WEEK 4: THOUGHTS AND SELF-COMPASSION

sound body sound mind

Mindful March

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.

**WHY MINDFULNESS**

MINDFUL MARCH

**INTRODUCTION**

**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.
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WEEK 4 TOPICS

Mindfulness of thoughts
F.L.O.C.K.
Second arrow
Cultivating positive emotions

WEEK 4 OBJECTIVES

- Students should understand the benefits of observing thoughts instead of reacting to thoughts
- Students should be able to label and count their thoughts
- Students should be able to explain the metaphors of the train, parade, and sky in relation to observing thoughts
- Students should be able to explain how they can prevent the “second arrow”
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CONCEPT OVERVIEWS

MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS

Being mindful of thoughts includes labeling (planning, remembering, judging, etc.), counting, and observing thoughts with curiosity and kindness.

F.L.O.C.K.

Flock is an acronym to help students remember how to be mindful of their thoughts. “F” stands for feeling, which means noticing the emotions and sensations that arise with thoughts. “L” stands for labeling, which entails identifying thoughts as judgements, planning, remembering, and other categories. “O” stands for observing, which means to notice thoughts as if they are clouds moving through a wide open sky. “C” stands for counting, as students can count their thoughts as a way of observing them. Finally, “K” stands for kindness. This encourages students to be kind with themselves as they are practicing.

SECOND ARROW

This is a metaphor that describes how we can prevent further frustration and reactivity when things don’t go our way. Students learn that the first arrows are unfortunate things that happen to us in life that we cannot control (disappointments, accidents, relationship endings, etc.). What we can control is how we respond to the pain caused by these events. We can prevent the second arrow or further pain by softening toward our initial discomfort and bringing compassion to our experience. Compassion is more effective for easing our pain than judging or assessing our pain.

CULTIVATING POSITIVE EMOTIONS: FRIENDLY WISHES TO OURSELVES

This is a practice that is similar to the loving kindness practice from last week. This week, however, we focus on self-compassion and sending friendly wishes to ourselves.
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MINDFUL OBSERVATION OF THOUGHTS

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. This week, we will be working on mindful observations of our thoughts. We will learn a new way to observe our thoughts using a practice called F.L.O.C.K. Let’s watch the video and try it out!
LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

Find a comfortable seated position in a place that is relatively free of major distractions. Set a timer for one to five minutes to observe your thoughts in a mindful body position. Anchor your attention to your breath or to sounds in your environment, then use the acronym F.L.O.C.K to help you remember how to be mindful of your thoughts. “F” stands for feeling, which means noticing the emotions and sensations that arise with your thoughts. “L” stands for labeling, which entails identifying thoughts as judgements, planning, remembering and other categories. “O” stands for observing, which means to notice thoughts as if they were clouds moving through a wide open sky. “C” stands for counting, as you can count your thoughts as a way of observing them. Finally, “K” stands for kindness. It’s important to be kind to yourself as you are practicing this as it takes practice.

CHALLENGE

For two minutes every day, observe your thoughts. If you get distracted, use breath or sound as your anchor.

DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)

Students may find it difficult to challenge negative or self critical thoughts. In order to move past them, we remind them to ask themselves these four questions:

1. Is this thought true?
2. Is it absolutely true (without exceptions)?
3. What does it feel like (emotionally and physically) to have this thought?
4. What would it be like if I didn’t have this thought?

This exercise helps students see that there are often exceptions to these rigid thoughts and it provides them with the possibility of letting these thoughts go in favor of new thoughts that are more positive and accurate.
In lesson 6, we practiced sending friendly wishes to others. Here, we are going to cultivate positive emotions by using a self-compassion practice on ourselves. We will also learn about the "second arrow" and how to prevent it. Let us bring our attention to the video and try it out!
LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

Before you practice sending friendly wishes, find a comfortable seated or lying down position. Put away any distractions so you can bring your full attention to the practice. Start by thinking of someone you find easy to care about. It can be a real person in your life or someone fictional, like a character you connect with. Pay attention to pleasant feelings of warmth and ease that you sense in your body as you think about this person feeling happy and peaceful. Next, bring to mind a few loveable qualities that you have. You can think of a time you’ve been generous or helpful. You can even think of the efforts you put in to doing your school work or getting up when you’d rather stay asleep. Next, repeat friendly wishes to yourself, genuinely wishing yourself well. You can use the following friendly wishes or create ones of your own:

*May you be happy*
*May you be peaceful*
*May you be safe and protected*
*May you live with confidence and ease*
*May you feel loved and loving*

Stay connected to the feelings of ease and warmth that these wishes tend to generate in our bodies and minds, savoring the pleasant sensations for a few seconds longer than you’re used to. When you are ready, you can open your eyes and continue your day with more ease.

LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
LESSON PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

We can think about our reactions to a negative event (first arrow), as a second arrow. You can practice preventing the second arrow when something frustrating or disappointing happens. For example, if you get a grade that you weren’t expecting and you are surprised, take a moment to pause and notice how your body and mind are reacting to the news. Allow the unpleasant feelings to be there just as they are as you observe the thoughts running through your mind. This will help prevent reactive and judgmental thoughts from controlling your actions and help you to make choices about what to do next that you feel good about.

CHALLENGE
Every day for two minutes, practice cultivating positive emotions by using the self-loving kindness practice.

DIVE DEEPER (OPTIONAL)
At the beginning or ending of each day for one week, invite students to take out a piece of paper and write down three things that they appreciate about themselves. Ask them to reflect on how this affects their self-talk. They may notice that their thoughts become more positive.
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LESSON PLAN

TEACHING TIPS

PRACTICE REMINDERS

- Provide praise for any noticing of thoughts that students express, no matter how small the efforts seem.
- If it’s difficult for students to think of their positive qualities, remind them that this practice is hard and continue to stay in the practice as they move to the next step.
- Students can always return to mindfulness of breath or sounds if they become overwhelmed with the new practice.
- If students are not feeling the lesson, they can always just sit quietly and rest.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about an arrow you encountered recently. What’s a helpful thought to prevent a second arrow in this scenario?
2. Share one or two of your strengths and how you make use of them.
3. Name three friendly wishes you’d like to add to your practice.
4. Who is someone you find easy to like or love? What do you like/love about them?
5. What metaphor for observing thoughts do you like best?
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GUIDED MEDITATION PODCAST

A 20 minute guided meditation observing thoughts from our mindfulness experts at UCLA MARC

VALUES ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

This worksheet lists 50 values that students can use to help guide their self-compassion practice.

TIKTOK

This short video compares negative and compassionate self talk. Watch with students and encourage them to have more positive self talk.