

Creative & Mindful Therapeutic Ideas for Children

Compiled by Bill Ahessy 2020

After The Virus Box

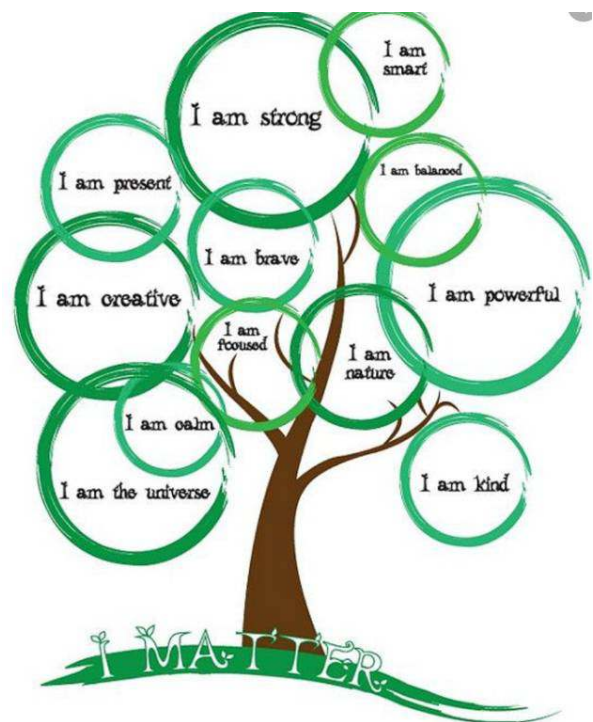


This is a lovely activity that suits all ages. Firstly, children can make the box with materials and resources from their home (be creative). Then colour and paint the box. Then the child or as a family, come up with your different plans you would like to do after the virus! Something to look forward to once we resume normality. Drawing and colouring pictures can support and reinforce the various ideas and be hung on the wall.

Positive Affirmations

Don't underestimate the power of They can support us all during these challenging times. Use them to support emotional resilience in your child. Make a Positive Affirmations Tree out of a branch. Each day write positive affirmations on ribbon or paper to hang on the tree. An picture for each affirmation could be made and be stuck on the wall.

Another activity is to use the '**I Love Me Tree**' sheet or the **Positive Self Talk Flower** sheet to focus on positive identity with your child.



Worry Jar



Young children lack the cognitive ability to effectively cope with stress independently, but they do respond well to concrete strategies to put their stress away. The Worry Box helps children put their worries in a special place (where parents can keep the worries for them) so that they can be relieved of those worries at night (or during the day). Like adults, young children tend to do most of their worrying at night. Before bedtime routine can be a good time to use the worry box.

Worry Boxes/Jars contain worries for the child. The container keeps the worries, so the child can let them go. Like journaling, which is an effective therapy technique, writing or drawing the worry gets it out of the child's mind and into a "vessel" where it is contained. Worry Boxes/Jars give the worry a boundary. The worries are still there. They've been acknowledged and expressed by words or pictures but they are filling a space other than the child's mind.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNB5yMq6S-s>

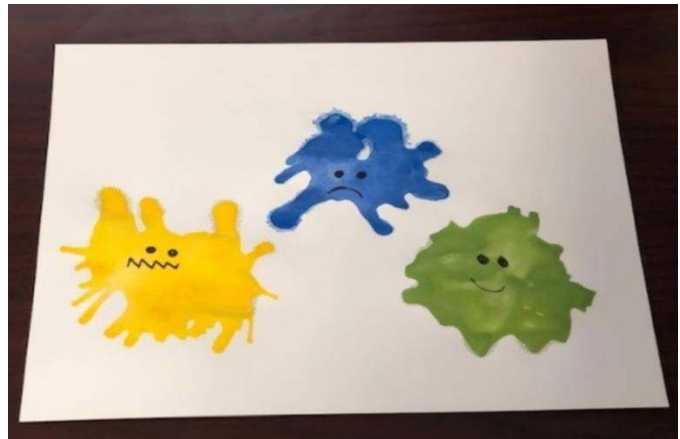
Create: Any small box or a jar will do. Have your child paint or decorate it.

Talk about it: Explain to your child that this is a special place where they can put away their worries each night, and that you will take care of those worries.

Let your child choose a place in your room where you can keep the box safe Letting your child make this decision helps your child gain some control over their worries.

Worry Monster Art

This activity helps encourage deep breathing, discussion of worries and creativity. Deep breathing in the activity promotes well-being and decreases stress. Discussion of worries helps provide children a space to process their emotions safely and in a creative way. Mix paint with a few drops of water in a cup. Pour the paint/water mixture on paper. Have the child use the straw to blow the paint mixture to create blobs. Once dried, draw faces on the blobs and allow them to discuss their worries.



Worry Stories

Ruby Finds a Worry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCyiiHI2SJU>

Jack's Worry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQ0wyzjr5mg>

You've Got Dragons <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0aeUKrLarM>

Breath Work for Children

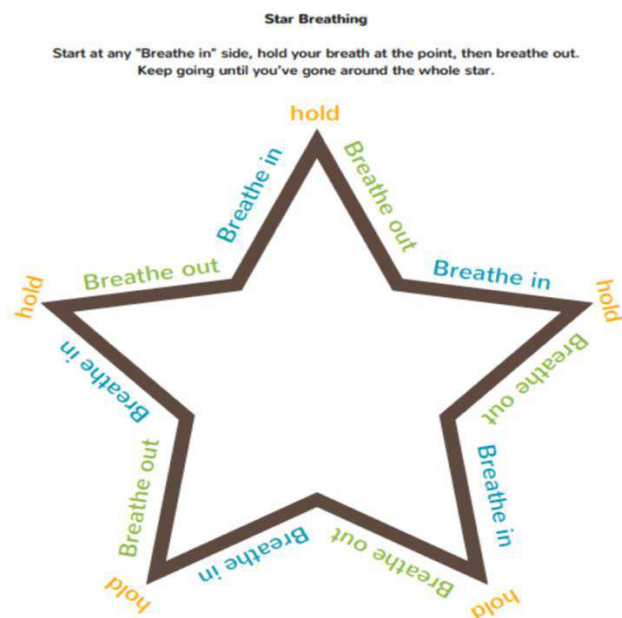
Promote breathing using:

- Bubbles
- Feathers
- Pinwheels
- Stuffed animals
- Dandelions
- Shapes

Star Breathing

Start at any 'breathe in' side, hold your breath at the point and then breathe out. The picture can be printed and the child can use

their eye or finger to trace their way around the whole star. You can print out the larger A4 version attached at the end of the pack.



Finger Breathing

This is a useful do-anywhere exercise for the middle of the day to calm and re-center. Create gentle fists with your hands, and with each breath, unfurl a finger from your palm. For exam, on your first exhale open your left thumb from your fist. Pause and enjoy an inhale. On your next exhale, unfurl your left index finger. Pause and enjoy an inhale. Continue until you have two open palms on your lap.

Deep Breaths Before Bed

Take a deep breath in through the nose, and on the exhale chant out loud: “three” (thrrree). Enjoy another deep in-breath, and on the next exhale, chant “two” (twwooo). Take a last deep breath in and exhale, chanting: “one” (onnee). Relax for a few breaths, and enjoy feeling your body sitting or lying on the floor or your bed. Repeat if desired.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations. Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 - LOOK: Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

3 - LISTEN: Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Say the three things out loud.

2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you’re allowed to, it’s okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can’t smell anything at the moment or you can’t move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or lunch. If you can’t taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

Take another deep belly breath to end.

Mindfulness Meditations

At each developmental stage, mindfulness can be a useful a useful tool for promoting relaxation and wellbeing.

Annaka Harris

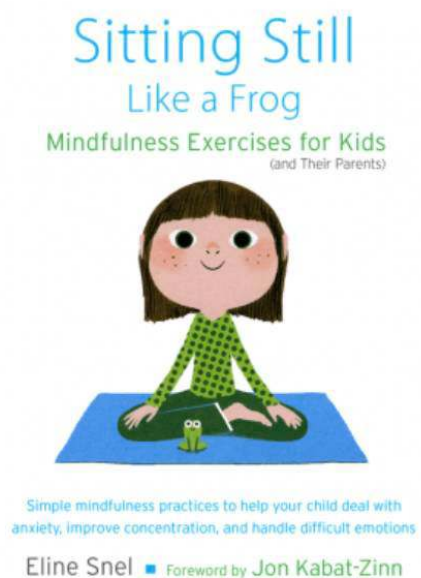
<https://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/>

Annaka Harris is the New York Times bestselling author of *Conscious: A Brief Guide to the Fundamental Mystery of the Mind* and of the children's book, [I Wonder](#) and collaborator on the *Mindful Games Activity Cards*, by Susan Kaiser Greenland, and a mindfulness teacher for the [Inner Kids](#) organisation (Mindful Living for Busy Families). She has some really nice free mindfulness recordings for children on her site.

Sitting Still Like a Frog

<https://www.shambhala.com/sittingstilllikeafrog>

Eleven gorgeous free mindfulness recordings for 5-12 year olds. They are based on mindfulness-training exercises for adults and developed especially for children and their parents. They form the core of learning to be more mindful at different times throughout the day. You can do the exercises together with your child or children. Some kids like to do the exercises on their own, and many parents love doing the exercises themselves. You can do them sitting on the floor, on a couch or chair, or lying in bed. You can listen to the tracks online and also download them to devices from Souncloud.



I have compiled some other mindfulness videos on a YouTube playlist

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLc_7eJO5zxRrMErkHPurBjL-cj8hE_--D

Some Mindfulness Stories

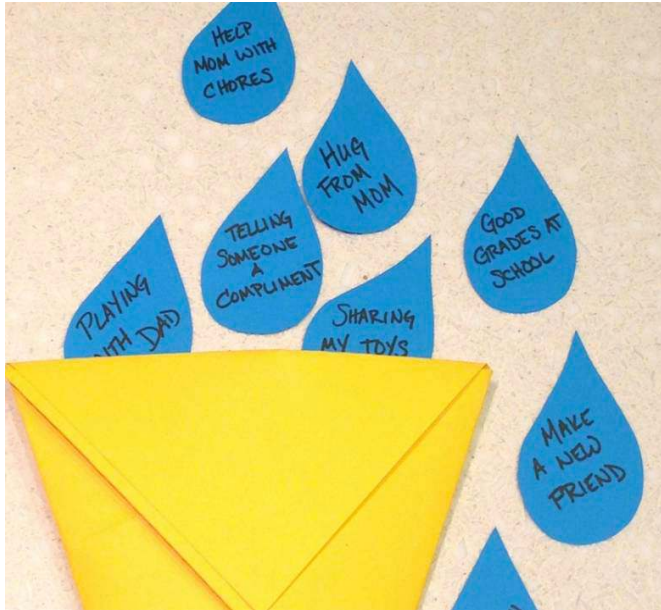
The Clever Fox <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtMHCVBgV00>

Dragon Story <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUAEDWwUL6g&t=106s>

Sleepy Paws <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvP-Bkp9btQ>

How Full is your Bucket

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A1tyObgrZc>

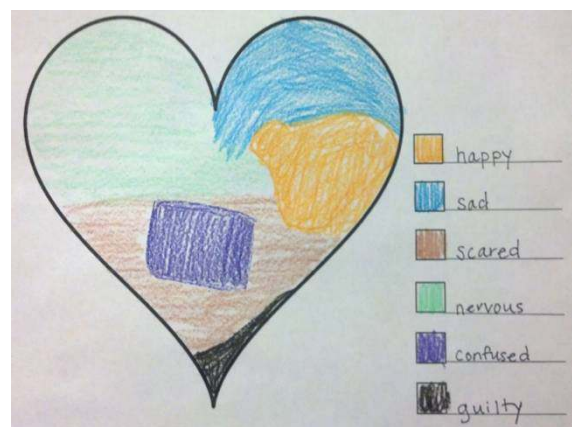


The story of a boy who learns a very important “bucket filling” metaphor and watches it come to life as the day unfolds. Every moment matters. Each of us has an invisible bucket. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it’s empty, we feel awful. Felix begins to see how every interaction in a day either fills or empties his bucket. Felix then realises that everything *he* says or does to other people fills or empties their buckets as well.

After the story make some art work with your child. Draw a bucket and then write or draw coping skills, activities or people that help them ‘fill up their bucket.’ This can then be done as a family to recognise how each other’s actions may dip from the buckets of others or fill them up.

What’s in your Heart?

Helping kids to identify and express their emotions. Give each emotion a colour in each of the boxes Use those colours to fill in your heart and show your emotions. Colour however much of the heart you believe you are feeling of that emotion. The What’s in your Heart sheet is attached at the end of document.





Music to Relax

A 2019 found that music encourages the release of dopamine in the synapses of the brain. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays an important role in our cognitive, emotional and behavioural functioning. Known as the 'happy hormone', it helps create the feeling of pleasure. While we have long known that music improves mood, there's increasing evidence that it can also contribute to mental and physical health, promote stress reduction and soothe us when we are feeling anxious. Familiar or preferred music is often the most potent, however specific music can also be used to target regulation and breathing and relaxation.

Here is a playlist of relaxing music for the mornings can be used as part of an activity, activities of daily living or down time.

<https://youtu.be/WUXEeAXywCY>

The channel [KIDZEN](#) also has music for Children to unwind with cute animation.

<https://youtu.be/5HrkXT5Bc9E>

Relaxing music set to a beautiful video of fish swimming in an aquarium.

<https://youtu.be/WUXEeAXywCY>

Playlist of relaxing Disney tunes on piano

<https://www.pnas.org/content/116/9/3793>

Other Music Resources

Very nice classical music podcast for children narrated by David Walliams

<https://www.globalplayer.com/podcasts/42KqAd/>

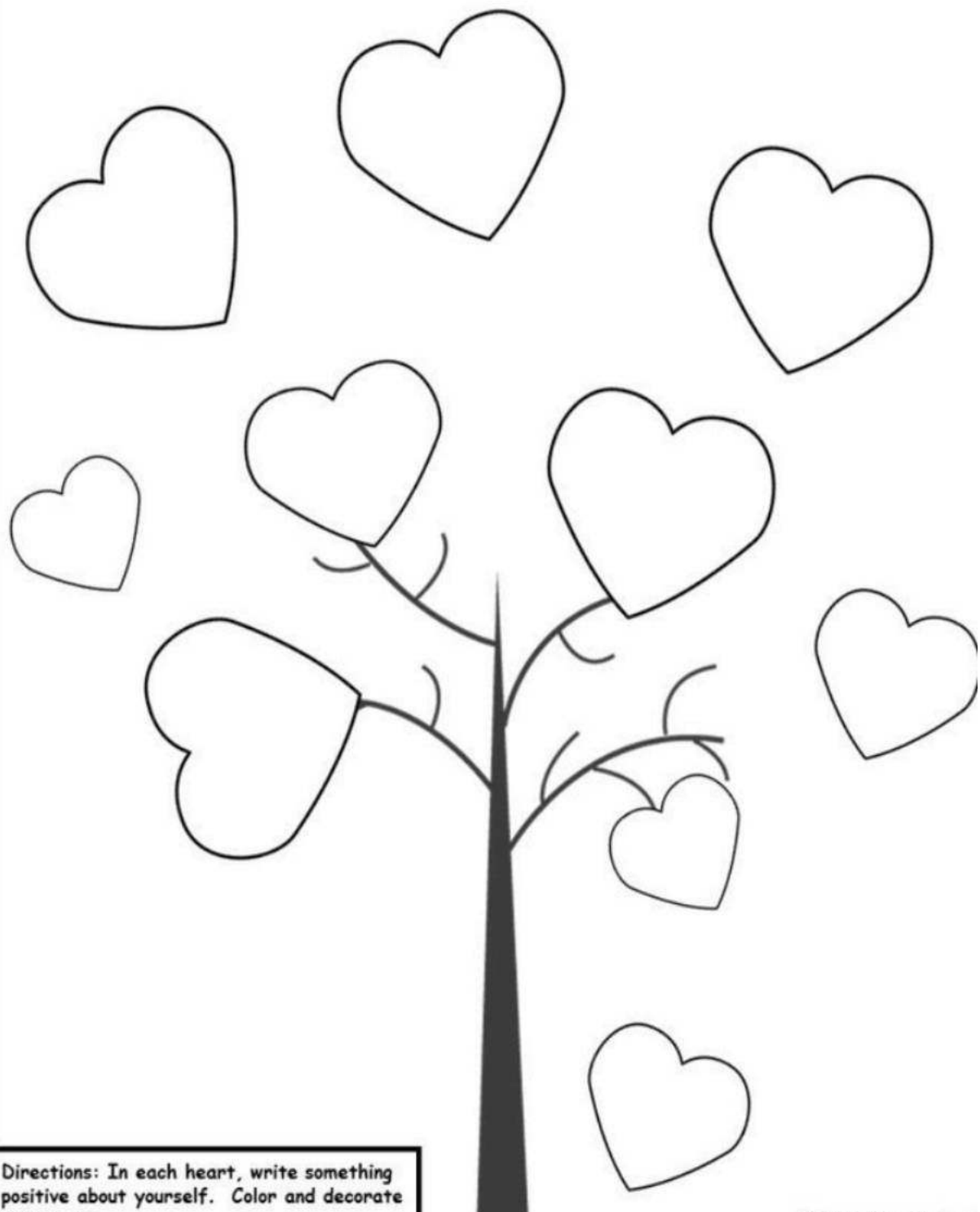
Daily song with accompanying activities can be found at 'Out of the Ark'

<https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/ootam-at-home/>

Positive Affirmations

I can do hard things.
I choose to be happy.
I stand for what is right.
I am a joyful child of God.
I believe in me. I am loved.
I am blessed. I am truthful.
I am thankful. I am special.
I stay calm. I am a good friend.
I am courageous. I am respectful.
I do my best in my work and tasks.
I love my life. I enjoy new adventures.
I work hard. I am strong. I am helpful.
I have faith in God. I am a good sport.
I am kind to others. I am a good listener.
I do the best I can. I focus on the positive.
I am a good influence on others. I have talents.
I learn from my challenges. I pray for strength.
I do the right thing even when no one is looking.
I am becoming better everyday.

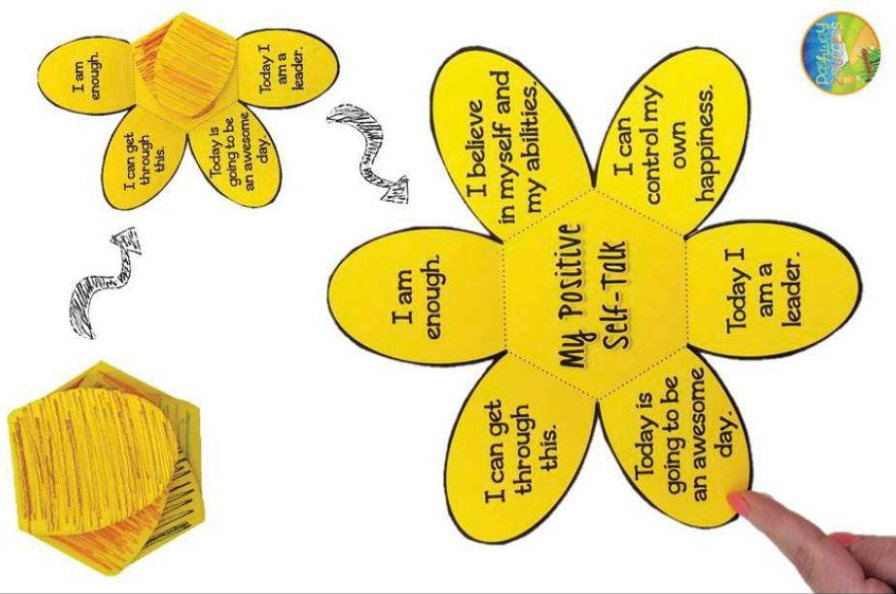
I Love ME Because...



Directions: In each heart, write something positive about yourself. Color and decorate

Positive Self-Talk

Flower Craft



POSITIVE
SELF TALK

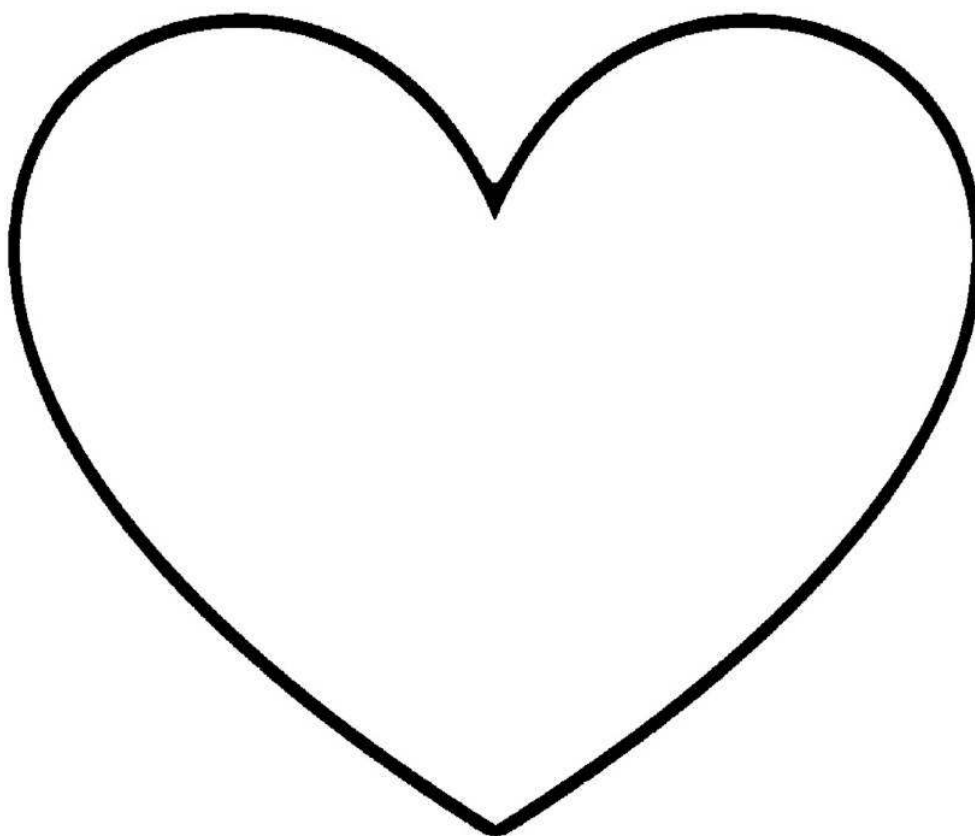
Star Breathing

Start at any "Breathe in" side, hold your breath at the point, then breathe out.
Keep going until you've gone around the whole star.



What's In Your Heart

Colour each of the boxes below a different colour. Use those colours to fill in your heart and show your emotions. Colour however much of the heart you believe you are feeling of that emotion.



Happy

☐

Scared

☐

Sad

☐

Frustrated

☐

Worried

☐

Mad

☐