

What's In Your Mind Today?
Teaching Notes



Written by Louise Bladen • Illustrated by Angela Perrini • Published by Little Steps Publishing

SYNOPSIS

No matter what kind of thoughts we have in our minds, there is a way to let them all go. A fun and gentle first guide to mindfulness and de-stressing, for children and adults alike. This is the perfect book to promote mental health awareness and help children understand their emotions. It also provides a useful introduction to key meditation techniques.

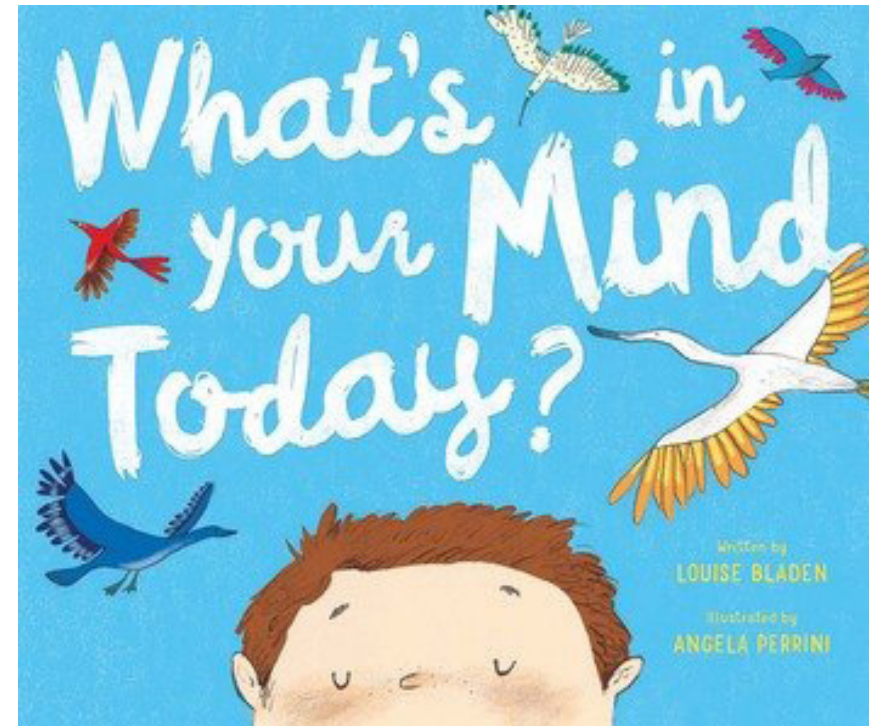
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As a classical pianist, Louise found that during long practice sessions the necessary mental focus gave her relief from emotional stress. Later, she discovered that a similar but more profound state of peace and calm could be cultivated through meditation and mindfulness, and swapped her piano stool for a meditation cushion! After years of teaching primary classroom music, she realised that there is a great need for children to learn some tools to help them de-stress and better cope with busy lives.

Beginning with the simple practice of breathing, Louise introduced some meditation activities into her classes and discovered that children are quite capable of looking into their minds and really enjoy the process of cultivating a calm, peaceful space within. When Louise isn't sitting on her meditation cushion looking at her mind, she loves painting in watercolours, swimming, watching musicals and walking her four-legged canine friends Maggie the Hairy and Harry the Smooth, accompanied by her two-legged husband John.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Angela was born in Putignano, Italy. She is a freelance illustrator with a degree in Art History and Cultural Heritage. She is fascinated by historical fables and fairy-tales, and loves bringing stories to life.



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Activity 1 Understanding Emotions

Here are some pictures from the book. Look at each characters' face carefully. Ask the children what the characters from the story might be feeling.



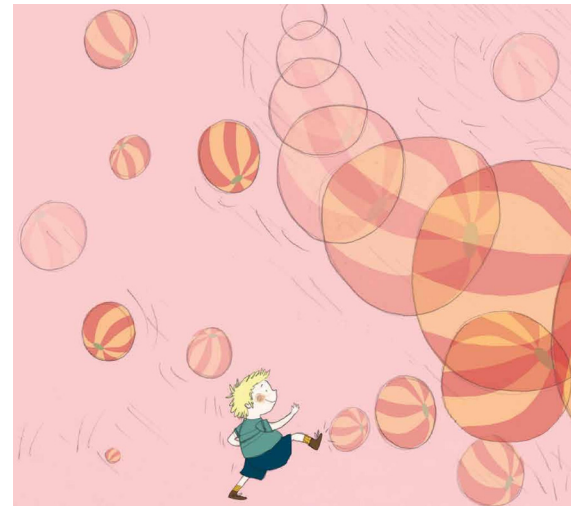
Picture 1



Picture 3



Picture 2



Picture 4

After you've labelled the emotions, ask the children what makes them happy or sad or angry. You can start off by giving some of your own examples. This exercise will allow children to articulate their emotions as well as identify the situations in which they occur. This is a valuable first step in learning how to control these emotions and calm the mind.

Activity 2 Mindfulness

Now that you've discussed various emotions with the class, you can use this activity to help them cope with these feelings. Let's start off with a guided meditation practice called 'the balloon'. This is a very simple breathing exercise and you've already seen it at the beginning of the story!

The Balloon

1. Imagine your stomach is a balloon. (Sometimes it helps to tell the children to imagine that the balloon is their favourite colour.)
2. Now breathe in to make the balloon bigger.
3. Hold the balloon at its full size for just a count of three.
4. Breathe out and imagine the balloon shrinking back down.

This easy exercise is the perfect way to show children how to breathe into their stomach, rather than the quicker and shallower 'chest' breaths. Breathing exercises can take a child's mind off a situation that makes them anxious and brings their mind back under control.



Molly's thoughts are butterflies.
They *flit* and *flutter*
all over the sky.

She can't catch them,
she's too slow.
where do they come from,
where do they go?

Activity 3 Drawing

Draw the things that make you happy in the space below. For example, you could draw your family and friends or your pet or sunshine or sweets or anything else that makes you happy!

