

# Mindfulness

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A Key Component of Social-Emotional Learning

**NOTE:** These slides were adapted and expanded by Errin French, Belinda Spurgin, and Jennifer Akins for our presentation today! To access the original materials, see the trademark below:

**<https://tinyurl.com/8521mindful>**



*Equipping students with the mindsets, skills and habits they need to succeed*

# Who are We?

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# MINDFULNESS

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What ideas or phrases  
come to mind when you  
hear the word  
mindfulness?

Write as much as you can  
Write as fast as you can  
Write as best as you can



# Objectives

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Define Mindfulness

Get comfortable discussing mindful practices

Provide resources to further understanding

Practice\* several mindful activities

Practical classroom uses

“Let us make your Mind full  
and help you with mindfulness”

# Defining Mindfulness: Overview

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**Mindfulness** is a state of awareness and a practice;<sup>1</sup> it involves attending to the present moment and cultivating an attitude of curiosity, openness and acceptance of one's experience.<sup>2</sup> It is a secular (non-religious) practice and is backed by compelling scientific evidence.<sup>3,4</sup>



# Defining Mindfulness: Overview

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Mindfulness generally describes a state of awareness and a set of practices and skills which center around four qualities: attention, intention, presence, and openness.<sup>5</sup> What does mindfulness actually look and feel like?:

- **Attention:** listening, watching, or considering what naturally exists (e.g. directing and sustaining attention on a selected object, such as the sound of a chime or the sensation of the one's breathing)
- **Intention:** purposefully increasing awareness of experience
- **Presence:** being in the moment, here and now
- **Openness:** being curious, objective and non-judgmental about experience<sup>6</sup> (e.g. simply observing, with no explicit focus on particular objects; noticing thoughts, emotions and physical states).<sup>5</sup>



## How does it actually work?:

- Different practices are thought to activate different mechanisms. For example, sustained attention practices may enhance executive function, while sensory experiences of one's breathing may reduce stress.<sup>7</sup>

# Practical Classroom Activity

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Monterrey Bay aquarium Live cams [here](#)

As students come in have the jelly cam up. Set a timer that is appropriate for you: 3 minutes, 5 minutes, etc. Have students simply engage in watching (being in the moment), then move into your lesson



# Challenges and Frequently Asked Questions

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The initial challenges associated with the practice of mindfulness are often the result of misconceptions and misunderstandings. Below we try to address some of these:

## **Are mindfulness and meditation the same thing?**

*Mindfulness, meditation, and mindfulness meditation* are often used interchangeably, but meditation more commonly refers to a stationary practice, whereas mindfulness is more of an umbrella term under which fall the set of states and practices described on slide 8.

**Is mindfulness from the Buddhist tradition? Does it conflict with other religions or atheism?** While it is *an aspect* of many religious and spiritual traditions, there is nothing inherently spiritual, religious, or anti-religious about mindfulness. In this presentation, we focus on mindfulness as a secular (non-religious) practice to enhance well-being, which is backed by compelling scientific evidence.<sup>3,4</sup>

## **I don't feel comfortable practicing mindfulness; it's just not my type of thing.**

No one should be forced to practice mindfulness if they do not wish to, but it is helpful to bear in mind that mindfulness does not need to have anything to do with yoga and meditation postures or spiritual ideas. It is a practice for the mind and body which can be totally invisible to the outside world.

## **In some mindfulness practices I can't keep my mind from wandering.**

This statement comes from perhaps the single most pervasive misconception about mindfulness. While the practice of mindfulness *may* result in reduced mind-wandering, the aim of mindfulness should never be to suppress thoughts. Instead, the aim is to simply notice thoughts arising— or notice that your attention has been drawn to them— and then, without judgment, to return to the initial goal of your practice, whether it was to focus attention on something or to openly monitor your experience. This practice of bringing the mind back once it has wandered is the essence of mindfulness.

# About that Wandering Mind....

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<https://youtu.be/vQxTUQhVbg4>

Consistent practice makes the process more relaxing and more likely to benefit you in the long run!

It's about noticing your thoughts, building awareness for how you are doing inside!



<https://youtu.be/rpJYACy8ZoI>

# Why Mindfulness Matters: Research Findings



Attention to mindfulness has risen exponentially in recent years, largely thanks to encouraging research across a wide range of fields and institutions.<sup>3</sup> Below are some of the findings which are of particular interest for those in educational contexts. Mindfulness leads to:

## Academic

- Improvements in cognitive performance, school self-concept, and engagement <sup>4</sup>
- Greater attention<sup>8</sup>
- Reduction of anxiety in high-stakes testing<sup>9</sup>

## Mental & Behavioral Health

- Decreases in stress levels<sup>8</sup>, emotional over-excitement and depression symptoms<sup>10</sup>
- Increases in emotional well-being and self-compassion<sup>11</sup>
- Lower self-harm<sup>12</sup>

## Social Behavior

- Healthier responses to difficult social situations<sup>13</sup>
- Reduction of implicit bias<sup>14</sup>
- Increases in compassionate responses to others in need<sup>11</sup>

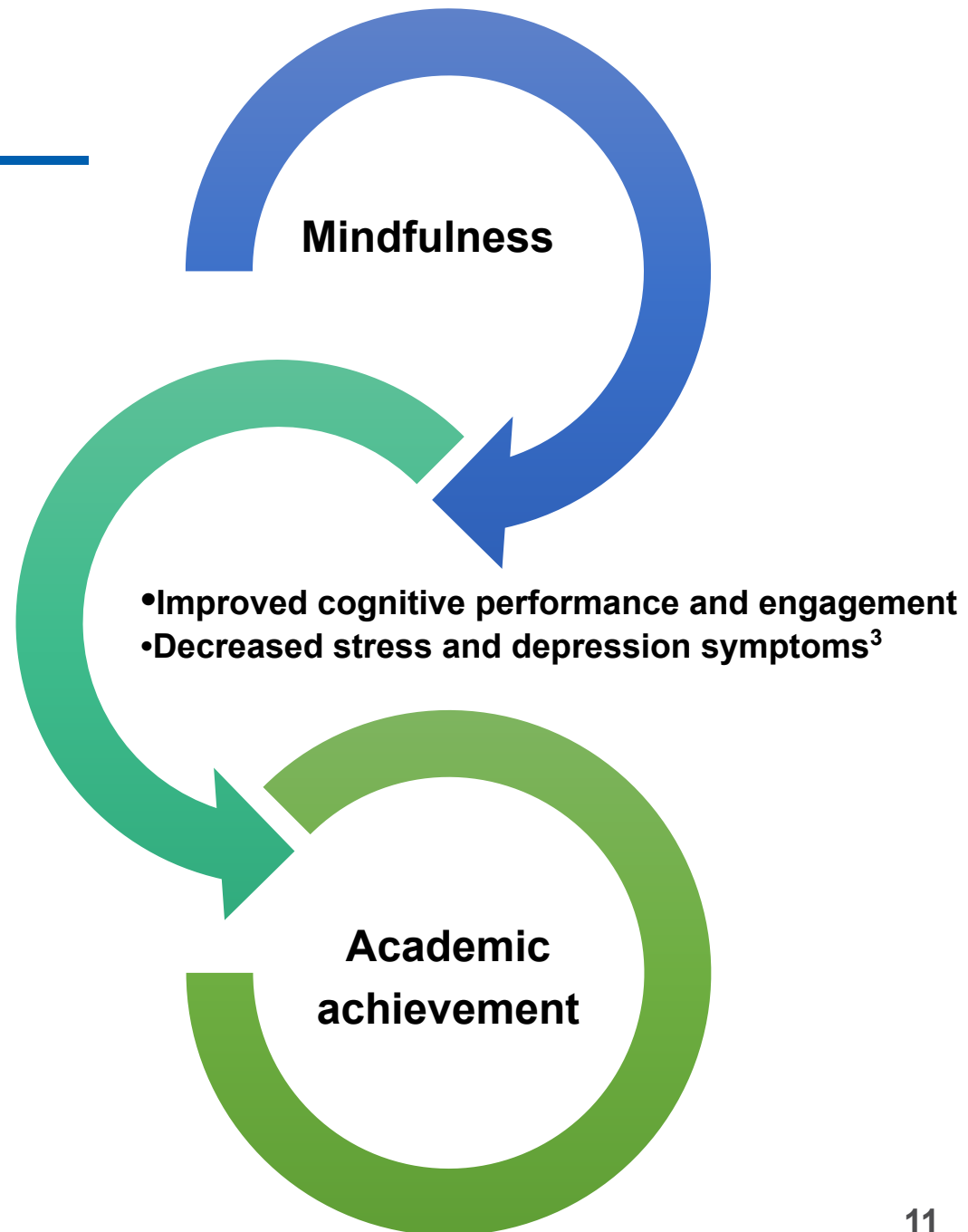
# Why Mindfulness Matters: Academic Achievement

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## Mindfulness and Academic Achievement:

Because mindfulness is shown to mitigate some of students' most common impediments to learning, several studies suggest that mindfulness can have a positive impact on academic outcomes.



# Mindfulness and Specific Populations

## Trauma and Stress

Mindfulness interventions may improve students' ability to cope with traumatic experiences. Furthermore, students with significant stress and/or trauma often experience greater overall benefits from mindfulness interventions compared to their peers. <sup>15,16,17</sup>



## Executive function difficulties

Studies indicate that students with executive control difficulties not only benefit from some mindfulness interventions, but actually tend to improve *more* than their peers who experience the same interventions.

<sup>18</sup>

## Bullying

“[Thinking mindfully] allows children to consider other perspectives, recognize situation novelty ... and generate and consider appropriate reactions in physically or socially threatening situations.” <sup>19, 20</sup>



# Mindfulness in the Classroom: Key Considerations

## Do teachers need personal experience with mindfulness?

While teachers do not need extensive training or experience before introducing mindfulness, many experts recommend that schools start with teachers, either through a direct training program or by supporting them in starting and maintaining a practice in their own lives. In fact, training teachers may cause a self-reinforcing cycle of “positive reciprocal relationships between [teachers and students].”<sup>21</sup> Clearly this has tremendous implications for improving classroom climate and easing burdens of behavior management.

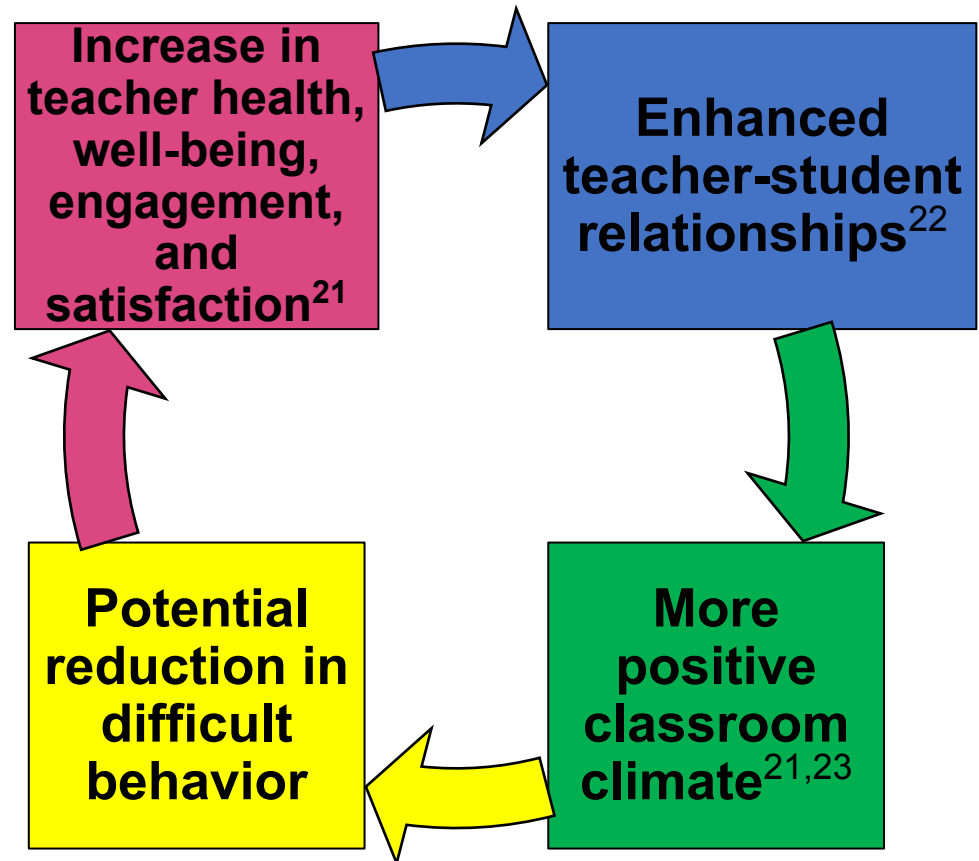


Image adapted from a model hypothesized by Roeser (2012)

# Group Activity: Mindfulness and Reactivity

This visual offers an excellent illustration of how mindfulness can impact behavior. Take a moment to consider it, and then try the activity below.

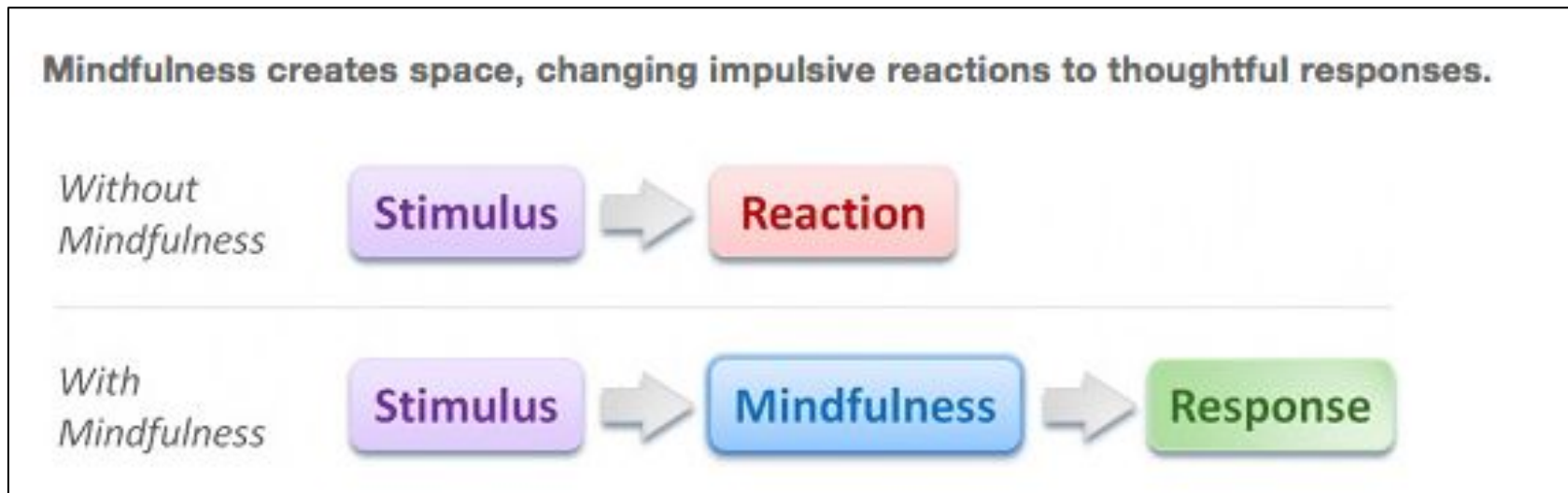


Image: Mindful  
Schools

## **THINK-PAIR-SHARE:**

1. *Take a minute or so to think of an experience you've had in the classroom (or elsewhere) when you reacted in a way that you later regretted. Share it with your partner, trying to use the language from the diagram: "The stimulus was \_\_\_\_ and my reaction was \_\_\_\_."*
2. *Now imagine how things might have unfolded differently if you had been more mindful before reacting. Take four or five minutes to discuss with a partner or small group, then share out in the large group.*

# Mindfulness in the Classroom: Key Considerations (con't)

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## Religious and cultural implications

Some students or families may express opposition to practices associated with mindfulness due to a belief that it impinges on their religious traditions or that it promotes certain religious beliefs (e.g., Buddhism). Be sensitive to these concerns, but reiterate that mindfulness can be taught in a way that has no religious, spiritual, or metaphysical dimension.<sup>24</sup> The practice of mindful awareness is actually found in almost all the world's classical traditions and philosophies, and the motivation and justification for introducing it in education is based in medical science.

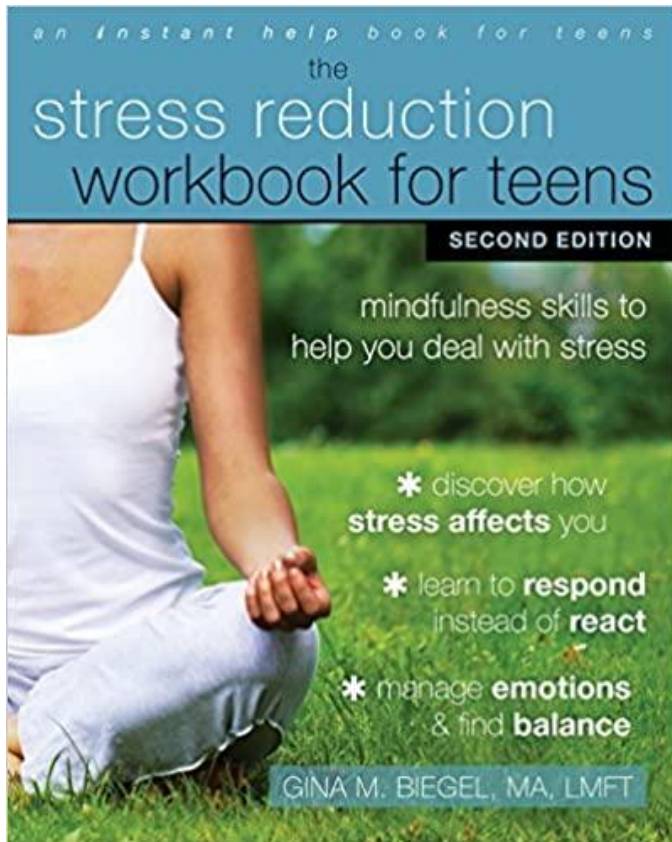
## Surfacing of trauma

School staff should be cognizant that as students become more aware of their experiences—especially in a new and “embodied” way—latent trauma may surface, and this may be painful or unpleasant to observe.<sup>25</sup> This is helpful to keep in mind, both in terms of understanding students' decision not to participate and as a means of more fully understanding students and communicating with school counselors as necessary.

**In light of these potential concerns, *students should always feel free to opt out of any mindfulness activities.*** As an alternative, they can observe, redirect to another strategy, or read quietly.

# Stress Reduction workbook for teens

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Mindfulness is a practice that can help you reduce your stress. Mindfulness is about slowing down, seeing things clearly, and paying attention moment to moment to moment.

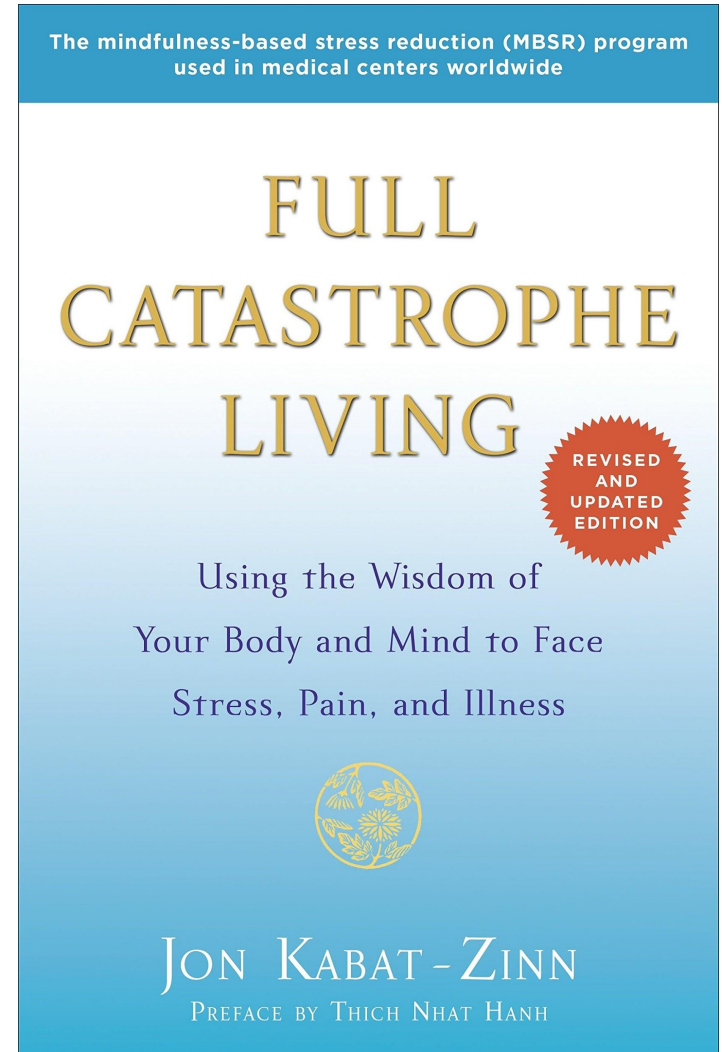
# You only have moments to live

## 7 Foundations

Non judging- “If we are to find a more effective way of handling the stress in our lives the first thing we much do is be aware of the automatic judgements so that we can see through our own usually inexperienced prejudices and fears and liberate ourselves from their tyranny (page 22).”

Patience- Wisdom, being open to each moment

Beginner’s mind- look with fresh eyes, remove your knowledge and opinions



# 7 Foundations Continued

Trust- listen to yourself, be more fully YOU

Non striving- No goal, no purpose, just be and be open, Stay curious, things will unfold

Acceptance-accept the current moment

“Acceptance does not mean that you have to like everything or that you have to take a passive attitude toward everything and abandon your principles and values. It simply means that sooner or later you have to come around to a willingness to see things as they are (page 28)”.

Letting Go- let things be, accept things they way they are

The mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program  
used in medical centers worldwide

## FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING

REVISED  
AND  
UPDATED  
EDITION

Using the Wisdom of  
Your Body and Mind to Face  
Stress, Pain, and Illness



JON KABAT-ZINN  
PREFACE BY THICH NHAT HANH



# Sample Strategy: Start with Yourself

**The best way to teach mindfulness is to be mindful.** This is why nearly every mindfulness-in-education program or curriculum advises staff (teachers especially) to cultivate a personal practice.<sup>21,26</sup> Below are some suggestions for getting started.



- **1. Schedule five minutes** into your day, ideally first thing upon waking:
  - Find a quiet space to sit comfortably with an erect spine and relaxed body
  - Set a soft timer so that you aren't distracted by looking at the clock
  - Focus on your breathing, putting your awareness in your chest and lungs
  - Scan your body from head to toe, relaxing each part as you become aware of it
  - When your thoughts bring you away, simply bring your awareness back to your breath; remember that the aim is not to stop or suppress thoughts, but rather to practice bringing awareness back once it has gone away
- **2. Make space for mindfulness moments** throughout the day; for example:
  - Take three deep breaths at the beginning of each class, before a meal, or to calm yourself when you notice that you are tense, stressed, frustrated or angry;
  - Feel the sensation of your feet on the ground as you walk to lunch;
  - Make eye contact and be still while listening fully to another person



**Integrate some or all of these exercises at your own pace, and remember that as long as you make an effort, there is no such thing as failing or doing it wrong.**

# Body scan

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“It is amazing to me that we can be simultaneously completely preoccupied with the appearance of our own body and at the same time completely out of touch with it as well. When we put energy into actually experiencing our body and we refuse to get caught up in the overlay of judgemental thinking about it, our whole view of it and of ourselves can change dramatically (Kabat-Zinn pg 75).”

- Silence and stillness are key
- Feel and inhabit each region non judgmentally
- With each Outbreath we release the tension accumulated
- With each In breath we breathe in vitality and energy and openness
- Positions can be sitting in a chair, on the floor, or lying down
- Visualization can be part of it

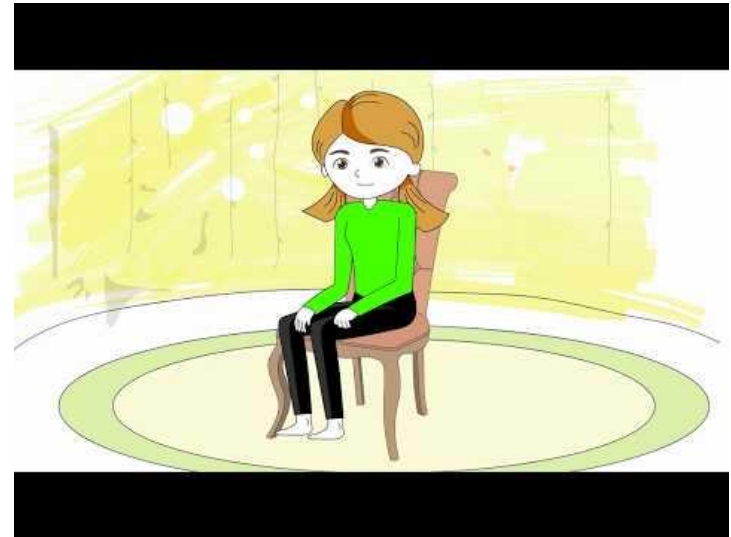
Disclaimer- non striving, no judgement and pure acceptance

# Guided Body Scan

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS2yDmWk0vs>



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihwcw\\_ofuME](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihwcw_ofuME)

# Partner talk

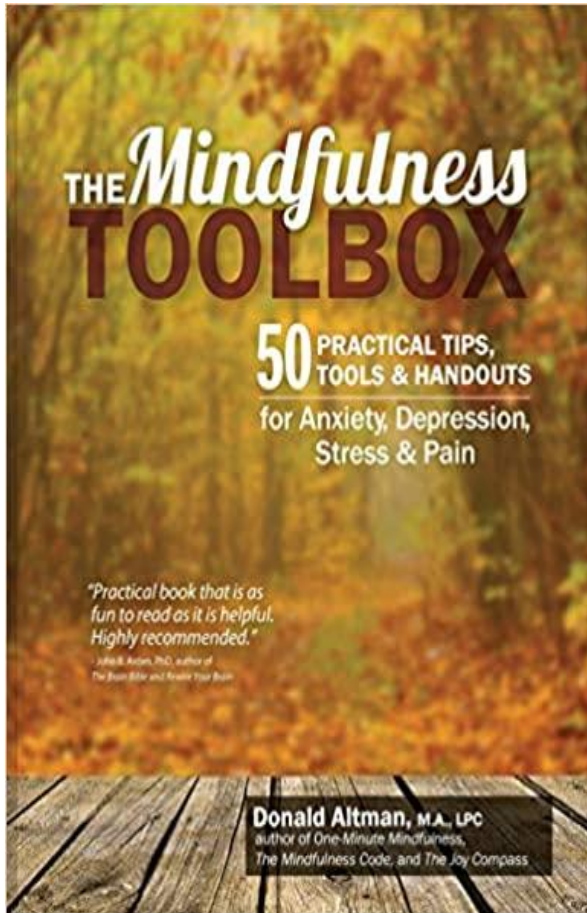
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Find your SOLE Mate- someone with similar shoes

Answer the question: How did the body scan make you feel? What did it do or not do for you?



# Laughter: It's No Joke



Lightness of  
Laughter  
“Studies have  
shown that  
having a more  
cheerful  
disposition can  
help you live  
longer as well as  
help improve  
sleep and lessen  
depression”  
(Altman page 11)

- What is your favorite sitcom, youtube series, source of laughter?
- How do you think inviting more humor into your life will change your experiences? How can you bring a little bit of laughter into your life each day?



# Mindful Movement

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Have you ever walked someplace and not realized how you got there?

Walking/moving mindfully allows you to use movement to bring yourself into the present moment.

Kids of all ages need movement!!

Run Jump squat [here](#)

And windmills!

Rhithm is an app but you can find all these 2-3 minute videos free!

# Mindful Movement

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Have you ever walked someplace and not realized how you got there?

Walking mindfully allows you to use movement to bring yourself into the present moment.

## **Take a mindful walk**

Choose a short path.

Walk slowly back and forth on the path for 5 - 10 minutes.

Walk in a normal fashion, arms swinging comfortably, & breathe normally.

Pay attention to walking & what it feels like to lift your foot and again the other foot.

Notice the sensations you feel as you think about what causes your leg to lift and make the movement.

At the end of your path, turn around and pay attention to the process of turning as you did to walking. Notice your thoughts. Mind wandering is ok. Pay attention to the thought, sound, or what distracted you, and then continue your walk.

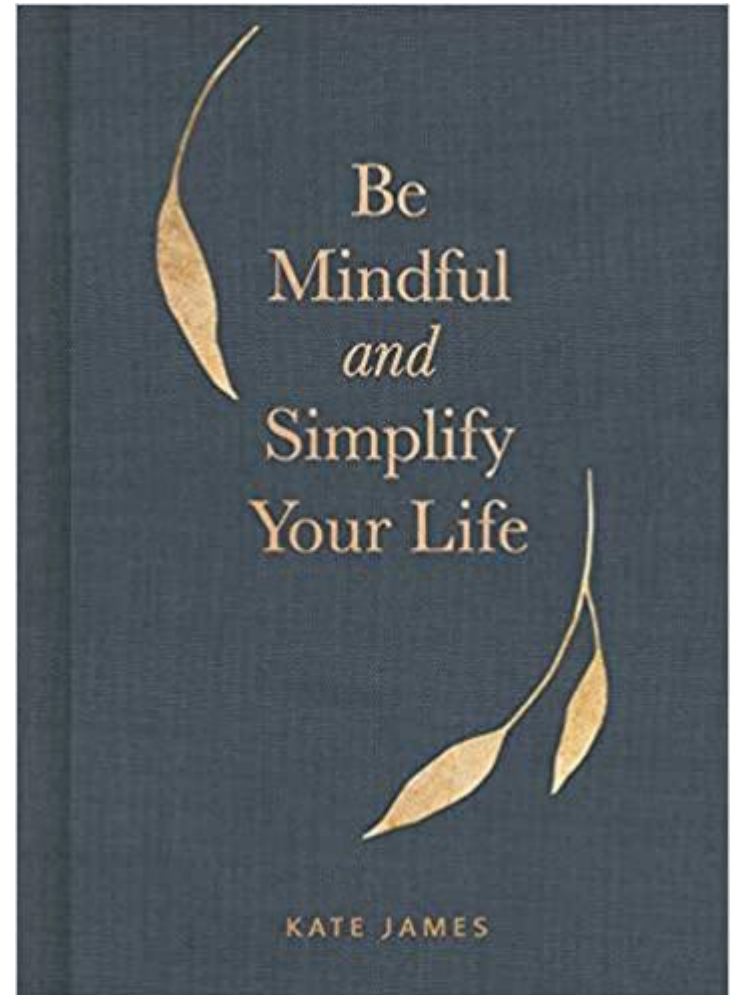
Awareness is the important step in this process. You can bring mindful awareness to a number of different physical activities other than walking. Use your senses to guide these activities.

# Be Mindful and Simplify Your Life

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Mindfulness is about being aware, being accepting, and being kind to yourself and others as you navigate your way through life. You could say that learning to value “being” as much as “doing” (page 2)”

“There are two main reasons most of us feel stressed: we spend too little time living in the present moment and too much energy wanting to change it.”



# Mindful eating

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Food is one of the greatest pleasures in life, and when we eat mindfully, it is a source of pure joy.



MINDLESS

VS



MINDFUL

# Be Grateful

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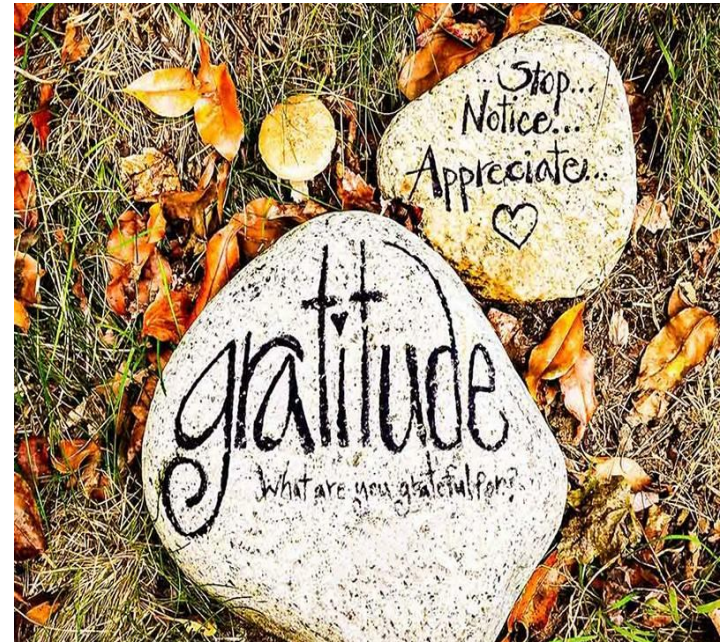
**GLAD-** pay attention to certain positive aspects of life around you all the time but often go unnoticed

**G-** One Gratitude you are thankful for today

**L-** One new thing you learned today

**A-** One small accomplishment you accomplished today

**D-** One thing of delight that touched you today



(Altman Page 75)

# And Breathe

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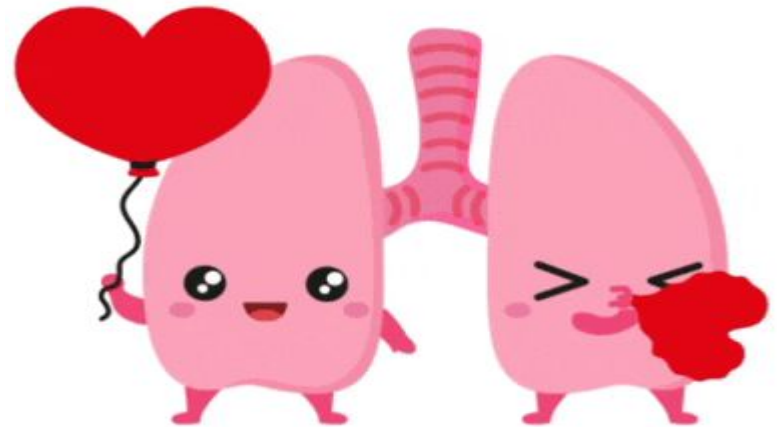
## Breathing- An unexpected Ally

It is with us every day; we can't leave home without it

We do it our entire life and hardly pay any attention

“Tuning into it brings us right into the here and now. It immediately anchors our awareness in the body, in a fundamental, rhythmic, flowing life process (Kabat-Zinn, page 41)”

**YOUR BREATH IS YOUR BEST STRESS BUSTER!**



# And Breathe

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Breathing- An unexpected Ally



# And Breathe

---

Breathing- An unexpected Ally



# Roadblocks

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Let's be honest. What roadblocks do you see in doing this for yourself, teaching strategies to others, etc?



# Permission

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Let's write a permission slip to ourselves to practice mindfulness

"What stands in the way becomes the way"  
~Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead*

Take 2 minutes

# Sample Strategy: Integrations

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Mindfulness literature and information spans nearly every discipline, from neuroscience and psychology to sports and business. Students can fulfill curricular requirements while learning about mindfulness through in-class activities or homework assignments. Below are some ideas.

- ELA: A research paper about a popular figure's relationship with mindfulness (e.g. Sports: LeBron James; Business: Oprah Winfrey)
- Science: A lab about how stress affects the human body and how mindfulness may mitigate the effect
- Health: A discussion about coping with stress and/or addiction and how mindfulness may impact those efforts
- Music: Activities with mindful listening
- Art: A mindful creation activity where students draw or paint while listening to a music recording
- Physical Education: Mindful movements activity such as yoga or mindful walking

# Sample Strategy: Mindful Journaling

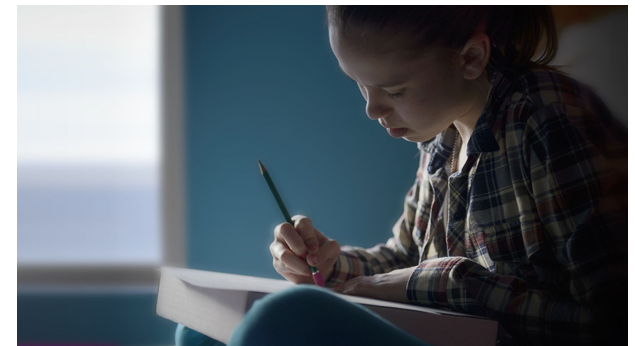
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**Mindful Journaling** is a fun and unique way for students to experience the practice of mindfulness in a way that is directly connected to their academic development. This practice will encourage students to be reflective about their lives and actions, and will also enhance their ability to express themselves in writing.<sup>29</sup>

Mindful Journaling asks students to track their experience and emotions *moment-to-moment*, rather than writing about what happened in the past or what might happen in the future. This could be part of a routine (e.g., every Friday morning) or a one-time activity.

Example prompts:

- 1: *“Describe what each of your five senses are experiencing right now. Use as much detail as possible.”*
2. *“Try to notice how you feel inside your body at this moment– your emotions and sensations. Try to describe the sensations in words.”*



# Sample Strategy: Auditory Reminders

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There is likely no practitioner of mindfulness who is permanently present and aware of their state; therefore reminders can be very helpful. **Teachers can use a sound-producing device as an auditory reminder for students to try to return to a mindful state.** When introducing the idea to the class, teachers should be clear about what the intention is. They may choose to connect the sound to one or more questions or concepts. For example, the sound may be a reminder to 1) return to a mindful posture, 2) refocus on the task at hand, 3) sense their breath, 4) ask themselves if they are being kind to themselves and others, and so on. Below is a Vibra-tone, a simple device that produces a pleasant sound.



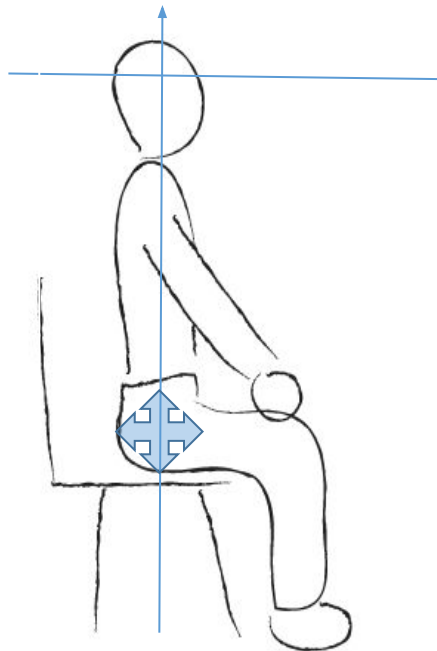
**Vibra-tone**

# Sample Strategy: Establishing Mindful Posture

**Establishing Mindful Body Posture** is a simple but powerful strategy. Using a set of verbal directions,\* this strategy can be integrated into the daily routine as a way to begin class, begin a new activity (e.g., prepare for a group discussion), or as a way to return a group to focus and attention. Below is one example

Foundations of mindful posture:

- Spine erect, perpendicular to the ground
- Head level or slightly down
- Muscles relaxed, not tense
- Entire body still, not fidgeting
- Eyes closed or gently open



## **Posture Matters:**

“Adopting an upright seated posture in the face of stress can maintain self-esteem, reduce negative mood, and increase positive mood compared to a slumped posture. ...Sitting upright may be a simple behavioral strategy to help build resilience to stress.”<sup>27</sup>

# Sample Strategy: A Mindful Break Area

Schools such as the Breakthrough Magnet School in Hartford, CT have experienced positive results from their use of a dedicated room where groups of students can go with an adult facilitator to practice some form of mindfulness in order to relax, regulate their emotions, regain focus, re-energize, etc. It may not be possible to dedicate an entire room for this, so it may be best to reserve a corner of a room. Below are images from the Breakthrough Magnet School in CT.

The Mindfulness Room



One classroom's "Mindful Corner"



# Sample Strategy: Research Assignment

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## Generate Interest

Some students, especially those in middle and high school, may feel resistant to experimenting with mindfulness practices, either because they feel it is pointless or too unusual. One option is to play this 10-second YouTube clip of NBA player LeBron James 'meditating,' and pose the question: Why do you think he's doing that?



Lebron James 'Meditating'

As an iconic athlete, Lebron James carries a great deal of credibility among young people.

Another excellent video, called Mindfulness Basics, which features celebrities talking about Mindfulness and related topics (3 minutes)

# Closing Activity: Planning for Implementation

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**Of the various strategies we've discussed today, which one are you most interested in trying?**



## Questions to consider:

- What planning / preparation is required?
- How do you plan to address anticipated challenges?
- How might this strategy be integrated into your existing practices, strategies, or lesson planning?
- Who do you need to coordinate with to proceed with this work?

# Resources to Explore

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## Activity Ideas:

Breathing [here](#)

Mindful observation [here](#)

Mindful movement [here](#)

Connect with nature [here](#)

Make rain [here](#)

Set the mood [article](#)

Mandalas [here](#), coloring [here](#), mazes [here](#)

Fablefy 21 days of Mindfulness [here](#)

Laugh -Madagascar 3 clip [here](#)

Body Scan [here](#)

Weave Silk Interactive [Art](#)

Go Noodle Virtual Glitter [Jar](#)

## Breathing Exercise Videos:

Triangle breathing [here](#)

5 Minute breathing [here](#)

4-7-8 breathing [here](#)

Shape breathing [here](#)

Netflix Jr Breathing Song [here](#)

Videos from Rhithm-

172 of them [here](#) in English & Spanish

# And Keep Exploring

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## Articles & Sites:

Mind Yeti [here](#)

Fablefy [here](#)

Go Zen [here](#)

Lessons on Mindfulness [here](#)

Articles on Mindful eating [here](#)

6 ways to practice Mindful eating [here](#)

Article on Mindfulness and depression [here](#)

Article on laughter [here](#)

Article on healthy movement [here](#)

Article on Music and Mental health [here](#)

Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior [here](#)

Mindful Classrooms (Stretching Alphabet) [here](#)

## Books:

The Power of Now by Echart Tolle

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion

Dr. Christopher Germer

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.

Best Mindful Books of 2019 [here](#)

Best Mindful books of 2020 [here](#)

## Card Decks:

Mindful Kids, click [here](#)

Monkey Mind, click [here](#)

# Want to Explore Even More?

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## Additional Resources on Mindfulness

- [Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom \(Book\)](#)
- [Headspace \(Meditation Platform\)](#)
- [Greater Good Magazine](#)
- [Mindful Eating Lesson Description](#)
- [Mindful Listening - MINDUP \(Prek-2\)](#)  
[Mindful Listening - MINDUP \(6-8\)](#)

## Partner with an Outside Organization

- [MindUP \(Curricula for Educators\)](#)
- [Calmer Choice \(Massachusetts-Based Prevention Program for Schools\)](#)
- [Learning to BREATHE \(Curriculum\)](#)
- [CARE for Teachers \(PD Course\)](#)
- [Breathe for Change \(Activities & Webinars\)](#)

## Additional Resources on Social-Emotional Learning

- [Transforming Education toolkit on Growth Mindset \(Free PD Resources\)](#)
- [Transforming Education toolkit on Self-Management \(Free PD Resources\)](#)
- [Transforming Education toolkit on Self-Efficacy \(Free PD Resources\)](#)
- [A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools \(Article\)](#)
- [Smart Hearts: Social and Emotional Learning Overview \(Video\)](#)
- [The Heart-Brain Connection: The Neuroscience of Social and Emotional Learning \(Video\)](#)

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