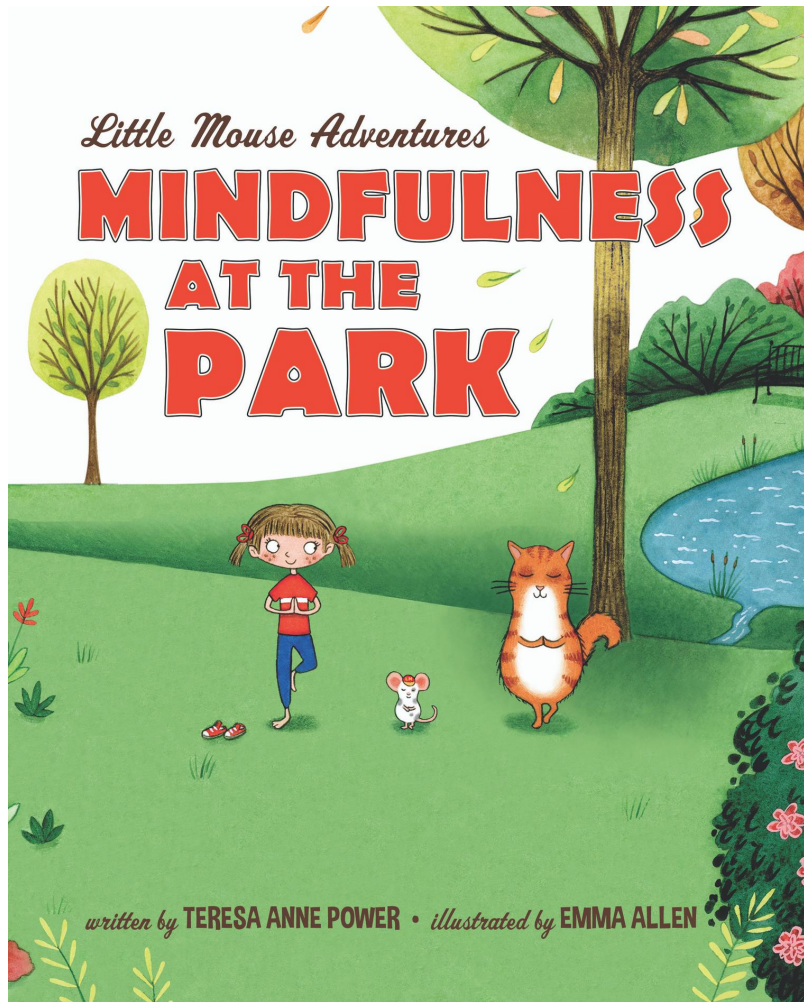


5 MINDFULNESS EXERCISES FOR CHILDREN



Little Mouse Adventures: *Mindfulness at the Park*

Companion Guide for Families, Schools, and Educators

WRITTEN BY TERESA ANNE POWER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMMA ALLEN

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Make Like a Tree

In ***Mindfulness at the Park***, the McDoodle family practice tree posture together on a windy day at the park. Little Mouse and Mr. Opus follow along, learning to calm their minds and bodies.

As a family or at school, invite children to try tree pose. Explain how their bodies are strong and growing, like trees. Their breath is like the wind as it flows in and out. Encourage them to balance in this pose while gently inhaling and exhaling through the nose. If younger children have trouble balancing, suggest that they hold your hand or the edge of a chair or desk. They can even try to close their eyes while in this pose, which takes a lot of balance and concentration. Another balance tip: Explain how a tree stands tall, but its branches can still sway side to side.



Kids can use their imagination while in tree pose. Here are some questions to ask children while they are in the pose to help them not only hold the posture for longer, but also to become more mindful in their thinking.

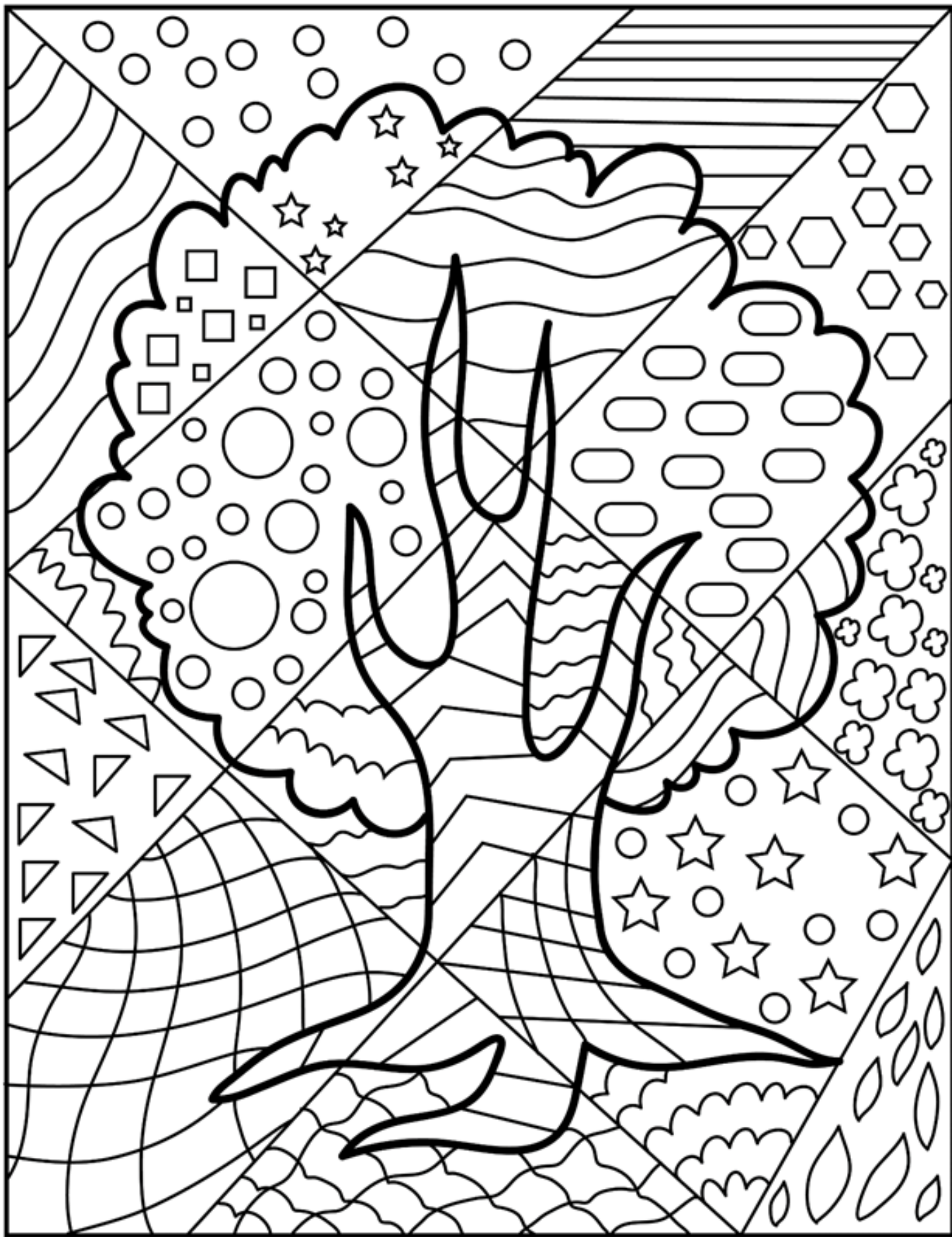
- Imagine you are a sturdy tree. What kind of tree are you? An oak tree? Apple tree? Fir tree? Maple tree?
- Does your tree have leaves? What color are they?
- Imagine your tree trunk. Is the bark rough or smooth?
- Imagine you are outside in a park, just like the McDoodle family, Little Mouse and Mr. Opus. What sounds do you hear? The leaves rustling in the trees? A dog barking? A bird chirping? A car horn?

Mindful Coloring

Have children sit at their school desks or at a table at home. Have some crayons or colored pencils available and explain that they are going to play a mindful coloring game. Hand out the tree coloring page (on the next page) and set a timer for 5 minutes to start. (You can eventually go up to 15 minutes doing this exercise.) Mindful coloring is a simple activity to help kids step back from the day to day barrage of media and technology and helps to reduce stress and anxiety. Here are some tips to help children be mindful as they are coloring.



- Have the kids try to continue their coloring until the timer goes off.
- Ask them to pay attention to their breathing. It will probably become slower and deeper.
- Encourage kids to try not to do anything except be in the present moment, paying attention to the design, their choice of colors, and the process of coloring.
- Explain that if they hear anything such as music or another noise, or smell anything such as food cooking, to just observe it without reacting.



Mindful Walking

Just like Little Mouse in *Mindfulness in the Park*, kids can enjoy a nature walk at a local park or even just going outside at school or at home. Ask kids if they feel like Mr. Opus, who strolls slowly on his walk, or if they feel more like Tammy McDoodle as she skips along.



This is a great introduction to mindfulness for kids, teaching them to be in the present moment and to focus on their various senses.

Can they **feel** the ground under their feet as they walk? Do they **smell** the grass and feel the wind like Little Mouse? Or do they smell anything else? Food cooking? What do they **hear**? Birds chirping, the rustle of a kite flying? Dogs barking? What do they **see**? Insects, trees, footprints of animals, clouds? Shadows from the sun?

Mindful Focus

Searching for words in a word search puzzle helps kids develop their literary skills, and alphabet recognition, as well as concentration and focus. While the kids search for the words in this puzzle (MINDFUL, YOGA, BREATHE, CALM), engage them in a conversation about how they can use mindfulness and yoga to breathe and stay calm. Ask them if they ever get scared like Little Mouse did when he saw the dog in the park? See if they can imagine breathing deeply when in a scary situation to stay calm. Often when we are in a calmer space, we can manage our emotions better.

b	g	x	g	r	x	y	o	g	a
y	r	x	q	v	b	n	m	r	t
c	k	e	t	a	n	d	m	r	o
g	a	c	a	w	b	y	i	t	i
p	i	l	z	t	w	a	n	f	o
l	u	d	m	j	h	b	d	p	b
i	w	y	i	j	f	e	f	k	t
d	f	v	i	w	m	f	u	d	s
u	x	u	b	j	j	p	l	i	y
a	g	v	f	h	c	j	f	i	r

Mindful
Yoga

Breathe
Calm

Breathing Game

Teach kids how to calm their minds and bodies through a simple breathing exercise which Mrs. McDoodle teaches to Tammy in ***Mindfulness at the Park.***



Have children sit at their desks, if at school, or in a quiet space at home. Instruct them to take a deep breath through their nose, count to five, and then breathe out slowly. They can have their eyes open or closed, and this exercise can be done at any time when kids feel overwhelmed or stressed. Repeat this breathing several times, and have kids try to empty their minds of all thoughts except for focusing on the flow of their breath.