby!”
- **Do:** Together with children, take deep breaths with Abby.
 - 1 Say “Put your hands over the bubble in your belly.”
 - 2 Say “Breathe in and make the bubble bigger.”
 - 3 Say “Breathe out and make the bubble smaller.”
- **Keep repeating with Abby.**
- **Discuss:** Ask “What are some times **you** think we could use bubble breathing to stay calm and relaxed?” Discuss how bubble breathing can help with big feelings.

REPEAT AND EXTEND

- Listen to the Bubble Breathing podcast before or after rest time, to help everyone calm down before a nap, or to focus after a nap.
- Bubble breathing can help children when they are having big feelings. You can use the technique to help individual children with anxiety, anger, and other emotions.
- Insert words from children’s home languages, when possible.



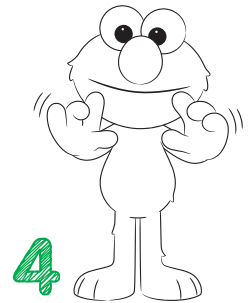
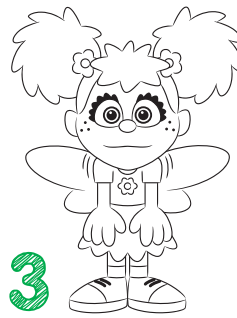
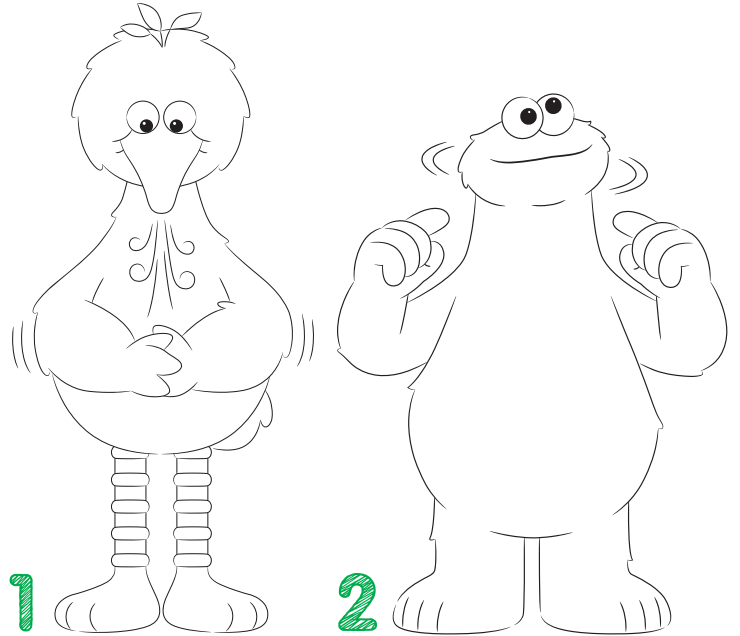
Body Scan with Big Bird

LISTEN AND DO

- **Say:** "Let's find out how to check in with our bodies."
- **Do:** Together with children, follow Big Bird's instructions with each part of the body.
 - 1 Take three belly breaths together.
 - 2 Say hello to your head, and circle it three times in each direction.
 - 3 Say hello to your shoulders, and squeeze them up and down.
 - 4 Say hello to your hands, and squeeze them open and shut.
 - 5 Say hello to your toes, and wiggle them.
- **Discuss:** Ask children what other parts of their bodies they can say hello to. Take turns making suggestions and moving those body parts.

REPEAT AND EXTEND

- Listen to the Body Scan podcast after outdoor time, before doing art, or any other time when you want children to calm their bodies for a new activity.
- A quick body scan can be a great activity for transitions. If children are in line to wash their hands before a snack, have them do a body scan while they wait their turn.
- Insert words from children's home languages, when possible.



Peaceful Planning



Connecting with Families. Share the links to the podcasts with families so that children can practice at home. Families may like to learn about strategies to help children calm down. Encourage families to ask their children to show them what they have learned in the program. And feel free to share them more than once to remind families that mindfulness is all about repetition and routine.



Individual Time. If a child is having big feelings that disrupts the group, have the child listen to one of these podcasts, following the instructions. Those few minutes can help the child be calmer and will give you the chance to set the group up with an activity. Once the podcast is over, a grown-up and the child can discuss the problem together.



Mindfulness for All. Even though these are Sesame Street characters, the mindfulness lessons are great for everyone, including family members and staff! Every person in your program can do whole-body listening, self-love, noticing, deep breathing, and body scans as moments of reflection throughout the day. For example, bus staff can choose a few of these podcasts to practice the strategies in their everyday routines. Children can do belly breathing or body scans even in their child passenger restraint system during trips to help them cope with restlessness or big feelings. With feelings big and small, use this guide and your Sesame friends through it all!

