



MINDFUL COLOURING



MATERIALS: Oxfam Australia’s “Six Goals to Change the World” colouring sheets, coloured pencils, textas or crayons, Mindful Colouring Script.

AGE RANGE: This activity is designed for anyone aged 7 and over.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Mindfulness is fast becoming a well-recognised and powerful practise for bringing a sense of focus, productivity and calm into the classroom. Mindfulness practise can involve formal meditation or informal practises where students are invited to connect to tasks mindfully via their senses.

Research shows that children in both primary and secondary school who practise mindfulness regularly are more focused, less anxious and stressed, and exhibit greater levels of wellbeing.¹

Oxfam Australia has developed a set of six colouring sheets about the organisation’s “Six Goals to Change the World.” These colouring sheets are designed to raise awareness and spark conversations around the human rights principles Oxfam uses to tackle poverty and inequality around the world.

The following activity is an informal mindfulness activity involving colouring. Mindful colouring has taken off in the adult world, with mindful colouring books being used for stress reduction in workplaces around the world.

Mindful colouring is also gaining momentum in schools, with a recent study finding it significantly decreased test anxiety in students.²

Mindful Tip: Use this activity after lunch to help settle students to refocus for the afternoon, to consolidate learning between tasks, or as a stress reduction technique prior to tests, assessments or exams.

¹ Zenner, C., Herrnleben-Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014). Mindfulness-based interventions in schools-A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 603.

² Carsley, D. Heath N. & Fajnerova S. (2015). Effectiveness of a Classroom Mindfulness Coloring Activity for Test Anxiety in Children. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 31(3), 239-255.





INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

STEP 1: Explain to students that you will be leading them through a special colouring activity that may be slightly different to other times they have coloured.

STEP 2: Start by explaining mindfulness. A useful way to explain mindfulness to students is that **it is like 'tuning in' to what you are doing**, instead of 'tuning out'.

You might like to ask students to generate some examples of times when they are tuned out, or times when their body is in one place, but their mind is somewhere else - i.e. daydreaming during class.

Follow this by asking what the effects of this are. For example, they may miss out on important information, get lost in worry, make more mistakes, take longer to do things, miss out on fully experiencing things, or come across as rude in conversations.

Explain that **mindfulness is the opposite of this. It is when our mind and body are together, connected in the present moment.**

Further, mindfulness is something you get better at *with practice* – it's **like ninja training for your mind**. The more you practise, the better you get at training your attention to be where you want it to be.

STEP 3: Print out and give one of Oxfam's "Six Goals to Change the World" colouring sheets to each student.

STEP 4: Use the Mindful Colouring Script on the following page to guide your mindful colouring activity. This is a just guide – feel free to use your own words!

STEP 5: Use the below questions to have a short discussion with your students after the activity is over.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What did you tune into and notice?
- When you noticed your mind wandering, could you bring it back to the feel of your pen or the image on the page?
- Was this different to other times you have coloured? How?
- Did any thoughts or feelings arise about your human rights goal?
- How important do you think this right is for everyone in the world?
- Do you have any questions about your human rights goal?
- How do you feel now?



Mindful Tip: This activity is best done with your students, so get creative and get colouring! This will help you to better guide the practise, i.e. you will know how long to pause between prompts, and it may give you a mini break too!





MINDFUL COLOURING SCRIPT (APPROX. 6-8 MINS)

This practise is designed to help you create some mental space and give you some time out from the busyness of the day. Think of it like a mini holiday for your head.

Start by tuning into how you feel in this moment. Notice your face, mouth, lips and tongue... Is there any tension there? Notice your shoulders... hands... and feet. Tune into your breath, is it high in the chest... or low in the belly? *(Pause)* If you like, take three full breaths in through the nose and out through the nose.

(Pause)

Now let go of the breath and bring your awareness to the page in front of you. Start by reading the title and caption at the bottom of the page. This is an important human rights goal. Notice any thoughts that arise while you read it.

Pick up your first colour and allow yourself to connect with the weight of the pen in your hand... Now feel the pen as it connects to the paper, and notice the amount of pressure required for the colour to flow onto the paper... Continue to colour mindfully in your own time...

(Pause)

Don't worry if your mind wanders and gets distracted, that's just what minds do. However, every time you realise you've tuned out to what you are doing, just tune back in to the feeling of the pen in your hand or what you can see on the page...

(Pause)

Notice if any judgements arise perhaps of your work, or of others. Perhaps label your thought "judging". Know that you can't stop your mind from judging – it's just what mind's do! However, you can notice when you are judging and decide whether you want to listen to the judgment, or wait for a more helpful thought to come along.

(Pause)

Notice if the mind gets caught up in planning, trying to plan what colour or part of the drawing is next. Maybe label your thought "planning" and then simply come back to seeing, or feeling. Does your pen make any sound as you colour? Perhaps tune into hearing too...

(Longer Pause)

If your mind wanders, don't resist this... as soon as you notice you are no longer tuning in to colouring, just bring your attention back... You might like to try to see the picture the way a little child who has never seen shapes or colour before may see it... with curiosity, like you have never seen anything like it before. This will help you to focus better on the activity...

(Longer Pause)

And as we start to come to the end of this activity, notice how you are feeling. Notice if you are having any thoughts such as "I'm not finished yet" or "I want to keep going". *(allow some time for students to finish)*... and now packing up the activity, noticing how you feel after that mini mind break.

Note: For younger kids, instead of labelling thoughts as judging and planning, invite them just to notice whenever they are thinking and maybe say "thinking" in their mind every time they notice they get distracted.

