

Teaching Children How to Meditate – Lesson 1

Today we are going to learn something new, we are going to learn how to meditate.

Meditation is practiced by children from all over the world. Anybody can meditate. It doesn't matter what age you are, whether you are a boy or a girl, the colour of your skin, whether you go to church or not - Everyone can do it. And it really will make you a kinder person.

I see you all work very hard in school every day. Schooldays are so busy and so long it is a good idea to take a break during the day and that is one reason why we are going to do some meditation. So let's learn how to do it.

Learning to meditate is a little bit like learning to ride a scooter. The only way to ride a scooter is to get up on it and give it a go! And I bet when you started it seemed very hard. Perhaps you fell off a few times and didn't feel like getting back up and trying again? But you kept at it, didn't you and now when you look back you are very glad you did because it is so much fun!

It's the same when we learn to meditate. We learn it by doing it! But, there is one important way in which meditation is very different to riding a scooter. When you ride a scooter the fun is in moving, feeling the sun on your back and the wind blowing in your hair! But meditation is about **not moving**. It is about **being very still** – being very quiet in your body **and in your mind**.

I'm going to try to be very still in my body now. Will you watch me very carefully – and very quietly – and tell me if you see me moving? ... Tap feet, tap fingers, scratching itch ...

OK, so now we know – being still in our bodies means sitting up straight and not moving anything ...

Let's **practice being still** in our bodies together? Can we try and do that together just sit very still and silent for 30 seconds. – I'll count to 30 in my head and I want you to be really still and silent while I do that, starting NOW ... **30 seconds of silence – OK**. That was really good.

Now I'm going to make it a little more difficult. I'm going to count to 30 again in my head and this time I want you to be really still in your body AND really still in your mind. So this time, NO THINKING! Let's try it, starting NOW ... **30 seconds of silence – OK**.

How was that? Was it easy to stop thinking? NO! It's really hard because thoughts just pop into your head. Out of nowhere! Most children find it easy to keep their body quiet but it's much harder to keep your mind from racing. So when we try to be still in our body and still in our mind, the body stays quiet but our mind wanders. We are all the same – our minds wander very easily. Mine too!

So, when we meditate we use a little trick – to stop our mind from wandering, we give it a word to focus on ... and we do our very best to keep our attention on the word; When thoughts come in to your mind, just let them go and go back to your word.

We could use any word but if this is your first time to meditate, let's use the word **Maranatha** – and we'll say it as if it were four little words **Ma-Ra-Na-Tha**.

[Junior Infants: I know you have been learning your sounds so you will know that the first little word is MMM ah Ma Etc

Will we all say the word out loud together now. I'll say it first and then you all say it with me. Now, all together ... Ma (wait for them) ... Ra ... Na ... Tha ..

[Repeat three times, slowly]

... And now let's do that again, but this time I want you to say it SILENTLY, in your mind, so no one else will hear you. I'll say it out loud, and you repeat it after me, but only in your mind. Is that OK. Here goes! Ma ... Ra ... Na ...Tha ... (3 times)

That was really good. Now we are going to meditate **for 2 minutes** together. And there are two things we do to help us.

When you meditate it really helps if you sit up straight in your chair with your body relaxed. If your legs are long enough, keep both feet firmly on the floor – and close your eyes lightly they will help us to remain perfectly still.

And the second think is to repeat our word **Ma-Ra-Na-Tha.**, slowly, silently and lovingly.

So let's do that together now for two minutes ... I'll ring a bell to start us off - the bell will ring three times and as soon as you hear the first bell, start to say your word in your mind. The bell will ring again three times at the end but don't open your eyes until you can no longer hear the last bell.

Ma ... Ra ... Na ... Tha

That was really good ... well done I think you are going to love to meditate ... I hope you will try meditating at home as well

[On another day use a **glitter jar** to talk about how meditation helps to let all of our thoughts sink to the bottom and leave our minds perfectly clear]