

MINDFUL MUSICIANS

AUGUST 2025 — ISSUE 7



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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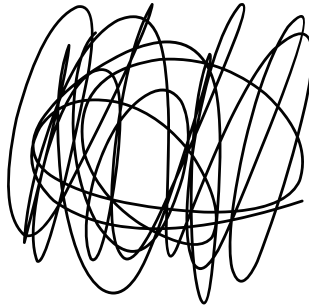
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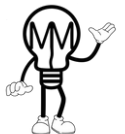
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This month's craft invites kids to set personal goals, visualize them through creative art, and celebrate themselves as they work toward achieving them.

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Monthly Inspirational Poster





HELLO, FROM CALLIE

We may still be feeling summer heat here in Iowa, but the shift toward fall has already begun. Back-to-school rhythms are in the air — earlier mornings, fuller calendars, and that subtle mental switch from the looseness of summer to something more structured.

For me, this transition is especially big because I'm stepping into homeschooling for the first time. It's something I've dreamed about for years, and now it's here — equal parts joy and "oh wow, this is real." If I'm honest, structure has never been my strongest skill, and I know the success of our at-home learning will depend on finding some. That's a little daunting.

So I'm entering this season with intention: I'll prepare as best I can, take care of myself along the way, and give myself grace when things inevitably fall through the cracks. Because they will. I'll be late sometimes. In fact, this very letter was late getting to our editor. Not exactly how I want to start the year — but also not the end of the world.

Lately, I've also been wrestling with another realization: sometimes I get completely paralyzed in the expectation of creating content for Mindful Musicians — particularly reels — feeling like I have to be an "expert" in parenting in order to speak into this space. And then, when I inevitably lose my marbles at home, I feel like the biggest hypocrite.

But here's what I've been remembering this month: I am not, and have never been, an expert in parenting or psychology. I am a human. I am a woman who loves music, the brain, and children — and who is deeply dedicated to changing the conversation around brain health. That's it. That's my lane. And maybe it's not my job to show up here as someone with all the answers, but rather as someone willing to share the journey — the good, the bad, and the "oops, that was not my finest moment."

In fact, maybe what's most powerful is for me to let you in on my challenges instead of trying to hand you perfectly polished advice I'm not always managing to follow myself. Because the truth is, we're all figuring it out as we go. Sharing the messy parts reminds us that growth isn't about being flawless — it's about being honest, curious, and willing to keep trying.

This month, we're highlighting the Mindful Musicians song "Don't Give Up". I love its steady reminder: keep your head up, keep your mind strong, keep your heart soft, and don't give up. It's a rhythm I'm trying to live this season — allowing space to rest, reset, and then try again. Not pushing so hard that I burn out, but not letting setbacks convince me I can't keep going.

So here's my encouragement to you (and to myself): notice the wins, even the tiny ones. Give yourself credit for showing up, even when you're late. Forgive yourself when the schedule slips. And keep taking the next step.

We don't have to do it perfectly to be doing it beautifully.

With you in the shift,

Callie Fitzgerald



Books and Bugs Seek and Find



2 hearts



half note



our logo!



button



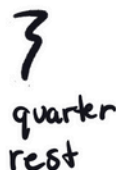
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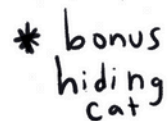
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Books and Bugs Seek and Find



2 hearts

half note



our logo!



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VOICES IN PRACTICE: KATELYN MCDERMOTT PART 2

In this new interview series, we spotlight families and educators who are bringing Mindful Musicians into their homes and classrooms. By sharing real-life stories, we hope to inspire others to see the many ways Mindful Musicians can be used outside of the group setting—to build connection, spark creativity, and support emotional growth in everyday life.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Katelyn McDermott is originally from Dubuque, IA, where she was born and raised. She and her husband, both proud graduates of the University of Iowa, are now navigating life with their three energetic daughters and their two lovable golden retrievers.

With a background as a Child Life Specialist, Katelyn transitioned to being a stay-at-home mom, a role she cherishes deeply. The family finds joy at the lake, which they consider their happy place. Katelyn is passionate about community support, actively serving on local boards and committees that focus on promoting positive brain health and providing valuable resources and family-friendly events in her area.

How did you first hear about Mindful Musicians, and what made you pause and consider trying it?

We had the unique opportunity of enrolling our oldest in a music class with the founder of Mindful Musicians—before Mindful Musicians was created. She was a COVID baby, so we were into year one and hadn't done daycare, so we were trying to find social activities.

We did a couple of music classes with Callie, and at that time she was dreaming up the idea of Centrally Rooted and Mindful Musicians. We've been able to be part of the journey from the beginning and to see how Mindful Musicians—the music, the curriculum—has shaped our parenting journey and how our children respond to things.

What kind of impact have you seen in your children since starting the program—emotionally, socially, or creatively?

The really neat thing is that our kids are learning through music but they don't even realize they're learning. For them, it's 45-minutes of creative songs, scarves, shakers, instruments—but there are lessons embedded into those 45-minutes, and that was a big goal for me. I just spent that time giving all my attention to my kiddos. We walk into this room, our phones are put away, distractions are set aside, and we really get to be together—singing, dancing, having fun.

But throughout those 45-minutes and beyond, we're getting these incredible messages and lessons. We bring [the songs] into our home and we hear [our kids] say those positive mantras or sing those songs, look in the mirror and tell themselves something positive. It's really become a foundation of things we think are important in our family—those lessons and messages we can give our kids without them even realizing what's going on.

Did each of your children respond differently to the Mindful Musicians classes?

They've all been really engaged and wanted to be part of it, but it goes back to personalities. Some might have been a little shy or more reserved, and you wonder, "Are they getting what we hope from this?" But then you bring the music into your home or you listen in the car or while coloring in the playroom, and you really start to see it come out in their play.

Can you share a moment when something in the program clicked—when you thought, "This is different"?

For me, it clicked in the interactions between our daughters. Lots of sibling rivalry—even when they're little—but through the songs they learned in Mindful Musicians, they had little chants they learned in class. I'll never forget when our middle one was just starting to walk and Layla, her older sister, was encouraging her and singing the song "Try, try, try again - if you don't succeed, try again."

Those are things she was hearing in class, hearing through the music, and she saw someone trying and struggling and could take that lesson and apply it—have empathy for someone and cheer them on. That was one of those moments that really clicked. It wasn't me providing encouragement or saying, "What does that song talk about?"—it was just in her head. She knew she was there to cheer her sister on.



How does Mindful Musicians show up in your regular routine now? Are there any rituals or moments during the day—like car rides, bedtime, or meltdowns—where the music really helps?

We lean into the Mindful Musicians music often in our house. We are having a hard time with transitions—getting to school, for example. There are lots of feelings of worry and separation; it's hard for them, leaving us for a period of time. As we started preschool, we implemented the "Wiggle Waggle" chant. Before she would go to school, we would recite that each day. In the beginning, it was mostly me, but toward the end of the school year it was her saying those positive words of affirmation before getting out of the car.

How has the music affected your child's ability to name, express, or regulate their feelings?

I've seen that more in my oldest—she's had a couple more years with Mindful Musicians. She's really good at naming how she's feeling. It's a big thing of "name it to tame it" in our family, and Mindful Musicians has helped us do that through the songs. The big thing is just knowing those emotions, and they're learning that in a fun, interactive way—it's not being drilled into them. It's fun, engaging—they're hearing those words over and over again and able to implement it in their everyday life.

How do you think a program like Mindful Musicians is helping lay the foundation for your kids' future?

I think what Mindful Musicians is creating is unique. They're all eventually going to go to school, they're all going to have that education piece regardless—but for me, Mindful Musicians is just as much a foundational pillar in our family as something like swimming lessons. It's become a staple in our family because it's important to me for them to have those skills and tools to be emotionally aware—not only for themselves but also for others—to make a difference in the world.

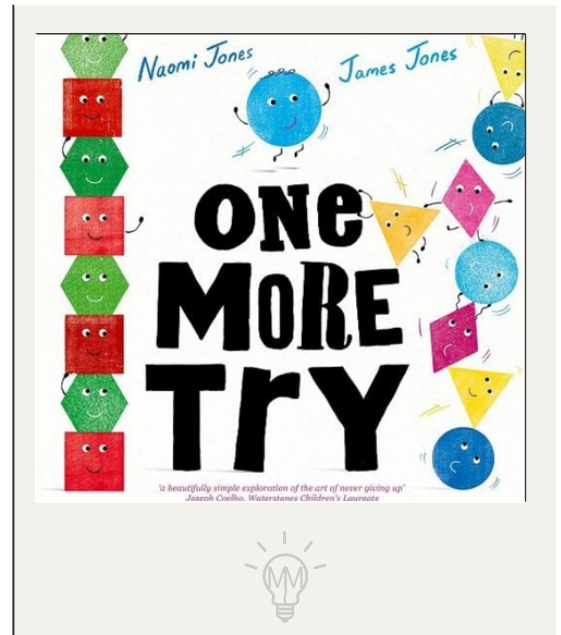
FROM PAGES TO PRACTICE

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

One More Try by Naomi Jones & James Jones is a perfect pairing for this month's song: "Don't Give Up." This beautifully illustrated story follows a character named Circle, who stays determined—even when things get tricky. While other shapes give up, Circle keeps wondering, trying new things, and thinking creatively.

What we especially love is that Circle doesn't push through nonstop. At one point, Circle takes a rest—some quiet time alone—and that's when the new idea finally comes. It's a powerful message for kids (and adults!): sometimes the best ideas come when we pause, breathe, and reset.



You won't find any tantrums or shouting in this story. Instead, the characters show curiosity, calm problem-solving, and perseverance. Circle models what it looks like to stay resilient and open-minded, even when something feels frustrating. Pair this book with our song "Don't Give Up" for a full-body experience of what it means to keep trying, rest when needed, and come back with a fresh perspective.

Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. What's something that used to be hard for you that isn't hard anymore?
2. What's something that feels hard for you right now?
3. How do you feel when something is really hard?
4. Do you think your brain works better when you're screaming... or when you're taking slow, deep breaths?
5. When you feel overwhelmed, what are some things you can do to help yourself reset so you're ready to try again later?

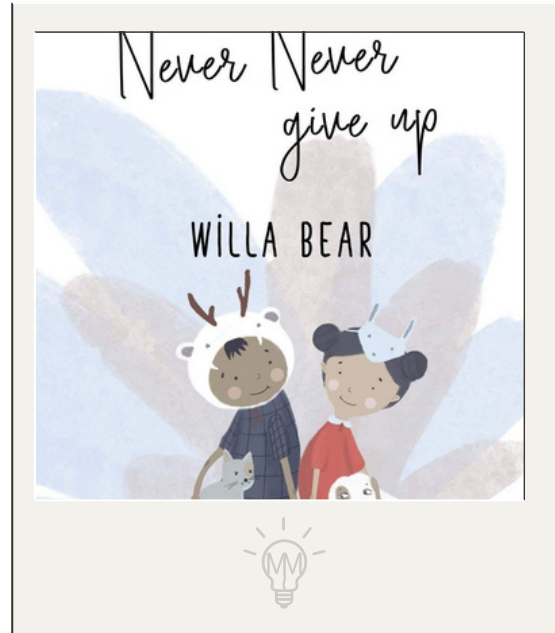
Tip* After they answer, offer your personal experiences as a child and adult to build connection and show empathy.

FROM PAGES TO PRACTICE

PART 2

Never Never Give Up is a touching story about two characters who walk through life together—through the joys, the challenges, and everything in between.

Unlike some stories where a character is working through a single problem, this book takes a wider view. It gently reminds us that hardships, sadness, and disappointments are not "if" moments, but "when" moments. They are a part of life. And even more importantly—so is love, connection, and not being alone. This book offers families a chance to pause and say, "I will be here for you. Not just when things are easy, but especially when they're not." It's an opportunity to let your child hear, maybe even feel, that your love for them is unconditional. That they are important. That they belong. That you want them in your life, always.

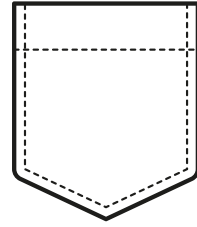


Pair this book with our song “Don’t Give Up”, which is about more than just math problems or tying shoes—it’s about the strength we find in each other when life gets hard.

Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. Have you ever had a time when something felt really hard or sad?
2. What helped you feel better—or what do you wish had helped?
3. How do you know when someone really loves you, even when you’re not feeling your best?
4. What does love feel like when you’re having a bad day?
5. In the story, the characters stayed together no matter what. Who in your life makes you feel safe and supported like that?
6. What do they do that helps you feel that way?
7. If you saw a friend having a hard time, what could you do to help them feel not so alone?
8. Why do you think it’s important to never give up—not just on activities, but on people?
9. What does it mean to be there for someone even when things aren’t easy?

POCKET PAUSE



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

DESCRIPTION

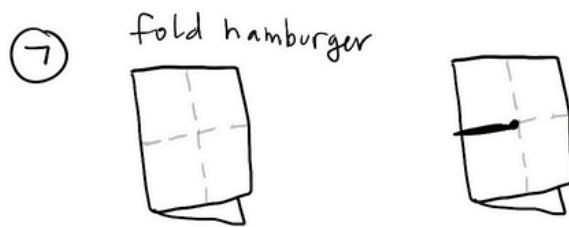
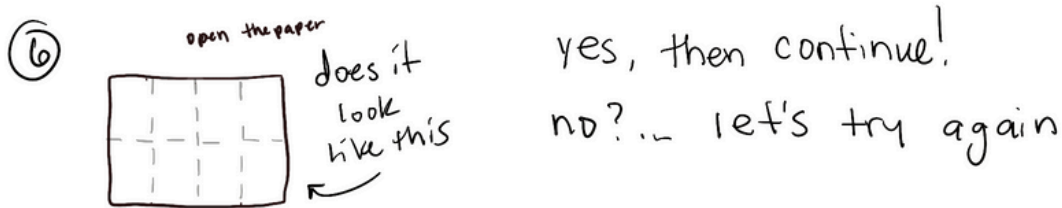
The Pocket Pause book is a small, portable tool designed to help kids calm down and feel better when they're having a tough time. It's filled with simple activities and calming ideas they can use to take a break, focus, and reset their emotions.

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

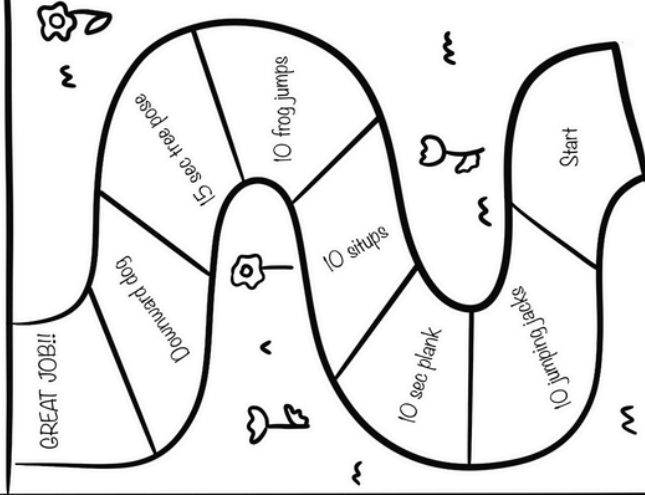




I Spy

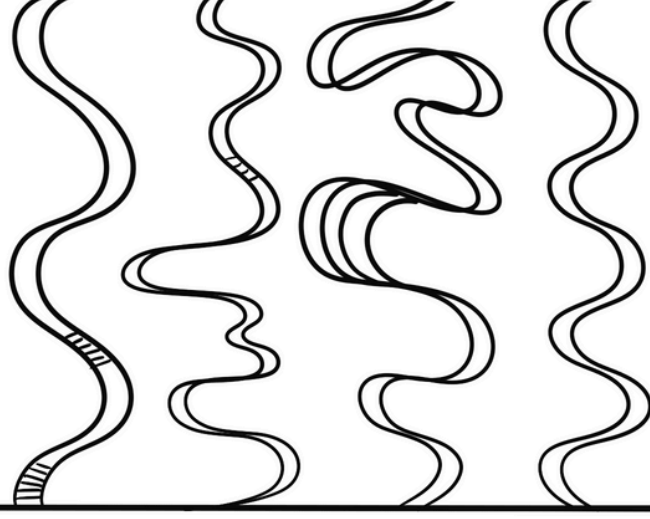
- ☐ The colors of the rainbow
- ☐ 4 fuzzy things
- ☐ 3 shiny things
- ☐ 2 living things
- ☐ 1 big hug
- ☐ 4 slow breaths
- ☐ Grass
- ☐ Fresh air

Super mega challenge of the day! Can you make it to the end? Can you make it to the end?
Color in each tile that you complete



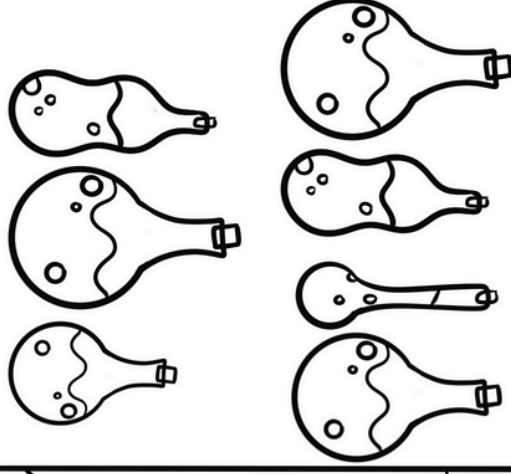
Find these words
sunshine strong kind funny
summer joy brave

O	P	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	R	T	T	U	U	U	U
U	T	R	J	M	M	L	L
N	F	O	O	M	B	B	B
S	U	N	G	B	R	K	K
H	N	A	B	D	I	I	I
I	N	Y	V	K	A	N	N
E	E	L	C	B	D	D	D

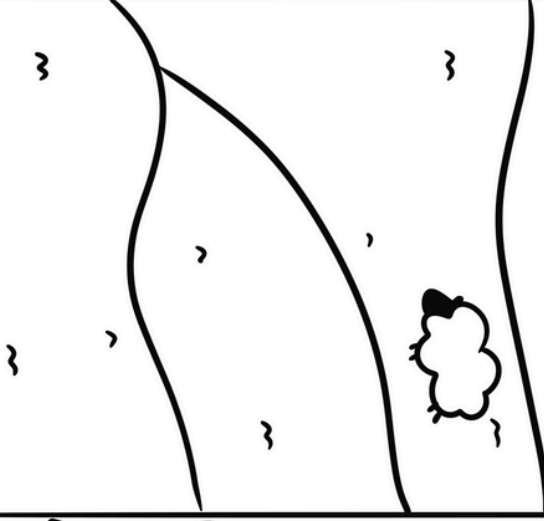


Add as many lines and squiggles as you can then color, your beautiful piece of art

What emotions have you felt today? If each of these magical bottles was filled with those emotions which bottle would be for which emotion? Choose and then color each one.



For every thing you tidy today, add one sheep to your pasture



Page

COLOR

THINK



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.

Q1: My child gets frustrated when learning a new song and wants to quit. How can I encourage them without pushing too hard?

A: Oh, I know this one – I've wanted to quit halfway through a song myself! I usually tell my kids (and myself) that frustration is a sign your brain is growing. Then we break the song into little bite-sized pieces so we can celebrate a win sooner. Small wins keep the "don't give up" energy alive.

Q2: We're always rushed in the mornings. Is there a quick mindfulness practice we can do as a family?

A: Mornings are chaos at my house too, especially now that we're trying to find our homeschooling rhythm. One thing that helps us is a 30-second "morning check-in." We all take one deep breath together, then say one word about how we're feeling. It's fast, it's doable, and sometimes my word is "sleepy" and that's okay.

Q3: How can I keep music practice from becoming a power struggle?

A: Been there. What works for us is letting the kids have some control – they choose the order of songs, pick a goofy warm-up, or decide where they want to practice. The more ownership they have, the less I have to be the practice police (which is a job I do not want).

Q4: What's a good way to help my child "reset" after a meltdown?

A: Honestly? I need this one for myself too. Movement is our go-to reset – sometimes it's jumping jacks, other times it's cranking a favorite song and dancing until we're laughing.

Ask Callie continued

Q5: Sometimes I feel guilty for needing a break from my kids. How do I get past that?

A: Oh friend, same. But here's the thing: breaks are not a sign you don't love your kids. They're proof that you're human. When you take care of your nervous system, you're teaching them how to take care of theirs. That's a win-win.

Q6: What's a fun way to weave mindfulness into music time?

A: Try a "close your eyes and imagine" game. Play a short piece and have your child picture a scene or story it reminds them of. It's fun, sparks creativity, and secretly teaches them to be fully present. (Also, the stories they come up with can be hilarious.)

Q7: My child doesn't want to try new activities because they're afraid of failing. Any tips?

A: I tell my kids about the time I bombed a piano recital in middle school (full-on wrong notes, red face, the works). Then I tell them what I learned from it. Kids need to hear that failure isn't the end – it's part of the story.

Q8: How do I "not give up" myself when parenting feels exhausting?

A: I'm with you – some days it feels like running a marathon with no finish line in sight. My best advice? Rest before you feel like quitting. Even a five-minute walk or one song in a quiet room can refill your tank. Rest is not giving up – it's how we keep going.

Q9: How do I help my kids handle big feelings without always jumping in to fix them?

A: This is such a tough one – my instinct is always to smooth it over, too. Lately I've been trying to just sit with them and name what I see: "That was disappointing" or "You're feeling really mad right now." It's amazing how much kids relax when they feel understood, even if nothing is "fixed" in the moment.



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



UNLOCKING THE LYRICS: DON'T GIVE UP

By Ana Maria Locke

The song *Don't Give Up* from the Green Album repeats the same few words throughout the entire track. At first, you might find yourself tempted to glaze over—especially when you're hearing or singing the same phrase again and again. But I've been surprised, again and again, at how useful these words are in real life when I'm supporting my child.

"Keep your head up." This telling us: "You've got this. Don't look down on yourself." These aren't just song lyrics—they've become our go-to phrases when things get hard. Whether it's a dropped pencil, a difficult math lesson, or an explosion of emotions when a drawing that she spent 10 minutes on goes awry, the song gives us a script. A way to meet challenge with strength. The repetition makes it stick.

Self-talk is powerful. And as parents, we sometimes forget just how much our children are watching—not just listening to what we say to them, but how we talk to ourselves. If I want my child to tell herself, "You can do hard things," then I need to be saying that to myself too.

I need to show her what it looks like to try again another time, to say, "I am enough," even when something didn't go well.

I feel like the line "Keep your heart soft" gets overlooked. I think it may be the most important lyric in the whole track. Getting overwhelmed, frustrated, or disappointed in ourselves is easy. Being kind to ourselves in those moments is the real challenge.

I'll share a trick that I use with my daughter when I notice she's being hard on herself. I ask her to imagine the younger version of herself—her two-year-old self, her three-year-old self, her four-year-old self, and they live in her heart. Then I remind her that those versions of her can hear how she is talking to herself. I give her a chance to try again, and instantly, her tone changes. She softens. Because she wants to be gentle. She knows that little version of herself deserves care.

That's what "keep your heart" is about. It's not about pushing through at all costs. It's about loving ourselves, even when we can't figure something out. It's about giving ourselves room to grow and space to feel.

And finally the line, "Don't Give Up" doesn't mean "try the same thing over and over until it works." It means staying curious. It means saying, "Maybe I could try this a different way." It means recognizing when we need to take a break or take a breath and come back when we feel ready. It means holding space for effort, rest, and trying again—with a soft heart and a strong mind.

DON'T GIVE UP

Keep your head up

Keep your mind strong

Keep your heart soft and

DON'T GIVE UP



“Don’t Give Up”- Goal Visualisation

Materials Needed:

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

Description:

This craft encourages children to visualize themselves achieving a task and to accept that they don’t have to achieve something right away, but that someday they will figure it out!

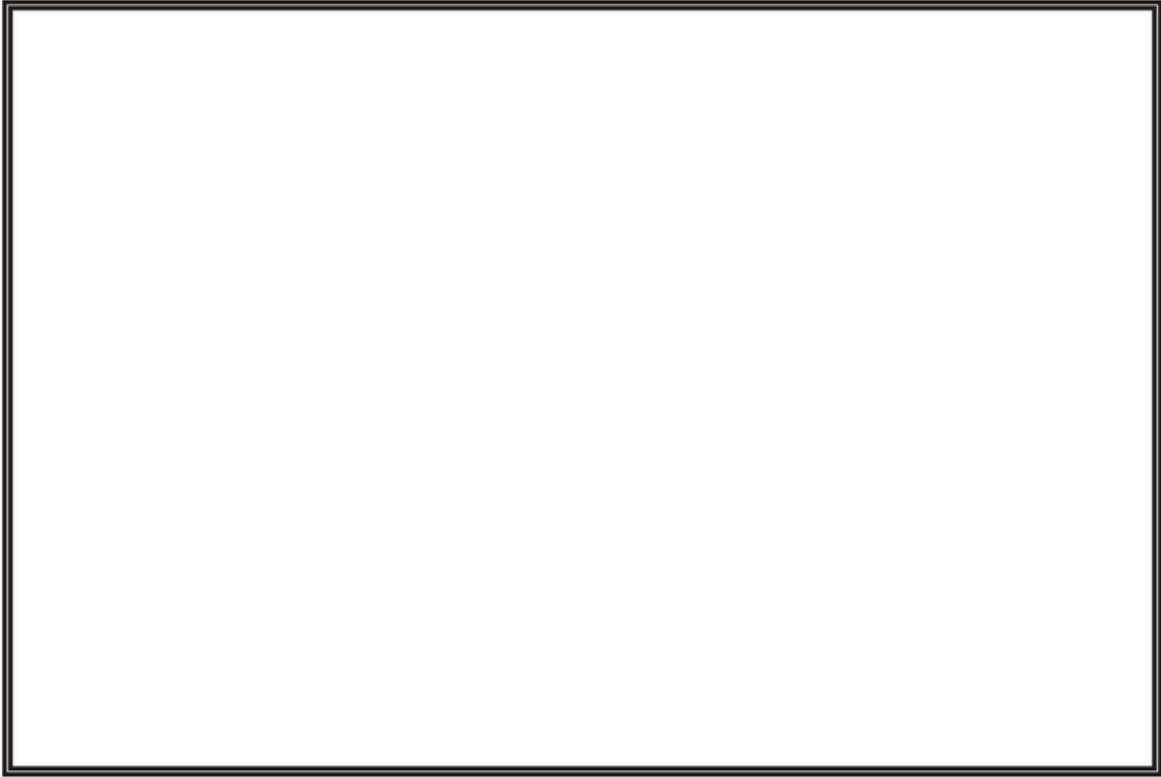
Instructions:

1. Have the child draw a picture of themselves achieving the thing that they are setting out to accomplish.
2. Write the date in the blank.
3. Put this photo up somewhere where they can see it. This is for inspirational purposes
4. Once they accomplish their goal, take a photo of them achieving it and let them glue it into the second square.
5. Write this date in the blank.

Keeping these accomplishments in an easily visible area will help them when they see all of the things they may have thought were too hard for them to do at the time. They can also see that some things took much longer to learn than others.

GOAL

DATE _____



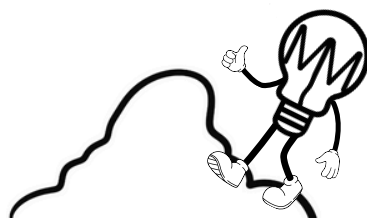
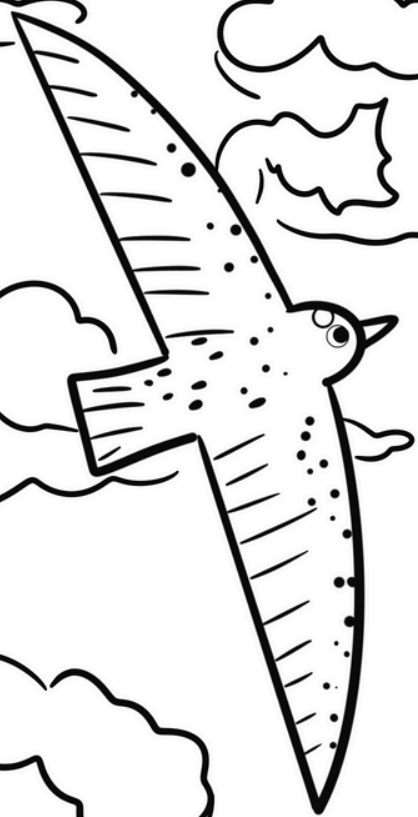
DATE _____



I
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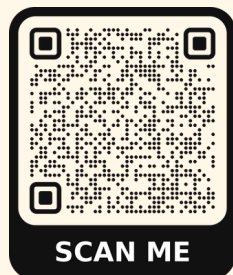
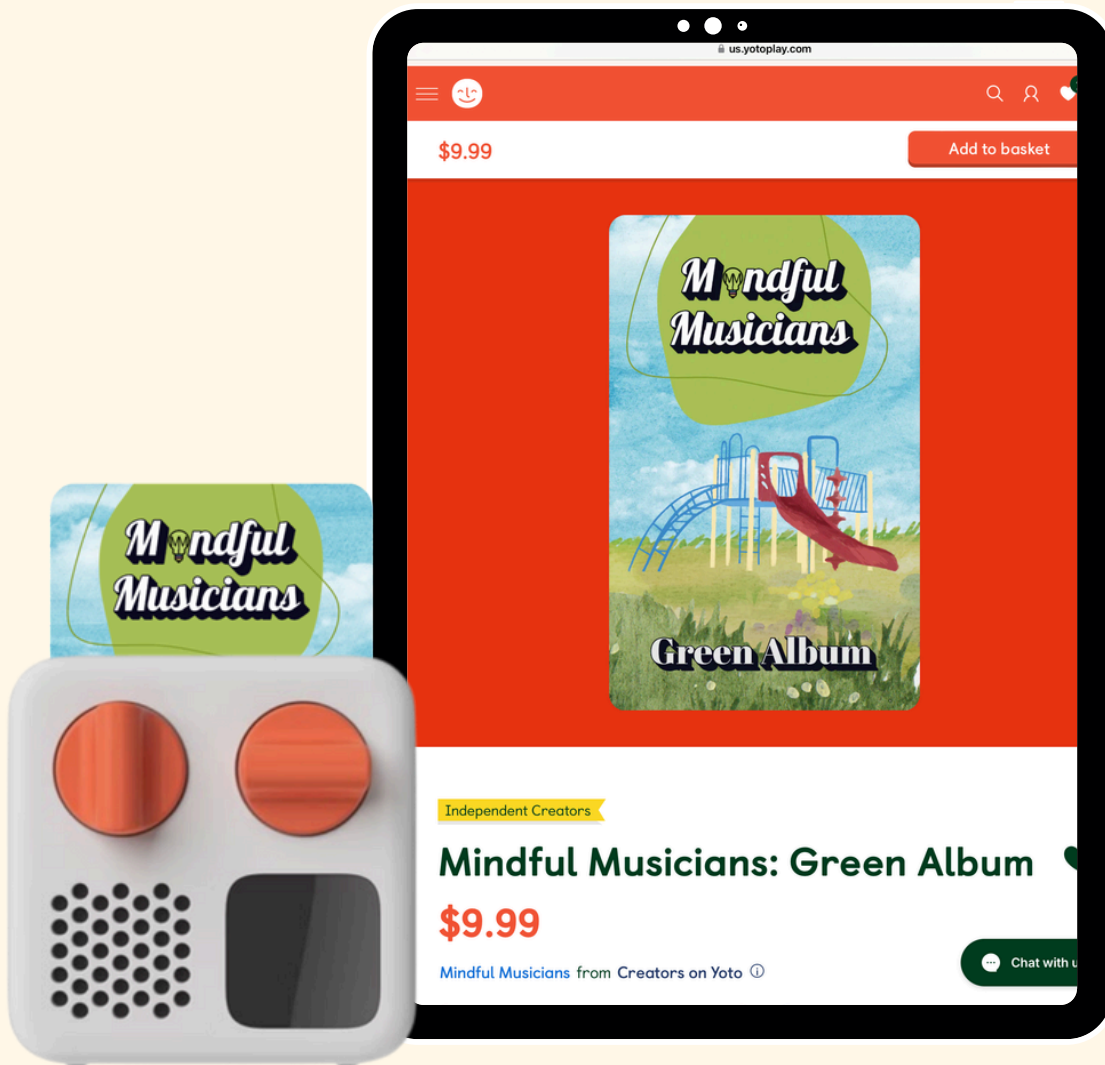


I
AM
PERFECTLY
ME



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>