sound body sound mind

Mindful March

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

A collaboration with

UCLA MINDFUL AWARENESS RESEARCH CENTER
MINDFUL MARCH

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS

Mindful Awareness is the moment-by-moment process of actively and openly observing one’s physical, mental, and emotional experiences. Mindful Awareness Practices (MAPs) are tools and exercises such as meditation, yoga, and tai-chi that develop greater mind-body awareness and promote mindfulness in daily life.

WHY MINDFULNESS

Mindful Awareness has scientific support as a means to reduce stress, improve attention, boost the immune system, reduce emotional reactivity, and promote a general sense of health and well-being.

IN EACH ISSUE

CONCEPTS
Introduction to mindfulness concepts to assist you with lesson implementation

TEACHING TIPS
Reflection questions and mindfulness practice activities for you and your students

LESSON PLANS
Two ready to instruct video lessons and plans in a plug and go format so you can easily send to students

RESOURCES
Supplementary resources to complete your well rounded mindfulness instruction
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LESSON PLAN

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

- Each week we will provide you with two lessons that include their own guided videos and practice instructions.

- There are sections titled "TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS" for you to copy and paste. These are specifically designed for you to easily assign through your learning management system to distribute to students.

- Each video has its own "LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTION." These are instructions for the mini practices that are discussed in the video. You can either copy and paste to send to students, or use it to better guide your own lesson instruction with students.

- Each video includes a mindfulness challenge based on the video's topic. These are written out in the "CHALLENGE" section.

- If you would like to expand on the lesson, there is an additional section titled "DIVE DEEPER." These are some prompts you can share with your students to facilitate more curiosity and discussion about the lesson.

- Each week there will be a series of reflection questions that you can assign as classwork or homework.

- Please note: these lessons were specifically designed for middle school and high school students. They may be modified for other classrooms based on instructor discretion.
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WEEK 1 TOPICS

Introduction to mindfulness

Sound and posture

Slowing down and breathing

WEEK 1 OBJECTIVES

- Students should understand what mindfulness is and its benefits.

- Students should be able to practice mindful listening and mindful breathing.

- Students should know the three components of a mindful body position and how it is helpful when meditating.
CONCEPT OVERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS
Mindfulness is a natural capacity we all have to be present, open, curious, and kind. It allows us to be with things as they are, free of judgement or resistance. Developing mindfulness takes practice just like learning a sport or a musical instrument. Mindfulness has been shown to prevent depression, help with sleep quality and anxiety management, and increase attention and focus. It also helps us to develop empathy, gratitude, generosity, and patience.

SOUND AND POSTURE
Listening to sounds, on purpose, is one helpful way to access mindful awareness. We teach students to “anchor” to sounds, meaning to notice sounds, one at a time and then return to listening when they notice that their attention has wandered off. We teach students the components of a “mindful body position” because it helps many people to concentrate, and notice urges. This position includes three main components: upright and seated, still, and comfortable (not too rigid). It is important to let students know that they can practice mindfulness while walking, standing, and lying down as well. Many mindfulness practices involve bringing our full attention to what we are doing while we are doing it. This means that mindfulness can be practiced while doing dishes, playing sports, or listening to someone tell a story.

BREATH AND POSTURE
Breath, like sound, is another anchor that can be used to strengthen awareness. With breath, we focus on the sensations of breathing in the abdomen, chest, and at the nose. Students are invited to be curious and find an “anchor point” where they can most easily notice their breath. Students can also count their breaths (up to four) or use the words “breathing in, breathing out” as they notice the sensations of breathing.
Mindfulness is unlike other subjects that we learn about. There will not be assessments and there are no right or wrong answers.

Today you will be watching a video. There will be two exercises or mini practices in them where you can follow along.

Students, please participate with your attention by putting away anything else you may be working on so you can follow along. Make sure you have somewhere comfortable to sit. Today we will be exploring something new, mindfulness.

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SOUND & POSTURE

LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

To practice anchoring to sounds, set a timer for one to three minutes and get into your mindful body position or another comfortable position lying down or standing up. If it is comfortable for you, close your eyes and listen to all the different sounds you notice, one at a time. Notice sounds that are far away and close by. Notice sounds that are constant, like the humming of a refrigerator, and sounds that come and go, like cars going by. Eventually, your attention may wander off to your thoughts (like “how much time is left?”) or something else - that is perfectly okay. Every time we notice our attention has drifted and we return to listening we are getting better at being mindful. It is like doing a bicep curl for our brain!

Sitting in a mindful body position can feel difficult at first as our bodies are used to moving and fidgeting throughout the day. To get more comfortable sitting in this position, set a timer for one minute and set an intention to be as curious as you can about what it is like to sit still. Notice urges like wanting to open your eyes, curl your toes, or adjust your position. Instead of reacting to these urges, notice them for a moment, then try to return to stillness - be kind to yourself and remember that it takes practice to maintain stillness.

CHALLENGE
Sit everyday for one minute and just listen to the sounds you can hear.

DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)
How do you think you may benefit from mindfulness? Think about one to three things that you discovered through the practices. This could include sounds you heard, the unpleasantness or pleasantness of getting still in your body, or anything else about your experience. Share your honest experiences, even if it was unpleasant.
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SLOWING DOWN & BREATHING

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

COPY AND PASTE THE INFORMATION BELOW

Students, please participate with your attention by putting away anything else you may be working on so you can follow along. Make sure you have somewhere comfortable to sit. Today we will be watching a video. There will be two mini practices to try today, so please follow along. We will be going over:

- Looking around the space from a beginner's mind perspective
- Focusing on breath
Let’s try slowing down on purpose. Try walking around with the intention of being grateful for all the little things you notice. You may discover an appreciation for things you normally take for granted like running water, a solid house, or furniture to rest on. Try this “mindful seeing” in different environments like the grocery stores and parks. Practice this when you feel bored, like when you are waiting in line at the store.

Let’s practice slowing down and breathing. Find a quiet and private space at home or outside. Set a timer for one to three minutes and focus on your breath wherever you feel it easiest. If you notice your mind wandering, with a curious and kind attitude come back and focus on your breath. One minute of focusing on your breath per day can help you with focusing and feeling more confident in yourself.

**CHALLENGE**
For one minute everyday, sit and pay attention to your breath and where you feel it in your body.

**DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)**
Where was it easiest to notice your breath? Was it your belly, chest, nose, or somewhere else? Why do you think you noticed your breath in this place?
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LESSON PLAN

PRACTICE REMINDERS

• Sitting still may sound relatively easy, but it takes practice.

• It’s important to emphasize that mindfulness is not about getting rid of thoughts or getting angry with ourselves for having thoughts during meditation. We are changing our relationship to our thoughts, being kind, open, and curious toward ourselves instead of judgmental.

• When practicing mindful breathing, remind students that it is a practice that takes time to learn. Let them know that it does not matter how many times their attention wanders away. The practice is about building awareness. If they notice just one thought or one breath, they are practicing mindfulness. The practice is also about developing a kinder relationship with ourselves. We can be kind every time we notice a thought (such as “this doesn’t work for me”) or distraction. Invite students to say to themselves “that’s okay, I’ll just come back to my breath now” or some other kind response.

• If students are fidgety or seem unfocused, allow them to squirm and practice in their own way. It may not look like they are doing anything, but creating space for these practices is like planting seeds of possibility for students to discover some aspects of the practices that resonate with them.

TEACHING TIPS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the three components of a mindful body position?

2. Name two to three benefits of mindfulness that you think might be helpful to you.

3. Name three places where you would like to try mindful listening.
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KEY TERMS

MINDFULNESS
Paying attention to your present moment experiences with kindness, curiosity, and acceptance.

MINDFUL BODY POSITION
We teach students to recognize how a still and upright body position supports meditative practices, allowing them to concentrate and tune in to one anchor at a time. At the same time, we encourage many moments of “informal” practice which includes noticing their surroundings, body sensations, and emotions throughout the day.

BEGINNER’S MIND PERSPECTIVE
This is the perspective we have when some experience is new to us. We feel naturally curious and absorbed in the new information presented by the experience. When we feel curious, our brain anticipates a reward. Curiosity and a beginner’s mind perspective encourage students to find something extraordinary in the ordinary moments of their lives, helping them to overcome boredom and increase flexibility.

MINDFUL BREATHING
Mindful breathing means we are breathing naturally and paying attention to the sensations of our breathing in our abdominal area, our chest, or at our nose. Anchoring to sensations of breath promotes concentration, ease, and focus.

MINDFUL LISTENING
Mindful listening invites students to experience what it is like to pay attention to sounds in their environment as an anchor for their attention. It gives them the opportunity to pay attention on purpose, engaging executive functioning to choose what they attend to.
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GETTING STARTED

Short videos on getting started with mediation from our mindfulness experts at UCLA MARC.

GUIDED MEDITATION

A 12 minute guided meditation using breath as an anchor from our mindfulness experts at UCLA MARC.

ARTICLE

Mindfulness-based interventions for adolescent health.

OUTSIDE READING

*Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Lauren Alderfer is a picture book for children and adults alike. It introduces the powerful practice of mindfulness in a fun and exciting way. [Find it here.](#)