

FOCUSED ATTENTION ACTIVITY IDEAS

When we are stressed, we can often get overwhelmed with thoughts of the past or thoughts about the future. Practicing focused attention activities can help to orient to the present moment, help to access our most resourced self, and help improve multi-directional attention ability.

Multi-directional attention helps to:

- Strengthens ability to Observe, Attune and Attend internally
- Strengthens ability to distinguish adaptive danger/stress response
- Strengthens ability to remain present even when distressed
- Strengthens ability to notice and calm distress or activation in the body

This table activity will help us practice staying focused to the present moment.

ACTIVITY 1: Connecting with our own thoughts, perspectives, and experiences and the thoughts, perspectives, and experiences of others

Tool: Rethink Card Deck (mindful conversation starters) or pick your own topics

When we experience stress, it can be difficult to think about things beyond what is causing us stress. Use this card deck to prompt conversation with yourself and others and to practice shifting your brain to think about something you are directing it to.

ACTIVITY 2: Focused attention with game play

Tool: UNO, Blitz, Bellz or other game

When we experience stress, it can be difficult to concentrate and act quickly and strategically. These games are hard to play if you are not focused. Use the game to help practice focused attention. Help other players stay focused on the game with *gentle reminders*. Play as many games as there is time for.

ACTIVITY 3: Focused attention with game play

Tool: UNO, Blitz, Bellz or other game

When we experience stress, it can be really difficult to concentrate and act quickly. These games are hard to play if you are not focused. Use the game to help practice focused attention. Help other players stay focused on the game with *gentle reminders*. Play as many games as there is time for.

ACTIVITY 4: Focusing on our senses – vision

Tool: Moving sand art frame, bubble timer, glitter wand, kaleidoscope, photo book, color block

Stress is a full body experience that happens in more places than our brain. When we experience stress, our visual perception often changes. When we are angry or depressed, we often have narrowed visual perception. When we are anxious or fearful, we often have expansive visual perception. Use these sensory objects to practice controlling your visual perception instead of wherever your thoughts are leading your eyes.

Explore sensory objects independently and/or with others. What do you notice? Are there objects that hold your visual attention longer than others? Share what you notice with others.

ACTIVITY 5: Focusing on our senses – touch

Tool: roller balls, scalp massager, foot roller, leg roller, massage paddle

Stress is a full body experience that happens in more places than our brain. Our body can hold a lot of tension when we experience stress. Sometimes we are holding tension without even being aware of it. Use these tools to explore and reduce tension. With frequent practice, we can increase our awareness of patterns of where our body holds stress.

What do you notice? Is there tension in your body that you found and didn't even know it? Was any tool helpful to reduce tension in your body? Share what you notice with others.

ACTIVITY 6: Focusing on our senses - hearing

Tool: Rain stick, ocean drum, lap harp

Stress is a full body experience that happens in more places than our brain. When we experience stress, our hearing can often shift to tune out different sounds. This can make our thoughts sound really loud at times. Under stress, we can also miss sound details in our environment. Use these sensory objects to practice controlling your hearing perception in this moment instead of wherever your thoughts are leading.

Explore sensory objects independently and/or with others. What do you notice? Are there objects that hold your hearing attention longer than others? Share what you notice with others.

ACTIVITY 7: Focused attention to our body movements

Tool: Flutter ring, blocks, rocks, spinning tops

When we experience stress, it can be really difficult to concentrate and control our hand movements (fine motor skills). These tools are hard to use if you are not focused. Use these tools independently and/or with others to practice controlling your hand movements. Build a tower of blocks or rocks or get a top or flutter ring spinning.

ACTIVITY 8: Focusing on our creative abilities

Tool: magnetic blocks, coloring sheets, notebooks, markers

Stress can cause different parts of our brain to shut down or go offline. It's a common experience that our creativity is often blocked when we are stressed. Use these tools to practice checking in and unblocking your creative abilities in whatever way you want. There is no wrong way to be creative.

What do you notice? Are there objects that hold your creative attention longer than others? Share what you notice with others.