



HOW **i** DECIDE

Mindful Choices

A mindful
awareness
program for
schools

Middle & High School Guide

Mindful Choices: Middle & High School Program

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- Tap prior knowledge of mindfulness.
- Identify the importance of emotional regulation.
- Learn how the brain and body affect emotional states.

Activities:

- Reading: What Is Mindfulness?, How Will Mindfulness Exercises Help Me?, & The Mind-Body Connection: The Science of Mindful Breathing

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Objective: Learn the fundamental purposes and practices of mindful breathing.

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- Shoulder Rolls
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Implementing *Mindful Choices*

Blending *Mindful Choices* into Your Classroom Schedule

Introductory Information

The handouts for students in Mini-Lesson 1 (pages 23-25) explain the benefits of mindfulness. Students should receive the information near the start of the *Mindful Choices* program, but you can decide whether it'll be the first thing you cover or if you'll cover it after students have tried a mindful breathing exercise and/or mini-lesson.

Daily Mindful Breathing Exercises

- Lead students in a mindful breathing exercise every day (using the scripts on pages 8-15 or the audio recordings online at programs.howidecide.org). Mindful breathing can be helpful for starting and/or ending the day or easing transitions. To promote a calm atmosphere, first make sure that students are settled and quiet. Then narrate the directions at a slow, steady pace.
- The mindful breathing log on page 16 can help students track their experiences so they can make adjustments to their practice over time.
- Keep mindful breathing practice fresh for students by using all of the exercises included in the program, varying the length of time you spend on the exercises, and selecting the day's exercise based on whether the class needs a more calming or energizing exercise.

Supplements to Mindful Breathing Exercises

- Coloring: Students who are new to mindful breathing or have difficulty focusing during the exercises may benefit from coloring designs like the mandala on page 18. Quietly focusing on coloring can be a calming experience that may make the transition into mindful breathing easier. You can find a multitude of similar coloring pages online if you search for "mandala coloring pages" or "Zentangle coloring pages." Coloring books meant to promote relaxation are also commonly sold at grocery stores and bookstores.
- Gratitude Log: Encourage students to take a few minutes to use the gratitude log on page 19 to note what they're thankful for on that particular day. This activity can help students shift their focus to the positive things in their lives, which may help them be more resilient during times of stress.

Mini-Lessons 1-15

In addition to practicing mindful breathing daily, try to present one mini-lesson per week.

- Most of the activities take approximately 10 minutes total to perform and discuss.
- The journal prompts should take approximately 15 minutes total for students to respond to in writing and then discuss as a class.

If you do not have 25 minutes of time on a single day, students can complete the activity and journal prompt on different days. In this case, recap the part of the mini-lesson you completed first.

Continuing Practice Throughout the School Year

After you complete Mini-Lessons 1-15, continue to lead students in daily mindful breathing exercises. To expand their mindfulness practice, students can:

- Do the additional mindfulness activities suggested on page 20.
- Lead the class in mindful breathing exercises.
- Develop new mindfulness activities.
- Review articles and books related to mindfulness practices.
- Share mindfulness practices with a sports team, dance class, or theater group to help strengthen focus during high-pressure moments.
- Teach mindfulness practices to family members or other people in the community.

Classroom Management and Mindfulness

Mindfulness practices, especially breathing exercises, are new to most students. Being quiet and calm – and seeing it as a way to improve one’s wellbeing, rather than as a punishment – may make some students uncomfortable.

It’s best to teach mindfulness practices with flexibility, curiosity, and humor. You will have more success if you invite students to find ways to participate that are comfortable for them, instead of treating mindfulness practice as a strict experience. However, you want to ensure that the group stays focused. Try to prevent classroom management issues by making behavioral expectations clear to the students, previewing the breathing exercises and mini-lessons to ensure that your classroom and supplies are arranged accordingly, and letting the students know that you support them as they develop their mindfulness practice and that you’re excited to work on your own practice.

If classroom management issues do emerge when the class is practicing mindfulness, here are some suggestions for addressing them:

Problem	Possible Solutions
Students seem uninterested in mindfulness or are skeptical of the benefits of mindful breathing. They may present attitudes that range from bored to hostile.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share facts about how mindfulness supports performance and wellbeing in other areas including academics and work, sports, and mental and physical health. • Show video clips of students their age who practice mindfulness and speak about the benefits.
Some students completely refuse to participate in mindful breathing, even after you encourage them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s a good idea to have an alternative activity or two on hand. Drawing/coloring activities like Zentangle and mandalas promote a calming state and are easy to find online. Keep in mind that students won’t appreciate mindfulness if you force them to participate. • Let the students know that they are permitted to sit silently instead of doing the breathing exercise.
Students seem embarrassed to do mindful breathing or quiet exercises in front of one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, have the students practice being silent with their eyes closed. Then, the next time do a mindful breathing exercise for 30 seconds. Gradually increase the time with each session. • Do icebreaker activities to help the group bond. • Tell students that they can close their eyes or keep them open. If they keep their eyes open, it’s important that they keep a soft, downward focus or pick a spot to focus on – but that spot cannot be another student.

Problem	Possible Solutions
<p>A student is making silly noises once everyone gets settled for mindful breathing or other quiet exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you have a sense of humor. If you yell at the student, it will be another distraction and will bring tension to the experience. Instead, laugh a little bit and tell the class that the student has “just demonstrated how we always have to maintain our focus in response to distractions in our everyday lives.” • If it becomes a repeated problem, talk to the student after class to let him/her know that although there will be times for more active and loud exercises, the quiet exercises are important too, so the noises have to stop.
<p>Students are trying to use their cell phones during mindfulness exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long before you get to the point of confiscating cell phones as a punishment, present mindfulness as a way to take a brief retreat from technology, which helps us refresh our brains (because we spend so much of our day connected to our technology devices anyway). • Each time you get settled for mindful breathing, make a fun ceremony out of putting phones away.
<p>Students doze or pretend to fall asleep.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to sit up straight on the edge of their chairs if they find themselves becoming too relaxed. • Select a more active exercise.
<p>A student starts crying or becomes visibly upset during mindful breathing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally remind students that unpleasant thoughts may arise when you’re quiet and still. It’s important to try to let thoughts go during mindful breathing, but it’s also important to avoid blaming yourself if that’s too difficult on a certain day. • Allow the student to do an alternative activity like drawing or coloring if necessary and check in with him/her later.

**Daily Breathing Exercises
for Classroom and Personal Practice**

Mindful Breathing Basics

Practicing mindful breathing for a few minutes every day can strengthen the ability to eliminate stress and stay focused on important tasks. The exercises on the following pages can be used regularly in classroom and personal mindful breathing practices. Follow these tips to construct an effective mindful breathing practice:

- **Put everything else aside.** Take a break from your phone, your work, and your conversations. Move to a quieter environment if necessary.
- **Get comfortable.** Move to the edge of your chair. Raise your shoulders up to your ears and then roll them back and down. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips. Sit up tall, but not rigidly. Place your hands palms down on your legs with your elbows underneath your shoulders.
- **Set a timer.** Try to do breathing exercises for 3-5 minutes as you're first learning. Increase the time you spend on it as you get more experience, but keep in mind that short, frequent sessions are better than long sessions that happen rarely.
- **Eyes open or closed? It's your choice.** Notice which one makes it easier for you to stay focused. If you keep your eyes open, softly focus with a downward on one point.
- **Try to focus fully on your breathing.** Pay attention to your entire breath, from your inhale through your exhale. When your thoughts wander, simply bring your focus back to your breathing. It will get easier to sustain your focus as you get more practice. Be kind to yourself as you learn.

Leading Class Discussions About Mindful Breathing

After students complete a mindful breathing exercise, give them the opportunity to share their thoughts so they can process and build upon their experiences.

The following questions can help you get the conversation going. Discuss them as your time permits. Encourage all students to share their thoughts. If students feel shy about sharing their ideas, it may help for them to answer the questions in writing or discuss them in small groups.

Questions for mindful breathing exercises:

- How did the mindful breathing exercise make you feel?
- What difficulties have you experienced with mindful breathing? How do try to overcome them?
- Have you been practicing mindful breathing on your own? Describe your experience.

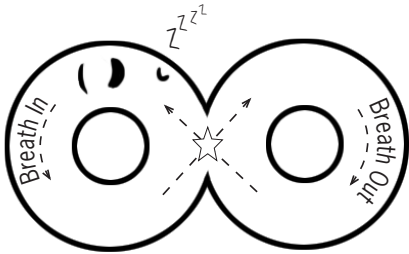
2 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise Shoulder Rolls
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today's mindful breathing exercise is shoulder rolls. You'll relax, inhale, and draw your shoulders up towards your ears, and then exhale as you roll your shoulders back and down.</p> <p>You can do shoulder rolls throughout your day to relieve tension. Shoulder rolls also help us get comfortable and focused in preparation any other mindful breathing exercise.</p>
Exercise	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall and lifting up through the crown of your head, without leaning on the back of the chair. Place your feet firmly on the floor and rest your hands on your legs with your elbows under your shoulders. (Alternatively, you can sit on the floor with your legs crossed, with a cushion underneath you if needed.)</p> <p>Begin to relax your face. Close your eyes or, if you prefer, keep them open with a soft downward gaze. Relax your jaw.</p> <p>Take a slow inhale...and then exhale. As you take a deep inhale through your nose, draw your shoulders up towards your ears, exhale through your mouth, and roll your shoulders back and down. Let's do that again. Take a full inhale and raise your shoulders, and exhale through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>

2-10 minutes*	Mindful Breathing Exercise Matching Breaths
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today's mindful breathing exercise is matching breaths. You'll be matching the length of your inhales to the length of your exhales. To guide your breathing pattern, I'll be slowly counting to three as you inhale and then slowly counting to three as you exhale.</p> <p>Matching breaths is a foundational mindful breathing exercise that you can practice at almost any time to increase your ability to be calm and focused.</p>
Intro	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall without leaning on the back of the chair. Lift up through the crown of your head. Place your feet firmly on the floor and rest your hands on your legs with your elbows under your shoulders. (Alternatively, you can sit on the floor with your legs crossed, with a cushion underneath you if needed.)</p> <p>Still sitting up tall, close your eyes if you're comfortable or keep them open with a soft, downward gaze. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips.</p> <p>Start to relax your face. Remove any wrinkles from your brow. Relax your eyes, imagining that they're sinking back into their sockets. Relax your jaw.</p> <p>Inhale slowly and exhale slowly. Again, inhale...and exhale.</p>
Exercise	<p>Do your best to keep pace with the counting. Inhale for a slow count of 3...2...1...and exhale for a slow count of 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale for 3...2...1...and exhale for 3...2...1.</p> <p><i>(Repeat the matching inhales and exhales for the amount of time you set.)</i></p>
Closing	<p>Now, inhale and exhale slowly at your own pace, keeping your eyes closed or softly open. Continue to sit up straight and keep your breath smooth. Take the next few moments to sit quietly and study your breath. Do your best to keep your mind focused on your inhales and exhales.</p> <p>Move to an exhale. Take a deep inhale in through your nose and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale out through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>

*For students new to mindful breathing, start with 2 minutes of practice and gradually increase to approximately 10 minutes of practice a day if possible. The matching breaths exercise is the one that you can do for the longest period of time without it seeming overly repetitive.

2-5 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise Matching Breaths with Retentions
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today's mindful breathing exercise is matching breaths with retentions. This exercise takes the matching breaths exercise and adds a hold of the breath between the inhale and exhale. You'll inhale slowly in sync with my count to three. Then I'll direct you to briefly hold your breath for a count of three, and then you'll slowly exhale in sync with my slow count to three.</p> <p>The hold challenges us to maintain concentration because we're eager to take the next breath. The brief hold also promotes deeper breathing when we get to the next inhale.</p>
Intro	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall without leaning on the back of the chair. Lift up through the crown of your head. Place your feet firmly on the floor and rest your hands on your legs with your elbows under your shoulders. (Alternatively, you can sit on the floor with your legs crossed, with a cushion underneath you if needed.)</p> <p>Still sitting up tall, close your eyes if you're comfortable or keep them open with a soft, downward gaze. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips.</p> <p>Start to relax your face. Remove any wrinkles from your brow. Relax your eyes, imagining that they're sinking back into their sockets. Relax your jaw.</p> <p>Inhale slowly through your nose and exhale slowly through your nose. Again, inhale...and exhale.</p>
Exercise	<p>Continuing to breathe through your nose, inhale for a count of 3...2...1...and exhale for 3...2...1. Inhale for 3...2...1...and exhale for 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale for 3...2...1. Now, hold your breath for 3...2...1. Exhale for 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale for 3...2...1. Hold your breath for 3...2...1. Exhale for 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale for 3...2...1. Hold your breath for 3...2...1. Exhale for 3...2...1.</p> <p><i>(Repeat the matching inhales and exhales with holds for the amount of time you set.)</i></p>
Closing	<p>Inhale...and exhale...</p> <p>Sit in quiet reflection for a few moments.</p> <p>Move to an exhale. Take a deep inhale in through your nose and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale out through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>

2-5 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise Lazy 8
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today’s mindful breathing exercise is called Lazy 8. This exercise involves tracing the shape of a figure eight on its side while you breathe deeply. Using your dominant hand, you’ll trace one half of the eight as you inhale in sync with my slow count to three and trace the other half of the eight as you exhale slowly in sync with my slow count to three. <i>(Draw or demonstrate a diagram similar to the one on the right for students.)</i> Then, you’ll do the same exercise using your non-dominant hand.</p> <p>The repetitive movement of tracing can help us stay focused and relaxed. Because it’s a small movement, we can do the Lazy 8 exercise anywhere.</p>
Intro	<p>We’re working on taking our time, going slowly, and being mindful during the exercise. Do your best to coordinate the length of your breath with the length of the side of the eight you’re tracing.</p> <p>Find a comfortable seat and sit up tall. You can use your index finger on your dominant hand to trace the eight onto a table or your lap.</p>
Exercise	<p>Inhale and trace half the eight for 3...2...1. Exhale and trace the other half of the eight for 3...2...1.</p> <p><i>Repeat 3-5 times.</i></p> <p>Take a moment to inhale and exhale at your own pace. We’re going to continue the exercise using your non-dominant hand. Be sure that you’re still sitting up tall. Inhale and exhale.</p> <p>Using your non-dominant hand, inhale and trace half the eight for 3...2...1. Exhale and trace the other half of the eight for 3...2...1.</p> <p><i>(Repeat 3-5 times.)</i></p>
Closing	<p>Sit in quiet reflection for a few moments.</p> <p>Move to an exhale. Take a deep inhale in through your nose and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale out through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>



3 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise Arm Raises
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today's mindful breathing exercise is arm raises. You're going to slowly raise your arms in sync with my slow count to three and then slowly lower them in sync with my slow count to three.</p> <p>Arm raises give us a bit of a stretch, which makes us more alert, so it's a good exercise to help you wake up or if you need to take a break from a tough task.</p>
Intro	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall without leaning on the back of the chair. Lift up through the crown of your head. Place your feet firmly on the floor and rest your hands on your legs with your elbows under your shoulders. (Alternatively, you can sit on the floor with your legs crossed, with a cushion underneath you if needed.)</p> <p>Still sitting up tall, close your eyes if you're comfortable or keep them open with a soft, downward gaze. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips.</p> <p>Start to relax your face. Remove any wrinkles from your brow. Relax your eyes, imagining that they're sinking back into their sockets. Relax your jaw.</p>
Exercise	<p>Breathing through your nose, inhale and slowly reach both arms over your head to a slow count of 3...2...1. Exhale and lower your arms to a slow count of 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale and reach your right arm over your head for 3...2...1. Exhale and lower your right arm for 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale and reach your left arm over your head for 3...2...1. Exhale and lower your left arm for 3...2...1.</p> <p>Inhale and reach both arms over your head for 3...2...1. Exhale and lower your arms for 3...2...1.</p> <p><i>(Repeat two more times.)</i></p>
Closing	<p>Take a few moments to breathe naturally. Try to keep your focus on your breathing.</p> <p>Move to an exhale. Take a deep inhale through your nose and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale out through your mouth. Roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>

4-5 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise Chair Sun Salutations
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today's mindful breathing exercise is chair sun salutations. This exercise combines breathing and movement to provide an energizing stretch. Make sure you have enough space to bend forward and raise your arms over your head. If you have enough space, you can stand for this exercise.</p>
Intro	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall and lifting up through the crown of your head, without leaning on the back of the chair. Place your feet firmly on the floor.</p> <p>Close your eyes or, if you prefer, keep them open with a soft, downward gaze. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips.</p> <p>Start to relax your face. Remove any wrinkles from your brow. Relax your eyes, imagining that they're sinking back into their sockets. Relax your jaw.</p> <p>Begin by focusing on your breath. Keep your breath smooth and steady. Exhale. Take a deep inhale through your nose. Draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale out through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down.</p> <p>Keep your shoulders sliding down your back and inhale through your nose. Exhale through your nose. Again, inhale through your nose and exhale through your nose.</p>
Exercise	<p>Sitting tall, inhale and reach your arms over your head. As you exhale, fold your body over your legs and touch the floor beside your feet.</p> <p>Inhale and lift just your chin (with your body still folded over) and draw your shoulders back. As you exhale, tuck your chin and round your back.</p> <p>Inhale and reach your arms over your head. Exhale and lower your arms by your sides.</p> <p><i>(Repeat 2-3 more times.)</i></p>
Closing	<p>Sit up tall and breathe naturally. With your eyes closed if you're comfortable, do your best to keep your focus on your breathing for the next few moments.</p> <p>Move to an exhale. Take a deep breath and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.</p>

2 minutes	Mindful Breathing Exercise “Yes!” Breaths
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	<p>Today’s mindful breathing exercise is “Yes!” breaths. You’ll be lifting your arms over your head and then quickly pulling your elbows into your sides as you make fists, so be sure you have enough space around you.</p>
Intro	<p>Find a comfortable seat, sitting in a chair. As you lift up your arms and pull them down, you’ll be forcefully saying the word “Yes!”</p> <p>Sitting tall, with your arms resting by your sides, first take an inhale and then exhale.</p>
Exercise	<p>Reach your arms over your head (like a V) and quickly exhale, saying “Yes!” as you make fists and pull your elbows close to your ribs.</p> <p>Again, reach your arms over your head and exhale, saying “Yes!” as you make fists and pull your elbows close to your ribs.</p> <p>One more time: inhale and raise your arms. Say “Yes!” as you make fists and pull your elbows close to your ribs.</p>
Closing	<p>Relax your arms by your sides. Inhale slowly and exhale slowly. Inhale...and exhale.</p>

5 minutes	<p style="text-align: center;">Mindful Breathing Exercise Body Scan</p>
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	This exercise helps you observe your body so you can relax the areas that hold tension or experience discomfort.
Intro	<p>You can do this exercise lying down or sitting up. If you're sitting up, find a comfortable seat, sitting up tall without leaning on the back of the chair. Lift up through the crown of your head. Place your feet firmly on the floor.</p> <p>Still sitting up tall, close your eyes if you're comfortable or keep them open with a soft, downward gaze. Align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips.</p> <p>Start to relax your face. Remove any wrinkles from your brow. Relax your eyes, imagining that they're sinking back into their sockets. Relax your jaw.</p>
Exercise	<p>Do a quick check-in to notice how your body feels.</p> <p>Try to place your awareness at your toes. Find your awareness tracing up through your feet...your ankles...and your knees. (If you're sitting, notice how your knees are stacked over your ankles. If you're lying down, feel the weight of gravity resting down on your legs.)</p> <p>Traveling up through your body, notice if there's any tension in your hips or lower belly. Try to relax.</p> <p>Let's move to the hands. Wiggle your fingers and then relax them. Soften through your hands and notice if there's any tension in your wrists...your lower arms...or your upper arms.</p> <p>Notice if there's any tension in your shoulders. Take note of how your neck feels.</p> <p>Become aware of the sense organs of your ears...your mouth...your nose...and your eyes.</p> <p>Now, turn your attention to your breath. Notice the quality of your breath. Is it shallow or labored? If so, try to take deeper breaths. Turn your attention to your heart rate. Try to use deep breaths to calm yourself and slow your heart rate.</p> <p>Take note of your entire body. How do you feel? Try to use your breath to help your body and mind feel better.</p>
Closing	Move to an exhale. Take a deep breath through your nose and draw your shoulders up to your ears. Exhale and roll your shoulders back and down. Gently blink your eyes open.

8 minutes	<p style="text-align: center;">Mindful Breathing Exercise Kindness Meditation</p>
<i>Say to the students:</i>	
Description	This is called a kindness meditation. It can help us develop compassion for all people. It will involve call and response, meaning that I will give you a cue for something to say and once I'm finished, you repeat after me.
Intro	Find a comfortable seat. Sit up tall, with your eyes closed or gazing softly downward. Put your hands onto your knees or your lap. Align your ears over your shoulders, and your shoulders over your hips. Breathe deeply. Take a deep inhale through your nose and draw your shoulders up towards your ears. Exhale through your mouth and draw your shoulders back and down. Sit up tall as you inhale and breathe through your nose as you exhale.
Exercise	<p>In this exercise, I'd like you call upon some mental imagery. At first, we want to see ourselves: what we might be wearing and how we might be feeling. In the second part of this exercise, I'd like you find an image of a person who you really enjoy being around (like a good friend or loved one). Again, you want to hold that image in your mind and do your best to make it as real as possible. The third part of this kindness meditation will involve finding an image of someone in your life (or maybe no longer in your life) who you've always found great conflict with – that person who has always given you great difficulties in life. Again, you want to keep the image of that person in your mind as we go through this meditation. The final step in this kindness meditation is thinking about all the people in your world and everyone on this earth.</p> <p>So, again, sitting tall, I want you to find an image of yourself. You might even see yourself on your seat or on the floor preparing for this meditation. Repeat after me: May I be safe...May I be happy...May I be healthy...May I live with ease. Again: May I be safe...May I be happy...May I be healthy...May I live with ease.</p> <p>Now, find the image of another person who's a friend, a loved one, a family member – someone you enjoy being around and get along with. Keep that image in your mind and make it as vivid as possible. Again, repeat after me: May you be safe...May you be happy...May you be healthy...May you live with ease. Again: May you be safe...May you be happy...May you be healthy...May you live with ease.</p> <p>Now, find the image of the person who has caused great stress in your life. (You may no longer have that person in your life anymore.) Find the image of that person, making it as real as possible. With the same language that we just used, repeat after me: May you be safe...May you be happy...May you be healthy...May you live with ease. Again: May you be safe...May you be happy...May you be healthy...May you live with ease.</p> <p>Finally, see the global community. (You may think of some people in your immediate world, but really this meditation goes out to everybody.) Again, repeat after me: May we all be safe...May we all be happy...May we all be healthy...May we all live with ease. Again: May we all be safe...May we all be happy...May we all be healthy...May we all live with ease.</p>
Closing	<p>Sitting upright, take a few moments for quiet reflection.</p> <p>Now, take a deep inhale through your nose and draw your shoulders up towards your ears. Exhale out through your mouth and roll your shoulders back and down.</p>

Mindful Breathing Log **Name:** _____

Copy this page to record your experiences with mindful breathing. Your reflections can help you make adjustments that will improve the effectiveness of your practice.

Date: _____	Name of practice: _____	Duration: _____ minutes
What distractions in your mind and/or environment did you experience? _____		

What did you do about the distractions? _____		

What positive factors (such as calmness or quiet) did you experience? _____		

What factors (such as lack of sleep or getting good news) do you think affected your practice?		

Date: _____	Name of practice: _____	Duration: _____ minutes
What distractions in your mind and/or environment did you experience? _____		

What did you do about the distractions? _____		

What positive factors (such as calmness or quiet) did you experience? _____		

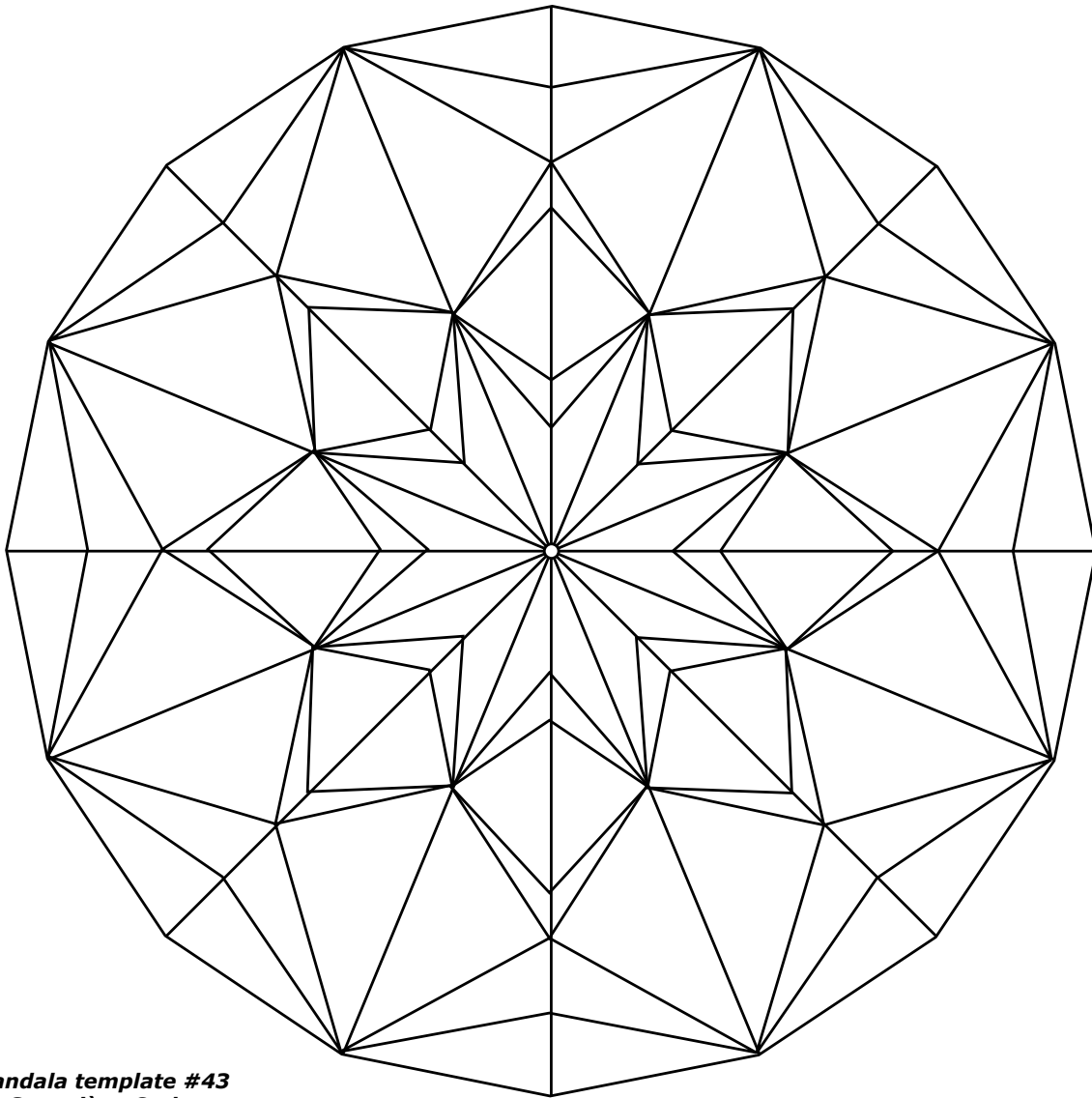
What factors (such as lack of sleep or getting good news) do you think affected your practice?		

Supplements to Mindful Breathing

Mandala Coloring

Name: _____

Find a quiet space, relax, and take your time coloring in the design. Coloring can help you get into a calm state similar to one you'd experience during mindful breathing.



Mandala template #43
by Geneviève Crabe
www.amarylliscreations.com

Gratitude Log

Name: _____

In addition to reducing stress, mindfulness practices can help us learn to appreciate life more fully. When we maintain ongoing practice of appreciating even the small details of life, we're better equipped to handle the stressful times with ease.

To supplement your mindful breathing practice, copy this page so you can keep a log of what you're grateful for each day. You might be grateful for big accomplishments (like getting an A on a tough assignment), events (like a trip), or the details of small, everyday happenings (like good weather or a fun time you had with a friend).

Today I'm grateful for...	Date: _____

Today I'm grateful for...	Date: _____

Today I'm grateful for...	Date: _____

Today I'm grateful for...	Date: _____

Additional Mindfulness Activities

Here are some other ways to incorporate mindfulness into your classroom throughout the day:

- Remind students to take a few deep breaths and do some shoulder rolls before they take a test, transition to a new activity, or experience a disruption.
- Before submitting any assignment, encourage students to take a moment to carefully review the details of their work, checking that they've included their name and date, have proper punctuation and capitalization, and have completed all of the questions fully.
- Ask students to identify what it would be like to behave mindfully and mindlessly during a activity or assignment you're introducing, or within the classroom or school in general.
- Direct each student to write down an intention for a certain behavior or attitude they want to uphold during the class period or day. Encourage them to check in periodically to see if they're following through with it.
- On Friday, direct students to describe the ways they behaved mindfully and mindlessly throughout the week and how they want to improve next week.
- Share a quotation or play a song that reflects the concept of mindfulness. Ask students to explain why they think it connects to mindfulness. As an extension, students can create a visual representation of the quotation/lyrics. Additionally, students can choose their own quotations/lyrics related to mindfulness to share with the class.
- Encourage students to be mindful of their phone/internet usage. Explain that it's easy to mindlessly jump between various apps and sites without realizing what information we've absorbed and how it affects us. Instruct students to write down the last three things they remember looking at on their phones (and then, if it's appropriate, give them the opportunity to check if they were correct). Have occasional conversations about mindful uses of technology: ask students how they think it affects their emotions, thinking, and time management – especially when a popular app or game debuts.
- Similar to the journal prompt in Mini-Lesson 9, direct students to identify an act of kindness they intend to perform that day.
- After you teach Mini-Lessons 1-15, look for opportunities throughout the year to remind students of the objectives. Consider repeating the activities from the mini-lessons periodically, in abbreviated versions if necessary. (In Plain Sight, Mindful Eating, Mindful Walking, Cloud Watching, Whisper Down the Lane & Zenergy Chime, Get Organized, and Non-Dominant Hand can be made different every time and thus stand up well to repetition). Ask students to think about how the subsequent times they engaged in the activity were different from the first time.

Mini-Lessons 1-15

Plan for Mini-Lesson 1

Introduction to Mindfulness

Objectives

Tap prior knowledge of mindfulness.

Identify the importance of emotional regulation.

Learn how the brain and body affect emotional states.

Set-Up

Provide each student with a copy of pages 23-25.

Activities: Introduction to Mindfulness

15 minutes

Announce the lesson objectives to the students.

Intro (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain what they think it means to be “mindful.” Call on a few students to share their ideas. (Some students may have heard of mindfulness as related to meditation. Some students may think of it as being careful, which is a related concept, but not all-encompassing.) Tell the students that you are beginning a program called *Mindful Choices* and today’s mini-lesson will help them understand the basic concepts involved in mindfulness and the reasons for practicing it.

Reading: What Is Mindfulness? & How Will Mindfulness Exercises Help Me? (5 minutes)

Read the background information aloud with the students. Then, have them complete the recap question. Call on a few students to share their ideas. (Responses will vary.)

Reading: The Mind-Body Connection: The Science of Mindful Breathing (8 minutes)

Read the background information aloud with the students. Give students time to answer the questions independently or in pairs. Then, discuss their responses.

Suggested responses:

When is it helpful to be in fight-or-flight mode?

Fight-or-flight mode helps us when we need to confront or avoid dangerous situations.

Why is it not good to be in fight-or-flight mode all the time?

When we’re in fight-or-flight mode, the amygdala releases stress hormones. When we release stress hormones frequently, it can result in irritability, depression, disrupted sleep, and illness.

How does mindful breathing prevent unnecessary fight-or-flight responses?

When we’re taking calm, deep breaths, our muscles are relaxed, which prevents our amygdala from releasing stress hormones. (When our bodies and minds are calm, it’s easier for us to think clearly.)

What is Mindfulness?

When we're distracted or stressed, we can slip into problematic emotional states without realizing what's happening. However, practicing mindfulness can strengthen our abilities to maintain positive emotional states and stay focused on the present moment instead of thinking about the past or worrying about the future.

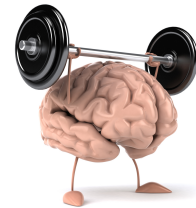
Mindfulness is paying careful attention to what is happening now, and noticing when your attention drifts away.

Mindfulness practices include breathing exercises and activities that increase your ability to focus and maintain a sense of calm.

How Will Mindfulness Practices Help Me?

Mental and Physical Health

- Mindfulness training has been shown to increase impulse control and improve decision-making abilities.¹
- Lab tests have shown that meditation training increases one's ability to keep levels of stress hormones low in response to tasks like giving a public speech.²
- Students who did mindfulness exercises in one study had higher levels of emotional control, optimism and empathy than students who were not instructed in mindfulness.³ Mindfulness research has shown to promote the ability to feel in control, make meaningful relationships, be calm, and be resilient.⁴
- Several studies have shown that mindfulness reduces anxiety and depression and improves sleep.¹
- Practicing mindful eating encourages healthier eating habits.⁵



¹ *Sitting Still Like a Frog* by Eline Snel

² "Mind of the Meditator" by Matthieu Ricard, Antoine Lutz and Richard J. Davidson for *Scientific American*

³ "Mindfulness Exercises Improve Kids' Math Scores" by Mandy Oaklander for *Time*

⁴ *The Way of Mindful Education* by Daniel Rechtschaffen

⁵ "What is Mindfulness?," Greater Good

School

- In San Francisco schools where students were practicing meditation for two 15-minute sessions a day, there was a 79% decrease in suspensions at the high school and a 75% decrease in suspensions at the middle school, an increase in attendance to 98.3%, and a .4 increase in overall GPA.⁶
- Mindfulness helps reduce behavior problems and aggression among students.⁶
- Fourth and fifth graders who were practicing mindfulness had 15% better math scores than peers who were not.³
- A study of elementary school students who had mindfulness training showed that they had improvement with metacognition (their ability to think about their thinking) and their ability to maintain attention. These students also showed improvements in memory, planning, and organization.⁷

Sports

- Sports psychologist and meditation teacher George Mumford, who has worked with the Chicago Bulls, Los Angeles Lakers, and many other sports teams says that the aspect of mindfulness that appeals most to athletes is “being in the zone.” When an athlete’s in the zone, Mumford says, “there’s a lack of self-consciousness, there’s a relaxed concentration, and there’s this sense of effortlessness, of being in the flow...When we are in the moment and absorbed with the activity, we play our best.”⁸
- Riders for the U.S. Men’s National BMX team used mindfulness practices to help them reduce anxiety before competition.⁹
- NFL quarterback Russell Wilson schedules individual sessions to “talk about being in the moment...so when I go in to the game, everything is relaxed.” Offensive Tackle Russell Okung says, “Meditation is as important as lifting weights and being out here on the field for practice. It’s about quieting your mind and getting into certain states where everything outside of you doesn’t matter in that moment. There are so many things telling you that you can’t do something, but you take those thoughts captive, take power over them and change them.”¹⁰



Recap

Identify one benefit of mindfulness practice described in the reading that interests you and explain why it matters to you:

⁶ “San Francisco Schools Transformed by the Power of Meditation,” *NBC Nightly News*

⁷ *The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate* by Susan Kaiser Greenland

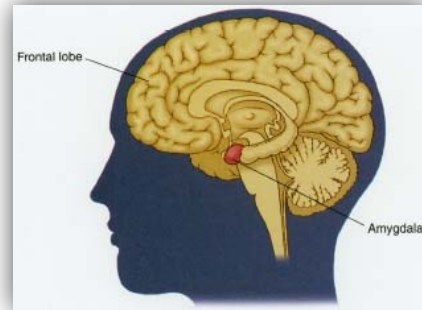
⁸ “The Lakers Meditate?,” by Soren Gordhamer, *Mindful*

⁹ “Does Mindfulness Make for a Better Athlete?” by Gretchen Reynolds, *The New York Times*

¹⁰ “Lotus pose on two” by Alyssa Roenigk, ESPN

The Mind-Body Connection: The Science of Mindful Breathing

If a rock is hurtling towards your head, you're going to duck. If a dog snarls at you, you're going to back away. If someone jumps out from a hiding place and shouts in your face, you're going to flinch at the very least. And if a friend smiles at you, you're probably going to smile back. You have a part of your brain called the amygdala (pronounced uh – MIG – duh – luh) to thank for enabling you to quickly react to danger and interpret the emotions of others. The amygdala is key to our survival and socially acceptable behavior, but it can sometimes get in the way of clear, rational thinking.



When something makes us angry or worried, but is not actually dangerous, our amygdala still detects that our muscles are tense and releases stress hormones that prepare the body for a “fight-or-flight” response (which means that you’ll be ready to intensely confront or escape from the perceived danger). Signs that we’re in fight-or-flight mode include a racing heart, shortness of breath, and an upset stomach. This isn’t a good state to be in often because chronic stress can result in irritability, depression, disrupted sleep, and increased illness.

However, we can prevent our amygdala from releasing these stress hormones by doing mindful breathing to keep our bodies calm. When we are able to take deep, relaxing breaths, our amygdala is convinced that everything’s okay. When we don’t get a fight or flight signal from our amygdala, our thoughts can reach our brain’s frontal lobe to be processed in a more rational way. The frontal lobe is still developing throughout adolescence, but the more opportunities that it gets to work on making decisions, the better it gets at it. Mindful breathing enables a calm state that creates those opportunities. Just as you would be more likely to make a layup shot in a basketball game if you worked on them in practice, the more that you practice being in a calm state, the more likely you are to stay calm when you run into everyday challenges.

The goal of mindful breathing and the other exercises in the *Mindful Choices* program is to strengthen the abilities you need for good decision making, including:

- Dealing with stress and difficult emotions.
- Pausing to think before reacting.
- Maintaining focus and attention.

Recap

When is it helpful to be in fight-or-flight mode?

Why is it not good to be in fight-or-flight mode all the time?

How does mindful breathing prevent unnecessary fight-or-flight responses?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 2

Introduction to Mindful Breathing

Objective

Learn fundamental purposes and practices of mindful breathing.

Set-Up

Provide each student with a copy of the Positive and Problematic Emotional States handout on page 28.

Provide all of the students with a copy of the journal prompt on page 29. Each student needs a pencil.

Activities: Introduction to Mindful Breathing

15 minutes

Announce the lesson objective to the students.

Positive and Problematic Emotional States (5 minutes)

Instruct students to draw a line through the emotional states that would best be described as “problematic” and draw a smiley face next to those that would best be described as “positive.” Have them complete the questions and call on a few students to share their ideas. (Page 27 is the instructor key and page 28 is the student version.)

Mindful Breathing Basics (3 minutes)

Transition by explaining that mindful breathing is a practice that can help maintain a positive emotional state. Read the Mindful Breathing Basics tips on page 8 to the students. Emphasize that mindful breathing isn’t meant to be a “strict” experience or a punishment for being loud or active. Although it takes some time to get used to it, most people find mindful breathing to be relaxing and helpful for lowering stress and improving focus.

Shoulder Rolls (2 minutes)

Explain to students that when we want to reduce stress, we naturally do certain movements like rolling our shoulders, taking deep breaths, and adjusting our posture. Follow the instructions on page 7 for the Shoulder Rolls exercise. Explain that mindful breathing exercises build on these movements to help us reduce stress and increase calm and focus. You’ll try one breathing exercise today.

Matching Breaths (5 minutes)

Lead students in Matching Breaths for two minutes using the instructions on page 8. Afterwards, ask the students to talk about their experiences, using the discussion prompts on page 6 as a guide.

Journal: The Physical Effects of Stress

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 29. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student’s name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Positive and Problematic Emotional States

Draw a line through the emotional states that would be best described as “problematic.”

Draw smiley face next to the emotional states that would be best described as “positive.”

Out of it	Centered ☺	In the zone ☺
Distracted	In the moment ☺	Focused ☺
Spaced out	Freaking out	Calm, cool and collected ☺
Stressed	Present ☺	Hot-headed

What do you think are some reasons why people get into a problematic emotional state like these ones?

Answers may include:

- *They are too busy.*
- *They are around other people who are in these emotional states, so it influences them.*
- *They are having problems with relationships, money, school, or work.*
- *They don't know how to get into a positive emotional state.*

What might be some specific problems that would result?

Answers may include:

- *They could be forgetful.*
- *They could be tired all the time.*
- *They could take their emotions out on other people by starting arguments or placing blame.*
- *They could be depressed.*

What do you think you can do to get into and maintain a positive emotional state (even when things aren't going perfectly)?

Answers may include:

- *Setting aside special time to relax.*
- *Talking to someone about what's bothering you..*
- *Asking for help.*
- *Taking some deep breaths.*

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 2 **Name:** _____

Positive and Problematic Emotional States

Draw a line through the emotional states that would be best described as “problematic.”

Draw smiley face next to the emotional states that would be best described as “positive.”

Out of it	Centered	In the zone
Distracted	In the moment	Focused
Spaced out	Freaking out	Calm, cool and collected
Stressed	Present	Hot-headed

What do you think are some reasons why people get into these problematic emotional states?

What could be some specific results of being in a problematic emotional state?

What do you think you can do to get into and maintain a positive emotional state (even when things aren't going perfectly)?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 2

Journal: The Physical Effects of Stress

Name: _____

Date: _____

When we worry about what could happen to us in the future, we feel anxious and stressed. However, that doesn't mean we should stop making plans or stop thinking about what's happening next in our lives. We can reduce the stress about the future by focusing on what we're best able to do in this exact moment. Think about it another way: worrying eats up a lot of time and energy that we could instead devote to things that make us happier.

Identify something that you're worrying about right now or find yourself worrying about frequently. (Many people worry about things related to school, their social lives or their families. Many people worry what will happen in the future in general.)

I often worry about: _____

When I worry about _____, this is what goes on in my mind and body:

When I start to worry about _____, this is what I can do to feel better:

Plan for Mini-Lesson 3

Reduce Multitasking

Objectives

Recognize the negative effects of dealing with too many tasks and/or thoughts at one time.

Recognize how “singletasking” (instead of multitasking) increases productivity and reduces stress.

Set-Up

Have the student volunteers stand for the exercise and create ample space between them.

Each volunteer needs a tennis ball for the new exercise.

Provide all of the students with a copy of the journal prompt on page 31. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: How Much Can You Handle?

10 minutes

Announce the lesson objectives to the students.

(Adapted from *Learning to Breathe*, by Patricia C. Broderick, Ph.D.)

Ask for a few volunteers. Give each volunteer a tennis ball. Explain that they need to try to keep multiple activities going at the same time.

Narrate the instructions, waiting a few seconds between each:

- Tap your right foot and keep it going.
- Using your left hand, keep throwing the ball up in the air and catching it as you tap your right foot.
- Start bending to the front and to the back, as you tap your right foot and throw the ball in the air with your left hand. Keep everything going.
- Swing your right arm in circle next to you. Keep bending to the front and to the back, as you tap your right foot and throw the ball in the air with your left hand. Keep everything going.
- Now begin to count backward from 100 by twos as you swing your right arm in circles next to you, bend to the front and to the back, tap your right foot, and throw the ball in the air with your left hand. Keep everything going.



Repeat the exercise if students want to keep trying. Or, see if they can just do any two or three of the tasks at the same time.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Mindless Moments

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 31. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 4

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Objectives

Increase awareness of how we can overlook important details in our surroundings, even when they're plainly visible.

Set-Up

Before the students enter, "hide" three small objects (such as a penny, a seashell, a Lego piece, an eraser, etc.) around the room in plain sight but in unusual places; don't conceal them under or behind anything.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 33. Each student needs a pencil. Have the videos listed on the prompt ready to play for the class.

Activity: In Plain Sight

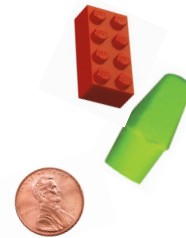
10 minutes

Announce the lesson objective to the students.

Ask, "Why is it important to be aware of your surroundings?" and call on a few students to respond.

Possible responses:

- Appreciating everyday pleasures, which increases your overall wellbeing.
- It can help you avoid dangerous situations.
- Finding things that would be easy to overlook.



Say that you are going to play something like Hide-and-Go-Seek, except that what they are looking for is "hidden" in plain sight. They will be silently walking around the room to find three objects. If they spot any of the objects, they shouldn't do anything to alert the others, but instead just move on to locating the next object. They can sit down when they have found all three objects.

Tell the students the three objects they will be looking for, and then let them begin the search. When all the students sit down, have them point out where each object is located.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Awareness Tests

15 minutes

Play the brief videos noted on the prompt on page 33. Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Be sure that students understand that the videos require us to be aware of both details and the "big picture." That can be challenging, especially when there are distractions, but recognizing that both exist in any situation can help us improve.

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 4

Journal: Awareness Tests

Name: _____

Date: _____

Watch the video of this awareness test: [youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4). (You can also search for “Test Your Awareness: Do The Test” on YouTube.) Describe what you experienced while watching it:

Then, watch this second video called “Whodunnit?”: [youtube.com/watch?v=ubNF9QNEQLA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubNF9QNEQLA). (You can also search “Test Your Awareness: Whodunnit?” on YouTube.) Describe what you experienced while watching it:

Overall, what points do you think these videos make about the act of paying attention?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 5

Notice the Details

Objectives

Increase attention to detail.

Reduce wandering thoughts.

Set-Up

Select a space that is familiar to the students. Divide the space into three large zones with tape, string or objects to mark borders. Divide the students into three groups.

The students need to carry a pencil and piece of paper with them during the exercise.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 35. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Walkabout

10 minutes

Announce the lesson objectives to the students.

Assign a group of students to each of the three zones.

Have the students slowly investigate the zone for two minutes. Rotate the groups until they investigate all three zones. Encourage them to observe the space from the top to the bottom.

Instruct the students to write down three things in each zone that they'd never noticed before.

Encourage students to try mindful walking in their everyday routines. Instead of letting their thoughts wander, paying attention to what they're seeing on a walk around the neighborhood or between classes can help them stay in the present moment.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Slow Down

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 35. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 5

Journal: Slow Down

Name: _____

Date: _____

Identify three activities in your life that would be enhanced by slowing down to experience the details of the moment. Try to think of activities from different areas of your life, like school, your relationships, your extracurriculars, your downtime, etc. For each activity, explain what you think you might experience if you slowed down and/or how it would benefit you.

Activity #1: _____

What you think you might experience if you slowed down:

How it might benefit you:

Activity #2: _____

What you think you might experience if you slowed down:

How it might benefit you:

Activity #3: _____

What you think you might experience if you slowed down:

How it might benefit you:

Plan for Mini-Lesson 6

Find Calm Around You

Objective

Use the surrounding environment to increase calmness.

Set-Up

If possible, take the students outside for the exercise. If not, gather near windows that offer a clear view of the sky.

Each student needs a pencil and piece of paper.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 37. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Cloud Watching

10 minutes

Announce the objective of the lesson to the students.

Direct students to silently observe the movement of the clouds in the sky. If you're not able to go outside or be near a window, you can show this video of clouds: [youtube.com/watch?v=Wimkqo8gDZ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wimkqo8gDZ0) or use another video that shows a calming scene in nature, like ocean waves or rain.



Direct students to jot observations of the clouds as they cross their minds. They might describe the colors, shapes and speed of the clouds.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Things that Calm Me

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 37. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 6

Journal: Things that Calm Me

Name: _____

Date: _____

Taking a break to watch the clouds passing by is a simple way to build a moment of relaxation into your day. Identify three other simple things that you can gently focus on for a moment to help you feel calm. They can be things that you'd commonly encounter indoors (like a fan that turns from side to side) or outdoors (like a tree that's swaying in the breeze). Try to avoid things that encourage multitasking or tend to make your thoughts race. Describe why you find each thing calming.

1

Thing that helps you feel calm: _____

Why it makes you feel calm: _____

2

Thing that helps you feel calm: _____

Why it makes you feel calm: _____

3

Thing that helps you feel calm: _____

Why it makes you feel calm: _____

Plan for Mini-Lesson 7

Eat Mindfully

Objective

Encourage healthy eating habits.

Set-Up

Put enough raisins on one plate and potato chips on another plate so that each student can have one of each. Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 39. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Mindful Eating

10 minutes

Announce the lesson objectives to the students.

Before you show the students the raisins and potato chips, tell the students that they will get some food and they should adopt a “beginner’s mind” and treat it as if they’ve never seen it before. Before they eat it, they will examine it mindfully.

Allow each student to take one raisin and one potato chip and remind them not to eat it yet!

First with the raisin, then with the potato chip, lead students through the following directions:

- Observe the food and be aware of what you see: the shape, texture, color, size and temperature.
- Now, smell the food.
- Next, bring the food near your ear and roll it between your fingers. Do you hear anything?
- Place the food in your mouth without chewing or swallowing. Become aware of all the sensations you are experiencing.
- Chew the food as slowly as you can, and eventually swallow it.

Ask students to compare their experience of eating the raisin with the experience of eating the potato chip. (Many people say that the experience of eating the potato chip mindfully was less pleasant than eating it quickly.) Explain that snack food is often so appealing it has been developed to reach the “bliss point,” which is the optimal combination of salt, sugar, fat, and texture (like the crunch of a potato chip). When we eat it quickly, our brains interpret the experience as pleasure and we’re more likely to overlook its lack of nutritional benefits. When we sample junk food mindfully, we’re more likely to notice that the food doesn’t actually taste that good and more likely to avoid overindulging.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Mindful Meals

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 39. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student’s name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 7

Journal: Mindful Meals

Name: _____

Date: _____

Busy schedules and distractions can get in the way of eating each meal mindfully. But we can make simple adjustments so that we approach mealtime more mindfully and create better nutrition habits over time.

Identify three specific actions you can take on a daily basis that can help you take a mindful approach to choosing, preparing, and/or eating food and explain the benefit(s) of each.

1
Action: _____
Benefit(s): _____

2
Action: _____
Benefit(s): _____

3
Action: _____
Benefit(s): _____

Plan for Mini-Lesson 8

Listen Mindfully

Objective

Improve listening skills.

Set-Up

For Part I, students will form a line around the room.

For Part II, you will need relaxing sounds that gradually diminish. Use a singing bowl or Zenergy chime if possible, or you can use an app or YouTube video that plays the sound.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 41. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Whisper Down the Lane & Zenergy Chime

10 minutes

Part I, Whisper Down the Lane: Direct the students to form a line. Whisper a phrase to the student at the start of the line and instruct the students to whisper the phrase to one another, being sure to speak quietly. Remind them to listen carefully, because no one is allowed to repeat the phrase. The student at the end will say the phrase that he/she heard.

Play a few rounds of Whisper Down the Lane. Some sample phrases you can use:

“Money doesn’t grow on trees, but leaves do.”

“It’s illegal to plant flowers on Mars.”

“Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.”

If the group is large, it’s rare that the last student will repeat the starting phrase. The game typically makes students laugh a lot. Have fun with it, but make sure that the concepts of mindful listening like focusing on the message and blocking out distractions get reinforced in the end. The activity also creates a good opportunity to highlight how gossiping distorts information.

Part II, Zenergy Chime: Have students get settled at their seats. Explain that sometimes we can be so lost in our own thoughts that we don’t hear what’s going on in our surrounding environment. This exercise will help us improve our mindful listening abilities by focusing on one noise at a time.

Tell the students to raise a hand when they can’t hear the noise anymore. Then, tap the bowl/chime. Wait until every student raises a hand. Repeat a few times.

Tell the students to close their eyes and simply listen to what they hear in the current environment for a few minutes. Then, ask:

- What did they hear going on inside the building?
- What did they hear going on outside the building?
- Did they notice any noises that they hadn’t heard before?



Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Hearing vs. Listening

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 41. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student’s name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 8

Journal: Hearing vs. Listening

Name: _____

Date: _____

What do you think is the difference between hearing and listening?

What are some signs that indicate someone isn't really listening to you during a conversation?

How does it make you feel when someone isn't listening to you?

What would you be doing if you were listening to someone mindfully?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 9

Increase Empathy

Objective

Develop awareness of and compassion for the differences in the ways people experience and behave in the world.

Set-Up

Divide students into seven groups.

Make seven copies of the worksheet on page 43 and circle a different challenge on each page.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 44. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Another's Shoes

10-20 minutes

Announce the lesson objective to the students.

Write the saying "Before you judge someone, walk a mile in their shoes" on the board. Ask students to explain what it means. Ideas may include:

- Stopping to think about the reasons for someone's behavior instead of immediately thinking that you don't want to get to know him or her.
- Trying to imagine or get close to experiencing the difficulties that someone experiences, so you be more helpful to them.

Explain to the students that everyone has challenges in life, but some people have long-lasting challenges that create hardships in many areas of their lives. Although we can't always know what's the best way to help someone, and we don't want to be overbearing, it's still a good idea to reach out to people who we know might be isolated because of a personal difficulty. The word for being able to sense and understand another person's emotions is *empathy*.

Circle a different challenge on each of the seven copies you made of the worksheet on the following page. Give each group one of the worksheets and instruct them to focus on the circled challenge. They need to try to put themselves in that person's shoes and think about how that challenge could affect that person's life at home, at school, at a job, and in social situations. Then, they will list ideas for helping that person.

Have each group present its ideas.

Journal: Being Kind

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 44. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 9

Activity: Another's Shoes

Names: _____

Date: _____

Imagine a person who has to deal with the challenge that is circled:

A hearing impairment	A visual impairment	Significant intellectual disability	Being permanently wheelchair-bound
Cancer	Moving to the U.S. and not knowing English	Can't make rent and has been evicted from an apartment	

List the difficulties that this person might experience with:

Social Situations

School or Work

Living Independently

If someone you know at school or in your community is dealing with this challenge, how could you try to help to him or her? List your ideas.

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 9

Journal: Being Kind

Name: _____

Date: _____

Most people would likely say they'd like to be seen as kind rather than mean. And most people would also likely say they'd like other people to be kind to them, rather than mean. Still, when we get stressed out or feel insecure, we often find ourselves being unkind to people.



Do you agree with this quotation from the ancient storyteller Aesop? Explain why or why not.

Encouraging ourselves to be kind supports mindfulness because it helps us be aware of our emotions and actions. When we notice ourselves feeling good because we were kind, we will be more likely to be kind in the future. Consider doing acts of kindness for strangers or in situations when you might not be thanked.

What do you think would be the purpose of performing an act of kindness when it's unlikely that you'll be thanked for it?

Think of three acts of kindness that you can do for other people today. Examples of acts of kindness could include offering your help, giving someone a specific compliment, or inviting someone to do something fun.

	Describe the three acts of kindness you plan to do:
1	
2	
3	

Try to practice kindness to yourself and other people – even people you don't like – as much as possible and observe how it makes you feel.

Plan for Mini-Lesson 10

Strengthen Your Self-Control

Objective

Develop self-control to be able to delay gratification.

Set-Up

Have two marshmallows (or pieces of candy)*
ready for each student.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal
prompt on page 47. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Marshmallow Experiment

10 minutes

Give each student a marshmallow. Tell them that they can eat it now or, if they wait five minutes, you'll give them a second marshmallow.

Wait five minutes. Give a second marshmallow to the students who waited.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Ask the students who didn't wait for the second marshmallow why they think they didn't. Ask the student who did wait why they were able to. Explain that this activity is similar to a famous psychology experiment known as the Marshmallow Experiment conducted with young children. Many kids ate the marshmallow right away, but kids who waited for the second marshmallow were successful because they found ways to redirect their attention away from the craving, like looking away or even making silly noises. Years later, it was found that the kids who were able to delay gratification had higher SAT scores and healthier weights and their parents were more likely to rate them as able to handle stress.

*Alternative activity: Instead of marshmallows or candy, you could use bubble wrap. (Students would decide whether they'll pop the bubble wrap immediately or wait five minutes so they get a second piece to pop.)

Journal: Moments of Weakness

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 48. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 10

Journal: Moments of Weakness

Name: _____

Date: _____

We all have our “moments of weakness” when it’s difficult to maintain self-control. Even when we know that something isn’t good for us in the long-term (like eating too much junk food, going on a shopping spree, or procrastinating on assignments), it’s not easy to restrain ourselves when we find something enjoyable in the short-term.

Describe a situation in which it’s often difficult for you to maintain self-control and why it presents a challenge for you.

How can you ensure that you maintain self-control in this situation? Describe at least two things you can say to yourself or actions that you can do that will prevent you from giving into temptation. (It may help to have a sense of humor about this!)

Think of someone you know or a well-known person who you think demonstrates good self-control. Describe who this person is and how you know that he or she has self-control.

What benefits do you think this person gets from maintaining self-control?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 11

Work with Distractions

Objective

Maintain focus amid distractions.

Set-Up

Use a computer with speakers to play this compilation of annoying noises (<http://www.wimp.com/can-you-endure-the-most-annoying-sounds-of-all-time/>), use a similar compilation, or make noises yourself within the classroom.

Give each student a copy of the rating sheet on page 49.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 50. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Annoying Noises

10 minutes

Announce the objective of the mini-lesson to the students.

When one noise or motion starts to distract you, it can suddenly feel like they're multiplying. Distractions are almost impossible to avoid, so it's good to learn how to work with them.

Give the students directions for the activity:

- First identify some noises that commonly annoy you and how you tend to react to them.
- Then, close your eyes and start to focus on your breathing.
- You're going to hear a compilation of sounds that many people find annoying. After each sound, we'll pause so you can rate how distracted you were from your mindful breathing.
- When you finish your rating, return to focusing on your breathing.

Play the compilation of noises and pause after each one so students can complete their ratings.

Ask students to share their responses and ratings.

Tell the students that when they practice mindful breathing, they should simply notice what distracts them from their breathing and how it makes them feel, and then bring their attention back to their breathing. As they get more experienced with the process of noticing when their mind has wandered and then bringing it back to their breathing, their attention will become stronger.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Online Distractions

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 50. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mini-Lesson 11: Annoying Noises

Name: _____

List three noises that commonly annoy you and describe how you tend to react to each one.

Annoying Noise	How I React

After you hear each of the noises in the compilation, rate how distracted you were from your breathing.

Noise	Level of Distraction (1-5)*
1. Vuvuzela	
2. Emergency broadcast system	
3. Gilbert Gottfried's voice	
4. Nails on a chalkboard	
5. Car alarm	
6. Dial-up modem	
7. Snoring	
8. Cicadas	
9. Imitation of a baby crying	

**1 = least distracted, 5 = most distracted*

What can you do to try to be less annoyed or distracted by certain noises?

Are there any noises that relax you or help you focus? List them:

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 11

Journal: Online Distractions

Name: _____

Date: _____

Websites and mobile apps for social media, news, and entertainment provide ways to have fun and stay in touch. But it can take a lot of willpower to break away from the screen, even when we feel annoyed or upset by what we see.

Identify two things you commonly encounter online that tend to pull your attention away from important tasks or what you initially intended to view. Identify how that distraction makes you feel and explain with specific details why it makes you feel that way. Then, think about what you could do to try to prevent it from distracting you as much.

1
Online distraction: _____
It makes me feel _____ because _____

How I can prevent this distraction: _____

2
Online distraction: _____
It makes me feel _____ because _____

How I can prevent this distraction: _____

Plan for Mini-Lesson 12

Manage School Stress

Objective

Reduce stress at school.

Set-Up

Make trashcans and recycling bins available. Supplies like a three-hole punch, stapler, paper clips, and rubber bands may also be helpful.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 53. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Get Organized

10 minutes

Announce the mini-lesson objective.

Explain to the students that studies have shown that people feel more stressed and have more difficulty thinking clearly when they're surrounded by clutter or have disorganized materials. However, many people avoid cleaning a room, locker, or a backpack because it seems like it'll take too much time – so then the problem grows. A good approach is to decide to clean or organize just one thing. We all have *something* we can clean or organize a little bit more.

Tell students that for today's activity, they're going to focus on one thing they can do to organize or clean their school materials. Suggestions include:

- Empty the dirt, lint, candy wrappers, etc. from your backpack.
- Put all of the papers from the same class together.
- Order your papers by date.
- Recycle papers you don't need anymore.
- Put all of your school supplies (pencils, pens, highlighters, erasers, etc.) in one pocket of your backpack.
- Put due dates and reminders into a single calendar or log.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Being a Mindful Student

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 53. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 12

Journal: Being a Mindful Student

Name: _____

Date: _____

In addition to setting aside time to practice mindful breathing, we can practice mindful awareness during our everyday schedules to make our days more enjoyable. One way to do this is to first notice the points in our day when we tend to encounter problematic thoughts and emotions. Then, we can identify ways to refresh our perspectives to improve these situations.

Identify a situation that's likely to make you feel **stressed** during a typical week at school:

What can you do to feel calm and relaxed in the situation (while still participating appropriately)?

Identify a situation that's likely to make you feel **bored** during a typical week at school:

What can you do to stay engaged in the situation (while still participating appropriately)?

Identify a situation that's likely to make you feel **annoyed** during a typical week at school:

What can you do to feel less bothered by the situation (while still participating appropriately)?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 13

Use Your Beginner's Mind

Objective

Cultivate a “beginner’s mind” that increases attention to and appreciation of everyday situations.

Set-Up

Each student needs a piece of paper and a pencil.

Collect the materials listed in the exercise and/or adapt as appropriate.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 55. Each student needs a pencil.

Activity: Non-Dominant Hand

10 minutes

Instruct the students to write the alphabet on the piece of paper in their neatest handwriting, but as quickly as they can.

Then, instruct them to write the alphabet backwards (from Z to A) using their non-dominant hand.

If possible, have the students attempt several tasks using their non-dominant hands such as:

- Cutting a piece of paper
- Playing catch
- Eating with a fork

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Explain to the students that even a small challenge like writing with our non-dominant hand gets us more focused on the present moment because it requires our close attention. When we’re focused on the present, we don’t ruminate about the past or worry about the future, which is why we’re happier when we’re trying things that give us interesting challenges. However, it’s easy to get impatient when facing a challenge, so we have try to notice the moments when we need to summon more focus and calm.

Journal: Fresh Eyes

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 55. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student’s name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 14

Expand Your Comfort Zone

Objective

Be willing to engage in and adapt to uncomfortable situations.

Set-Up

Bring students to a hallway or large room for the exercise.	If possible, provide blindfolds for half of the number of students.	Scatter objects in the students' walking paths (such as books, balls, desks, etc.).	Write/post each student's name on a wall that serves as the finish line.	Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 57. Each student needs a pencil.
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Activity: Trust Walk

10 minutes

Ask the students, "What does it mean to 'leave your comfort zone'?" and call on a few students to respond. Possible responses may include trying something that you usually would avoid or adapting to new or difficult situations.

Assign the students to pairs. Explain that they will be going on trust walks, which represents the idea of leaving one's comfort zone. One partner is the leader and the other is the follower. The follower will close his/her eyes (or wear a blindfold) and the leader can only use verbal directions to guide the follower to the place on the wall where his/her name is. The follower must touch his/her name on the wall to complete the trust walk. Have the students switch roles. Tell the students now in the follower role to close their eyes while you move the obstacles into new places. Then let the students begin the trust walks again.

Explain that we feel anxiety about leaving our comfort zone because we're uncertain about what *could* happen. It's good to push the limits of your comfort zone so that you're open to trying new things. However, you shouldn't feel that you have to take huge risks or force yourself into lots of situations that make you nervous. Leaving the comfort zone can be as simple as interacting with new or different people, trying a sport or class that challenges you, or coming up with strategies to tackle a problem instead of avoiding it. When we feel nervous about leaving our comfort zone, mindful breathing can help us maintain a sense of calm that can make us more likely to try what is making us anxious.

Use these discussion prompts to help students review the activity:

- What was challenging about the exercise? What was easy?
- What did you like and/or dislike about the exercise?
- What was something new that you noticed during the exercise?
- How can this exercise connect to your everyday life?

Journal: Try Something New

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 57. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

Plan for Mini-Lesson 15

Mindful Choices Recap

Objective

Encourage students to maintain a personal mindfulness practice.

Set-Up

Provide each student with a copy of the Mindfulness Visualized activity on page 59.

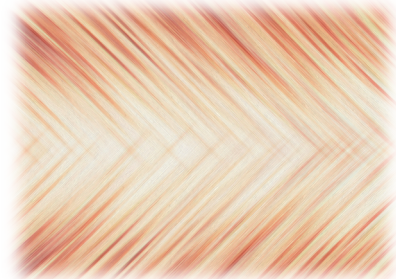
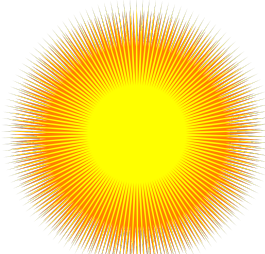
Provide students with colored pencils, crayons, and/or markers.

Provide each student with a copy of the journal prompt on page 60.

Activity: Mindfulness Visualized

10 minutes

Read the directions for the activity on the next page aloud with the students.* Make it clear that they should be creating an abstract design that represents how mindfulness and mindlessness make them feel mentally and/or physically. If students are unclear about what an abstract design is, show them a few examples like the these ones:



Call on students to share their ideas. Post their drawings in the classroom if possible.

*Alternatively, students could make larger, more detailed designs on blank sheets of paper if you have time.

Journal: Personal Mindfulness Practice

15 minutes

Give students 5-8 minutes to respond to the prompt on page 60. Then, use these suggestions for discussion prompts to guide students in sharing their ideas with the whole class:

- How does this journal prompt connect to the general concept of mindfulness?
- How does this journal prompt relate to the activity from this mini-lesson?
- What do you have in common with what [student's name] shared? How are your ideas different?

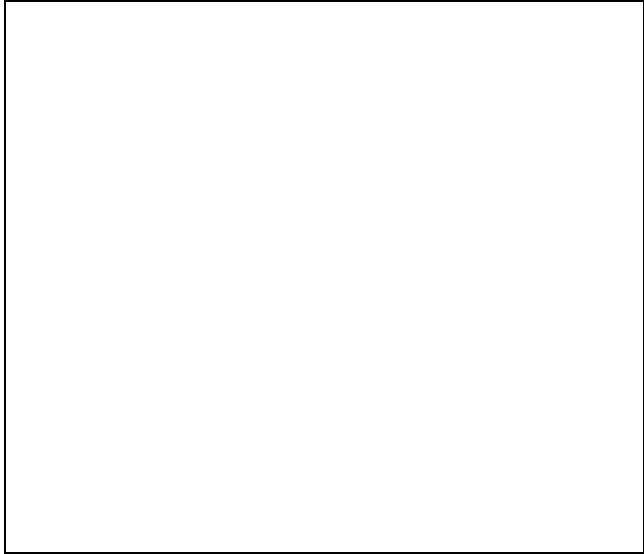
Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 15

Mindfulness and Mindlessness Visualized

Name: _____

Date: _____

Draw a design in the box that represents how you feel when you're being **mindful**.



Describe why you chose these colors and shapes to represent being mindful.

Draw a design in the box that represents how you feel when you're being **mindless**.



Describe why you chose these colors and shapes to represent being mindless.

Mindfulness Mini-Lesson 15

Journal: Personal Mindfulness Practice

Name: _____

Date: _____

Now that you've tried a variety of breathing exercises, activities, and journal prompts to help you develop mindful awareness, recap your experiences so you can transition into practicing mindful awareness on your own, in ways that work well for you.

Describe mindfulness in your own words: _____

What's your favorite mindful breathing exercise? _____

Explain why: _____

Which mindful breathing exercise was your least favorite? _____

Explain why: _____

Identify three specific ways that you can practice mindfulness in your daily life. (You can include formal practices like mindful breathing exercises or informal practices like paying attention to one particular thing at a time.)

What are two ways that practicing mindfulness can benefit you, specifically?

What's a question that you still have about practicing mindfulness?

Works Consulted

The Mindfulness Toolbox: 50 Practical Tips, Tools & Handouts for Anxiety, Depression, Stress & Pain by Donald Altman

Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescent to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance by Patricia C. Broderick, PhD.

The MindUP Curriculum: Grades 6-8 by The Hawm Foundation

“What Is Mindfulness” by The Greater Good Foundation

The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate by Susan Kaiser Greenland

DBT Skills Training Manual, Second Edition by Marsha M. Linehan

The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students by Daniel Rechtschaffen

Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone Who Teaches Anything by Deborah Schoeberlein

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents) by Eline Snel

The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time by Dzung X. Vo, MD