



Transformative Teaching Toolkit

Teaching Mindfulness in Schools



Breathe For Presence



Toolkit Overview

Breathe For Presence

Your presence is the greatest gift of all. This Breathe For Presence Transformative Teaching Toolkit will empower you to embrace and appreciate each present moment, one breath at a time. If you are new to mindfulness, or are inspired to deepen your practice, you can draw on these mindful practices to enhance your awareness, increase your presence, and improve your relationships. When we are more mindful, we are better equipped to thrive in school.

This toolkit includes a Breathe For Presence theme overview you can share with your students, colleagues, and families, and a wide range of mindfulness strategies you can embody and teach to your students and staff. All practices are CASEL-aligned and differentiated for primary, secondary, and adult education. Each strategy includes a step-by-step description, reflection questions, and scaffolded pedagogical pointers that you can draw on to bring the practice to life.

We invite you to soften your gaze or close your eyes, connect to your breath, and get inspired to experience the power of mindfulness in action.



BREATHE FOR PRESENCE

THE BEST GIFT OF ALL



*We take care of the future best by
taking care of the present now.*

— Jon Kabat-Zinn

Your children need your presence more than your presents.

— Jesse Jackson

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence.

*When mindfulness embraces those we love,
they will bloom like flowers.*

— Thich Nhat Hanh

*The only way to live is by accepting each minute
as an unrepeatable miracle.*

— Tara Brach

Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have.

Make the Now the primary focus of your life.

— Eckhart Tolle



BREATHE FOR PRESENCE

Our ability to transform ourselves and our relationships is directly related to our ability to be present with exactly how things are – right here, right now. Many of us have a tendency to avoid uncomfortable thoughts, emotions, and sensations. However, the more we are willing to look at and accept the way things are, the more we are able to see and understand how to effectively change them.

Being present to our breath, our body, our emotions, and our thoughts is the core of mindfulness practice. In Breathe For Presence, we take the time to enhance our mind-body connection by learning to more consciously focus on the present moment. In the process, we learn to cultivate positive feelings and beliefs, and accept and release disempowering feelings and beliefs.

Our bodies are incredibly sensitive and complex instruments that are constantly communicating with both our internal and external environments through our senses, emotions, and thoughts. As we grow up, our nervous system becomes conditioned to unconsciously filter out the vast majority of information coming in through our senses.(1) This automatic filtering helps prevent us from being overwhelmed by excess information, but it can also be limiting, especially if we are not aware of its existence. It is important that we train our bodies and minds to be aware of our present moment experience,(2) so that we can consciously welcome in information that aligns with who we want to be, and filter out that which does not serve us.

Mindfulness is commonly defined as, “a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings,

thoughts, and bodily sensations.”(3) There are many forms of mindfulness practice, centering on the art of being present while loving and accepting everything we sense, feel, and think. Mindfulness is very powerful, in part because it can be integrated into everything we do; with practice, we can learn to act, teach, and live mindfully. This allows us to form deeper connections, learn more effectively, transform more consciously, and more fully experience all that life has to offer.(4)

Traditionally, mindfulness has often been viewed as a solo practice. Breathe For Change, however, believes that, in our connected society, mindfulness must be approached from a more integrated and interpersonal perspective. We have coined the term “collective mindfulness” to refer to the cultivation of acceptance, love, and presence within individuals, relationships, and the very social fabric of a community.

This evolved understanding of mindfulness can provide more meaning and practicality within a world where we are all in continuous communication and interaction with one another. This is not to diminish the importance of traditional individual mindfulness practices; to the contrary, it only further emphasizes the importance of cultivating our own mindfulness so that we can foster and contribute to the collective mindfulness of our community.

In today’s world, we are bombarded with new information and interaction at all times, which can easily take us away from our focused attention. The key to staying focused in the present is to tap into what’s happening right here, right now. In Breathe For Presence, we do just that. Embrace this presence as the greatest gift of your life!

1 Cromwell, H. C., Mears, R. P., Wan, L., & Boutros, N. N. (2008). Sensory gating: a translational effort from basic to clinical science. *Clinical EEG and neuroscience*, 39(2), 69-72.

2 Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hachette Books.

3 Mindfulness. 2016. In *OxfordDictionaries.com*. Retrieved May 29, 2016, from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/mindfulness

4 Davidson, R. J., Kabat-Zinn, J., Schumacher, J., Rosenkranz, M., Muller, D., Santorelli, S. F., ... & Sheridan, J. F. (2003). Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic medicine*, 65(4), 564-570.

MINDFUL BODY SCAN

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*f Component

Focus, Relaxation

SEL Competency

Self Awareness

SEL Purpose

Enhances awareness and self-acceptance



DESCRIPTION

Mindful Body Scan — also referred to as Mindfulness Of Our Body — is the practice of observing and accepting our body and its many sensations in each moment. Since our bodies are the vehicles through which we experience the world, our relationship to our body has a significant impact on our relationship to the rest of reality. If we actively accept—and even embrace—our body, we train ourselves to walk through life with greater self-acceptance and joy.

1. I invite you to settle into a comfortable position for our mindful body scan. You can either sit down on a chair or on the floor, or lie down on your back with your legs and arms out long or in constructive rest with your knees bent and feet planted. Soften your gaze or close your eyes and connect to your breath.
2. As you continue to breathe, invite your attention to your head. Notice any sensations that are arising near the top of your head, your forehead, and the back of your head. If you are carrying any tension in this area, try to soften into it through each exhalation.
3. Now, welcome your attention to your eyes. Our eyes give us the incredible ability to see the world around us. Notice any sensations you may be feeling around your eyes, without trying to shift or change anything.
4. Now, guide your attention to your nose, which gives us the gift of smell. Observe and feel the air moving in and out of your nostrils, and notice any sensations arising.
5. Begin to guide your awareness to your jaw. We often carry tension in our jaws, so just observe what's present for you here, and try to soften your jaw by letting your lower jaw release downward to create just a little more space.
6. Now, invite your attention to your shoulders. We carry so much of the weight of the world on our shoulders, so if you feel tension in this area, try to let some of the tension melt off your shoulders as you exhale.
7. Now, welcome your attention to your heart. Perhaps you bring so much focus to your heart space, that you can even feel the rhythm of your heart beating inside you.
8. Now, guide your awareness to your belly, observing your breath moving in and out of your belly. Notice and accept any sensations arising in this area of your body.
9. Now, direct your awareness to your legs. Begin by focusing your attention at the top of your legs, then slowly move your focus down towards your feet. Notice any sensations arising in your legs, as they come into contact with the surface beneath you.
10. Now, invite your attention to your feet. Notice any sensations arising at the top of your feet, in your arches, and on the bottom of your feet. Now, draw your awareness to each toe.
11. Finally, expand your awareness to your entire body. Feel any sensations present throughout your body. Take this moment to honor and appreciate your body for all that it is, and all that it does for you each day.
12. To seal this practice, I invite you to bring your hands to your heart, check in, and notice how you feel.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you feel as a result of the mindful body scan?
- What insights or “aha’s” arose from this experience?
- What was it like to observe the sensations in your body?
- What did it feel like to turn your attention inward?
- When might it be supportive to practice the body scan?



» — Lead with Love — «

PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

Facilitate the body scan in a developmentally-appropriate way by decreasing the overall time and areas of focus. For example, you can invite students to only focus on their head, heart, and belly, or their face, shoulders, and legs. Or you can simply invite them to draw their attention to the sensations arising in their body in general. Add additional time and body parts as your students get more familiar with the practice.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

To increase engagement and buy in, talk about the benefits and research behind the body scan practice. Explain that this type of mindfulness practice increases both athletic and academic performance, and can enhance overall mental and physical well-being. Share the positive impact this practice has had on your life as a source of inspiration.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

You can introduce this practice at meetings, community events, wellness workshops, or at home as a tool to increase awareness and focus. Whether you facilitate the body scan for 1 minute, 5 minutes or 10, invite participants to engage in a conversation about what opened up for them as a result, and ask them to consider how they can incorporate the body scan into their lives and teaching.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Trauma lives in the body, so the body scan practice can be quite vulnerable for those who are carrying a lot of tension in their bodies. Encourage participants to engage with the practice in a way that feels supportive and safe to them. Provide options (e.g., eyes open or closed) so that everyone feels like they can engage with the practice in a healthy way.



MINDFUL BREATHING

B4C Theme	Breathe For Presence
SEL*F Component	Breath Awareness
SEL Competency	Self-Awareness, Self Management
SEL Purpose	Deepens awareness, increases focus

DESCRIPTION

The practice of Mindful Breathing — or Mindfulness of our Breath — helps us develop a relationship with our breath, calm the mind and body, and focus and increase our attention. This practice is a great first step toward cultivating mindfulness in all aspects of our lives, and can serve as an access point to observe and accept more challenging aspects of our reality.

1. I invite you to join me in a mindful breathing practice that will support us in focusing our minds, relaxing our bodies, and increasing our focus.
2. To begin, find a comfortable seated position. Ground down through your sit bones, lengthen your spine, and relax your shoulders down your back. Place your hands on your heart, in your lap, or on your legs.
3. Find a point in front of you to focus your gaze or close your eyes, whichever feels more comfortable to you.
4. As you settle in, begin to draw your attention to your breath, observing each inhale and each exhale moving through your body. No need to shift or change your breath; simply draw your attention to the natural flow of your breath.
5. If you notice your mind wandering, no worries! Simply draw your attention back to the breath, observing each inhale and each exhale moving through your body.
6. As you continue to observe your breath, I invite you to fully accept your breath exactly as it is. You can even repeat to yourself "I see you breath. I accept you breath."
7. Take the next few moments to complete your practice.
8. Now, bring both hands to your heart, check in, and notice how you feel after practicing mindful breathing.
9. If your eyes are closed, you can gently open them.
10. Thank you so much for joining me in mindful breathing. I'd love for whoever feels called to share how you feel after our practice.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you feel after our mindful breathing practice?
- What shifts or changes did you notice inside you?
- What was it like to observe each inhale and exhale?
- What did it feel like to fully accept your breath as it is?
- When might it be helpful to practice mindful breathing?



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PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

Model this practice first by saying aloud what you are doing (e.g., “I’m observing each breath moving in and each breath moving out”). Then invite students to practice mindful breathing with you for a short amount of time (e.g., 1 minute). Increase the amount of time as students become more familiar and comfortable with the practice. Ask students how they feel after the practice, and engage in a conversation about when this might be a helpful practice to draw on (e.g., when we feel sad, angry, frustrated, or scared).

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

To introduce the practice, you can facilitate a conversation about what it means to be “mindful” or “present.” Ask students when they feel they are most mindful, and when they feel they’re not, and introduce mindful breathing as a strategy to support us in cultivating more awareness in our daily lives. This is a great practice to use to settle students into class, as a brain break or transition, or in response to a stressful moment.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

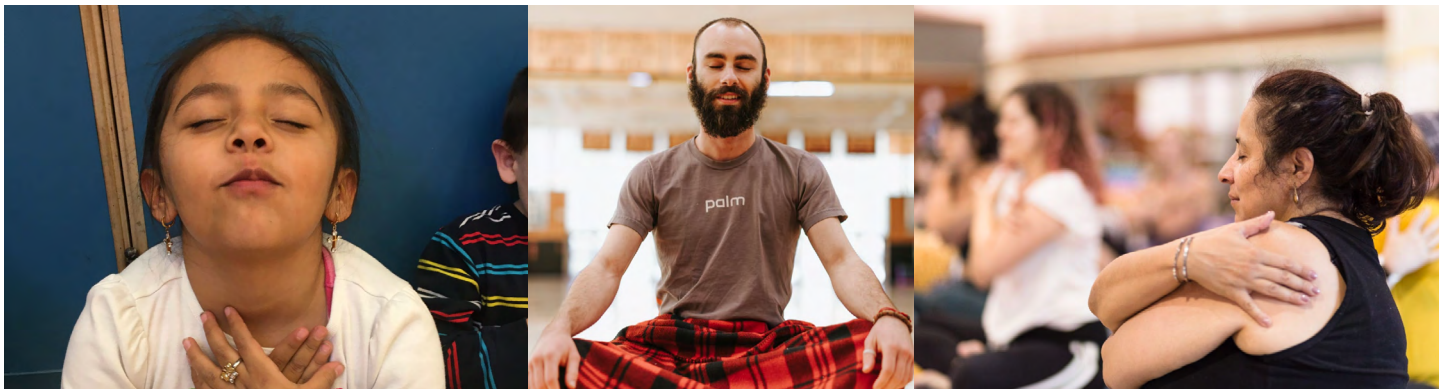
Facilitate this practice at the beginning of meetings, during group discussions, as a transition, or in response to stressful moments. After leading the mindful breathing practice, encourage your colleagues or community members to notice how they feel and consider when they can incorporate this practice into their life and teaching.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Students who have experienced trauma may have a shorter, quicker breath. Invite them to observe and honor their breath exactly as it is, without trying to shift or change it. Additionally, some people may not feel comfortable closing their eyes; always provide an open-eyed option to ensure everyone has access to the practice.

DAILY PRACTICE

Practice this strategy consistently with students to promote breath awareness, increase focus, and enhance well-being. Encourage people to use this practice when they need to center themselves, clear their minds, or increase their focus... and ultimately, performance!



MINDFUL FEELING



B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*F Component

Focus

SEL Competency

Self Awareness, Self Management

SEL Purpose

Builds emotional awareness, fosters self-acceptance

DESCRIPTION

Mindful Feeling — also referred to at Breathe For Change as Mindfulness of our Emotions — is the practice of observing and accepting any and all emotions that are present within us, even the ones we have learned to avoid or suppress (e.g., anger, fear, guilt, shame, sadness, etc.).

Over time, this practice can support us in developing a more open and loving relationship with ourselves and our world.

1. Settle into a comfortable seated position, and close your eyes or gently gaze a few feet in front of you.
2. Begin by bringing your attention to whatever emotions you are experiencing within your body right now. Perhaps you feel a strong experience of emotion overtaking you, or maybe you feel barely any emotion at all.
3. Continue to draw your attention to your emotions, and notice what sensations are showing up for you.
4. No matter what you are feeling — whether it's sadness, anger, happiness, fear, joy, or another emotion — place both hands over your heart, and with self-compassion, embrace your current emotional state exactly as it is.
5. As you embrace the emotion, say, "I accept you [emotion]."
6. As new feelings and sensations arise, continue to feel into and embrace each emotion with love.
7. Notice if and how your emotions shift and change as you continue to accept your emotions exactly as they are.
8. Let's take a few deep breaths together to complete this practice.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What was it like for you to observe how you're feeling?

How did it feel to fully accept your emotions?

What did you learn about yourself through this practice?

Are you typically in touch with how you are feeling?

How might observing and accepting your emotions impact you moving forward?



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PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

For younger students, build emotional vocabulary by asking students to name the different types of emotions they've experienced. Generate a list of emotions, and ask them to make facial expressions that reflect the experience of each emotion. This context will support children in connecting to and accepting how they feel.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

Connecting to our emotions can feel quite vulnerable, especially for adolescents and teens who are experiencing a lot of changes physiologically. Ensure that students recognize the benefits and value of this practice by sharing the benefits of emotional awareness, and invite them to consider how they want to respond to what's present inside them to support themselves in thriving.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

This can be an incredibly powerful practice for adults who've been going, going, going, and haven't had a moment to pause, reflect, and connect with themselves. Facilitate this practice to support people in building a closer relationship with themselves, and ensuring they have the support they need to be who they want to be and do what they're here to do.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Some people who experience trauma or are going through obstacles may push down or avoid confronting their emotions because the emotions feel too big or they don't feel safe expressing what's truly present. This practice may bring these types of emotions to the surface so it's important to acknowledge that all emotions are welcome, and that observing and accepting ourselves exactly as we are is the first step towards healing.



MINDFUL LISTENING

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*f Component

Community Connection

SEL Competency

Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills

SEL Purpose

Promotes mindful listening and vulnerable sharing



DESCRIPTION

We are going to practice a powerful mindful listening exercise that will support us in being more present with ourselves and others. The intention of this process is to develop our mindful listening skills, and to experience what it feels like to be fully present as both speakers and listeners. This protocol takes place in partners. Each person will have the opportunity to play the role of both the speaker and the mindful listener. The speaker will share in response to a reflective prompt.

Directions:

The speaker will talk uninterruptedly for X minutes in response to the prompt, while the mindful listener listens with their full presence. When the timer goes off, the speaker will end their share. Then, the mindful listener will reflect back to the speaker what they heard them say for Y minutes (e.g., X:Y ratio in minutes = 2:1 min; 5:2 min; 10:3 min). When the timer goes off, partners will take 3 collective breaths, acknowledge each other, and then switch roles.

Key Points:

1. **Be vulnerable in your sharing:** This is an opportunity to be seen and heard. Allow yourself to take up all the space – the entire X minutes – and see what opens up for you as a result of authentic connection. This is truly a gift, so we encourage you to embrace your stretch zone and share from your heart.
2. **Practice Presence in your listening:** Do not think about what you are going to say next, or get caught up in distractions. No note taking – Simply witness and hold space for the speaker to share so that they can receive the gift of your presence.
3. **Do not give advice:** We tend to want to give advice when people share their vulnerabilities or challenges with us... but this is not the point of this practice. As the listener, your main purpose is to serve as a mirror so that your partner can come to their own understandings, answers, and insights.
4. **Follow the structure:** The structure is intentionally designed. This is not a back and forth conversation. Practice taking space and making space.

MINDFUL LISTENING STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

- **Step 1: Partner Up**
Find a partner. (You can pair students intentionally, or invite them to choose a partner, whatever works best in your context.)
- **Step 2: Speaker 1 Shares**
Speaker shares uninterruptedly in response to the prompt for X minutes.
- **Step 3: Mindful Listener 1 Reflects Back**
Mindful listener reflects back to the speaker what they heard them say for Y minutes.
- **Step 4: Switch Roles**
Mindful listener becomes the speaker and the speaker becomes the mindful listener.
- **Step 5: Speaker 2 Shares**
Speaker shares uninterruptedly in response to the prompt for X minutes.
- **Step 6: Mindful Listener 2 Reflects Back**
Mindful Listener reflects back to the speaker what they heard them say for Y minutes.
- **Step 7: Whole Group Reflection**
Open up space for whoever feels called to share any appreciations, insights, or “aha’s” from their experience.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What opened up for you from this experience?

What did you learn about yourself as a listener? Speaker?

What did you learn and appreciate about your partner?

What surprised you the most about participating in mindful listening?

How might listening more mindfully impact you and your relationships?

PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS



PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

With young children, talk about and model what mindful listening looks like (being present, quiet) and what it doesn't look like (interrupting, being distracted, etc.). Demonstrate the role of the speaker and mindful listener in this specific protocol before inviting students to participate. Set timer for a short amount of time (e.g., 1 minute: 30 seconds) in the beginning to ensure developmental appropriateness, and facilitate the transitions.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

You can draw on this protocol to create space for students to explore their perspectives, questions, and critical thoughts about a particular subject area or topic you are currently studying in class. Setting context and giving clear directions prior to this activity is key. You can facilitate the timing and transitions, or invite students to use their phones as timers and facilitate the process themselves.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

You can incorporate this protocol into workshops, meetings, or community gatherings to foster vulnerability and strengthen relationships. Inviting participants to walk around during mindful listening can enhance their capacity to speak and listen consciously through reducing anxious thoughts.

POWERFUL PROMPTS

Draw on this mindful listening exercise to facilitate self-reflection, leadership development, and growth. Examples of self-reflection prompts include: What are your hopes and dreams for yourself? What challenges are getting in the way of you achieving your goals for yourself? What actions can you take to bring your vision for yourself to life? What makes you a great leader? How do you hope to contribute your strengths and gifts to our community?

TIMING

You can either facilitate the timing and transitions of the mindful listening process, or invite your students to move through the process on their own by timing themselves.

PARTNERS & SMALL GROUPS

If you choose to do groups of 3 or more, you can invite whoever is not serving as a speaker or mindful listener to be a witness. Witnesses simply offer the gift of their present to both the speaker and mindful listener.





MINDFUL MOVEMENT

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*F Component

Mindful Movement

SEL Competency

Self Awareness, Self Management

SEL Purpose

Energizes the body, calms the mind, enhances performance



DESCRIPTION

Mindful movement energizes the body, focuses the mind, and enhances our physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being. When we integrate moments for mindful movement into our daily lives, we strengthen our mind-body connection and set ourselves up for a healthier and happier life. You can engage with the following practices seated or standing.

- Shoulder Rolls:** Reach your shoulders up towards your ears and down your back a few times to release any tension you may be carrying in your shoulders. Whenever you feel ready, roll your shoulders in the opposite direction.
- Neck Rolls:** Gently circle your neck in one direction at whatever pace feels good for you. After a few rounds, roll your neck in the opposite direction to cultivate balance.
- Side Bends:** Inhale, reach your arms up. Exhale, bring your left hand down, and your right hand up and over your body, feeling the stretch along your right side. Take a few breaths in and out. Switch sides.
- Seated Twists:** Find a comfortable seat. Inhale, reach your arms up. Exhale, twist to the right, placing your left hand on your right or left thigh, and your right hand on the chair or floor behind you. Twist from your ribcage to the top of your head. Take a few breaths here, imagining as though you are a sponge ring out anything that may not be serving you. Come back to a neutral position facing forward, and then switch to the left side.
- Cat Cow:** Find a comfortable seat, or move into table top position. Inhale, open your heart, gaze up, cow pose. Exhale, round your back, and curl for cat pose. Inhale, drop your belly, look up, cow pose. Exhale, drop your chin and curl for cat pose. Inhale, open. Exhale, round. Do a few more of these cat cows on your own breath; one breath per movement.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What was it like to practice mindful movement?

How do you feel after practicing mindful movement?

How did these practices feel in your body?

What shifts did you notice as a result of moving mindfully?

When might it be helpful to practice mindful movement?

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PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

Engage in a conversation about the benefits of mindful movement to inspire participation. Model one practice at a time, and invite students to practice each mindful movement with you. Once they experience the practices in their own bodies, invite them to come up with their own mindful movements.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

Talk about the science behind mindful movement. Explain that these practices strengthen our bodies, calm our minds, and improve our performance (both academically and athletically!) Encourage students to try each practice as if they are doing an experiment so that they can see what feels good for them.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

Mindful movement is a great practice to use as a settle in, community builder, brain break, or energizing activity during a staff meeting, workshop, professional development, classroom activity, or community gathering. You can incorporate it into any type of experience to enhance physical and mental well-being.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Use invitational language (e.g., "I invite you to...") and provide options to ensure everyone has access to each movement. Discuss safety expectations with students prior to mindful movement, and create enough space so students can move through the practice freely.



MINDFUL EATING

B4C Theme	Breathe For Presence
SEL*F Component	Focus
SEL Competency	Self Awareness, Self Management
SEL Purpose	Increases mindful awareness, fosters appreciation for food
Materials	Food, plates, napkins or wipes



DESCRIPTION

To increase our mindful awareness, and develop a deeper appreciation for the food we eat everyday, we are going to engage in a practice called mindful eating. When we eat mindfully, we intentionally savor every aspect of the eating experience, from the moment we see the food in front of us, until we swallow it fully.

Step 1: Get food

I invite you to find the small plate of food in front of you (or grab the food you already have).

Step 2: Smell food

Before tasting this food, choose a piece of food from your plate and bring it up to your nose. Take in its smell. With every inhalation, observe the scent of this food, smelling all the nuanced flavors.

Step 3: Bring food to lips

Slowly, place your food against your lips, and allow yourself to observe how it feels and smells before putting it into your mouth.

Step 4: Touch food with tongue

Now, bring the tip of your tongue to your food and draw your awareness to the sensation of taste. Mindfully explore the taste of the food, simply through the touch of your tongue.

Step 5: Taste food in mouth

If you would like to eat the food, either take a bite or place the whole piece in your mouth and taste it, while observing its flavors.

Step 6: Chew food

Now, start to chew the food, feeling your teeth crunch down on each bite. Mindfully observe and taste each bite.

Step 7: Swallow food

Once you finish chewing, mindfully swallow the food, and follow it as it goes down your throat, into your esophagus, and towards your stomach.

Step 8: Mindfully eat the other food

If you would like, mindfully eat the other pieces of food on the plate, paying close attention to each step of the process.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What did you learn about yourself through mindful eating?

What insights did you gain from mindfully eating?

How was this experience different from how you typically eat?

What would eating with more presence look like for you?

How do you hope to integrate mindful eating into your life?

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PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

Before the practice, engage in a conversation with children about and model what mindful eating does and doesn't look like, sound like, and feel like so they can better understand how to approach this practice. You can either facilitate mindful eating using the food children have from home or get at school, or you can put a few healthy fruits on a plate to promote both equity and nutrition.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

Before the practice, encourage students to reflect on how they typically approach eating. How present do you feel when you eat? Are you practicing mindfulness? What's the impact? From here, explain the benefits and research behind mindful eating; it increases our focus, inspires an attitude of gratitude, and improves our mental and physical well-being. After the practice, invite students to reflect on the experience and consider how they can adapt their eating habits to receive the benefits of this practice.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

This is a great strategy to facilitate during a meal or snack at a meeting, conference, or family or community gathering. When you

invite participants to bring intentionality to a community activity like eating, it can surface the often drastic distinction between when we are and aren't practicing presence. After you introduce and engage participants in the practice, invite them to consider how they can incorporate this into their life and teaching.

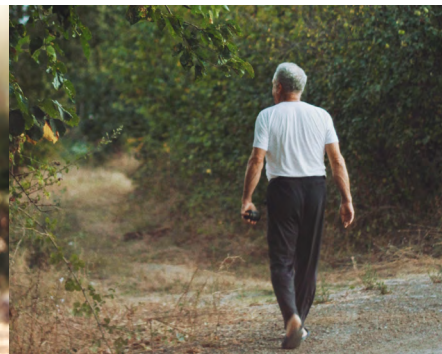
TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Everyone has a unique relationship with food. Forcing people to eat something they don't like will only cause more harm and will defeat the purpose of this practice. Ensure that all participants enjoy the food in front of them, and invite them to engage in the mindful eating steps in a way that feels supportive for them.

SAFETY & FOOD OPTIONS

If you are providing food for this practice, ensure you know the dietary restrictions and allergies that exist among all community members. Fruits and chocolate are often incredible foods to use for this practice because they are sweet and delicious, and easy to savor! Always have back up options for food for those who do not like what you provide to ensure all can experience the benefits.





MINDFUL WALKING

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*F Component

Mindful Movement

SEL Competency

Self-Awareness, Social Awareness

SEL Purpose

Increases mindful awareness, calms the mind and body



DESCRIPTION

1. The practice of Mindful Walking enhances our awareness of our minds, bodies, and surroundings as we move through the world, step-by-step. Let's create space now to experiment with mindful walking, and experience the benefits of this practice.
2. To begin, I invite you to slowly walk around the space. Notice any sensations arising in your feet as they come into contact with the earth beneath you.
3. Now, increase the pace just a little bit, and continue noticing the sensations moving throughout your body. Observe and fully accept whatever sensations or feelings are showing up as you take each step.
4. Continue to move through the space at whatever pace feels good to you. As you walk, expand your attention to the space around you. Notice what you see, take in the smells, feel the air on your skin, and soak in the beauty surrounding you. Continue to appreciate everything around you for a few more minutes.
5. Now, draw your attention to the people moving around you. Share a smile, acknowledge their presence, or connect in whatever way feels authentic to you.
6. Now, take the next few moments to bring your attention back to your feet, reconnecting to each step. As you walk, take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate your body's ability to move through the world.
7. To close, pause your walk and bring yourself back to stillness. Bring both hands to your heart, take a few cleansing breaths here, and notice how you feel.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What was it like to bring your awareness to each step?

What was it like to soak in the beauty surrounding you?

How did it feel to move through the world mindfully?

What insights did you gain through mindfully walking?

How was this different from how you typically walk?

How might moving through the world mindfully benefit you?

PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

You can facilitate this practice in a classroom, outside in nature, or in whatever space you are in. Start by talking about what mindful walking means, and offer specific examples to bring the concept to life (e.g., listening to the sounds around you, feeling your feet meet the ground, seeing the leaves blowing in the wind, feeling the air on your skin). Encourage young children to practice walking slowly at first to increase their ability to focus their attention on their present moment experience.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

To increase engagement, you can begin by asking students how they typically walk through the world. What are they doing? How do they feel? What are they paying attention to or thinking about? Are they being mindful or mindless? This conversation can lead into an introduction into the benefits of the practice. Invite them to try it on as an experiment to support them in approaching the practice with an open mind. You can use this as a brain break, transition, or mindfulness activity.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

This is a great practice to incorporate into a meeting, workshop, or community gathering

when the energy is low, or when people need a brain break. Moving our bodies in a mindful way can help increase focus, energy, and presence. You can facilitate the first part of the practice, then invite participants to mindfully walk on their own for X minutes without your guidance, and then close out with a community reflection.

ACCESSIBILITY

Some people with physical disabilities, limited mobility, or injuries do not have the ability to walk comfortably, or at all. Ensure that you are adapting this practice for those who, for example, use wheelchairs or walkers, or have amputated feet or legs, by giving them options that work in their bodies (e.g., as you move in your wheelchair).

VARIATIONS

You can facilitate this practice using the step-by-step instructions listed above, or you can invite participants to go on a mindful walk on their own within whatever parameters you create. If you let them go out without you guiding each step of the practice, encourage them to bring their mindful attention to their inner and outer worlds before sending them off, and clarify the specific time you want them to return back to complete the activity.



MINDFUL THINKING

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*F Component

Focus

SEL Competency

Self Awareness, Self Management

SEL Purpose

Increases awareness and self-acceptance, transforms beliefs



DESCRIPTION

Thoughts are incredibly powerful; the thoughts we have guide us through life and literally shape the structure of our brains. Mindful Thinking — also referred to as Mindfulness of our Thoughts — invites us to observe and accept each thought as it comes, goes, stays, or shifts. As we take the seat of the observer, we recognize that we are not our thoughts, which supports us in connecting to and fully accepting ourselves exactly as we are.

1. Settle into a comfortable seated position. Close your eyes or gently gaze a few feet in front of you, and connect to your breath.
2. Now, draw your awareness to your thoughts. Notice each thought that enters into your awareness, without trying to shift or change anything. Simply observe each thought as if it were a cloud passing through the sky.
3. As you observe each thought moving through your mind, acknowledge the thought, exactly as it is. With each new thought, say to yourself, "I accept you thought."
4. If you notice your mind wandering or following a train of thoughts for a while, practice non-judgement by observing your inner patterns with curiosity. Continue to accept each thought that shows up in your awareness.
5. Whenever you feel complete, I invite you to reconnect to your breath, and notice how you feel.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What was it like for you to observe your thoughts?

How did it feel to fully accept your thoughts?

What insights did you gain through this practice?

What surprised you most about this experience?

How might engaging in mindful thinking benefit you moving forward?

» — Lead with Love — «

PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

It's important for young children to know that thoughts are always moving through our minds — and that becoming aware of what we are thinking gives us the power to choose thoughts that will support us! Model this practice by naming the thoughts going through your mind aloud (e.g., I am thinking about how excited I am to see my friend, I am thinking about how hungry I am right now, etc.) Invite students to share their thoughts to check for understanding.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

Describing Breathe For Change's Approach to Meditation through the lens of mindfulness and manifestation (Observing, Accepting, and Creating our Reality) can be helpful context for this practice. This practice specifically invites us to observe and accept our thoughts; and from this place of observance and acceptance, we gain the power to choose to take on thoughts that will help us thrive.

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

This powerful practice sheds light on the complexity and power of our minds. When we bring out attention to our thoughts, we gain insight into how we are doing, and what is happening in our internal worlds. Introduce this practice in meetings, events, or gatherings as a mindfulness tool to help people become aware of and overcome any limiting beliefs in their way.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

People who are experiencing high levels of stress or dissatisfaction likely have thoughts that are not supporting their well-being. Invite participants to practice compassion and remember that this practice is not about judging our thoughts; it's about observing and accepting what's present for us fully.





MINDFUL MIRRORING

B4C Theme

Breathe For Presence

SEL*F Component

Mindful Movement, Community Connection, Creative Expression

SEL Competency

Social Awareness, Relationships Skills

SEL Purpose

Increases human connection, fosters collaboration

Materials

Music



DESCRIPTION

- Mindful Mirroring invites us to collaboratively move our bodies and fully express ourselves through movement. It is a mindfulness practice that requires us to practice presence, be creative, and have fun all at the same time!
- Here is how the mindful mirroring practice will work: In a moment, I will play some fun music, and invite you all to move around the room. As you move towards one another, mirror each other's movements, at first without words. Who leads and follows will naturally ebb and flow, which is perfectly fine. After you mirror someone, continue moving through the room and connect with a new person to mirror. Continue mirroring new people until I bring us to a close.
- Alright! It's time to practice mindful mirroring! Begin by moving your bodies in whatever way feels good to you. Now, find your first person to mirror, and let the energy between you guide you. Continue to amplify your movements as you mirror each other.
- If you haven't already done so, I invite you to continue moving through the space and find the next person or group of people to mindfully mirror. Let the music and movement flow through you.
- Continue this practice until you've mirrored several people in this community. I encourage you to try on new movements with each new connection.
- Now, I invite you to welcome in sounds as you mirror. Express yourself in whatever way you'd like, and mirror each other's movements and sounds.
- Now, slow down your mirroring as if you are moving in slow motion together and return back to a place of quiet. Notice what sensations are arising as you slow down the pace.
- To close, I invite you and the person or people you are currently mirroring to find a way to acknowledge one another (e.g., with your hands over your heart, a hug around your body, etc.) as you continue to serve as each other's mirrors.
- Let's seal this practice with 3 collective breaths together.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What was it like to mirror your friends in movement?

How did it feel to mirror each other with no sound?

What shifted when you mirrored each other with sound?

What insights did you gain from the mindful mirroring practice?

How might you apply these learnings to your life?

» — Lead with Love — «

PEDAGOGICAL POINTERS

PRIMARY DIFFERENTIATION

Model what mirroring looks like with young children by inviting a few volunteers to mirror movements with you. Then, invite the entire community to mirror whatever movements you are making (e.g., twirling your body, mindful movement, etc.). To begin, you can first guide students to find a mirroring partner (or 2 if the numbers are odd), and then transition them at the same time to find their next mirror.

SECONDARY DIFFERENTIATION

Talk about the science! You can introduce the concept of mirror neurons to bring to life the power of this practice. Explain that we have mirror neurons in our brain; when we show up in a certain way (e.g, joyful or stressful), it impacts the way other people show up and vice versa (e.g, joyful or stressful). If we bring positive energy to each interaction, it will activate our mirror neurons, and ultimately have a positive impact on the people we are mirroring!

ADULT DIFFERENTIATION

This is a great community building activity that can increase connection, bring joy, and foster vulnerability. Encourage participants to embrace their stretch zone, have fun, and tap into their creativity. As the facilitator, participate in this practice full-on to increase the energy and model what full self expression can look like, sound like, and feel like.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Create an inclusive space by giving those who may not feel comfortable being in close contact with others the option to participate from a distance, or in whatever way feels supportive to their well-being.

VARIATIONS

You can guide this practice in silence with no music, or draw on music to cultivate whatever type of energy or experience you believe will be inspiring and fun for your students. You can switch it up by starting with a more grounding, calming song, and then moving to a more energizing, uplifting one.

