Mindful March

WEEK 3: WORKING WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

A collaboration with

UCLA MINDFUL AWARENESS RESEARCH CENTER
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.

**WHAT IS 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.

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**IN EACH ISSUE**

**CONCEPTS**
Introduction to mindfulness concepts to assist you with lesson implementation

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

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

**RESOURCES**
Supplementary resources to complete your well rounded mindfulness instruction
HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

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

- 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.
WEEK 3: WORKING WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

WEEK 3 TOPICS

Working with difficult emotions
R.A.I.N.
S.T.O.P.
Loving kindness meditation

WEEK 3 OBJECTIVES

- Students should understand how emotions, body sensations, and thoughts are connected
- Students should know how to use the steps outlined in R.A.I.N. to help them regulate their emotions
- Students should know when to use the S.T.O.P. practice to help them regulate emotions and ground themselves in the present moment
CONCEPT OVERVIEWS

WORKING WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

We can see emotions as energy in motion. This means that emotions make us want to react and take action quickly. It also means that we can feel the energy of emotion in our bodies, noticing sensations such as heat, pressure, tingling, and coolness. Though emotions are short-lived (roughly only 90 seconds long), they are prolonged by the thoughts that we keep thinking about them. Rumination, for example, can exaggerate and bring back an emotion that has already passed. By using the techniques outlined in R.A.I.N. and S.T.O.P., students can learn to observe instead of habitually react when difficult emotions arise.

R.A.I.N.

R.A.I.N. is a technique that requires students to pause and notice their inner experience of emotions. “R” stands for recognizing or naming the emotion(s) that are present. Naming emotions has been shown to reduce their intensity and increase activation of the prefrontal cortex, the brain’s center for executive functioning, decision-making, and self-awareness. “A” stands for allow, which means to let go of changing or suppressing the emotion and instead allow it to move through you with acceptance. “I” stands for investigate, which means to scan through the body, noticing sensations like tightness or heat that arise with the emotion. Finally, “N” can stand for three concepts: non-identify, nurture, or neutral. Non-identify means to let go of judgement and remember that emotions are universal. They are temporary experiences moving through us, and they are not who we are. Nurture means to bring compassion and kindness to our inner experience. We can do this by softening toward our pain and realizing we are not alone. Neutral refers to bringing awareness to our five senses and connecting with the neutral, yet, peaceful aspects of our environment.
S.T.O.P.

S.T.O.P. is an acronym students can use to help them bring their attention to the present moment more often and deal with difficult emotions. "S" stands for stop what you’re doing to pause. “T” stands for take a deep breath. “O” stands for observe. Students can observe in a similar way to the investigate step in R.A.I.N. by noticing internal body sensations and emotions, or they can observe sensations (sounds, sights, tastes, skin sensations, and scents) in the present moment. And finally, "P" stands for proceed. You can invite students to find a cue to practice S.T.O.P. It could be something they do every day, like walking from their home to their car, or when they walk up steps.

LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

This type of meditation invites students to bring to mind a person or animal that they like or love and to send them kind wishes. This practice helps students to feel connected with loved ones that they may miss and may inspire them to reach out to them and express their love or gratitude. In the practice we repeat phrases while imagining that we are sending them to our loved ones. Students can also send these kind wishes to themselves. We offer three general wishes (happiness, health, and peacefulness), but students can feel free to send whatever wishes feel natural and genuine to them. This practice can help students fall asleep at night and promote general relaxation and ease.
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 are going to learn a new way of relating to difficult emotions by being less reactive and more curious and accepting of them.
LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

Bring to mind something that has been difficult lately, not the most difficult thing but something that is between a 3 and 6 out of 10 in intensity. It could be a recent argument you’ve had with someone close to you or a time when you were disappointed. With your eyes open or closed, recall the steps of R.A.I.N. Start by recognizing the feeling or feelings that arose from this situation. Was it anger? Sadness? Fear? Something else? Recognizing our emotions can help them to settle more easily. Next, accept the feelings that are present by not avoiding them or trying to push them away. Though they are uncomfortable, they are temporary and get stronger when we try to suppress them. Then, you can identify sensations that you notice in your body. You can start from the top of your head and scan your body for sensations such as tingling, heat, pressure, and tightness. Finally, remember to not identify with your emotions by remembering that the way you’re feeling is acceptable and not a reflection of who you are or your character. Remember to think of emotions as energy in motion. They are temporary and you are not alone in feeling them.

LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
EMOTIONS & S.T.O.P.

LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

The S.T.O.P. practice helps you to be less reactive and more responsive. You can use it when you need a little calm so that you don’t say or do anything you might regret later. You can also choose a cue to practice. The cue can be something you do every day like arriving home or entering the car. Practicing S.T.O.P. a little bit each day will help you to be more present and less preoccupied by worries and self-consciousness. Let’s practice right now. Stop what you’re doing. Take a long, slow breath in and out through your nose. Now, observe by looking around you and noticing your environment. Notice any scents in the air, tastes in your mouth, and sensations of air or clothing against your skin. Finally, take a few moments to notice sounds in your environment with your eyes open or closed. Once you’ve checked in with your five senses, you can proceed with more presence.

CHALLENGE
Practice everyday for two minutes one of the following:
- S.T.O.P.
- R.A.I.N.
- Paying attention to your breath or sounds

DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)
 Invite students to take out a piece of paper and a few different colored pens or pencils. Ask students to draw an outline of a body (like a gingerbread person) and choose an emotion. Working independently, have them reflect upon what that emotion feels like in their body. Have them use colors and shapes to capture the sensation that comes with the emotion that they have chosen and draw it on their paper body. Invite any student who feels comfortable to share their drawing with the class and have their classmates guess what emotion was drawn. Have them share what cues from the drawing made them guess that emotion.
Today we will be practicing something new, loving kindness meditation. This meditation focuses on feelings of love and connection. Let’s watch the video to learn the benefits of this practice and then try it ourselves with a guided walkthrough.
WEEK 3: WORKING WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

LESSON 6 PLAN

LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

Loving kindness meditation provides a way of thinking about people we care about and wishing them well. To practice it, find a comfortable seated or lying down position and put away any distractions. Take a few moments to anchor your attention to your breath wherever you feel it most easily in your body. Bring to mind someone you find easy to like or love. It can even be a pet! Imagine this person looking happy. What do they do that makes them feel happy? Imagine them healthy and strong. Finally, imagine them feeling peaceful and at ease. Then, take your time to imagine that they are nearby and that you are sending them these kind wishes, one at a time:

1) May you be happy.
2) May you be healthy and strong.
3) May you feel peaceful and at ease.

Repeat the phrases silently one or two more times, staying connected to the feeling of love and care that you feel for this person or animal. After, you can send the same kind wishes to yourself or imagine that the person or animal is wishing the same for you. When you open your eyes, notice how you feel. Pay attention to places in your body where you may notice more easily. This practice can help you fall asleep at night and may even inspire you to reach out to the person you thought about, letting them know you were thinking about them. Sometimes this meditation brings up feelings of longing or sadness, especially if you really miss the person. Let yourself feel whatever feelings arise and be sure to share your experience with someone you feel safe speaking with.

CHALLENGE

Think of someone who is easy to appreciate and send them kind wishes for two minutes every day.

DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)

Have students write a loving kindness note, letter, or poem to themselves, an animal, or someone they want to send kind wishes to. Have them write down as many kind wishes as they can think of, then have them imagine that the person or animal feeling all the wishes that they made. They can share the wishes with the person that they made them to or they can keep it to themselves.
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LESSON PLAN

PRACTICE REMINDERS

- Students may be hesitant to talk about difficult feelings. Help create a safe space by letting students share what helps them feel safe to share with classmates. You might suggest confidentiality, taking turns and not interrupting, and being generous with our assumptions about each other, namely agreeing that we are all trying our best.

- As always, remind students that sharing and practicing is optional and that they always have the option to rest during the practice.

- If you can, devote a generous amount of time for these activities so that you and your students don’t feel rushed. Allow for periods of silence so that students can take time to think or write about their responses to reflective questions. You can also set a timer for periods of reflective silence so that students can ponder without pressure to respond quickly and superficially.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Tell an emotion story! Choose an emotion (don’t tell anyone what it is yet) and tell a story about a time you felt that emotion or about situations that bring up that emotion. If you have time, allow your classmates, friends, or teacher to guess what the emotion is based on your story.
2. What makes you feel safe and loved?
3. What’s something helpful that you do when difficult feelings arise?
A 20 minute guided meditation using R.A.I.N. from our mindfulness experts at UCLA MARC.

Psychological health during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic outbreak.

The Feelings and Needs Inventory from the Non-Violent Communication organization can help students practice identifying their feelings and needs. Students can recognize that difficult feelings often reflect needs they have that are not being met. As they learn to identify their needs, they will be better able to communicate them to others. Available in multiple languages.