

Monthly Mindful Teachers Meetings - **February 21, March 20, April 24, May 29**
Mindfulness + Movement for Teachers

This is a guide for bringing mindful practices into the classroom. These monthly meetings will give us the space to practice leading the exercises as well as experiencing the effects for ourselves.

What is mindfulness?

“Paying Attention in a particular way, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn)
“The Art of Noticing”

“Mindfulness is a particular state of consciousness that involves *awareness and acceptance* of whatever is happening in the present moment” (Jennings, 2015)

Peace - Maya Angelou

It does not mean to be in a place
where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work
It means to be in the midst of those things
And still be calm in your heart

Ways to Practice Mindfulness throughout the day

- Cultivating kindness
- Centering yourself - 3 breath practice
- Modeling behavior
- Wait time in class
- Noticing, recognizing, and labeling what is happening in the moment
- Setting Intention
- Awareness of scripts
- Perspective taking
- Mindful walking
- Listening deeply
- Eating mindfully

Introducing the concept to your students

A good place to begin with your students is to find out what they have heard about mindfulness. You can then begin by saying the practice is about *paying attention* and it might feel strange, but paying attention to something they do every minute of the day. *You might start by asking how many of them have paid attention to their breathing today?* And then ask them to take part in an experiment – in which they are the scientist.

The benefits of practice are listed here for you as a teacher – and they may be something you discuss with your students. But *why* we practice might attract their attention more.

Benefits of practice:

- Increases concentration, focus and attention span
- Increases ability to witness emotional states
- Improves impulse control
- Increases the ability to self-regulate
- Reduces stress and anxiety

Why we practice? *Mindful Schools* provides this list of questions in their Middle & High School curriculum:

Raise your hand if you have ever:

- said something you wish you could take back?
- done something that you later regretted?
- felt angry and out of control?
- felt nervous or anxious about an exam or performance?
- been in a bad mood but not sure why?
- been in a bad mood but not even sure what emotion it is?
- felt like you need a break and want everyone to just leave you alone?
- had trouble falling asleep because your mind won't be quiet or your body feels restless?
- been accidentally spacing out in class when the teacher calls on you?
- noticed that you do much better at sports or music when you are really focused?

POSTURE - Mindful bodies

- Sitting facing forward, on the edge of the seat
- Bring attention to the length of the spine
- Shoulders back and down
- Both feet flat on the floor
- Body still, alert and relaxed

MINDFUL LISTENING - Centering Practice

This can be used as a focusing exercise and can be done as a first experience of mindfulness – bringing your students attention to sound. Bring attention to posture. Invite students to close the eyes or look at a spot on the floor with a soft gaze. Ring the bell or chime and allow for a period of silence after the sound disappears. Ask what they noticed?

Then repeat the exercise, but this time instruct your class to bring awareness to listening to all the other external sounds after the bell stops ringing (for a minute or two). What did they notice? Where they aware of more sounds? The A/C perhaps? Sounds in the hallway? Chatter? Did they hear these sounds the first time – if they did not this is a good time to point out how we are

often on automatic pilot. If they did, then point out how aware and mindful they were being. Do they notice the difference?

If there is laughter or your students don't take it seriously - be mindful of your own reaction - and allow space for a some silliness. This is very much about meeting them where they are, what you can point out (kindly) is their distraction - because what you are wanting them to 'get' is *watching* and *being aware* of their own behavior. Getting irritated with them or reacting to laughter harshly isn't modeling mindfulness - which is really the first step - *cultivating your own practice*.

BREATHING EXERCISES

Being mindful and cultivating this level of attention relies on utilizing the breath as an anchor. It is purposefully slowing things down and bringing attention to thoughts, sensations and feelings in the body and mind. Bring your students attention to posture, invite students to sit on the edge of their seats – bring attention to the length of spine, shoulders back and down, and feet flat on the floor. For the most part breathing is done in and out of the nose, unless the nose is blocked. There are several exercises where breathing is out the mouth.

*After each breathing exercise ask students to notice the effects in the body and mind. Ask students to think of words to describe this space and then allow time for students to share after the exercise. This is a concrete way to bring attention to the space they are creating and can open the discussion of why we practice.

Belly Breathing (with Hoberman Sphere)

Awareness is on the belly. Breath is brought into the body with particular focus on the extension and release of the diaphragm – the belly moving in and out - slowly. *Students love leading with the "breathing ball"*.

HOBERMAN SPHERE is a really great way to bring awareness to the 'space' inside our minds and who has control of this space. Who does this space belong to?

"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom" -Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

STOP breath.

Invite your students to practice STOP breath several times a day. Stop; Take 3 deep belly breaths; Observe thoughts, sensations, and feelings and what is happening in their surroundings. Proceed with awareness.

Anchor points and Anchor Words

Hands placed on anchor points: one hand on heart, one on the belly. An anchor is used to steady a boat or ship. This analogy is useful when paying particular attention to how the breath is being used – so as to steady the body and the mind. This may be something you use for the first several times you lead the breath and it may fall away once your students understand.

Anchor words: I am steady, I am still. Breathing in - I am steady; Breathing out - I am still. Once your class has practiced with these words you might encourage them to find words that resonate with them. Breathing in: I am confident Breathing out: I feel confident. *What do they notice?*

Anchor Words can be used in any posture - especially Mountain Pose or Child's Pose.

Counting the breath

Breathing in to the count of 4, breathing out to the count of 4. Or simply, counting the in and out breaths. Notice when you lose count or when you stop counting and start thinking. How many breaths did you count? What do you notice after this exercise?

Taco Breath

Inhale: roll the tongue and stick it out past your lips, like a straw. Inhale through the curled tongue, swallow, pause for a second or two, exhale through your nose.

Flat tire breath

This breath works well when really upset, angry, or frustrated. Inhale a full belly breath for a count of 4; purse lips as though drinking from a straw – exhale slowly for a count of 8 – as though air was slowly being released from a flat tire! Repeat for 3-5 breaths and then let the breath return to normal. Close eyes. What do you notice?

Take Five Breath

Hold up one hand, fingers spread wide. Using the forefinger of the other hand draw an imaginary outline along each finger. Inhale: raise up along one side of the finger, exhale: move down into the valley.

Stress Release breath

Stand with feet a little wider than hip width apart, knees slightly bent. Inhale arms up above the head bringing in a steadiness, concentration, ease – Exhale move down in one motion letting go of any stress, worry or anxiety. Repeat 3-5 times. Stand in Mountain pose – notice what the effects of stress relief breath are on the body and mind.

Lion's Breath

This breath is fun and can be used to release anger, aggression or frustration. Stance is the same as Stress Relief Breath, but with the addition of a Lion's Roar on the exhale. Visualization

on the exhale: releasing negative thoughts, anger, frustration, etc. Inhale: Bringing in what's needed: Strength, courage, positive feelings.

Smile Breath

A nice way to finish any breathing practice is to bring a light smile to the face. Just the corners of the mouth is enough. Your students may at first bring a very big smile to their faces - but gently guide them that a very small smile works. Bring attention to the corners of the eyes gently turning upwards and the release of muscles in the face.

Breathing in: bring the smile into the body

Breathing out: releasing any stress or strain in the body. Repeat as necessary.

What do they notice?

QUALITIES OF BREATH

Particular attention can be paid to the qualities of breath. These are, very simply: sound, temperature, and sensation. It is often a nice way to call renewed interest to the breath to point these out to your students.

* It is important that after each breathing practice allow for a pause, for the breath to return to normal and for students *to notice, to pay attention to*, the changes of sensation/thought/feeling in the body and mind.

VISUALIZATION

Thanks to Julie Henderson and Janet Evergreen for this practice, which comes from *Embodying Well-being* (How to feel as good as you can in spite of everything)

This is a visualization exercise can be practiced sitting up or lying down. Invite students to watch the breath while you say each line slowly. Allow time for a breath between the sentences. Repeat stanza three times. After the third round: "Now, settle in and feel all three at once"

Body Rests like a Mountain

Breath moves like the sea

Heart like the sky

Ring the bell to signal the end of the practice. Guide students to take a deeper breath into their bodies and notice the space they are in. Can they think of a word or words to describe the feeling in the mind and body?

*If students are lying you could bring them out of this the same way you would a Body Scan.

"Wriggle fingers and toes, roll over onto one side using your arm as a pillow. Watch three breaths coming in and out of your body and slowly, push yourself up to seated - you may like to try pushing yourself up with your eyes closed."

Once seated, you might ask your class what they notice and what words they can use to describe their experience.

MIND JAR

To distinguish between states of mind a Mind Jar is a useful analogy – the glitter in the jar represents thoughts and feelings. You can make your jar with different color glitter that represents different emotions or patterns of thought. When the mind jar is shaken this represents a *busy mind* or a *monkey mind* - when you are bouncing from thought to thought or are highly distracted. The settled glitter represents when your mind is focused and calm - and where your mind is clear.

It's nice to begin the practice shaking up the mind jar and then leading three deep belly breaths. Bring your students attention to the settling in the jar and ask them what they notice in their own state of mind.

There are several recipes for making a Mind Jar online – but one that I've found works well is

- 1: Fill a bottle $\frac{1}{3}$ full with clear laundry detergent
- 2: Put glitter in the jar - with different colors to correlate with different emotions. It's a fun exercise to have students identify colors with emotions.
- 3: Fill water to the top
- 4: Close jar and shake

Lead breathing exercise while jar settles - draw the analogy of a still, steady mind and the settled jar.

Mindful Schools 'Mind Jar' video: <https://youtu.be/RVA2N6tX2cg>

MINDFUL MUSCLE

After practicing a few of the breathing exercises you might venture into practicing ***keeping your attention*** on the breath. This practice is building the capacity to focus attention on the breath for an extended period of time and can be thought of as training the "mindful muscle". Begin with one minute. Drawing out the diagram helps with explaining this practice.

1. Bring your students attention to their natural breathing and to watching this flow in and out.
2. Focus can be brought to their still and steady state of mind and keeping their attention on this flow of air, in and out.
3. As soon as they notice their attention wandering from the breath guide students to label this as "thinking" or if distracted by a sound or a person as 'distracted'
4. Instead of going off with the thought or distraction, notice it and very kindly bring the attention back to the breath.
5. Allow for a minute to practice. What did they notice?

HEARTFULNESS PRACTICE - Cultivating Kindness in ourselves

Do your thoughts matter? Heartfulness practice is a great way to explore *how* thoughts have an impact on your body, mind, and well being. My experience is that students may feel strange doing this and, in practicing being in the moment, it's important to recognize that it may feel awkward and strange – and that is okay. But, if we are influenced by our thoughts this is an interesting practice to see just how much! Ask if they can adopt an open mind in this practice of sending kind wishes and *noticing* or *paying attention* to what happens.

First bring attention to the breath, anchor points, and a sense of stillness or steadiness. Ring the bell and allow for a few moments of silence.

I will say each wish out loud, and you will repeat the wishes silently to yourself.

*pause for several moments between each wish**

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be happy.

May I be peaceful.

Bring a light smile to the face and breathe it into the body. What do you *notice*? How do you feel in your body and mind. Do your thoughts matter?

*Younger students will repeat these kind wishes out loud, totally fine.

Sending Kind Wishes

We can also practice sending kind wishes to a person(s) or the whole class. I will say each wish out loud, and you can repeat the wishes silently in your mind. Continue each wish until you hear the next one.

Let's begin. *pause for several moments between each wish*

May you be healthy and strong.

May you be happy.

May you be peaceful.

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

After practicing breathing you might like to incorporate some movement - bringing awareness to breath with each movement of the body.

Mountain Pose (Visualization practice very nice here too)

Child's Pose

Neck Rolls

Shoulder Rolls

Spinal Twists

Mindful Movement Twist Sequence (picking up what you need for the day)
Forward Fold - nodding head yes/no. Slight swing around knees.
Balancing Postures - Tree, Stork, Lever, Star fish
Seated Postures
Body Scan/Relaxation.

RESOURCES

The link below is a research repository of peer-reviewed, published studies and research review articles related to yoga/meditation for youth, and it provides links to abstracts and full-text publications when available. It includes every study that she could find in PubMed and PsycInfo on yoga and meditation for youth.

<http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/supporting-research>

"Scientific Evidence for Yoga and Mindfulness in Schools: How and Why Does It Work?"

<http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/yoga-4-classrooms-blog/scientific-evidence-for-yoga-and-mindfulness-in-schools-how-and-why-does-it-work>

The above article includes some content from a forthcoming peer-reviewed article in the Journal of Children's Services titled *"Implementing Yoga within the School Curriculum: A Scientific Rationale for Improving Social-Emotional Learning & Positive Student Outcomes"* by Bethany Butzer, Denise Bury, Shirley Telles, and Sat Bir S. Khalsa.

Dr. Patricia Jennings offering the list of resources from her book *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom*.

Calm Classroom
Chicago, IL

<http://calmclassroom.com>

Holistic Life Foundation
Baltimore, MD and other US locations

<http://hlfinc.org>

Learning to BREATHE
Philadelphia, PA, and other US locations

<http://learning2breathe.org>

Mindfulness in Schools (.b)
Oxford, UK, and other locations worldwide

<http://mindfulnessinschools.org>

Mindful Schools

Oakland, CA and other US locations

<http://www.mindfulschools.org>

MindUp

Santa Monica, CA and other locations worldwide

<http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>

Programs for Teachers

Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE for Teachers)

Garrison Institute

Garrison, NY and other locations worldwide

<http://www.care4teachers.org>

Inner Resilience Program

New York, NY, and other locations worldwide

<http://www.innerresilience-tidecenter.org>

Other Resources:

Center for Mindfulness at the University of California San Diego (UCSD)

<http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>

Mindful Awareness Research Center at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)

<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

Mindful Apps

Calm

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/calm-meditate-sleep-relax/id571800810?mt=8>

Get Some Headspace

<http://www.getsomeheadspace.com/shop/headspace-meditation-app.aspx>

Insight Timer

<https://insighttimer.com>

Mind

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id419702358>

Mindfulness Daily

<http://mindfulnessdailyapp.com>

Jennings, P.A. (2015). *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple skills for productivity in the classroom*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, NY: Delta Trade.

Siegel, D.J. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Siegel, D.J. (2013) *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*. Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin.

Williams, M., & Penman, D. (2011). *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*. Rodale.