

Introduction to interoception for families and caregivers

We are using new mindfulness activities in the classroom which are designed to help students feel more connected to their bodies, and to interpret and express their emotions helpfully.

Our bodies send us signals about our emotions all the time through physical changes like our heartbeat slowing down or speeding up, our muscles tensing and our breath changing.

Tapping into these changing signals and learning to understand them as emotions and/or feelings is called interoception or 'mindful body awareness'.

Everybody's natural interoception is different.

Without good interoceptive awareness, children and young people might find it hard to notice a big emotion building up inside until it becomes overwhelming or distracts them from learning.

What are interoception activities?

The simplest activities involve gently moving parts of your body, like your hands and feet, and mindfully paying attention to the stretch.

- They only take 1-2 minutes each to complete.
- To see a benefit, they need to be repeated 2-3 times a day for at least 8 weeks.

What are the benefits?

Participating in mindfulness and building interoception skills can help children and young people to:

- self-regulate their emotions and feelings,
- be calm and engage with learning,
- have positive wellbeing, and
- improve their academic performance.

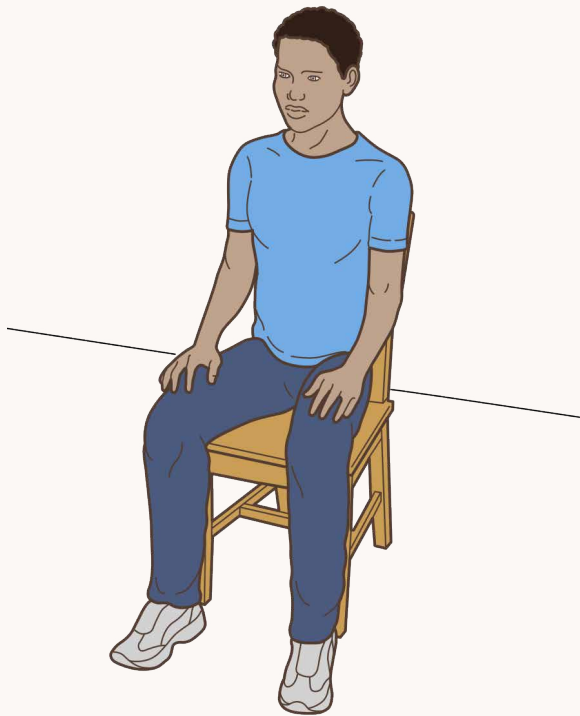
Try it at home

You might like to give this interoception activity a go in the morning, before bed, or even in the car on the way to school.

Feeling the muscles in your hands

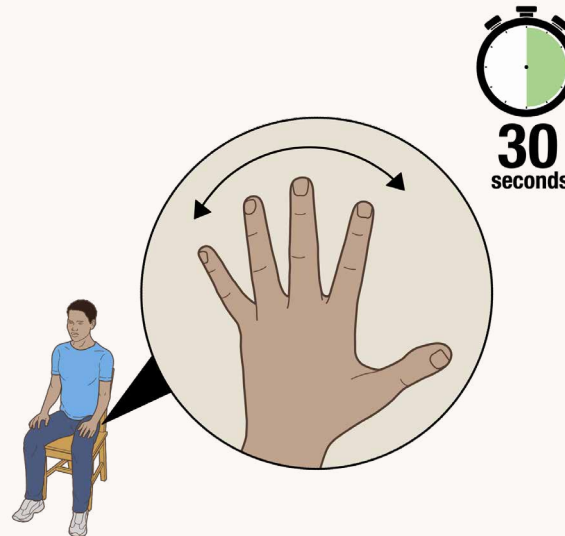
Step 1

Sitting down, rest your hands on the top of your thighs.



Step 2

Now stretch your fingers as wide apart as possible and hold them stretched out like that for 30 seconds. Then rest them back, so they are relaxed again.



Where could you feel a difference in your body when your hands were relaxed and when your hands were stretched? Point, sign or say where you felt something.

Step 3

Now pick one of the parts of the hand that you identified and repeat Steps 1. and 2. focusing on that part of your hand.

For example, focus on the webbing of your hands while your hands are relaxed, now stretch the fingers as wide apart as possible and focus on how the webbing between your fingers feels.



Visit the [Student Wellbeing Hub](#) for more information, activity videos and academic references.