

Tips for Leading Mindfulness Activities in Class

Be Trauma Informed

Children who have experienced trauma may have triggers that would never occur to others. Follow these suggestions to minimize the chance of inadvertently retraumatizing your students.

- Invite children to close their eyes rather than requiring it. Always offer an alternate focal point, such as bringing the gaze down to their desktop about a foot in front of them.
- It is okay if a student chooses not to participate in a breathing exercise or guided visualization if they do not distract their classmates. Allow them to sit quietly.
- Attention-getting methods like clapping hands or flickering lights can be triggering. Use the hand chime to mark the beginning and end of mindfulness exercises in class.

Be Calm

It can be daunting for people who have little or no experience with meditation or mindfulness to lead an activity. We have provided scripts you can follow, but as you get more comfortable, please make these exercises your own, based on the interests and needs of your class. For maximum benefit,

- Read each activity slowly and in a soft, soothing voice.
- Pause between each line or instruction, allowing students to take in the information and complete the instructed activity.
- Use pauses to take a few deep breaths of your own. This has multiple benefits: it will improve the pacing of the exercise, model the behavior for your students, and help you calm your own nervous system.

Be Deliberate

Implementing mindfulness techniques in your classroom can help students improve their concentration and self-regulation, among other benefits. Exercises can be especially beneficial during these times:

- At the beginning of the school day
- After any transition, such as recess or lunch
- Before a test
- After a classroom disruption
- When classroom energy is low

Animal Breathing Exercises



Snake Breathing

When they are coiled and resting, snakes look around calmly – and when they move, they are slow and smooth.

Sit up nice and tall. Take a deep breath in, filling up your whole body.

Pause and breathe out slowly and smoothly, making a hissing sound for as long as you can.

Repeat for three to five rounds, feeling yourself slow down and become calmer each time.

Bunny Breathing

Bunnies are very alert. Keep yourself awake and alert with this cleansing breath we are about to do together.

Sit on your shins with your back nice and straight, shoulders wide and your chest lifted.

Keeping your chin down, take three big sniffs, one right after the other.

Then exhale in a long release, as though you are sighing out through your nostrils.

Repeat this for five to seven rounds.

When you are finished you should feel clear, relaxed, and alert.

Bear Breathing

In winter, bears hibernate in caves, sleeping peacefully. Discover your own peace and balance with this special breath we are about to do together.

Sit up tall, close your eyes if you'd like to and go inside yourself.

Through your nose, breathe in for a count of five, then hold your breath for a count of three.

Breathe out for a count of five, then hold out for a count of three.

Repeat this for five to seven rounds.

Open your eyes when you're ready and notice how you feel.



4 Finger Mantra with breathing:

- “We are going to begin practicing a calm down activity to help us when we are upset and don’t like how we are feeling inside. We are going to call this activity our “4 Finger Mantra.” A mantra will be something we say over and over to help us feel better.”
- “Ok, let’s have big ears and big eyes. Watch me. (Hold up hand) I’m going to practice my mantra that I will use when I am mad or sad or too loud for the classroom. I’ll start with ‘I’ (touch pinkie to thumb and then insert three more words of your choice, such as “can calm down” or “can sit still” slowly touching your next three fingers to your thumb – one word per finger - as you say the mantra) At the end of the mantra I’m going to take such a deep breath that my shoulders go up and down (demonstrate).
- “This mantra is special for me and I’m going to picture it working each time I use it. (demonstrate) Now, think of a mantra you might say to help you feel better. It might be “I can be awesome” or “I can calm down” or “I can chill out” or anything you want.
- “Everyone hold up their hand. Start with “I” (Demonstrate as all share their mantras and use their fingers count the four words.) Now take a deep breath. Let’s try again. If we are really upset, we might need to do this a few times before it helps. Let’s do it again. We can say it out loud, in our head, or ask to go somewhere quiet to practice our mantra.”

Helping youth develop this skill will take repetition and reinforcement. Don’t hesitate to demonstrate the mantra on a regular basis and to heap praise on the child who makes efforts to use their mantra. Some students may need individual help to find a mantra that is special for them.

Spidey Senses

We're going to use our five Spidey Senses today. Sit up straight in your chair and take a deep breath in through your nose, and out through your mouth.



- First, we're going to start with what you can **see**.

Look around and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick something that you don't normally notice, like a shadow or a small crack in the floor.

- Now, if you would like to, close your eyes and let's notice what we can **feel**. Pay attention to four things you can currently feel. Maybe it's the texture of your shirt, the feeling of the air on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table.

- Now let's focus on three things you can **hear**. Take a moment to listen and note three things you hear in the background. This can be the air conditioner in the building, the sound of someone in the hallway, or the sound of your own breath.



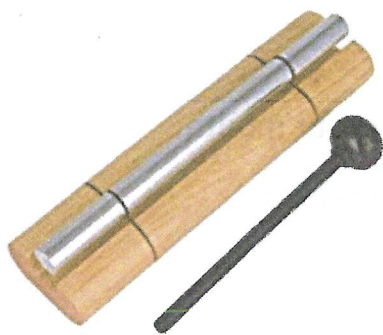
- We're going to move on to **smell**. Focus on two things you can smell in this room. Maybe the air has a certain smell in here, maybe you can smell the laundry detergent on your shirt, or maybe you smell paper from your desk nearby.



- Notice one thing you can **taste**.

Focus on one thing that you can taste right now, in this moment. Maybe you taste your toothpaste from earlier today, maybe you taste the last meal you ate. Maybe you can take a breath in with your mouth and taste the air.

Once you've taken some time to notice what you taste, gently open your eyes. Take one last deep breath in through your nose, and out through your mouth.



Bell Focus

Today we are going to practice an exercise called Bell Focus. When I ring the bell, you will focus all your attention on the sound until it fades away completely and then you will listen to the silence in the room. If your mind starts thinking about something other than the sound of the bell, try to bring your mind back to the sound. The bell sounds like this [teacher rings bell]. I will ring the bell three times.

Sit up straight and comfortably in your chair.

Rest your hands on your desk or in your lap.

If you would like to, close your eyes. Otherwise, try to keep your focus on a spot on your desk in front of you.

Feel your feet flat on the floor.

Relax your shoulders back and down.

Let your whole body be still.

Feel the air moving in and out of your nose. [Take three deep breaths yourself before proceeding.]

When the bell rings, place your attention on the sound without moving your body. If you notice any thoughts passing through your mind, let them float away and bring your attention back to the sound of the bell.

[Ring bell three times. Each time the bell rings, wait for the bell to stop ringing completely before continuing.]

Bring your attention back to your breathing. [Take three deep breaths.]

Now, take a deep breath in, hold and exhale slowly.

Notice how you feel. [Wait 10 seconds.]

Slowly open your eyes or lift your gaze.

Toothpaste

Today we are all going to pretend we are a tube of toothpaste.

Get your body comfortable and close your eyes if you want.

Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose out through your mouth.

Keep breathing slowly, in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Think of what your toothpaste tube looks like at home.

Sometimes, we have to squeeze the toothpaste to get it all out.

Pretend that you are full of toothpaste, we're going to squeeze our bodies to get every bit of toothpaste out.



Then make believe toothpaste is going to come out of your toes!

Start by pulling your head down, like you are a turtle pulling your head into its shell.

Great job! You are starting to push the toothpaste down to your toes!

Next, wrinkle up your face like you are eating really sour candy.

Now, pull your belly in as far as you can to push the toothpaste further down.

You're so good at this!

Now, I want you to pretend that you are pushing your feet **through** the floor. You're pushing the toothpaste even closer to your toes!

Okay, we're almost there! Keep going! The toothpaste is almost there!

Now, wrinkle your toes up and imagine ALL the toothpaste coming out! That's it!

There's still a little bit of toothpaste left though. Let's do it all at once. Pull and wrinkle and push every part of your body at the same time to get the last drops of toothpaste out!

Way to go! Now, let your body relax. Notice how good it feels to be calm and relaxed.

We can learn a lot when our bodies are relaxed and calm.

Bucket Fillers

Get your body comfortable and close your eyes if you want.

Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Now imagine that inside of you, there is a big beautiful bucket. Everyone has one, though we can't see it with our eyes. When we feel good, our buckets are full. When we're feeling bad, our buckets are low... or even empty.

Did you know that when you fill someone else's bucket with kindness, helpfulness, or even a smile, your own bucket gets filled up too? That's actually the way we fill our buckets.

When we share goodness and think happy thoughts, our buckets are filled with so much goodness.

When kind words are spoken, buckets get fuller. And when unkind words are spoken, buckets become a little emptier.

We all want our buckets to be full of love, kindness, peacefulness, and happiness. Everyone does. So, we can make a choice each and every day to show loving kindness to others and help fill their buckets. If we do this, our own bucket gets filled to the top and can even overflow with happiness!

Let's imagine for a moment a time when you might be upset with someone. What do you imagine happening to your bucket? What's happening to the other person's bucket?

We don't want empty buckets because it doesn't feel nice inside. So, your goal, when you get upset, is to talk about what you're feeling, without emptying your bucket or the other person's bucket. You can do it. Just imagine that bucket and keeping it full.

If your bucket ever feels low or empty, you can take in a deep breath and remember how loved you are. You can choose to be thankful for the good things and people you have in your life and pay attention to that.

Now when you're ready... take in a deep breath. Open your eyes and give your wonderful body a big wonderful stretch!

You've done a great job!

**** Optional:** After the meditation, pass around a bucket (can also be a basket or other container) and ask each student what or who fills their bucket. Each student can name one thing and pretend to place it in the bucket and pass it on to the person next to them. Teachers are encouraged to share too!



Treehouse

Today we are going to use our imagination! Get your body comfortable and gently close your eyes if you want. Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Spend a moment or two relaxing your whole body.

Imagine you are standing in front of a massive tree. This tree has deep, deep roots and branches that reach out in every direction. Can you see it? Pay attention to what your tree looks like.

This tree is home to your *very own* treehouse. This is a treehouse of your own design. Imagine how you would like your treehouse to look.

You can add swings, windows, trapdoors, plants, animals, your favorite things, your favorite colors, just allow yourself to design the treehouse any way you like.

Can you see it? Good. Now allow yourself to go inside the treehouse. (Pause). Are you inside? Good.

Inside the treehouse, imagine anything that makes you feel good to think about. You can put pillows, waterfalls, plants, trees, birds, pictures of mountains, rainbows, anything you would like that you feel good when you think about it. Go ahead and design the inside of your treehouse now.

Know that when you go inside your treehouse you feel really, really relaxed. This is a place to let go of all your thoughts, all your worries.

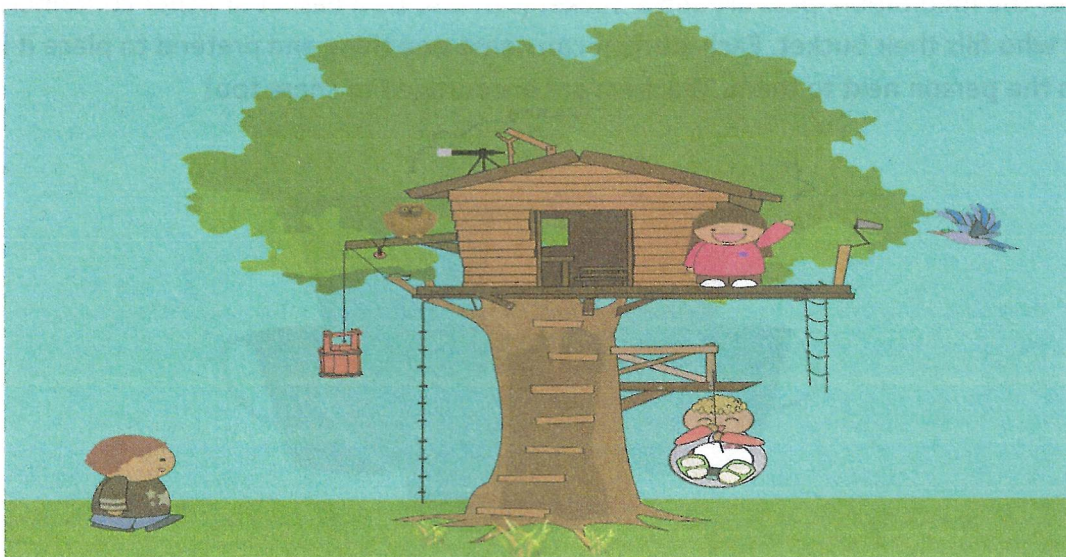
This is a place that you can go any time you want to feel more calm. Know that your treehouse is available to you any time you like. You can visit here whenever you want.

Now take a deep breath and imagine you are walking down, out of your treehouse.

Gently bring your attention back to the room.

Rub your hands together to make them warm. Gently put your hands over your eyes.

You can open your eyes whenever you are ready.



Sensory Awareness

Get your body comfortable and close your eyes if you want

Slowly take three deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Think about the answers to the questions, but do not say the answers out loud

(Allow at least three seconds between each question below)

Without moving your hands, can you feel the hair on your head?

Can you feel your body moving as you breathe in and out?

Can you feel the chair or floor holding you up?

Can you feel your shoes touching your feet?

Can you feel your fingernails growing?

Can you feel wind or air on your face?

Can you feel your heart beating strong?

Can you feel your stomach make noises?

Can you feel your ears listening to sounds?

Can you feel your brain learning something new?

Can you feel any part of your body touching something?



Movement exercises

Stretch like a tree

Let's all stand up nice and tall and plant our feet firmly on the ground. We're about to become very strong trees.

Let's start with your roots. Wiggle your toes inside your shoes and just notice how they feel.

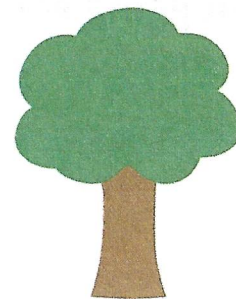
Now, plant your toes down on the bottom of your shoes. Imagine your feet have roots growing from them. These roots are so strong that they go all the way from your feet, through your shoes, and through the floor. Your roots are nice and strong now.

Next, we're going to grow branches. Stretch your arms up nice and high without moving your feet. See how tall you can make your tree.

Now imagine you have a heavy piece of fruit hanging on the right branch of your tree. This piece of fruit makes your branch bend toward the ground and your other branch stick straight up toward the sky. You should be bent to one side getting a nice stretch to one side.

Great job. Now let's stretch back to the center and make our branches nice and tall again. This time there is a big, juicy piece of fruit hanging from your left branch. It's so big that it weighs your left branch down toward the ground. It sends your right branch up toward the sky. Now, your body is bent on the other side giving you a nice stretch.

One last time let's reach our branches up toward the sky. Take a deep breath in through your nose and slow let it out through your mouth.



Seated forward bend



We are going to practice "seated forward bend."

Sit up straight and comfortably in your chair. Feel your feet flat on the floor.

Rest your hands in your lap. Relax your shoulders and your back down. Let your whole body be still.

Stretch your arms straight over your head with your palms facing each other.

Now, carefully bend forward.

Reach for your legs, ankles or feet, and be comfortable.

Close your eyes if you'd like. Relax your head, neck, and face.

Feel the air moving in and out of your nose (wait 20-30 seconds) Now slowly sit up and stretch your arms straight over your head with your palms facing each other.

Lower your arms and rest your hands in your lap.

Bring your attention back to your breathing. (Wait 10 seconds). Now, notice how you feel. (Wait 10 seconds). Slowly open your eyes.

Calm Down Bottle (also known as Sensory Bottle)

Calm Down Bottles can be used to help the regulation process when a child is angry or overstimulated. When calming is needed, shake the bottle vigorously and place it on a flat surface. Encourage students to take deep breaths while they watch the glitter swirl around and eventually settle.

Calm Down Bottles can form the basis of a discussion about emotions. Like the glitter, our emotions can be stirred up and swirl around inside of us, making it hard for us to see things clearly. We can find techniques that help us calm down, like taking deep breaths or stretching or using our four-finger mantra, and use them, so that our emotions settle like the glitter.

To make your own Calm Down Bottle, you will need the following:

- Clear glue
 - Plastic bottle with tight-fitting lid
 - Hot water
 - Glitter (extra fine works best), also sequins, confetti, or other little colorful bits
 - Super Glue
- 1) Pour hot tap water into your bottle. (It should be a little hotter than “warm” but not boiling. Boiling water will damage your bottle.)
 - 2) Add several healthy squeezes of clear glue, screw on the bottle cap, and shake vigorously.
 - 3) Open the bottle and add LOTS of glitter, along with any other colorful bits of sequin or other craft material you may have.
 - 4) Shake, shake, shake. Glitter may collect around the top of the bottle; if this happens, keep shaking the bottle until it disperses.
 - 5) If your glitter is falling too quickly, add more glue, and shake. If it is falling too slowly, pour a little water off the top and add fresh water.
 - 6) Once your bottle is how you like it, Super Glue the top on. You may also secure it with decorative duct tape for extra security.