



MINDFUL MUSICIANS

OCTOBER 2025 — ISSUE 9



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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HELLO, FROM CALLIE

Dear friends,

The air has cooled just enough to make us move slower. The pace of September has softened, and with it, a new rhythm has started to take shape in our home. For the first time, I've gone against what feels like the "norm" of society and listened instead to what my nervous system — and my family — actually need.

Homeschooling wasn't a decision we made lightly, but it was one born out of that quiet knowing that our lives had become too rushed, too noisy. I needed to choose peace over pace. In doing so, I've learned that slowing down doesn't mean everything gets easier. It simply means I can see more clearly what was already there — the joy, the exhaustion, the loneliness, the love.

Between chasing a fifteen-month-old, teaching my bold eight-year-old, managing a nonprofit, and trying to grow Mindful Musicians, I'm learning the huge impact that small rituals can have. Thirty seconds of deep breathing after loading the car. A few minutes under the stars at night. A scribbled journal entry in the morning. A walk, a workout, a solo ice cream cone. They're so small they almost don't seem worth naming — but together, they're teaching me how to come home to myself again.

And yet, even with all this intention, belonging still feels slippery. I have community all around me, and still there are moments I feel like I have no one to talk to. This year has brought family challenges I never expected. I've seen myself in so many different roles — mother, teacher, daughter, wife, leader — and I'm still learning to feel "enough" in any of them. That, I think, is my soul work: to remember that my worth isn't measured by how together I seem, but by how true I'm willing to be.

Lately, I've been thinking about how belonging changes shape throughout our lives. As children, it's given to us — through family, friendship, and familiarity. As adults, we have to build it. We build it in our choices, in our honesty, in the small ways we care for others and ourselves. It's easy to assume belonging means being surrounded by people, but I'm learning it's more often about being at peace within ourselves — that quiet confidence that says, "I can trust the life I'm living, even when it doesn't look like everyone else's."

And maybe that's why rituals matter so much. They become our anchors when life feels uncertain — steady, repeatable, grounding. A ritual doesn't need to be grand to be sacred. Lighting a candle. Saying "I love you" before bed. Playing the same song on the way to school. These small, ordinary moments are how we remind ourselves — and our children — that we're held. That we belong to one another, no matter how chaotic the day feels.

There are days when the house is a mess, the meal plan sits blank, and the bedtime routine has completely unraveled. The eight-year-old is still awake at ten, and my husband and I pass each other like ships in the night. But even here — maybe especially here — I'm trying to see myself with softer eyes. Because when I show myself grace, my girls learn to offer it to themselves. When I move through my struggles, they see resilience. When I take time to care for my body, they learn what it means to prioritize their own health. When I wave to the mailman or tidy the yard, they see respect in action.

This month, I'm sharing something close to my heart — a brand-new bonus song called "I Belong." I wrote it while reflecting on this very theme — how belonging isn't something we wait to be given, but something we cultivate within and around us. It's a gentle reminder that connection begins by honoring who we are and where we are, right now.

I'm realizing that maybe belonging isn't something we find — it's something we build through small acts of presence. Through the rituals that whisper: you're safe, you're loved, you belong right here.

As the trees let go of their leaves this month, I'm trying to let go too — of the pressure to have it all together, of the voice that says I'm not doing enough, of the belief that chaos cancels out beauty. Because from this unmade bed, surrounded by toys and laundry, I can still see it: the beauty that's been here all along.

With you in the mess and the magic,

Callie Fitzgerald

bonus: cat spider



bonus: cat spider



30-DAY CONNECTION



 30 minutes outside (no screens)	Listen to the whole Green Album together	Get a book from your library that we shared in our magazine	Do a craft together from our magazine	Write a thank you card to someone you love 
Turn on Feels Good Too & clean together	Listen to Fruits & Veggies and make a veggie/ fruit platter	Karaoke night! Use our sing-along videos! 	Make up a family mantra that you say every morning and night	Set aside a time of day where everyone shares a moment that was hard
 60 minute family play time, tech free!	 Pack a lunch and spend the afternoon at your local park	Cover the house in your colored version of our monthly posters	 Find all of the colors of the rainbow outside	Read together at the end of the day while soft piano music plays
Pretend Play! Have a MM class at home that your kiddo leads	Do a craft together from our magazine 	30 minutes outside (no screens)	Visit a place in your town that you have never been to	Get a book from your library that we shared in our magazine 
 Make instruments out of items in your house!	Color and solve a seek and find from our magazine	Print out pocket pauses for you <u>all</u> to do	Print out and color square bears together. Keep one on you!	Create a calming corner in your house
Go on a walk with no time constraints 	60 minute family play time, tech free! 	Gift Giving: Give a friend a Pocket Pause for them to do	Bake something together while listening to the Green Album	Go for a walk and let your child lead the convo 

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

The Grand Hotel of Feelings by Lidia Brankovic is a wonderful book for opening up meaningful conversations about emotions. It helps children learn to observe their feelings rather than be defined by them, recognizing emotions as visitors that come and go, rather than permanent parts of who we are.

The illustrations are quirky, fun, and engaging, making complex ideas about emotional awareness easy to grasp. This book isn't just great for young children, it also offers valuable insights for older kids, making it a perfect choice for families who want a creative and gentle way to talk about feelings together.



Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. Which of the emotions was most interesting to you?
2. Which of these emotions did you feel today?
3. What things can we do to invite peace into our hotel?
4. How do you know when a certain feeling is “checking in” to your hotel?
5. What helps you when a big feeling doesn’t want to leave?
6. Which feeling would you like to visit your hotel more often?
7. How can we make all feelings—both comfortable and uncomfortable—feel welcome?

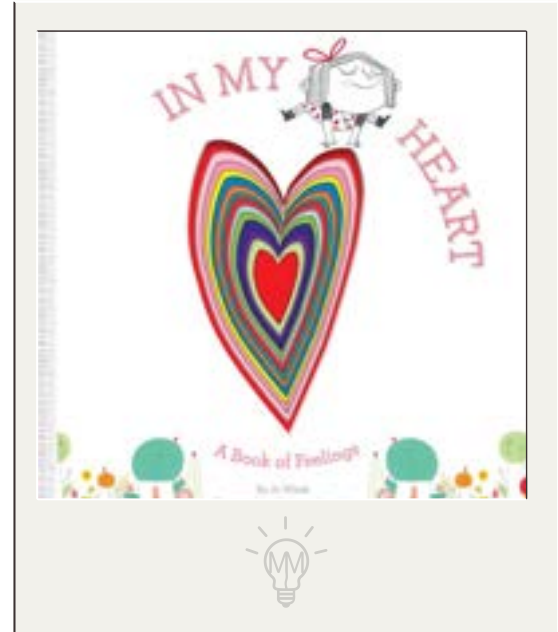
Tip* After they answer, offer your personal experiences as a child and adult to build connection and show empathy.

FROM PAGES TO PRACTICE

PART 2

In My Heart : A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek is a beautifully simple yet powerful book that explores the wide range of emotions we all experience. The illustrations are clean and straightforward, allowing the heartfelt message to shine through. Witek uses gentle metaphors to describe how different emotions feel inside our hearts, helping children connect words to their own emotional experiences.

This book is perfect for younger children and offers a comforting way to begin conversations about feelings, both their own and those of others. Seeing the main character experience a full range of emotions helps children recognize that all feelings are normal and that their own emotional experiences are valid and shared.

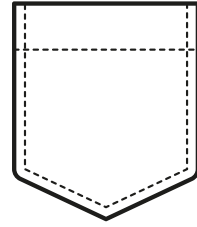


Reflection Questions to use with your book:

1. What feeling stood out to you the most in this story?
2. What does your heart feel like when you are happy?
3. Can you think of a time your heart felt heavy or sad like in the book?
4. Which color would you choose to show how your heart feels today?
5. How can we help our hearts feel calm when they are full of strong feelings?
6. What kinds of things make your heart feel big and full?
7. How can you tell when someone else's heart might be feeling something different than yours?

Tip* Point out moments in your day that reflect the different parts of the book.

POCKET PAUSE



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

DESCRIPTION

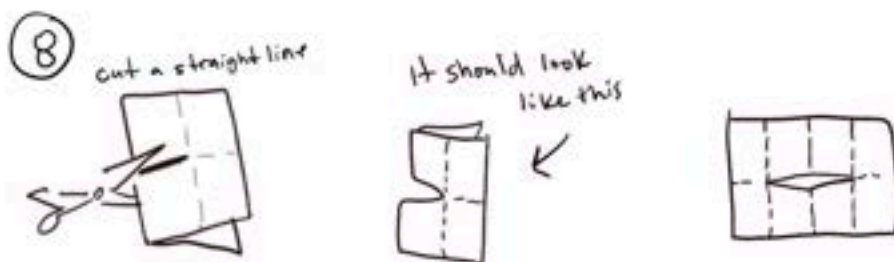
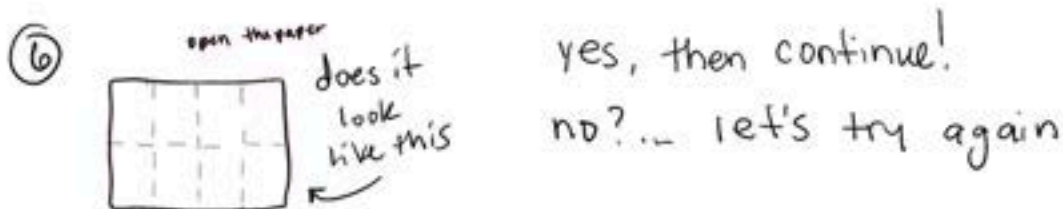
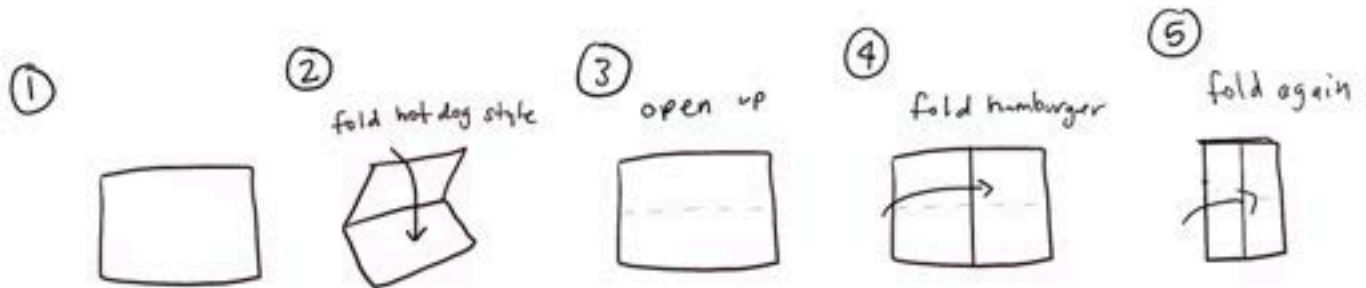
The Pocket Pause book is a small, portable tool designed to help kids calm down and feel better when they're having a tough time. It's filled with simple activities and calming ideas they can use to take a break, focus, and reset their emotions.

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



! _
! _
AND _
! _



Say how you feel

When... _____

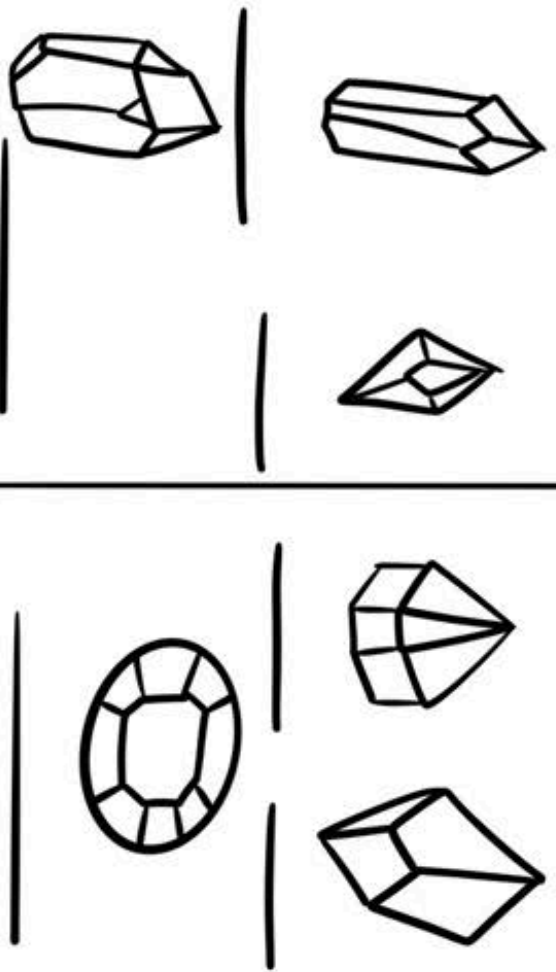
I feel... _____

Because.... _____

I need... _____

Coping Skills Gems

Think of six coping skills that help you feel better on a hard day. Assign a gem to each one. Color the gems!



Power of Perspective

Sometimes things aren't as bad as they seem. Draw a picture of a difficult situation. Turn your page upside down and draw the optimistic view that sees a learning opportunity.

Pessimistic

Optimistic





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: This month's letter talked about belonging. In your work as a therapist and educator, what's something you've learned about how belonging shapes the brain?

Belonging is not just an emotional experience—it's biological. When we feel safe and accepted, our brains release oxytocin, which lowers stress hormones and increases our capacity for empathy and connection. For children, especially, that sense of "I'm safe here" literally builds the neural foundation for healthy emotional regulation later in life. It's one of the reasons community—whether family, classroom, or team—is so powerful for brain development.

Q2: You also mentioned the power of small rituals. Why do these simple moments matter so much?

Rituals are predictable patterns, and predictability is what tells the nervous system, "You can rest now." When a family lights a candle at dinner or sings the same bedtime song, the repetition cues the body to move out of "fight or flight" and into the parasympathetic—or rest-and-digest—state. That's where real learning and bonding happen.

Q3: You've spoken before about the science of humming. Can you explain why it's so calming—for babies and adults alike?

Yes! Humming is one of my favorite "micro-tools" for regulating the nervous system. When we hum, we activate the vagus nerve, which is the main pathway of the parasympathetic system. This vibration signals safety to the body—heart rate slows, breathing deepens, and cortisol drops. For infants, whose nervous systems are still co-regulated with a caregiver, a parent's gentle hum literally helps them learn what calm feels like. It's rhythm, vibration, and voice—all communicating, "You're safe."

Q4: For families wanting to build more mindful habits, where's a realistic place to start?

Start small. Choose one consistent anchor in the day—a song before school, a breathing moment in the car, a three-minute dance break after dinner. Consistency matters more than complexity. Those little repetitions create familiarity and connection, which over time shape brain patterns for calm and focus.

Q5: What's something about music therapy that still amazes you after all these years?

That rhythm and melody can reach places words can't. Even in clinical settings—working with trauma, grief, or developmental challenges—I've watched music bypass defenses and awaken hope. The brain doesn't separate emotion from sound; when we use rhythm intentionally, we're essentially speaking the brain's native language.

Ask Callie continued

Q6: Mindful Musicians keeps growing. What's your vision for the next season?

My dream is to see Mindful Musicians become a household tool for emotional literacy—something families, schools, and therapists all use to teach kids how their brains and bodies work together. We're building resources that make brain health both approachable and fun. Long-term, I'd love to see it accessible in pediatric offices and early-childhood programs nationwide.

Q7: For readers who ask, "How can we help?"—what's the most meaningful way to support the mission?

Honestly, sharing it. When a parent, teacher, or therapist passes along a song, subscribes, or brings it into their classroom, that ripple matters. For those in a position to give financially, donations or school subscriptions help us reach more under-resourced communities. But even more powerful is engagement—people using the content and talking about why it matters.

Q8: As someone balancing leadership, parenting, and creativity, what keeps you grounded professionally?

Clear boundaries and honest reflection. I've learned that I'm most effective when I pause, listen, and realign with purpose before reacting. That's as true in leadership as in parenting. When I give myself permission to slow down, I can lead from clarity instead of urgency.

Q9: What's one concept from neuroscience that you wish every parent understood?

That self-regulation is contagious. Our kids borrow our nervous systems to find their own calm. When we take a breath before responding, when we hum or pause, their mirror neurons fire—and they learn calm through us. It's less about what we say and more about what we model.

Q10: Finally, what's giving you hope right now?

Watching families embrace imperfection. I see more parents choosing connection over control, curiosity over shame. It's not easy work, but it's world-changing. Every time a parent hums instead of yells, pauses instead of reacts—that's generational healing in real time.



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



SO MANY WAYS

By Ana Maria Locke

At face value, “So Many Ways” is a song that helps children label their emotions and practice calming breathing. It’s simple and straightforward. But from a deeper perspective, and especially from a parent’s point of view, this song is an essential tool in building a child’s resilience and ability to process emotion.

In our house, whenever our child is having a really big feeling, “So Many Ways” is the song we turn on. She goes into her room, blasts it, jumps up and down, and lets all that energy out. Then we move on to “Feels Good Too,” followed by “Square,” and we finish it off with “Good Kid.” Some days, “So Many Ways” plays three times before we can move on to the next song – but either way, this playlist wouldn’t exist without “So Many Ways” being first.

Children don’t yet have the capacity in their brains to rationally work through emotions or understand the deeper cause behind them. As adults, it’s our job to teach them how to do this – and to do it safely. One of the most powerful things about this song is that it validates a child’s feelings. It reminds them that everyone has big, difficult emotions; that good days and bad days happen to everyone; and that these moments will pass.

As adults, it’s so easy to want to make our child’s difficult emotions more manageable – to say something like, “It’s okay, you can just get another popsicle,” when theirs hits the ground. But in doing that, we unintentionally invalidate their feelings.

I’ve been taking a cue from “So Many Ways.” The first thing I do now is listen to my child’s feelings. I relate to them, show that I understand where she’s coming from, and help her find a safe way to express that emotion.

Sometimes, that process takes longer than is convenient, but that’s part of the work.

As parents, we also need to be resilient ourselves. We have to remember that this is a long process, and that our child’s brain won’t be fully developed until their mid-to-late twenties.

And if no one else has thanked you today, I want to personally thank you, for taking the time to help raise, support, teach, and encourage the next generation of adults to be kind, thoughtful, respectful, and self-aware.

SO MANY WAYS

So many ways, so many ways to feel (x2)

Sometimes I'm feeling mad

Sometimes I'm feeling sad

Every single way I can breathe

I go in...out...in...out (4x)

I'm feeling sad I'm feeling sad today (x2)

When I'm feeling sad, I know that I'm still okay

I go in...out...in...out (4x)

I'm feeling mad I'm feeling mad today (x2)

When I'm feeling mad I know that the feeling won't stay

I go in...out...in...out (7x)

WOOO!

(guitar solo - 5 counts of 8)

I'm feeling great I'm feeling great today (x2)

When I'm feeling great I'm thankful for the day

(clap last 2 times)

So many ways so many ways to feel (x2)

Sometimes I'm feeling mad

Sometimes I'm feeling sad

Every single way I can breathe (4x)



“So Many Ways” Feelings Hotel

Materials Needed:

- Printed RoomTemplate
- Scissors
- Glue stick or tape
- 1 large clip or clothespin (for keeping the hotel closed or open)
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- Small toys or figurines (to represent different emotions)
- Optional: A flat surface or small box to display your finished hotel

Description:

This activity invites children to imagine, build, and explore their very own Grand Hotel of Feelings — a playful and artistic way to understand emotions. Each room represents a different feeling, helping kids visualize, name, and nurture their emotions through crafting and pretend play. Children can make one room or several and even connect multiple rooms to form their own “Feelings Hotel.” Each room becomes a place where their feelings can “live,” rest, or receive care.

Instructions:

1. Step 1: Print and Prepare

- a. Print one or more copies of the Grand Hotel of Feelings Room Template.

2. Step 2: Design Your Room

- a. On each template, draw and decorate what a specific emotion’s room might look like. Encourage children to express what each feeling would need in their room.

3. Step 3: Cut, Fold, and Assemble

- a. Cut along the solid lines of the template.
- b. Fold along the dotted lines.
- c. Glue or tape the flaps to form an open cube shape (three sides open).
- d. Each finished piece is one “room” in your Feelings Hotel.

4. Step 4: Combine Rooms (Optional for Older or Adventurous Crafters)

- a. To attach rooms together:
 - i. Flatten (collapse) two rooms side by side. (See images on next page for visual understanding)
 - ii. Glue one side of the first room to one side of the second room.
 - iii. Continue gluing each room until you have four connected rooms.
- b. Leave the last two sides unglued — these will be the front and back doors of your hotel. When open, your Feelings Hotel will fan out into a circle; when closed, it folds neatly.

5. Step 5: Add Your Feelings

- a. Choose small toys or figurines to represent each emotion — for example:
 - i. Ex: a small sun toy for happiness, a blue bead for sadness, a tiny dragon for anger
 - ii. Free play and allow the child to explore this new creation!

"SO MANY WAYS" FEELINGS HOTEL

REFLECTION QUESTIONS AND CONVERSATION STARTERS

What feeling would stay in
this room?

What feeling visits your
hotel most often?

what about that toy makes
you think of that emotion?

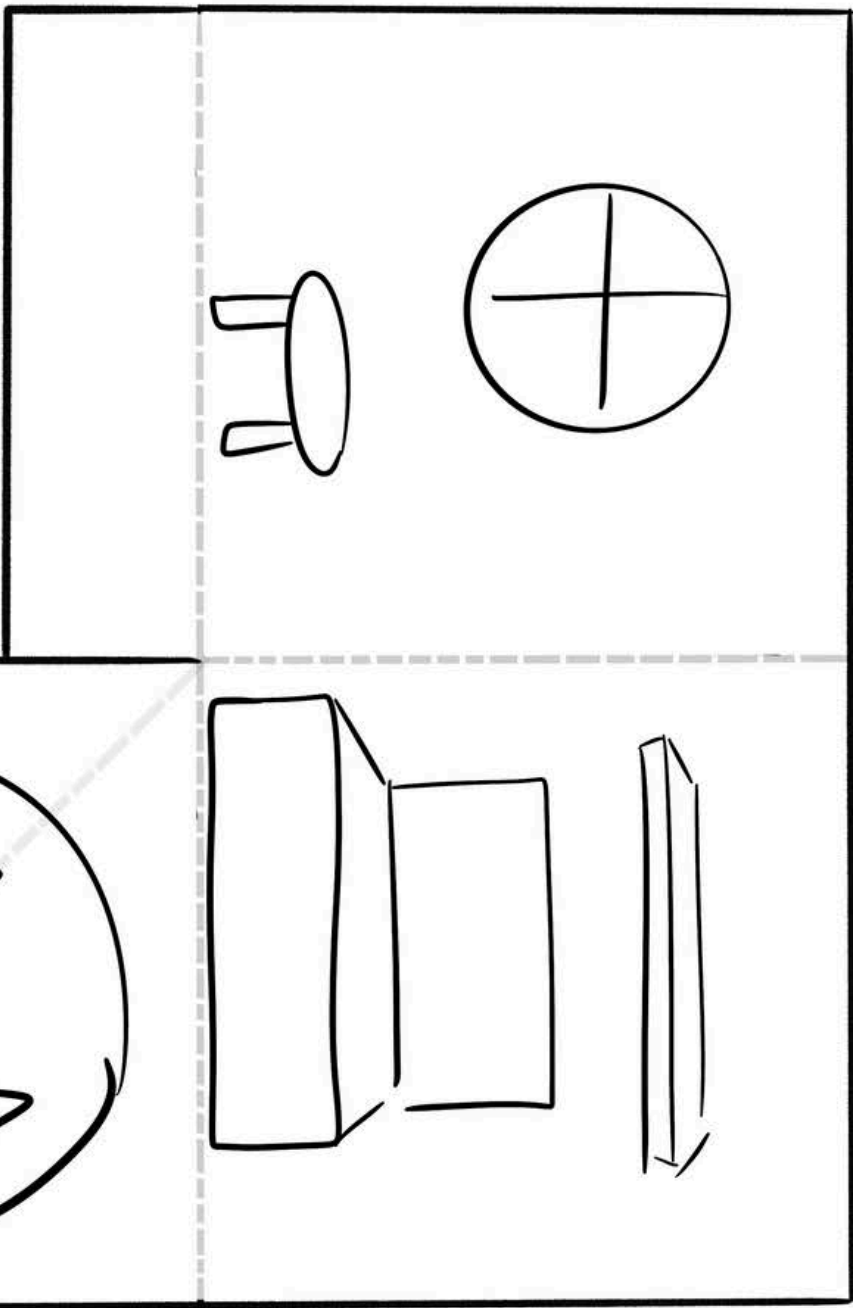
CONVERSATION STARTERS

- How can we welcome all feelings, even the tricky ones?
- Can you think of a time that two or more feelings showed up at once?
- How do you know when that feeling is here to visit your hotel? What do you feel in your body?



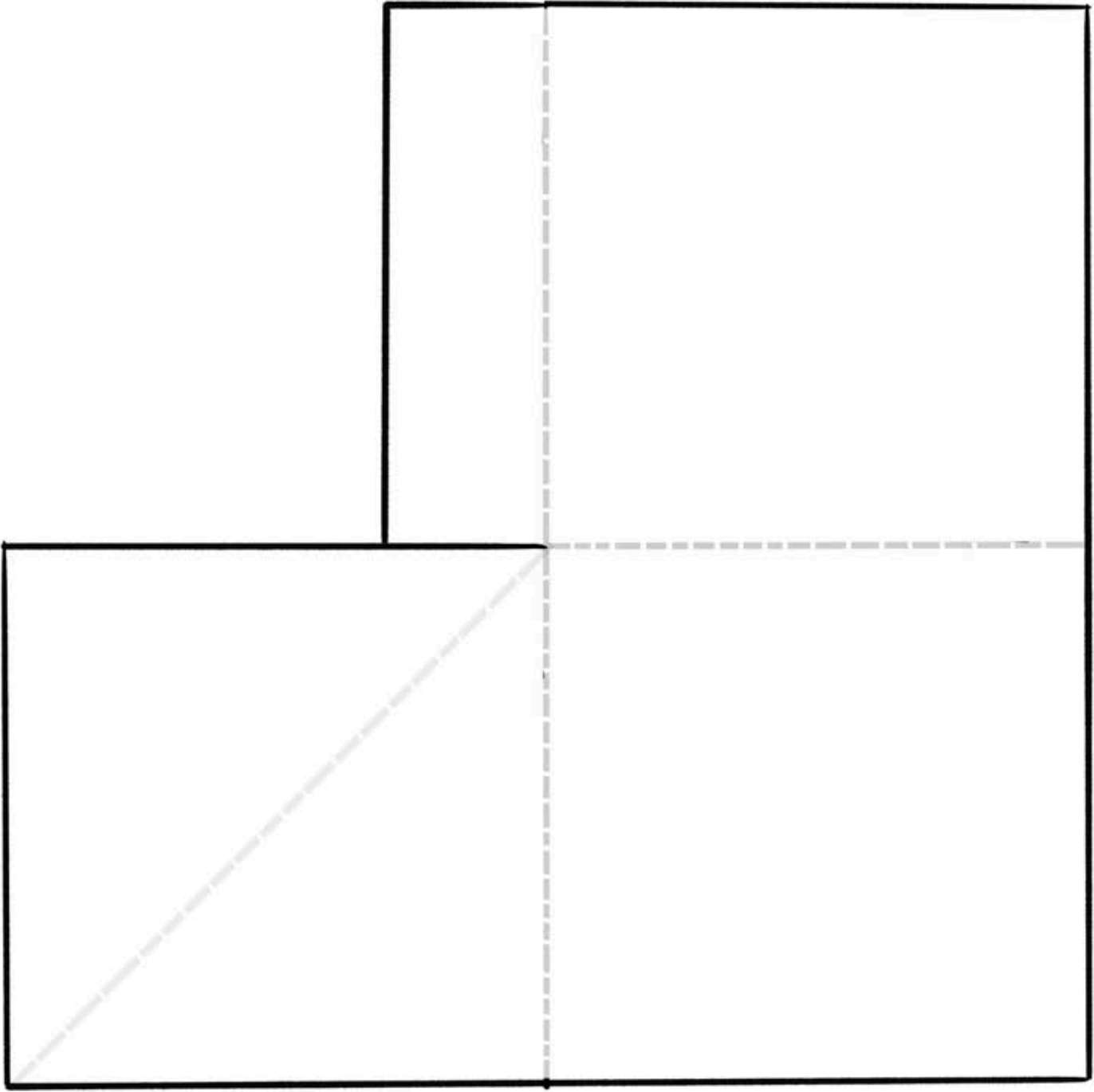
Wall
→

g/n
+ m
p e l o o r
f o o r



← Floor

← Wall



I CAN

there are so

many ways

to feel

BREATHE

I CAN

there are so

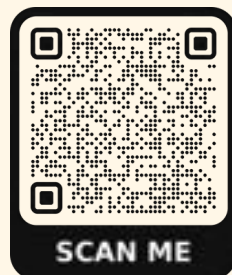
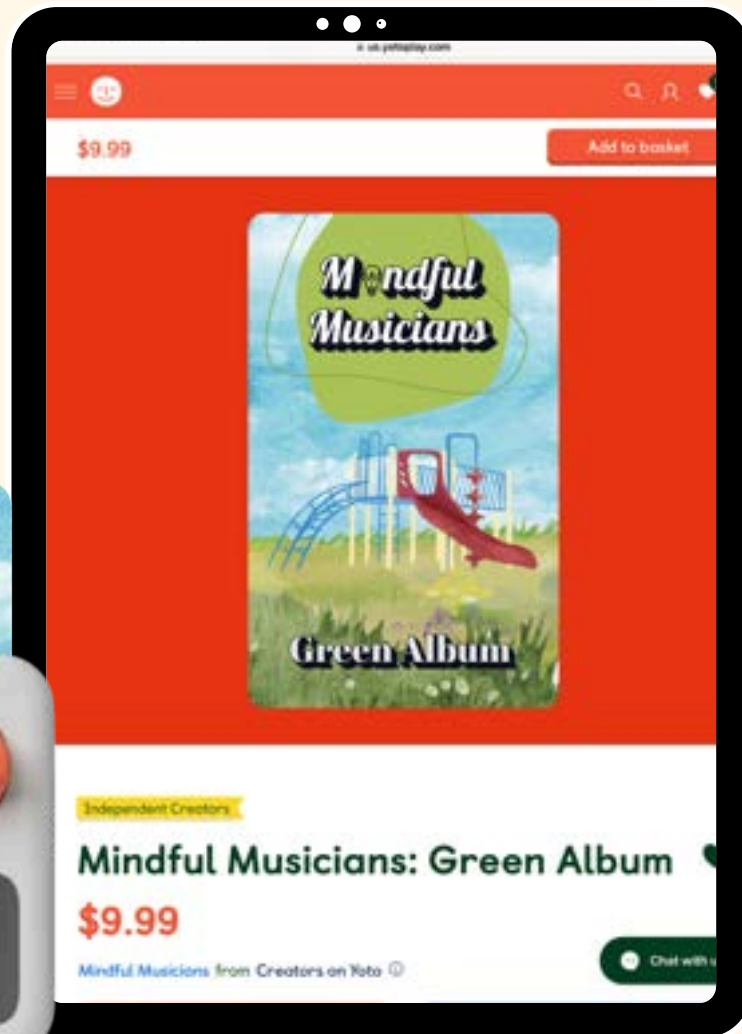
many ways

to feel

BREATHE

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>