



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



## ABC List of Mindfulness Activities

### Remembering Joy

Recalling happy memories reduces stress and builds resilience. At a time when we are constantly flooded with upsetting events and news, it's especially important to make time for positivity. With this mindfulness activity, we travel back in time through our minds to relive a moment that brought joy.

- Get in a comfortable position.
- Read the following script:
- Take a moment to recall a happy memory, whatever comes to mind first will work for this exercise, as long as it brings joy.
- Travel back to when the memory takes place. Picture yourself there. What did it look like? Look around in your mind to remember your surroundings.
- Who else is there? Remember the faces and how it felt to be with them. If it was just you, remember what felt good about spending time on your own.
- Open your senses. Remember the sounds. What did you touch? What did it smell like? What could you taste?
- Take a minute or two to be in that memory.
- Gently bring yourself back to the present. Wiggle your fingers and toes and open your eyes.
- Think about the good feelings this memory brought. Did it *fill your bucket*?
- Think about how you might *fill the bucket* of someone else

### Five-Finger Starfish Meditation

This breathing technique works well for children. Take the time to breathe and do this slowly.

- Close eyes. Shake hands gently and squeeze them to warm them up.
- Tell students to hold up one hand in starfish position (fingers spread wide).
- Have them slowly and gently trace up and down each finger with the other hand, matching their breathing at the same time. (Do 2x)
  - Breathe in as you trace up your finger.
  - Breathe out as you trace down your finger.
- Take a deep belly breath at the end.
- Connect to the 5 Free Fish Rules:
  - Do mindful activity as listed above at the beginning of the lesson.
  - At the end of the lesson, use the starfish position to chant the 5 Free Fish Rules while tracing up and down each finger.

### Stop and Think in Space

This activity is a reminder that we control our own reactions. Between stimulus and response there is a space. In this space lies the power to choose your reaction. We have referred to this space before when talking about *using your lid* with the phrase, *stop and think*.

1. When I say "name," you say your name. When I say "clap," you clap. (Do this a few times).
2. Now, when I say "name," you clap. When I say "clap," you say your name. (Try this. There will be flubs).
3. With younger students stop and have them practice deep breathing before step 4.
4. Now, we will try this again, but before you react, pause, and take a deep breath. (I say "name," everyone takes a deep breath and then claps).
5. Debrief by asking if they were aware of the space between responding and reacting.

### **The Five Senses**

For some students recess can be stressful. It can be a time of bullying, micro-aggressions, or isolation. Mindfulness at the beginning of recess is a way to reduce feelings of anxiety before they escalate.

- Teach this simple mindfulness lesson as a way to reconnect and relax.
- This can be done outside or inside.
- Look around and find:
  - What are 5 things that I can see?
  - 4 things I can touch?
  - 3 things I can hear?
  - 2 things I can smell?
  - 1 thing I can taste?

### **Heartbeat Exercise**

Paying attention to one's heartbeat has a role in mindfulness exercises and activities. This exercise teaches children to notice their heartbeat and use it as a tool to help their focus.

- Direct students to place their right hands on their heart.
  - Close your eyes and listen to their heartbeat for 20-30 seconds.
  - What do they feel or hear?
  - What about their breathing?
  - Can they focus or think of other things?
- Have the students jump up and down in place, do jumping jacks, or run in place for one minute.
  - Stop and place their hand on their heart.
  - Have them close their eyes and pay attention only to their heartbeat.
  - What do they feel or hear? Is it different?
  - What about their breathing?
  - Can they focus or think of other things?

### **Mind, Body, Go!**

Materials: Ball

- Sit back in a chair relaxed or lay on floor. Close your eyes and do a body check. What are you feeling in your body?
- Keep your eyes closed and do a mind check. How does your mind feel?

- Now open your eyes and let's share. (In person use a ball. Virtually ask students to raise hand to share verbally.)
  - Roll ball to one another and when it's your turn, quickly name one thing that you are feeling in your body and one thing you are feeling in your mind.
  - Ex. "My body feels relaxed, and my mind feels happy" or "My body feels stiff, and my mind feels a little nervous."
  - Roll the ball to someone else for their turn.
- Have a few students share.
  - What do they notice about their mind and body checks?
- This time take 3 deep breaths in and out.
- Do a mind and body check again.
  - What do they notice now? Do their mind and body feel more in sync?

### **Rainbow Walk**

- Take a walk outside and look for something red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.
- Find the colors in order.
- Keep going through the colors, in order, until the end of the walk.

### **Hum That Tune**

- Humming is soothing and good for our overall well-being.
  - When we hum, we vibrate the sinuses and stimulate airflow through the nasal cavity.
  - There is evidence that humming stimulates the vagus nerve and cues the brain to rest and relax.
- Close your eyes and think of a song you know well. Or close your eyes and think of this song: (Choose a song that the class knows well.)
- Take a deep breath in and out.
- Quietly start humming this song for about 1-3 minutes.
- Take inventory of your body. Do you feel more relaxed now than when you started?
- If not, try humming a few more minutes just breathing softly in and out.

### **Safari**

- This exercise is a great way to help kids learn mindfulness.
- Tell the kids that they are explorers going on a safari.
- They'll need to focus all their senses.
- The goal is to notice as many birds, bugs, plants, and animals as they can.
- Look (put hands up to eyes like binoculars).
- Listen (put your hand behind your ear).
- Smell (take some slow, deep breaths).
- Before you return from the safari, think about all you have discovered.

### **Blowing Bubbles**

Bubbles are a classic activity for kids, and they make for great mindfulness practice.

- First ask the students to reflect on what they are feeling or thinking. You can prompt them by giving examples like, “I feel tired” or “I want to eat lunch.”
- Demonstrate blowing your bubbles and figuratively putting your thoughts and feelings inside them. Example: “I feel nervous. I’m going to put that feeling in a bubble and let it float away.”
- Point out how our thoughts and feelings are just like bubbles. They come up, and they drift away in the breeze. Sometimes they even pop.

### **Be Mindful of Change**

This mindful checkout has students pause to notice how they feel before and after the mindfulness activity. This is a simple way for students to notice changes they experienced as a result of the lesson and a way for you to assess the effect of the activity on members of the group. Begin by asking students to sit comfortably and notice what they are thinking and feeling in their bodies right now. Then do the following mindfulness activity:

4x4x4

- Sit comfortably, close your eyes, or look down
- Take a long, slow deep breath.
- Now, 4x4x4 breathe. Inhale to the count of 4. Exhale to the count of 4. Repeat 4 times.

To add fun and creativity to the checkout, suggest a playful checkout metaphor. Introduce a category for students to use as a metaphor (such as an animal or a color), asking them to describe how they felt before and after the 4x4x4 breathing, using items from that category.

For example, you could prompt students by saying, “Describe how you felt before and after this activity as . . . animals.” Demonstrate this by sharing your own description first. For example, you might say, “Before this lesson, I was feeling a little stressed and racing around—like a squirrel. Now, after practicing breathing with all of you, I feel relaxed and sleepy—like a bear getting ready to hibernate.”

Summarize the comparison: “Coming in, stressed squirrel. Now, hibernating bear.” Then ask students to give their own descriptions using animal metaphors.

Using metaphors provides students with guidance and structure, as well as a way to compare their metaphors and relate to each other. This is a fun way for students to share their experiences and build connections. As they get used to it, students may suggest their own categories of metaphors. Here are some categories you could use (colors, weather, food, flowers).

### **Gratitude**

- Sit comfortably, close your eyes, or look down, take a long, slow deep breath.
- Repeat the breath twice more.
- Open your eyes or look up and take a moment to look around and notice things or people for which you are grateful. These can be little things or big things.
- Use your other senses too. Are you grateful for the smell of food cooking on the stove, the sound of your neighbor’s wind chimes, or the feeling of your cat licking your arm?

- What is it about these things or people that fill you with gratitude? Consider for 1 minute. What do you notice?

### **Draw Your Breath**

- Give each student a piece of paper and a marker.
- With the marker in the center of the paper, students breathe in and breathe out drawing lines for each breath. During this whole activity, students will not raise their pen from the piece of paper.
- When you breathe in, draw a line in any direction. Keep the pen on the paper and when you breathe out, draw another line.
- Students keep doing this as they breathe in and out making their own lines, shapes, and creative artwork.
- After about 30 breath cycles, students may use other colored markers to fill in the different shapes. Students can be creative coloring the shapes, drawing little pictures or patterns in each shape etc.

### **Mindful Eating**

Flavor: Today as you eat, take a moment to notice the flavor of your food. Chew slowly. Which flavors do you notice? Is the flavor different right before you swallow than when you first put it in your mouth? Consider for at least 1 bite. What do you notice?

### **Mindful Listening**

Singing: (Play preselected song with vocals.) Close your eyes or look down. Listen to the singers who are singing. How many voices do you hear? What do the voices sound like? Listen for 1 minute. What do you notice?

Nature Sounds: (Use if outside). Close your eyes or look down. Listen to the sounds of nature. How many different nature sounds can you identify? What is creating each sound? Listen for 1 minute. What do you notice?

Cup Hands Around Ears: Close your eyes or look down. Cup your hands lightly around your ears. Notice the sounds all around you. How do things sound different from when you didn't have your hands near your ears? What new details do you notice? Listen for 1 minute. What do you notice?

### **Mindful Seeing**

Makes You Smile: Take a moment to look around and notice things or people that make you smile. What or who do you see? What is it specifically that makes you smile? Consider for 1 minute. What do you notice?

Look at Yourself: Take a moment to look at yourself. Look at your skin, clothes, and belongings. What do you notice that's new or different? What's something positive you can say to yourself? Consider for 1 minute. What do you notice?

### **Mindful Stretching**

**Tower:** Stand straight with your feet together. Taking a deep breath, slowly raise your arms up out to your sides and over your head. At the top, press your palms together. Hold pose for 5 deep breaths. What do you notice about your body?

**Star:** Stand straight with your feet just slightly more than hip-distance apart. Lift your arms up so they form an X or a star shape with your entire body. Hold pose for 5 deep breaths. What do you notice about your body?

**Superhero:** Stand straight with your feet hip-width apart. Clench your fists and lift them up over your head like a flying superhero. Stretch your arms as high as they'll go while keeping your feet flat on the floor. Hold pose for 5 deep breaths. What do you notice about your body?

### **My Personal Weather Report**

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Take some time to determine how you are feeling right now. What is the weather like inside you? Do you feel relaxed and sunny inside? Or does it feel rainy and overcast? Is there a storm raging? Summon the weather report that best describes your feelings at the moment. Acknowledge how you are feeling, no need to do anything else. After all you can't change the weather outside, can you? If you are dealing with a storm, realize it will pass. Moods change. They blow over, just like the weather.

### **Five Sense Scavenger Hunt**

Most kids love scavenger hunts, and this one designed to encourage mindfulness by engaging all the senses. All you need to do is provide a safe environment for exploration. Here are the steps for kids to follow:

- **Listen.** Name one thing that you hear when you listen with your ears.
- **Look.** Name one thing that catches your attention when you look around.
- **Smell.** Name a scent that you notice when you take a sniff with your nose.
- **Touch.** Name an object that you enjoy feeling with your hands.

If you want to add in the sense of taste, simply add a few kid-friendly snacks, and ask kids to name flavors they enjoy (sweet, salty, sour, spicy)

### **Dragon Breathing**

Dragon breathing is a fun way to get kids to practice slow, deep breathing. The simple version doesn't require any supplies, but a piece of paper can help focus on the exhale.

- Instruct the kids to take a deep breath in, filling their belly and chest.
- When they're ready, instruct them to "breathe out their fire" with a long, slow exhale.
- If you have paper available, it can be extra fun to watch the paper blow as the kids breathe out. Just instruct them to hold it about 6 inches away from their mouths and let go as they exhale.

### **I Am from Mars**

Make sure you have the permission of the teacher before attempting this activity. This activity will encourage students to have an open mind because they are from Mars!

Tell students- "Imagine that you are from Mars. You know nothing about Earth. Everything is new to be discovered. Close your eyes and hold out your hands so I can give you something."

Put two small raisins (or marshmallows) in each student's hands. Have students open their eyes. First have them look, without forming an opinion. They are from Mars after all. Describe what you see, the shape, color, and texture. What do they feel like? Put one up to your ear. What does it sound like? Put them between your teeth and really taste them as you bite into them. What do they taste like, Martians? This exercise is an enjoyable, effective way to help kids experiment with paying attention in a creative way and keeping an open mind.

### **First Aid for Worries**

This exercise teaches children to shift their attention out of their head and to distance themselves from their thoughts. The idea here is to move the worries in your head down to the abdomen where there are no thoughts, only the calm movement of breath. Have the students visualize a spider on a thread of web (or a ribbon unfurling) lowering from their head, carrying their worries, dropping farther and farther, all the way down to their abdomen. Take slow deep breaths. Deep down in the abdomen all is calm. There are no worries. There are no fights. There is peace and intense quiet. Remind students who are worrying to do these two things. First notice that you are worrying, second move out of your head down to the breath in your abdomen.

### **Spiderman Breathing**

This is a mindful, deep breathing activity. Deep breathing techniques can improve focus and concentration by increasing oxygen flow to the brain. This helps to clear the mind, improve mental clarity, and enhance cognitive function.

For Spiderman Breathing:

- Stand up straight and tall.
- Reach your arms above your head.
- Ready your hands to sling some webs. (Fold over two middle fingers on each hand).
- Bring your arms down slowly as you sling webs (okay to make a slinging sound "pfew, pfew, pfew").
- Repeat 2-3 times.

### **Self-Compassion: Just Like Me**

Self-compassion means treating oneself with patience, kindness, and understanding. When we practice self-compassion, mistakes become opportunities to be vulnerable. Instead of beating ourselves up, we can respond to negative thought patterns with self-kindness and care. Begin by imagining that there is a person sitting across from you. Silently repeat the following phrases while being aware of that person.

- This person has a body and a mind, just like me.
- This person has feelings, thoughts, and emotions, just like me.
- This person has at some point been sad, just like me.
- This person has been disappointed, just like me.
- This person has been angry, just like me.
- This person worries, just like me.
- This person is frightened sometimes, just like me.
- This person is learning, just like me.
- This person wants to be caring and kind, just like me.

- This person wishes to be happy, just like me.
- This person wishes to be safe, strong, and healthy, just like me.
- This person wishes to be loved, just like me.

Send these wishes to that person:

- May you have strength, resources, and social support to navigate the difficulties in your life with ease.
- May you be peaceful and happy.
- May you be loved because you are a fellow human being, just like me.

Take a moment and notice the sensations in your body. As you breathe, feel the sensations of being connected to those that are “just like you.”