

WELL-BEING CARDS FOR CHILDREN



This box contains 25 well-being exercises for children. They can be used with a single child or a group of children but always supervised by an adult.

Regular use of the exercises will help children to relax, self-regulate and boost their inner resources.



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the European Union

USING THE CARDS

Before and after doing an exercise with a child or a group of children, it is recommended to let the children 'check in'. Ask them to say one word that describes how they feel and one word that describes how their body feels as they begin and end the exercise. This will increase their awareness of the effects of the different exercises.

When working with groups of children, the adult can also allow time to share experiences. Let everyone say a few words about how they feel. This will build their vocabulary, knowledge and familiarity with the exercises.

Test the exercise before instructing others, so the instructions come naturally: Speak in a normal tone of voice, give adequate pauses, and provide time to discuss the effects and reflections afterwards. Use the cards as an inspiration and feel free to improvise and adapt to context.

**NEVER FORCE ANYONE TO DO AN EXERCISE
LEAVE THE CHOICE OPEN WHEN SUGGESTING ANY OF THE CARDS**



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SPATIAL AWARENESS



HOW MANY STEPS?

This exercise helps children build spatial awareness and to place themselves in a room and in relation to others.

Instruct the children to stand at one end of the room.

- Ask them how many steps there are between them and the other end of the room and let them guess the number.
- Then test with them and see if they were right.
- Vary the questions and repeat the procedure – how many steps are between you and me? How many steps are between you and the sides of the room?

SPATIAL AWARENESS



GROUNDING

Grounding helps children release muscle tension before a situation that may make them uncomfortable and tense.

Instruct the children to wear flat shoes or no shoes.

- Ask them to stand up and place both feet on the ground.
- Have them soften the knees.
- Instruct them to take a deep breath and exhale slowly.
- Focus their attention on the soles of their feet.
- Ask them to feel the contact with the surface.
- Instruct them to imagine that they are growing roots anchoring them in the ground.
- Take a moment to savor the sensation.

SPATIAL AWARENESS



HOW BIG OR SMALL?

This exercise helps children understand their size and how it changes with their movement. It also creates awareness of muscle tension and of how muscles feel when relaxed.

Instruct the children to stand on the floor.

- Ask them to notice how much space they take up when they stand normally.
- Have them notice the same when they make themselves as big as possible and then as small as possible.
- Repeat the exercise varying the speed: Ask them to make themselves as big as possible but as slowly as they can or to make themselves as small as possible as fast as they can.

SPATIAL AWARENESS



TIME MANAGEMENT

This exercise helps children prioritize their time and tasks through symbolic objects of pebbles, stones and a jar.

Explain that the stones represent important obligations such as schoolwork and family time and the pebbles less important undertakings like watching TV. The jar represents the available time in a day.

- Ask the children to fill their jars to capacity so that all the big stones are used up first.
- Explain that the jar should contain both big stones and little pebbles..
- Discuss what might be important obligations and less important undertakings.
- Explain that the jar should be filled to its maximum and contain stones as well as pebbles – but that all the stones need to be in the jar.
- Ask what happens when the jar is so full of small pebbles that there is no room left for the big stones.
- Explain that in life we need to focus on our stones/important obligations first and then the pebbles/less important undertakings to make sure we can manage time.

SPATIAL AWARENESS



FUN WITH BALLOONS

This exercise helps children understand spaces and find a moment of concentration and playfulness using balloons that are cheap and easy to store.

Instruct the children to blow up their balloons.

- Show them how to make noises by letting air out of the balloons.
- Show them how to tie the balloons and balance them with their fingers and the back of their hands.
- Let them blow the balloon in different directions while keeping it in the air.
- Let them pair up and try to cooperate to keep the balloon from touching the ground without using their hands.

MOVEMENT



MIRRORING

This exercise aims to increase children's self-awareness and the awareness of others through mirroring.

Group the children in pairs with each pair facing one another.

- Select one child as the leader and the other as the mirror in each pair (these roles should later be swapped).
- Tell the child who is assigned as a mirror to try to copy every movement the leader makes.
- Tell the leader to start moving slowly.
- Tell the leader to speed up their movements and to gradually make the mirroring increasingly challenging.

MOVEMENT



FRUIT PICKING

This exercise aims to help children direct attention to parts of their body and releases muscle tension through stretching.

Help the children set the scene and guide them through the exercise.

- Tell them to imagine that they are going to pick some fruit today.
- Tell them they are standing underneath a huge tree with lovely, ripe apples [or other fruit] hanging from it. But the branches are quite high.
- Tell them to stretch their right arm and try and pick the fruit – letting their left heel leave the ground and hold this position for 10 seconds.
- Tell them to stretch their left arm and try and pick the fruit – letting their right heel leave the ground and hold this position for 10 seconds.
- Tell them they have dropped a fruit and need to bend down with both arms to pick it up and put it in their baskets.
- End the exercise by telling them to tilt their body forward from the hips, allowing their arms to dangle down their body. Let them hold this position for 10 seconds.

You can repeat the same instructions once more or modify them.

MOVEMENT



GUESS ANIMALS

This exercise seeks to empower children and make them joyful through imitating the sounds and behaviours of animals.

Instruct the children to draw their favourite animal on a piece of paper or cardboard – try to make sure there is diversity and no more than ten different species.

- Collect the drawings and place them in a bag.
- Have the children stand in a circle and pass the bag allowing each to pick one drawing without showing it to the others.
- Let the children take turns to mime the movements and imitate the sounds of their respective animal.
- Let the other children guess the name of the animal.
- Ask the children to form a line with the smallest animal to the left and the biggest to the right.
- When everyone is standing in a row, ask the participants one by one to say their “animals” name out loud and imitate their sounds.

MOVEMENT



RAINBOW COLOURS

This exercise uses colours to stimulate hope and joy in children. The rainbow is the perfect illustration of the full spectrum of colours.

Ask the children to find objects or items that match all the colours of the rainbow in their immediate surroundings - in the room or outside nearby.

- Remind them if needed that the rainbow colours are: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.
- You can either tell them to bring the objects with them or write them down (depending on the practicalities e.g., violet scarf, blue coloured wall, green tree, yellow sun).

INNER RESOURCES



I HAVE, I AM, I CAN, I WILL

This exercise aims to train the inner strength of children faced with difficult decisions or situations which seem to have no clear, right option or way forward. It can change their perspective and help them to find new possibilities. Children need to be able to read and write to do this exercise.

Instruct the children to open their palm and fingers wide. Place their hand on a piece of paper and trace the outline of their hand and fingers.

- Tell them to write I HAVE on one finger and list the names of people, places, animals, or anything else they can rely on for support.
- Tell them to write I AM on another finger and list the things they are proud of.
- Tell them to write I CAN on the next finger and list the skills, abilities and activities they engage in.
- Tell them to write I WILL on the next finger and list the things they will do to bring comfort to themselves when times are hard.
- Instruct them to give themselves a thumbs up at the end of the exercise.

INNER RESOURCES



BE KIND

This exercise uses acts of kindness as a way to reverse the effect of stress for children.

The body responds in completely opposite ways to stress and to kindness. When stressed, the heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, digestion is disturbed and the immune system suffers, making it easier to catch colds and other inflammations.

Kindness has the beneficial effects of lowering blood pressure, slowing the heartbeat, making digestion easier and decreasing the likelihood of catching colds. Kindness, such as helping another person, also makes us more open to others and even helps us recover after a distressing event.

Instruct the children to sit in a circle facing each other and let them respond to the following questions one by one.

- What support do you give to others?
- What kind act would you like to do today?
- What kind act would you like to receive from someone?
- What kind or compassionate words would you tell yourself to remember the things you are good at and the support you give others?

INNER RESOURCES



COAT OF ARMS

This exercise helps children to see the positive things that form their identity and make them happy.

Show the children a copy of your country's coat of arms and use it as an example of how a coat of arms reflects key aspects of your country.

- Hand out blank copies of the coat of arms and ask the children to complete their own personal coat of arms.
- Tell them that each section should be filled in with pictures, words and a motto or mission statement in the ribbon at the base of the shield.
- Tell them it should include pictures or words reflecting the most important things in their lives, such as what they are good at, what they feel strongly about and who they want to become as individuals.
- Once they have finished, have the children share their coat of arms and what it says about them.

INNER RESOURCES



WELL-BEING FLOWER

This exercise focuses on the inner and outer resources of children so they can be aware of them and rely on them in times of difficulty. Younger children will need to be guided and the categories explained.

Begin the exercise by showing the children how to draw a seven-petal flower and explain to them that it is called the Well-Being Flower.

- Tell them to colour the petals of the flower in their favourite colour(s).
- Help them to label each petal with the following seven words: Material (belongings), Social (friends/ family), Spiritual (beliefs), Cultural (surroundings), Mental (mind), Emotional (feelings) and Biological (health/ body).
- Explain to them how the petals of the flower represent the areas of well-being. They represent the aspects of their lives that help them feel healthy and happy.
- Reflect with them and help them write down examples of things, people or activities under each of the seven areas.
- Then tell them that the result is their personal Well-Being Flower.

RELAXATION



LEFT AND RIGHT - SLEEP TIGHT

This exercise aims to activate children's parasympathetic nervous system responsible for resting. The activity may need to be repeated over multiple nights before having an effect – younger children will need to be guided in this exercise.

Instruct the child or a group of children ready for bed, to lay on their back without using a pillow.

- Tell them to let their face point straight at the ceiling and to keep their eyes open.
- Tell them to move their eyes as far left as they can without moving their head and count to 60. It is likely that their body will automatically do one of three things: swallow, yawn or sigh.
- Tell them to look at the ceiling again and count to 10.
- Tell them to move their eyes as far right as they can without moving their head and count to 60. It is likely that their body will automatically do one of three things: swallow, yawn or sigh.
- If they perform these actions (swallow, yawn or sigh) it means they have successfully activated their parasympathetic nervous system which will help them relax and fall asleep.

RELAXATION



STIMULATE THE FINGERS

This exercise focuses on stimulating the closely spaced sensory cells in children's faces, hands (especially in the fingertips), arms and feet. Children need to have these senses stimulated to develop.

Instruct the children to hold both hands in front of them.

- Tell them to touch their little fingers with their thumbs and press gently when they touch.
- Ask them to repeat this with the other fingers, touching each of their fingers to their thumb one by one.
- Have them repeat the exercise in reverse, beginning with their index finger and ending with the little finger.
- Tell them to check how quickly their fingers touch their thumb on each hand and see if they can be faster with a bit of practice.

RELAXATION



BLOW SOAP BUBBLES

This exercise helps calm children in distress using the act of blowing soap bubbles to ease their mind. Bubble blowing is associated with fun activities, and it keeps the child's attention on positivity rather than worries and uncertainty.

Show the children how to blow soap bubbles.

- Tell them to fill their lungs and blow the bubbles as far as they can.
- Have the children notice how it feels as their lungs empty and fill with air effortlessly.

The breathing exercise can be varied in different ways e.g. blowing through a straw into a glass of liquid or blowing up a balloon.

RELAXATION



BREATHE IN A COLOUR YOU LIKE

This exercise shows children an easy way to calm themselves if anxious or worried through a breathing exercise combined with a mental image. The exercise uses imaginary breathing in of “positive” colours and breathing out of “unpleasant” colours.

Start by instructing the children to take a deep breath and slowly breathe out.

- Tell them to imagine breathing in a favourite or pleasant colour and to let it fill their lungs.
- Have the children then breathe out their least favourite or unpleasant colour. Tell the children to notice how their body feels as they exhale.

Continue the exercise as long as it helps the children relax.

SENSORIAL AND BODY AWARENESS



FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE

The following exercise aims to help children who have been exposed to stressful experiences that remain in the mind. This exercise helps children get immediate relief, grounds them or directs their attention to the here and now. Younger children will need to be guided in this exercise.

Instruct the children to stand, sit or lie with their eyes open.

- Tell them to find five things in the immediate surroundings that they can see. Let them say out loud what they are and use concrete words to describe them.
- Tell them to find four sounds in the immediate surroundings that they can hear. Let them say out loud what they are and use concrete words to describe how they sound.
- Tell them to find three things in the immediate surroundings that they can touch/ are touching. Let them say out loud what they are and use concrete words to describe the feeling.
- Find two things in the immediate surroundings that they can smell. Let them say out loud what they are and use concrete words to describe their smell.
- Find one thing in the immediate surroundings that they can taste. Let them say out loud what it is and use concrete words to describe the taste.

SENSORIAL AND BODY AWARENESS



ANGER MANAGEMENT

This exercise focuses on helping children manage their anger.

Explain to the children that anger is a common, natural, yet powerful emotion that can override reasoning and other feelings and prevent good sleep. Younger children will need to be guided in this exercise.

- Tell the children that when they are awake and overpowered by anger it is important to acknowledge that it is a feeling that will pass and can be controlled. Have the children hang their arms relaxed by their sides with open hands and palms showing. Help the children calm their breathing.
- Tell them that many children feeling anger clench their hands into tight fists when falling asleep. This leaves the body tense and fatigued in the morning. Tell the children that when falling asleep, they should make sure their palms are open. It will help their hands, arms and shoulders relax and give them healthier and happier sleep.

SENSORIAL AND BODY AWARENESS



SENSORIAL AWAKENING

This exercise aims to release oxytocin, which is a feel-good brain chemical and hormone that helps children stay calm and collected. A release of oxytocin also makes children feel connected to others. This exercise stimulates the skin with its myriads of sensorial nerves - children will need to be guided in this exercise.

Instruct the children to hold a wooden pencil or a thin bamboo stick.

- Tell them to take the pencil or stick in one hand and slowly trace the outline of the other hand. Have them glide the pencil or stick over their fingers, palm, all the way around their hand and around the wrist.
- After a few minutes, have them notice how their hand feels.
- Tell them to repeat the exercise on their other hand.
- After a few minutes ask them if they feel a tingling sensation in their hands and to notice how their shoulders are lowering and feel more relaxed.

SENSORIAL AND BODY AWARENESS



BACK MASSAGE WITH TENNIS BALLS

This exercise aims to awaken the children's senses, increase their body awareness and help their muscles relax. The exercise should be done only by family members, caregivers or people with an established relationship of trust with the child(ren).

Instruct the children to lie face down on a mat.

- Place a tennis ball on the lower back of the child.
- Gently roll the tennis ball over the back of the child along the muscles on each side of the spine – avoid direct touch.
- Continue the movement along the sides of the back and around the shoulder blades.
- Children can be asked to name the body part that is being touched by the ball, if the body awareness needs stimulation.
- Experiment with speed and pressure and ask the children: What feels good? What feels less good?

THINKING



WATER FESTIVAL

This exercise encourages children to interact with water as a metaphor for gratitude. The traditional Buddhist Water Festival is celebrated across Southeast Asia. It is founded upon the act of showing gratitude across generations.

Tell the children how gratitude is a very powerful feeling that helps them cope with difficulties. Let them know focusing on what we are grateful for has a positive impact on our physical and mental health.

Instruct the children to think of what they are grateful for as they interact with water in the following actions.

- When they are pouring water between cups/ buckets .
- When they are jumping in puddles.
- When they are floating or swimming.

THINKING



THOUGHTS IN A BOX

This exercise helps children when difficult or stressful thoughts invade their minds – leaving them feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Younger children will need to be guided in this exercise.

Instruct them to use their imagination to create a beautiful and sturdy box.

- Tell them they have the freedom to visualize the box with as many beautiful colours, materials and decorations they would like.
- Tell them to supply the box with a solid lock.
- Tell them to place every intrusive thought into the box and lock the box securely.

Visualizing the box can help us distinguish the uninvited thoughts from our head. It is a simple exercise for children as well, as it helps us keep our mind clear in chaotic times.

THINKING



MANAGING CLIMATE ANXIETY

This exercise aims at helping children experiencing climate anxiety that can make them feel dispirited, powerless and without a clue about what to do.

Explain that when they are anxious about climate change, identifying and acknowledging what they are feeling makes it easier to understand what is happening to them and find ways to feel they have agency and power. The Ikigai method used in Japan can be a helpful frame. Younger children will need to be guided in this exercise.

- Tell them to draw four circles.
- Have them write what they love in the first circle (Passion).
- Ask them to write what the world needs in the second circle (Mission).
- Tell them to write in the third circle what they are good at (Skills).
- In the fourth and final circle, tell the children to write how they can make a difference (Action e.g. planting seeds in the garden).

THINKING



IF I WERE

This exercise aims to help children use imagination and metaphors to understand themselves, reflect and dream.

Instruct the children to sit in a circle and respond to the following questions one by one. Help them reflect on the answers.

- If I were a bird, I would.....
- If I were strong, I would
- If I were rich, I would buy
- If I were an adult, I would
- If I were superman/ superwoman, I would
- If I were an invisible person, I would
- If I could be any person in the world, I would be
- If I could have one dream come true, it would be.....