

MINDFUL MUSICIANS

MAY 2025 — ISSUE 4



Welcome

Discover the harmony of music and social-emotional learning. Explore insightful resources, creative tips, and inspiring tools to nurture growth and connection on every page.

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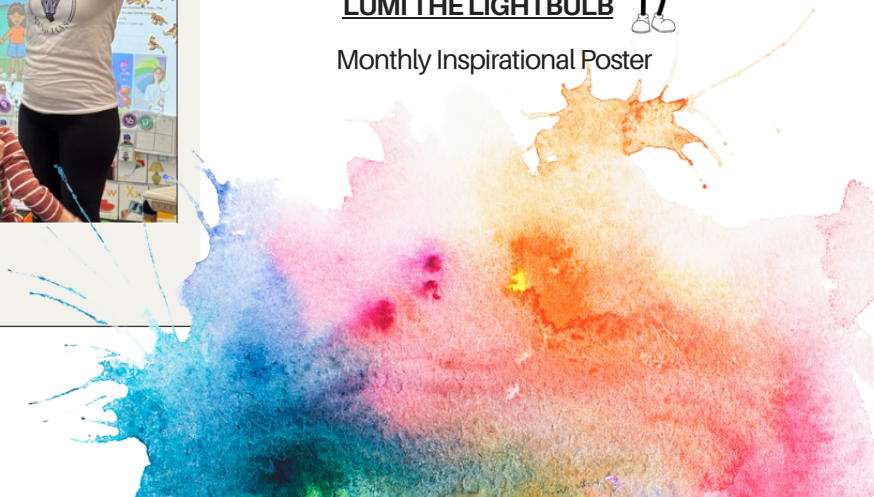
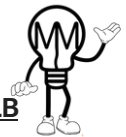
CRAFT

Turn difficult tasks into a fun game and help your child have some fun!

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Monthly Inspirational Poster





HELLO, FROM CALLIE

"It might be hard, but it feels good too." These are lyrics from "Feels Good Too" that we are focusing on in this month's "Unlocking the Lyrics."

To me, one of the most beautiful things about Mindful Musicians is that the words we sing about are relevant for us as adults as well. Just because we are older doesn't mean that the little kids inside of us don't actually want to throw a fit when we are required to complete tasks of daily living. Some days/weeks/seasons/years are just simply harder than others. While I'm more grateful to welcome this spring than ever before, I've swayed from the structure that keeps me sane!

We, just like our kids, crave freedom—but need structure as well. This is a powerful human paradox in psychology. While we naturally long for flexibility, choice, and spaciousness, structure offers us something essential:

- It reduces anxiety by giving our brains a break from the unknown. Predictability helps calm the nervous system.
- It offers a sense of control, which actually increases our freedom by helping us feel grounded in our choices.

- It builds motivation. Goals and routines help us move forward, even when we feel stuck or scattered.
- It creates clarity, allowing us to better understand our own patterns and emotional needs.
- It fosters safety in relationships—especially for kids. Boundaries and routines help children (and adults) feel secure.
- It makes space for creativity. Having a container to work within often frees the imagination, rather than limiting it.
- It regulates emotion, offering stability when things feel wobbly or out of our control.

When we provide structure for our children—through rhythms, music, routines—we’re also giving them emotional tools to thrive. And when we allow structure back into our own lives, we create more room for the joy and freedom we’re craving.

I’ll be honest—I’ve fallen out of my rhythm lately. Self-care has slipped to the back burner, and I can feel the effects. Maybe you can too. If you’re feeling a little unstructured or off balance, you’re not alone. This is your gentle nudge (and mine) to return to the simple practices that ground us—whether it’s music, fresh air, deep breaths, or five quiet minutes with something warm in your hands.

If you’re looking for a way back into structure, here are a few simple, doable ideas for both you and your kids:

- Start the day with a cue. A song, a stretch, or even lighting a candle can mark the beginning of the day with calm intention.
- Sprinkle in music. One clean-up song, one silly bath-time verse—small musical moments teach presence without pressure.
- Name your rhythms. “After snack we go outside.” “Before bed, we sing our quiet song.” Simple, soft structure helps everyone feel secure.
- Mark transitions mindfully. A phrase, a bell, or a funny dance can turn chaos into connection.
- Return to what once worked. Revisit routines you used to love. Reclaim one or two—you don’t need a total reset.
- Offer grace. When things unravel (and they will), come back with curiosity, not guilt. Structure isn’t about control—it’s about care.

We don’t need to get it perfect. We just need to keep coming back.

Structure can feel like a gift when it’s gentle. It holds us steady so we can move, grow, and breathe a little easier.

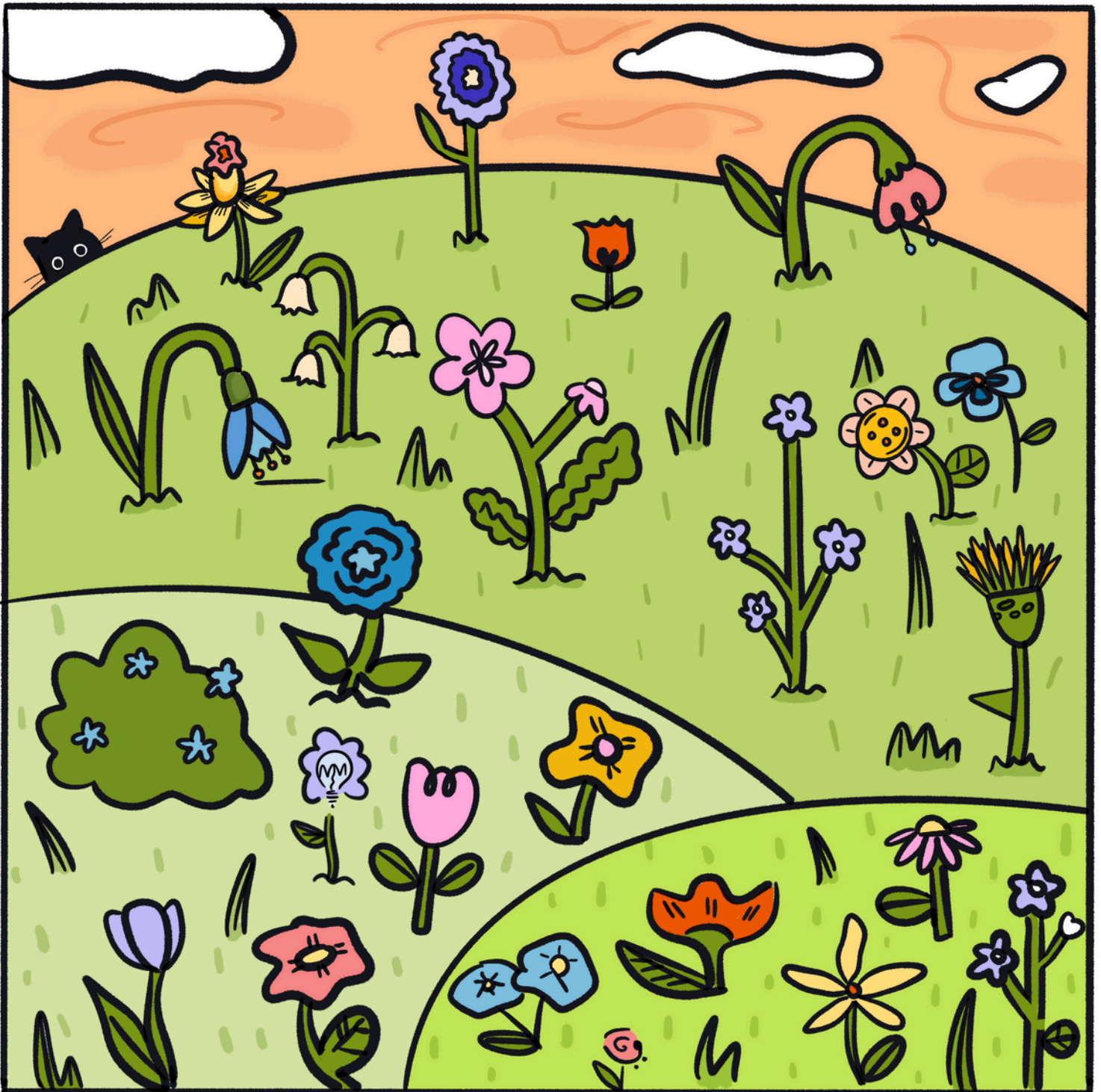
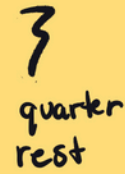
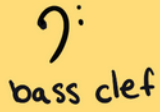
Callie Fitzgerald

Seek
\$

Find

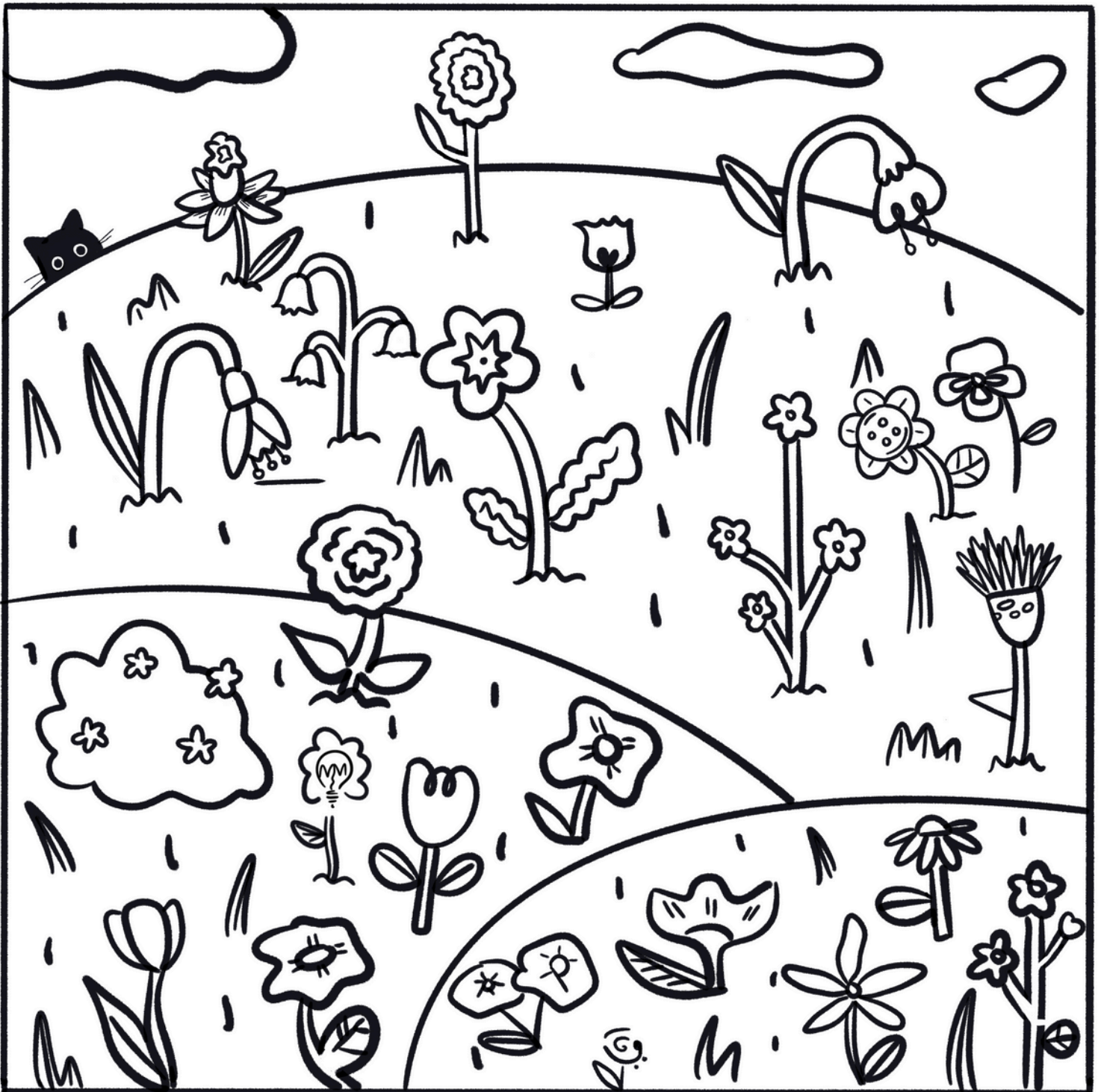
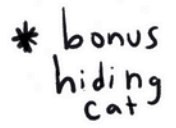
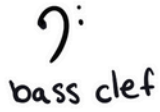


p
piano



Seek
\$

Find



THE MINDS BEHIND MINDFUL MUSICIANS: ERIN CALLAHAN

This article is the second in a series that offers a behind-the-scenes look at the talented individuals shaping Mindful Musicians, from composers and lyricists to graphic designers and teachers. Get to know the people who bring our music, lessons, and resources to life!

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Erin Callahan
Mindful Musicians Participant Turned Instructor

How did you first discover Mindful Musicians, and what drew you to sign up as a parent?

I first discovered Mindful Musicians through Jill and Callie—we know each other from Clarke University. My husband and I moved back to Dubuque, Iowa, in 2017 and there was nothing like Mindful Musicians that existed. My daughter Kate was born in 2019, and Jill reached out to me and invited me to participate in the session. We absolutely loved it and we did probably six sessions. Kate loved it, and I felt like that was a special time where my cup was also being filled by going to the classes.

What was it like to participate alongside your child in class?

It was interesting to see how confident she was right away! She liked participating with everyone right away! As a mom, we get mom guilt—like, are we giving them enough one-on-one time? She loved it and loved making friends, and I loved it. It was a community that I didn't have yet. It was a really positive experience all around. Kate and I would be singing the music at home, and our older boys ended up learning the songs as well!

Were there any songs or activities that really stuck with your child—or with you?

What we do the most at home are the chants! Like “I am friendly, I am smart!” We do those every day on the way to school.

How does Mindful Musicians fit into your family's values?

It is extremely vital to our family's values because having these hard conversations is really important to me and my husband. He is a pediatrician, so taking care of kids all around—physical health and brain health—is really important to him. I am someone who grew up struggling with anxiety. As my older kids are getting older and in middle school, a lot of these brain health discussions are things that we discuss often now.

Having taken the classes really helped prepare me to have some of these hard conversations, and now switching to the other side and teaching it—I use something from Mindful Musicians every single day in my personal life. It fits in for me when I have to prep myself for hard conversations that I am going to have. I am learning something new every day.

THE MINDS BEHIND MINDFUL MUSICIANS: ERIN CALLAHAN CONTINUED

Did you notice any changes in your child's behavior, language, or emotional expression during or after the sessions?

Definitely. Over the past year I was noticing a bit more negative self-talk with some of my older kids. Then we used a lot of the songs and stuff that we talk about in Mindful Musicians. They are more loving to themselves. They are kinder and more accepting of everyone. [Middle school] can be a hard [time] to feel confident, and I feel that [Mindful Musicians] helped.

Was there a particular message or song that made a lasting impression on you or your child/children?

I really like Good Kid a lot, because I have four kids and there is something happening every day. Somebody is making a mistake and we do have hard discussions, but I like the message that it doesn't mean that they aren't a 'good kid' just because they made a mistake. You can keep trying. I like to say it to myself too, because sometimes I have a hard day and I feel bad at the end of the day. I can say that I can try again tomorrow. It doesn't mean I'm a bad mom just because today was a hard day.

At what point did you realize you wanted to share this work with others?

I was a stay-at-home mom for twelve years and I knew that I wanted to do something that had to do with music, helping people, and kids. Jill was the one who mentioned it to me several times. Once all my children started school, I knew it was time.

How has being both a parent and now a teacher shaped the way you approach your classes?

There were several classes that Kate would start to cry because she didn't get the xylophone that day or the pink scarf. Kids are going to be kids. Some days they will be more interested, and some days they will be more tired. It's okay. They are there and they are soaking it in. I want the parents to feel comfortable because there were times where I was stressed as a parent coming in, but I always felt good when I left. That's my goal. I want the kids to get as much out of it as they can and I want the adults to leave happier than when they came.

What's something you understand now as a teacher that you didn't fully grasp as a parent in the class?

How important some of the things we do each time are. When you are a parent, you are doing the repetition and crossing the midline, but I didn't understand how important all of that is for their development. I could see it later, but I wasn't really understanding in the moment how deep it was.

What do you think a world where every family had access to MM would look like?

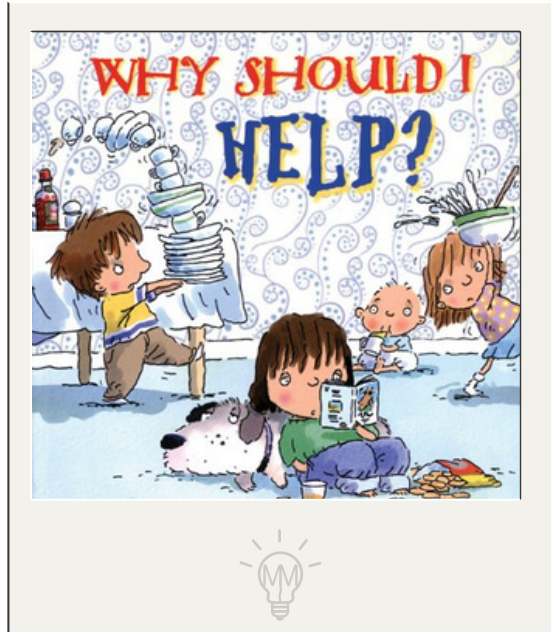
I think it would make it so much easier to have these important conversations that we need to have—that people need to be taking care of themselves, and thinking about their brain health. Being confident and loving themselves just how they are. Kids would be learning all of these important lessons while they are having fun at a young age, it would be so amazing to see. Being an adult and having access would make it so much easier to talk to your kids about brain health.

FROM PAGES TO PRACTICE

BY ANA MARIA LOCKE

This book review highlights books that parents might already be familiar with, but with a fresh perspective. Each book explores topics we sing about on the Mindful Musicians Green Album, offering new ways to connect music and meaningful lessons with your child

"Why Should I Help" by Claire Llewelyn is a great book for children of all ages. This story follows a young girl who is finding it hard to understand why she should do things that do not directly help her. Taking our song "Feels Good Too" in mind, we can see how growing up and learning that sometimes helping may not directly help us, but it can greatly impact how we feel. We see our main character learning that she can be a helping hand in the world and that often she is helped by others as well. We see that a small inconvenience can greatly help others.



Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. What are some things your grown-up/teachers ask you to do that you don't like doing?
2. What do you think would happen if you didn't do that thing?
3. How does it make you feel knowing that you're big enough to have that responsibility?
4. Do you think when you were little, you could have done that task?
5. Why do you think your grown-up/teachers ask you to do those things?
6. What kinds of things do your grown-up/teachers have to do that you think they might not like?
7. Why do you think they do it anyway?
8. What would happen if they didn't do that task?

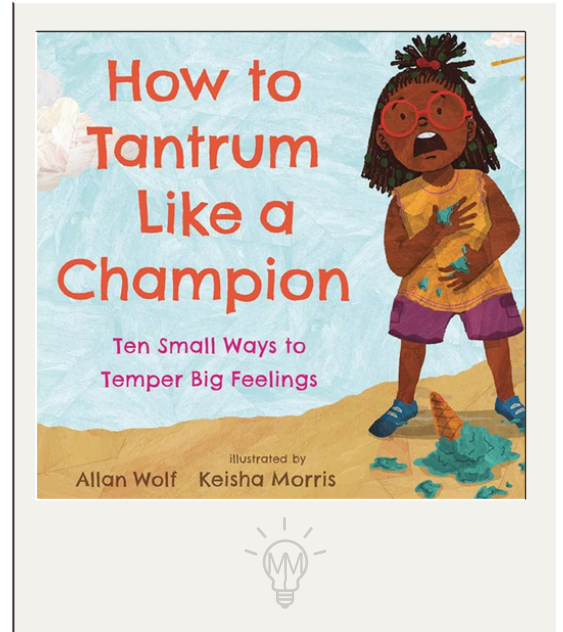
Tip* After they answer, offer your personal experiences as a child and adult to build connection and show empathy.

FROM PAGES TO PRACTICE

BY ANA MARIA LOCKE

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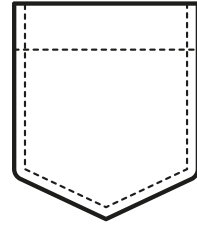
If you are looking for a book that is both practical and relatable, "How to Tantrum Like a Champion" by Allan Wolf is the book for you!. This story is a great way to apply knowledge from the song "Feels Good Too" and the practical things in life that are difficult—like cleaning your room. We as adults know how difficult it can be to regulate our own emotions, and our brains are fully developed! This story gives practical ways to regulate when children are struggling. Like the song says, it might be hard learning new things, but they will learn incredible skills and tools that they will take into their adulthood. As an adult, it might be hard teaching these concepts and holding boundaries, but you can do it!



Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. What kinds of things make you have a tantrum?
2. How does your body feel during the tantrum?
3. What would you think if your grown-ups had a tantrum that looked like yours?
Would it be a little funny?
4. Why do you think you don't see grown-ups throwing temper tantrums?
5. Do you think grown-ups have big feelings too?
6. How do you think you become a grown-up who regulates their emotions instead of throwing a temper tantrum?
7. Which of these activities would you like to use this week?
8. Do you think you will be able to regulate right away, or do you think it will take time?
9. How do you think you will feel as a grown-up who is awesome at regulating?

POCKET PAUSE



Fold, cut, and create—a Pocket Pause to help you feel great!

DESCRIPTION

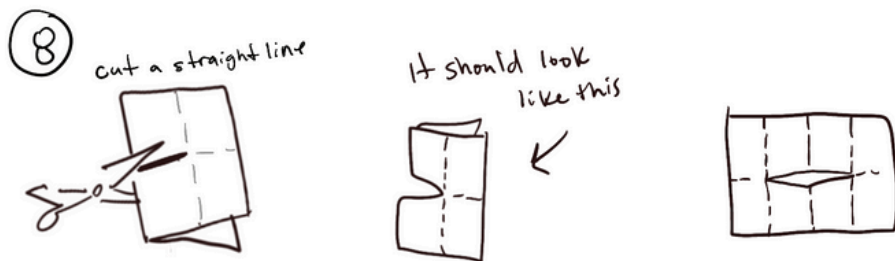
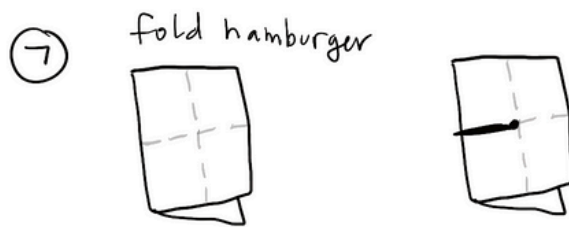
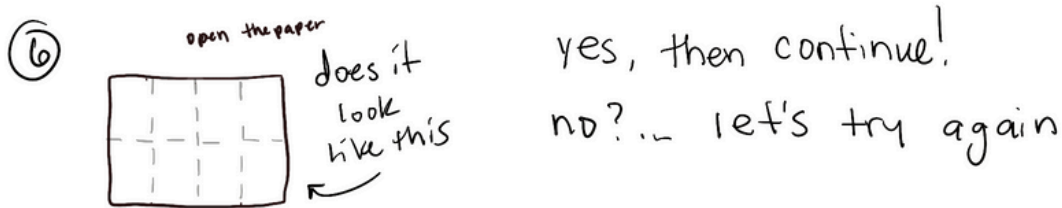
The Pocket Pause book is a small, portable tool designed to help kids calm down and feel better when they're having a tough time. It's filled with simple activities and calming ideas they can use to take a break, focus, and reset their emotions.

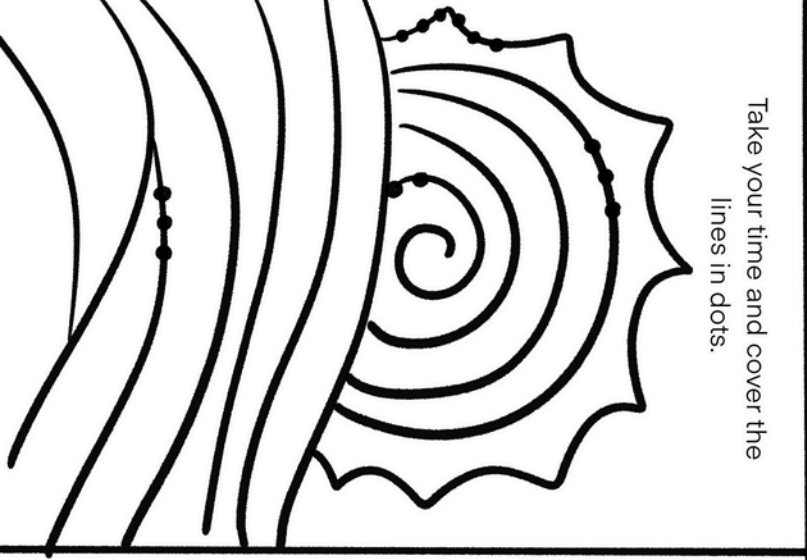
Easy to make and carry, the Pocket Pause empowers kids to practice self-regulation anytime, anywhere.

INSTRUCTIONS

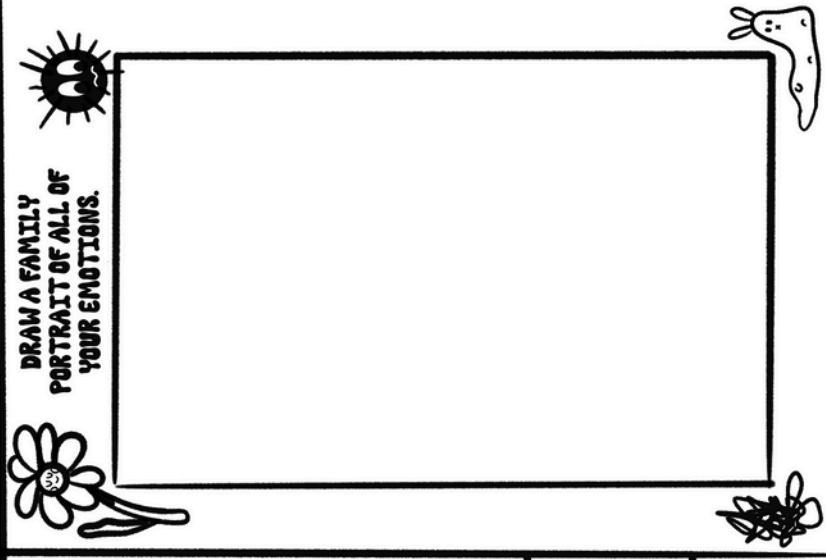
1. Print it out: Ask an adult to help you print the Pocket Pause page.
2. Fold it up: Follow the folding steps in the pictures carefully to make it into a book.
3. Cut the spot: Use scissors to cut along the line shown in the picture (ask for help if needed!).
4. Take it anywhere: Slip it into your pocket and use it when you need a moment to pause and relax!

Fold your Pocket Pause





Take your time and cover the lines in dots.

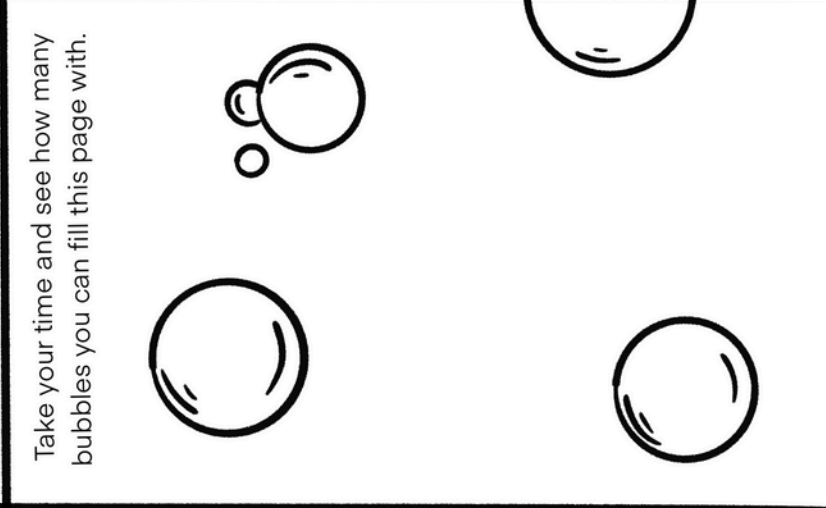


DRAW A FAMILY PORTRAIT OF ALL OF YOUR EMOTIONS.

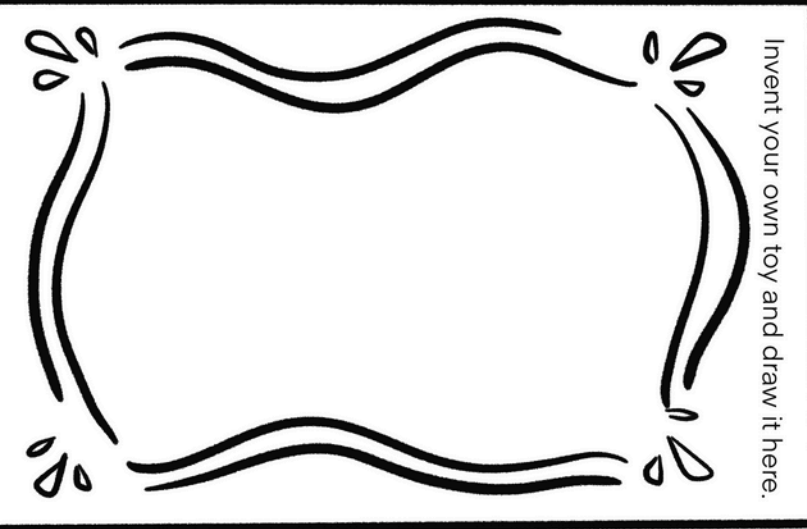


I SPY

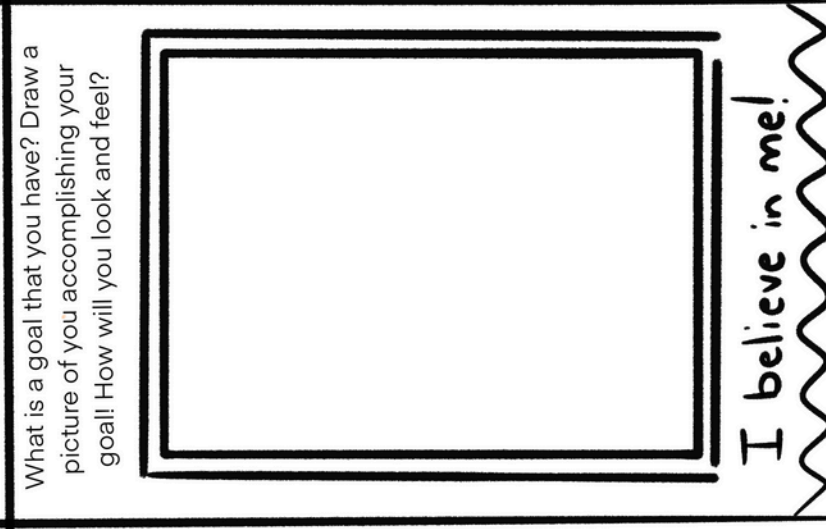
- ★ THREE WOODEN OBJECTS
- ★ TWO BRIGHT THINGS
- ★ 3 SOFT THINGS
- ★ SOMETHING YELLOW
- ★ A SMILE
- ★ A LAUGH



Take your time and see how many bubbles you can fill this page with.

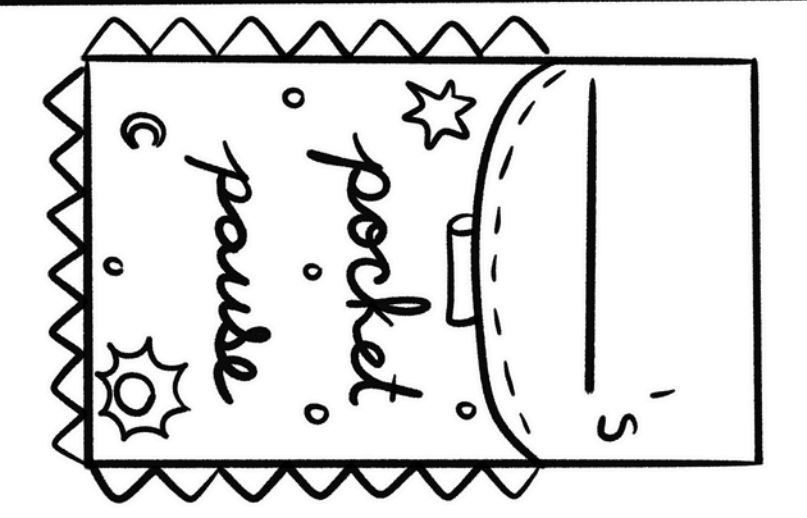


Invent your own toy and draw it here.



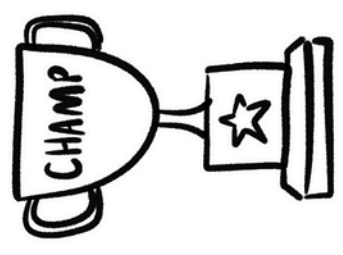
What is a goal that you have? Draw a picture of you accomplishing your goal! How will you look and feel?

I believe in me!



To win the trophy you need to accomplish 3 things. The first one has been done for you. Add 2 things that you want to accomplish. Color in your trophy when you're done.

- 1 Tidy my area
- 2
- 3





Ask Callie

"Ask Callie" is your chance to submit questions about music, mindfulness, and parenting—where we answer commonly asked questions to support you and your family's journey.

Q: As both a mother and a music therapist, how do you create a musical environment at home that supports emotional well-being without it feeling like a therapy session?

At home, I keep things simple and playful. I might hum a calming tune while we clean up, or turn getting dressed into a silly song. It's less about structured "therapy" and more about making music feel like a natural part of our connection. The key is consistency and letting the music support our moods rather than trying to fix them.

Q: Can you share a personal story where music helped your own child navigate a tough moment?

Absolutely. There was a time when my child was overwhelmed and having some really intense escalating behaviors. Instead of trying to talk about it, I went into her room with her, sat down and sang a song that is meant to help regulation. Within minutes, she engaged in singing it too, her breathing slowed, and she crawled into my lap. The song didn't solve the problem, but it gave her the space and safety to feel her feelings. That's the power of music—it gently opens doors.

Q: How can I support my child's creative voice, even if I don't consider myself musical?

You don't need to be a musician to make music meaningful for your child. Just sing with them, dance to a song in the kitchen, or ask them what a "rainbow sounds like" and explore it together. Your willingness to be playful and present tells them their creativity matters. Even more, we want them to have the opportunity to feel how good it feels to make a musical sound without worrying about the perfection of the sound that comes out. To make music is a joyful thing. That's more important than hitting the right note.

Q: What inspired some of the songs you've written for Mindful Musicians, and how do you hope children connect with them?

Most of the songs I write come from real moments of my own life or with kids—whether it's my own or students in class. If a child is having a hard time calming down, I might create a song on the spot that helps them breathe or name their feelings. I hope kids feel seen in the lyrics and empowered by the rhythms. Music becomes a mirror for their emotions and a tool they can use anytime. The songs are also designed to normalize tough feelings that aren't always talked about. The more we can connect and show that we all experience hardship, the less alone we will all feel.

Ask Callie continued

Q: How can I tell if my child is more responsive to rhythm, melody, or lyrics—and how can I tailor musical activities accordingly?

Watch how your child naturally engages—do they tap to the beat, hum a tune on repeat, or sing full lyrics with expression? That's your clue. If they love rhythm, try clapping games or drumming on household items. If melody grabs them, sing simple songs together or even chant your next activity instead of just saying what you're going to do. If lyrics are their thing, explore songwriting or story songs. Follow their lead—it keeps things joyful and connected.

Q: As a teacher and therapist, what are your go-to strategies when a child resists participating in music sessions?

First, I honor the “no.” Resistance is often a sign of needing control or feeling vulnerable. I offer choices—like picking the instrument or song—and try not to take it personally. Sometimes just being present and listening to music together is enough to build trust. When a child feels safe, participation naturally follows.

Q: How do you recommend parents use music to support transitions, like getting out the door in the morning or winding down after school?

Use a simple “transition song” as a signal. It could be a morning jingle or a calming melody for bedtime. Repeating the same song during certain transitions helps cue the brain for what's coming next, and it can reduce stress for both parent and child. You don't need to overthink it—just find a tune you both enjoy and stick with it.

Q: What should I do if my child loves music but seems more drawn to listening than participating? Is that okay?

Absolutely. Listening is a beautiful form of engagement, and for many kids, it's how they first connect with music emotionally. You can invite gentle participation—like asking how the song makes them feel or drawing while they listen—but there's no need to push. Trust that music is working its magic, even in quiet ways.

Q: How does music actually help my child improve their brain development and emotional well-being?

Music does a lot more for your child than just sound fun—it actually helps their brain grow! When kids engage with music, it strengthens the connections in their brain that are tied to things like memory, attention, and problem-solving. It also plays a big role in their emotional health. For example, when kids sing or play instruments, they're not just improving their language skills, but also learning to express their feelings and manage their emotions. Plus, activities like clapping or drumming improve their coordination and motor skills. So, by adding music into their day, you're helping boost their brain and their mood all at once!



We would love to hear your questions! Send Callie an email at callie@mindfulmusicians.org



UNLOCKING THE LYRICS: FEELS GOOD TOO

By Ana Maria Locke

From a baby learning to sleep in a crib, to a toddler learning to share, a first grader working on addition and subtraction, a middle schooler cleaning their room, a high schooler studying for a big test, or an adult filing their taxes—there are things in life we have to do that we might not want to do. But all of those things, while hard, can give us a sense of accomplishment afterward.

That doesn't mean they're easy. That can be a hard thing for a young child to understand. Some hard things get easier with time, and some things will always be hard. Building resiliency is something that can start as soon as you're ready.

We see resilience growing in children when they have to be patient and wait for their turn to talk. I tell my child to put her hand on mine so we both know she wants to share something. When I'm ready, I finish my conversation and then let her have a turn. At first, I couldn't go very long before giving her a turn. That was hard for me as an adult, but it felt good knowing I was helping her build that skill.

Cleaning the house is not something I usually look forward to. But as I was preparing to write this article, I challenged myself to show my daughter that I'm still growing too. We found ways to make the hard things a little easier. We made a playlist together to have something fun on while we do the work.

From a child's perspective, adults seem to have it all figured out. But I think we all know that adulthood is quite the opposite. In reality, we just get better at learning. Adults know we don't have all the answers. Let your child, when it's appropriate, see you struggle with something. Let them see how you react. They're going to notice anyway, but choose something where you can say aloud, "This is hard. I'm going to try to do it."

For me, it's the house cleaning.

We're all human. When children see the people they love most working through challenges and being vulnerable, it helps them feel like it's okay to grow too. They don't need to succeed every time they try something.

When children see the people
they love most working through
challenges and being vulnerable,
it helps them feel like it's okay
to grow too.

FEELS GOOD TOO

C Am
I don't wanna brush my teeth
C G7
I don't wanna take a bath
C Am
I don't wanna clean my room
 F G C
But there are some things I just have to do
 F G C
Yea there are some things I just have to do

C Am
I don't wanna eat my food
C G7
I don't wanna share a turn
C Am
I don't wanna leave the park
 F G C
But there are some things I just have to do
 F G C
Yea there are some things I just have to do

 Am C Am C
When my mom or my dad or my grownup tells me something I don't wanna hear
 Am C F G
I tell them my point but then I take a deep breath cause there are some things I
just don't know yet

C Am
I know when I brush my teeth
C G7
I know when I take a bath

C Am
I know when I clean my room
 F G C
It might be hard but it feels good too
 F G C
It might be hard but it feels good too

C Am
I know when I eat my food
C G7
I know when I share a turn
C Am
I know when I leave the park
 F G C
It might be hard but it feels good too
 F G C
It might be hard but it feels good too



“Feels Good Too”- TaskTrek

Materials Needed:

- Print outs (or you can draw these yourselves)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Description:

Like our song says, “it might be hard but it feels good too.” Making chores and things in life a little more fun is our goal with this craft. Our hope is that as kiddos play this game that they helped to create, they will find joy in doing the mundane.

Instructions:

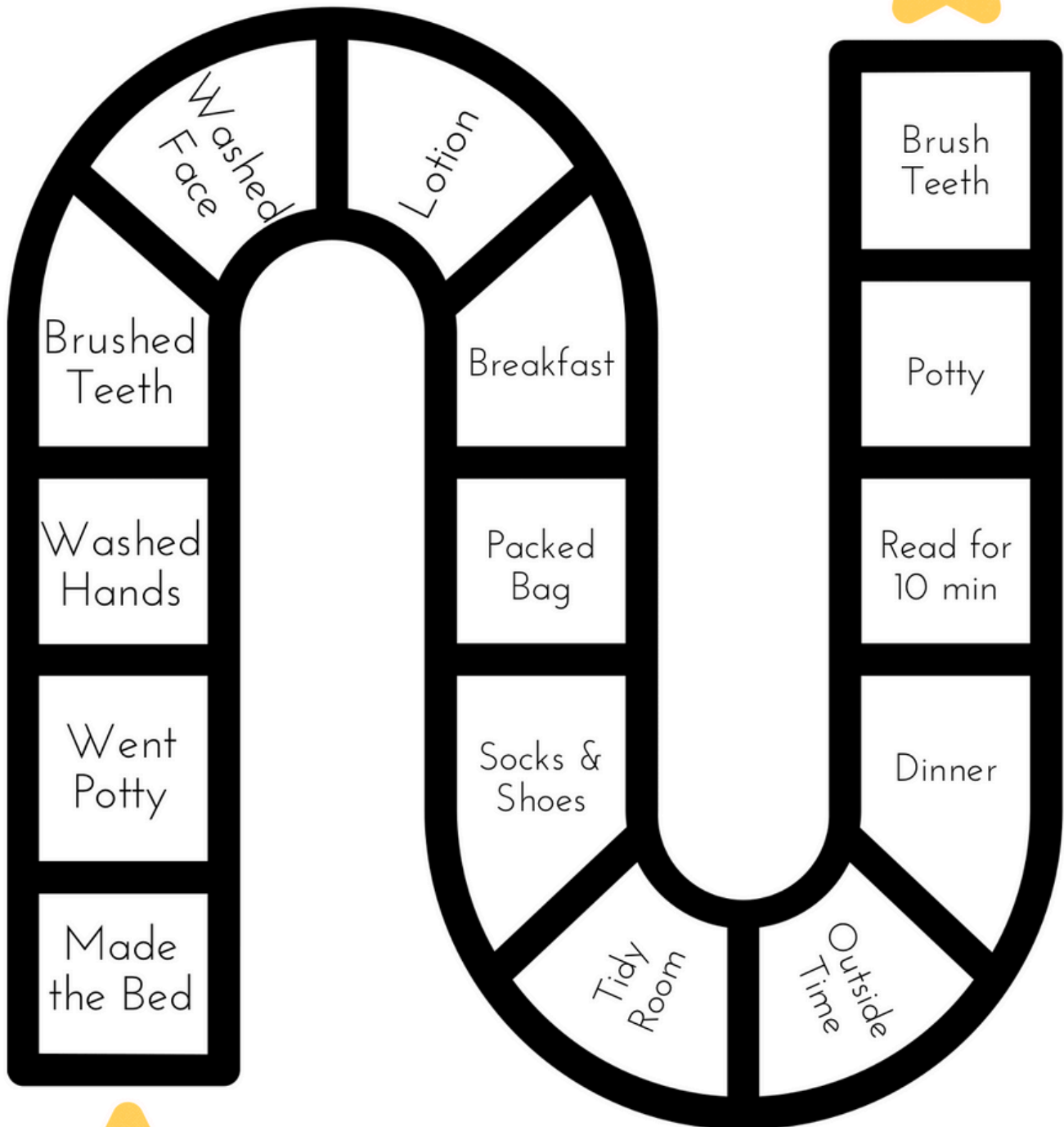
1. Have the child color and decorate the board game. You can use ours, or customize it from the ground up using the last print out. For schools, this can be one game board that the whole class uses as a team, AND you can also allow them to make their own so they have personal goals as well.
2. We highly recommend laminating this game to help it last longer, but with care this could be used routinely. This includes classrooms as well.
3. There are endless possibilities for game pieces. You choose what works best for your kiddos. They could be magnets that help it stay on the board, game pieces that have no home, or a makeshift piece they have drawn/colored.
4. If you are choosing to place it on a wall here are a few ideas:
 - use expo marker to X off spots
 - You can use glue dots on the back to hold it up as well

GAME PIECES



TASK TREK

CHAMP



START

TASK TREK

CHAMP

	Said something kind	
Put backpack away	Raised my hand before speaking	Tried a task 4 times before asking for help
Calmly said hello	Tidied my space	

START

TASK TREK

CHAMP



START



I AM

RESILIENT

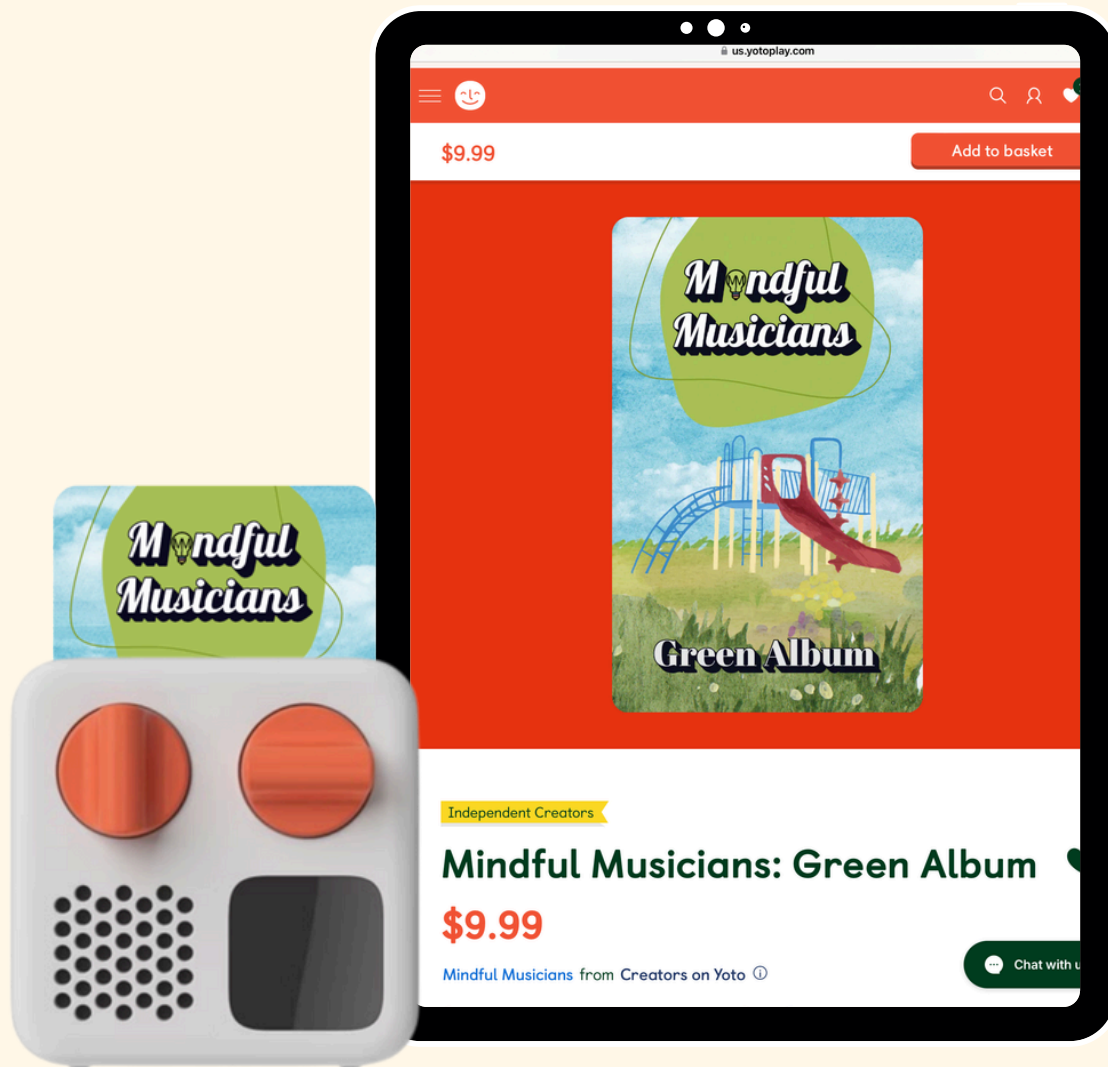


AM

RESILIENT

FIND US ON YOTO

provide an easy, screen-free way to incorporate music and mindfulness into your children's daily routine.



UNLOCK MINDFUL MUSIC

<https://us.yotoplay.com/products/mindful-musicians-green-album>