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MEDITATION IN A BOTTLE

Create a personalized bottle filled with slow-moving glitter — and a heavy dose of calm.





Meditation in a Bottle

—
Create a personalized bottle
filled with slow-moving glitter —
and a heavy dose of calm.

About the Activity

Between school, homework, and activities, life can be busy and may sometimes feel overwhelming. That's why it can be good to pause, take a deep breath, and relax our minds and bodies – or in other words, to meditate. Meditation helps reduce stress and can get you in the right mindset to focus – which can be helpful at home and at school. In this activity, you will make your own meditation bottle as a tool to help make meditation a habit.



Supplies

**These simple materials
will get you started.**

- Plastic bottle with cap
- Clear glue or glitter glue
- Glitter – use multiple colors and sizes for an interesting bottle
- Hot Water
- Spoon
- Large liquid measuring cup
- Funnel
- Hot glue gun (optional)

Grades: 6-12

Topic: Mental Health, Mindfulness

Time: 30 minutes





Activity Steps

Follow these activity steps to create your own meditation bottle and practice.

Ready Your Bottle

If there is a label on your plastic bottle, remove it. Part of meditation is learning to focus your attention, and having a clear, clean bottle will help you to do that. Take note of how many ounces your bottle holds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Meditation focuses on interactions between our brain, mind, and body. It has been around for thousands of years and began in ancient India as a way to understand the meaning of life.

Create Your Meditation Mixture

This next step involves creating a mixture for the inside of your bottle.

- 1 Heat up water in a tea kettle or microwave. It should be warm, but not boiling. Have an adult help you heat up the water, then pour it into your liquid measuring cup. You need to add one less ounce of water than your bottle will hold.
- 2 Add your glue to the hot water and stir until it dissolves. You can choose how much glue to add.

Tip: The more glue you add, the slower the contents of your meditation bottle will move. We recommend adding between a half bottle to a full bottle of glue.

Add Your Elements

Now it's time to create your focal point using your bottle, glue mixture, and glitter.

- 1 Use the funnel to pour enough water and glue mixture into your bottle to just cover the bottom. This will prevent all your glitter from sticking to the bottom of the bottle.
- 2 Add your glitter to the bottle. You can use as much or as little as you would like. Using multiple colors and sizes of glitter will make your bottle more interesting. You can even add large sequins or beads for extra decoration.
- 3 Fill the bottle with the water-glue mixture. There may be some extra mixture left. Feel free to discard it.
- 4 **Optional:** With the help of an adult, hot glue the cap onto your bottle to prevent spilling.

Set Your Practice

Now, it's time to meditate. Practicing meditation can help us stay calm, reduce stress, and improve our overall well-being. In fact, many medical studies have shown that meditation can help reduce high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, and chronic stress.

- 1 Find a quiet location where you can sit comfortably.
- 2 Shake your bottle and set it in front of you.
- 3 Use your meditation bottle as a timer to help you relax and focus.



Activity Steps

(continued...)

- 4 As you watch the glitter settle, focus on your breath by **following these steps**:
- Breathe in through your nose while slowly counting to three.
 - Hold your breath while slowly counting to four.
 - Exhale through your mouth while slowly counting to five.
 - Repeat this breathing exercise until all the glitter has settled to the bottom of your bottle.

Tip: You may feel a bit silly at first, but part of meditation is keeping an open mind while you get used to it.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most meditation practices follow the four basic elements we have reviewed: quiet location, comfortable posture, focused attention, and an open attitude.

Set Your Mantra

Now that your body is relaxed, shake your bottle again.

- 1 This time, instead of focusing on your breath while you watch your bottle, make a mental list of positive things about yourself.

Here are some examples:

- What do you like about yourself?
 - What skills have you mastered?
 - What are your dreams for the future?
- 2 Remind yourself that you are capable, strong, and loved. You can also come up with a mantra for yourself.

What's a mantra?

A mantra is a word or phrase that you focus on or repeat to yourself during meditation. You can say it aloud or in your head. Using a mantra can help boost your self-confidence or provide encouragement.

Here are a few examples to try:

- "I think I can."
- "Today is a good day."
- "Happy and healthy."

This type of practice is called transcendental meditation.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are different types of meditation, including transcendental meditation, which we just tried. Yoga is a popular type of meditation and exercise. Yoga uses controlled poses and breathing techniques to help gain strength, flexibility, and concentration. Tai Chi is a type of martial art from China that is used for meditation. It involves slow, graceful movements and deep breathing.



Test Your Knowledge

See how much you've learned about meditation.

QUESTION 1

Meditation focuses on the interactions between our:

- a. Brain, mind, and body
- b. Body and soul
- c. Health and attitude
- d. Brain, heart, and health

QUESTION 2

A word or phrase that you repeat or focus on during meditation is called:

- a. Yoga
- b. Mantra
- c. Tai Chi
- d. Positive self-talk

QUESTION 3

What country do historians believe is the birthplace of meditation?

- a. USA
- b. China
- c. India
- d. Japan

QUESTION 4

Which type of meditation is also a form of martial arts?

- a. Yoga
- b. Transcendental meditation
- c. Heart-centered meditation
- d. Tai Chi

QUESTION 5

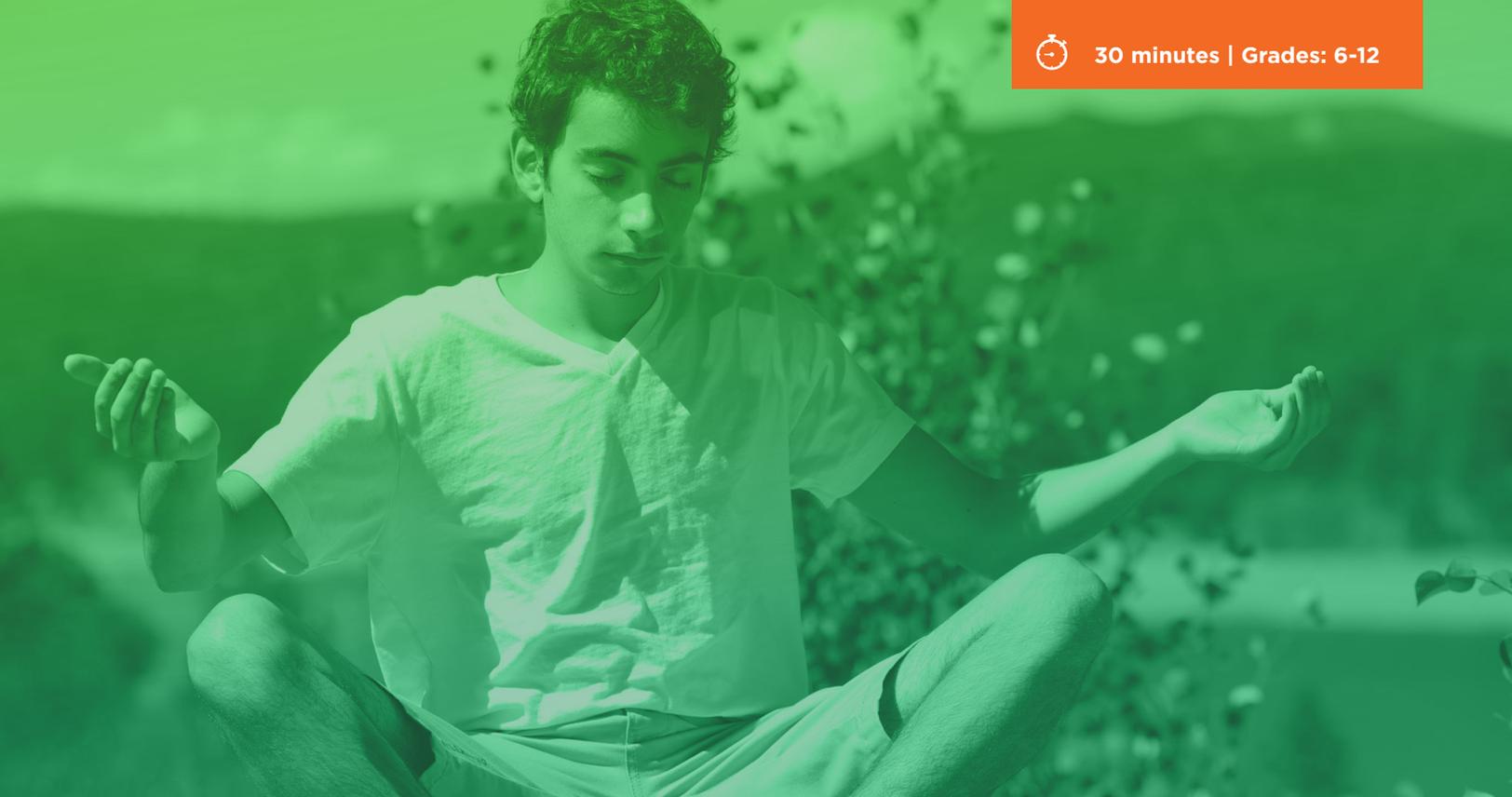
Which of the following is **NOT** one of the four basic elements of meditation?

- a. Quiet environment
- b. Focused attention
- c. Mantra
- d. Open attitude

Reflection Questions

Questions to deepen wonder and understanding

- How did you feel when using your meditation bottle to focus your attention and breathe?
- What different types of meditation do you know about? Which type would you like to try?
- How can meditation help improve your health?



Investigate & Explore

Take what you've learned to the next level to learn more and explore the possibilities.

Meditation can help improve our health and happiness, and making it a daily habit is one step you can take to create a healthier you!

Daily habits are actions that we do every day to make ourselves better. Things like brushing our teeth, washing our hands, and eating fruits and vegetables are daily habits that we learn as a toddler to keep us healthy. For an action to become a habit, you have to do it over and over again each day.

You can build a habit of meditation by using your meditation bottle for a few minutes every day. Try picking a specific time, like when you wake up or right before you go to bed. This will help you remember to meditate, and soon it will become a habit!

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BUILDING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

Friendship is worth the work! Learn how to maintain friendships
with the people who matter to you.





Building Healthy Friendships

—
Friendship is worth the work!
Learn how to maintain friendships
with the people who matter to you.

About the Activity

Making connections with other people is an important part of your emotional well-being, no matter your age. Friendships help us to feel connected, and when friendships don't last, we can feel lost or disconnected from our community. This activity will encourage you to reach out to others and help you to build safe and healthy friendships.



Supplies

These simple materials will get you started.

- Paper or Notecards
- Envelopes
- Stamps
- A writing utensil: pen, pencil, colored pencils, or markers
- Addresses of friends and family
- A favorite soft item (a pillow, sweatshirt, stuffed animal, blanket, etc.)
- Your favorite music
- Any social media that connects you to others

Grades: 6-12

Topic: Mental Health, Mindfulness

Time: 30-45 minutes



Before We Begin

What defines a healthy relationship?

According to youth.gov, a healthy relationship (friendship or romantic) is one where respect is shown. An unhealthy relationship is one where another person attempts to control and use power physically, sexually, or emotionally.

The characteristics of a healthy relationship include: mutual respect, trust, honesty, compromise, individuality, anger control, good communication, problem solving, fighting fair, understanding, self-confidence, non-sexual touch, lack of pressure to behave a certain way, and encouragement.

The characteristics of an unhealthy relationship may include: control, hostility, lying, cheating, disrespect, dependence, intimidation, separation from loved ones, physical violence, and sexual violence.

Activity Steps

Follow these steps to work on honing your relationships.

Relax and Reflect

Grab your soft item and find a place to relax. Turn on your favorite music while holding or hugging that soft item, and take 3-5 minutes to reflect on the following statement: "I am important enough to be loved and to show love to others." Continue to hug your item while you work through your reflection.

DID YOU KNOW?

Plants and animals have organic substances in their bodies called hormones, which regulate various processes in their bodies. For humans, hugging is important because it releases the hormone oxytocin and the brain chemical dopamine — both of which are linked to pleasure and happiness.

Hugging also directly impacts cortisol levels, which is our fight or flight hormone. It's also your body's main stress hormone, working with certain parts of your brain to control your mood and motivation.

So how often should you practice hugging?

It is recommended that we receive:

- Eight 10-second hugs a day for maintenance
- 12 hugs a day for growth
- At least 18 hugs a day for optimal mental health.

Important Tip: Before you hug someone, make sure to ask for and receive their consent. Asking for hugs will also encourage you to build and deepen personal connections. More on the importance of this in the following steps.

Create Your Heart Chart

Connection looks different in every relationship. Sometimes you have a connection with another person due to chemistry – meaning you may just “click” with one another. Sometimes connections may stem from other types of interaction. Maybe you work together, are in class together, or share a common interest.

In the following steps, we are going to explore our connections with the important people in our lives:

- 1 To start, using your writing utensils and your sheet of paper, draw a large heart that takes up most of the space on your piece of paper.
- 2 Inside the left side of the heart you drew, write the word “people.”
- 3 Inside the right side of the heart you drew, write the word “peace.”
- 4 Inside the heart that you drew, write “I am loved,” “You are loved,” or any expression that reminds you of how important you are.



Activity Steps

(continued...)

Consider Your Connections

Think about five people who are important to you. These can be people who you see on a regular basis, but you can explore other types of relationships, too. You may want to pick a person who you were once close to but have since grown apart from.

Now complete the following:

- 1 Write the names of the five people you selected on the left side of your drawn heart.
- 2 Identify five activities that you like to do with people, and write them inside of the right side of your drawn heart.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Do you associate any of the activities on the right hand with the people listed on the left hand? How does this make you feel? Associations like this may help to release oxytocin, the hormone that promotes feeling of contentment, reduces stress, and promotes bonding.

Care for Your Connections

Your brain development thrives on connection. But not all connections have to be in person or verbal – we also communicate through nonverbal signals. Social media is one modern form of nonverbal communication. Writing letters can be another.

This next part of the activity will allow us to build connections as we work on our nonverbal communication.

To start, take out the paper, notecards, and envelopes. Write a note to each of the 5 people you listed on the left hand. In the letter:

- 1 Tell them why they are important to you.
- 2 Share a cherished memory that you have with them.
- 3 Thank them for a specific attribute (kindness, silliness, joy, etc.) that they add to your life.
- 4 Invite them to join you in one of the activities you have identified..
- 5 Mail the letter via snail mail. A handwritten note shows that you have put care and consideration into this communication and are willing to dedicate extra time and effort to connecting with them.

Remember: You are your biggest barrier to connection. To build connection, you must be vulnerable and empathetic – that is, showing other people that you understand their feelings. This includes opening yourself to the chance of rejection, which can be uncomfortable. Letter writing like we just did is one way to become more comfortable with being vulnerable.



Test Your Knowledge

See how much you know about connecting with other people.

QUESTION 1

Cortisol does the following:

- a. Acts as a flight-or-fight response
- b. Controls mood
- c. Controls motivation
- d. All of the Above

QUESTION 2

True or false? Connection can happen in contrived situations.

- a. True
- b. False

QUESTION 3

Oxytocin promotes:

- c. Disconnection
- d. Contentment
- e. Anger
- f. Frustration

QUESTION 4

How many daily 10-second hugs are recommended for optimal mental health?

- g. 3
- h. 8
- i. 18
- j. 27

QUESTION 5

True or false? Communication can be verbal and nonverbal.

- a. True
- b. False

Reflection Questions

Questions to deepen wonder and understanding.

- What are your strengths in building connection with others? In situations you choose to be in? In situations that you don't choose?
- Where do you identify areas of growth in building connection with others? In situations where you choose? In situations you don't choose?
- How can others show you that they are invested in a connection with you?
- How many connections do you need to feel healthy? For some, it is 1 or 2 people; for others it is as many as they can gather. There is no set number of positive connections needed, but knowing what you need is helpful.
- When you are feeling lonely and disconnected from others, what coping strategies do you utilize? Identify if these are positive (building healthy habits) or negative (putting yourself or others down).



Investigate & Explore

Take what you've learned to the next level to learn more and explore the possibilities.

We fall out of touch with various friends at different times of our lives. That is natural. But just because you may not see them on a regular basis doesn't have to mean you can't still be close with them – sometimes maintaining a friendship takes work, and for the right ones, it is worth it.

Think about people who you used to be closer with than you are now. Think about what they meant to you at that time, and ask yourself if they could or should still be a valuable part of your life. Do they

bring out your best qualities? Do you feel good about yourself being around them? Do you think you make them feel good about themselves?

Take control of your own well-being. Pick up the phone. Write a letter. Send a text. Make a list of who you miss and start putting “Connect with _____” on your to-do list every day. It will make a difference in your mental health and overall well-being.

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LEARN HOW TO STRESS LESS

Identify what causes stress in your life, and learn healthy ways to handle it.





Learn How to Stress Less

—
Identify what causes stress in your life, and learn healthy ways to handle it.

About the Activity

Stress is a part of life, no matter your gender or your age – including teens. While it's normal to experience stress, it can be particularly tough on teens, who have busy schedules and face constant peer pressure. According to [4-H research](#), 45% of teens have dealt with excessive stress, and 64% fear that the stress of living through COVID-19 will have long-term implications for their mental health.

This activity will help you identify the sources and the impact of stress on your life and who you can count on to help you through it.

Supplies

These simple materials will get you started.

- 2 paper plates
- Markers (black, green, yellow, red)
- Printout of the Less Stress Plan worksheet
- Pen or pencil

Grades: 7-12

Topic: Healthy Living,
Social Emotional Learning,
Stress

Time: 30-45 minutes



Activity Steps

This activity will help you to identify different areas of stress in your life, and it will also help you learn some coping mechanisms to deal with that stress in a healthy, productive way.

Divide Your Plates Like a Pizza

Grab your soft item and find a place to relax. Turn Stress can be defined as any physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension caused by a situation or event. Stress does not discriminate. It can impact anyone — including yourself — during any time of day. The clocks we are about to make will help showcase this. Let's begin!

- 1 Using the black marker, divide each paper plate into 12 equal sections, similar to a clock. Each section should look like a slice of pie or pizza — yum!
- 2 Write AM in the middle of one plate and PM in the middle of the other plate.

Write Out Your Routine

Think about your schedule on a typical weekday. Label what you are doing on each section of your clocks. For example, you might put "SLEEP" in each section from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.

When you are finished, you will see your whole schedule for a day on your clocks. There should be no blank sections on either plate.

Color Code

Now think about each activity on your clock and your level of stress during each time. Color each section using the green, yellow, and red markers to correspond with how stressed the activity makes you feel.

- **Green:** no stress
- **Yellow:** can be stressful sometimes
- **Red:** very stressful

DID YOU KNOW?

Some types of stress can have a positive effect — in moderation, at least. For example, if you are stressed about an upcoming test, that may motivate you to study more. Studying more increases your likelihood of doing well on the test. The stress leads to an improved outcome. But we don't want to feel this way about school all the time — more about that later. Stress that promotes good outcomes like this is known as positive stress.

Stress can also help us to stay safe. When we hear the fire alarm go off, our body reacts with stress and tells us we need to leave the building to protect ourselves.





Activity Steps

(continued...)

Identify Your Chronic Stressors

Now that you've identified which parts of your day are the most stressful by color coding them, use the Less Stress Plan printout to help you learn more about those stressors.

- 1 Pick the top three stressful parts of your day to use on the worksheet.
- 2 Use the worksheet to ask yourself the following questions:
 - Why do these parts of your day cause you stress?
 - What can you do before these activities or times to prevent stress?
 - What can you do during these activities or parts of your day to reduce the stress?
 - What can someone else do for you to help during these stressful times?
- 3 Now identify who can you ask for help if this stressor becomes too overwhelming. Is there a parent, guardian, coach, or teacher that you can turn to for support?

Why is this exercise important?

Working through the Less Stress Plan can help identify areas of chronic stress, which is what we experience when we are stressed for prolonged periods of time. This type of stress negatively impacts our ability to do our daily activities, have healthy relationships, and thrive. According to **4-H research**, teens often cope with stress in unhealthy ways, including pretending to feel better to not worry anyone (67%), dealing with their feelings on their own (65%), and trying to ignore their feelings or spending more time on their own (45%).

Chronic stress also negatively impacts our overall health, such as increased risk for heart problems, obesity, and mental health disorders. Additionally, chronic stress can lead to physical symptoms, such as:

- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- High blood pressure
- Low energy
- Digestive problems

As you can see, identifying areas of chronic stress early on can help to promote both mental and physical well-being.

Confide in Your Helper

Having an adult you trust and can count on can help reduce your risk of chronic stress. After you've completed the Less Stress Plan worksheet, share it with the people you listed as helpers. Having a conversation about your daily stressors before you become overwhelmed is important so that your trusted adults and friends know how to help you.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you are experiencing chronic stress, you are not alone. According to the American Psychological Association, the stress levels of American teenagers are higher than those of their adult counterparts. In one APA survey, 27% of teens reported having extreme stress during the school year; 59% of teens in the survey reported that managing time to balance all activities was a significant stressor.



Test Your Knowledge

See how much you know about managing stress.

QUESTION 1

Stress that motivates you to improve or stay safe is called:

- a. Negative stress
- b. Chronic stress
- c. Positive stress
- d. Not really stress

QUESTION 2

Which is true about chronic stress?

- a. Chronic stress means you experience stress for a short period of time.
- b. Chronic stress positively impacts your health.
- c. Chronic stress puts you at increased risk for other health problems.
- d. Chronic stress helps you have healthy relationships.

QUESTION 3

True or false? Stress is only a mental health problem; it cannot affect your physical health.

- a. True
- b. False

QUESTION 4

Which is a protective factor against stress?

- a. Unbalanced diet
- b. Having at least one trusted adult to confide in
- c. Living with a parent who has a mental illness
- d. Using tobacco products

QUESTION 5

Who has higher stress levels according to the American Psychological Association?

- a. Adults
- b. Teens
- c. Preteens
- d. Toddlers

QUESTION 6

Which of the following is an example of an unhealthy way to deal with stress?

- a. Pretending to feel better to not worry anyone
- b. Dealing with your feelings on your own
- c. Trying to ignore your feelings or spending more time on your own
- d. All of the above

Reflection Questions

Questions to deepen wonder and understanding

- How much red do you have on your clock? Are there activities that you can eliminate to reduce your stress levels?
- How is stress currently impacting your daily life and your relationships?
- How can you build protective factors against stress? How can sharing with your trusted adults and friends help?



Investigate & Explore

Take your new knowledge to the next level.

Stress is a part of life, and as you've learned, it isn't always a negative thing. The next time you are stressed, take a moment to pause, breathe, and reflect.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why am I stressed?
- How can I make the situation easier in the future?

Starting a stress journal can be a helpful tool for alleviating stress in your life. Each time that you feel overwhelmed or stress, take note of:

- Where you are
- Who is with you
- What activity is happening
- How you feel (physically and mentally)
- How long you feel stressed after the activity is over

This practice can help you recognize patterns and identify what causes you stress. That is the first step in figuring out how to prevent or work through those stressful situations. If you don't have one, you can make your own journal.

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