How Do I Feel Today?

Date	Zone and #	Feeling Word or Face	Why?
	1 2 3 4 5		
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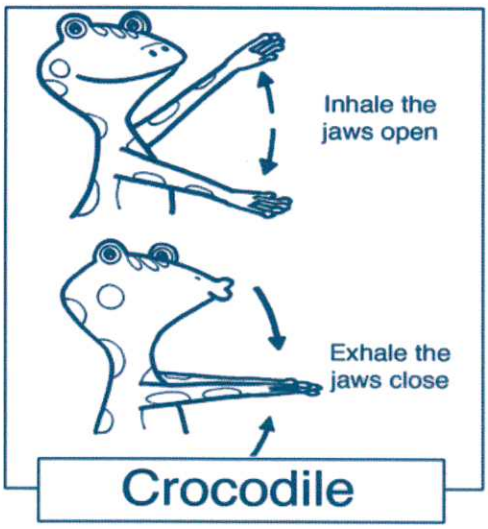
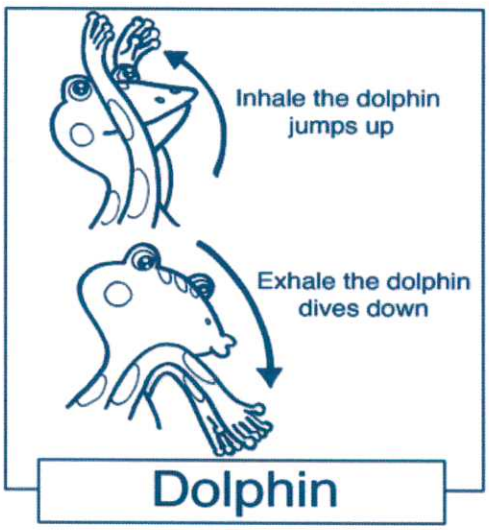
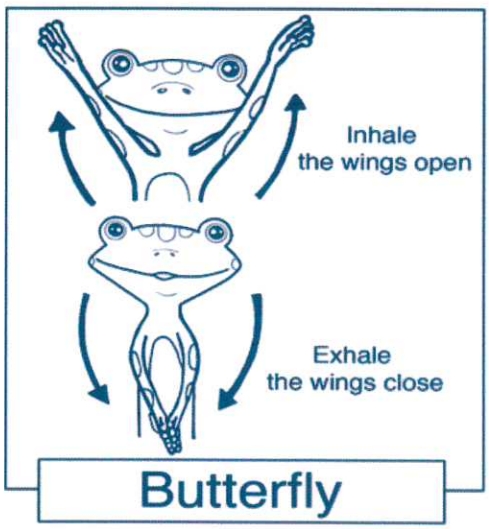
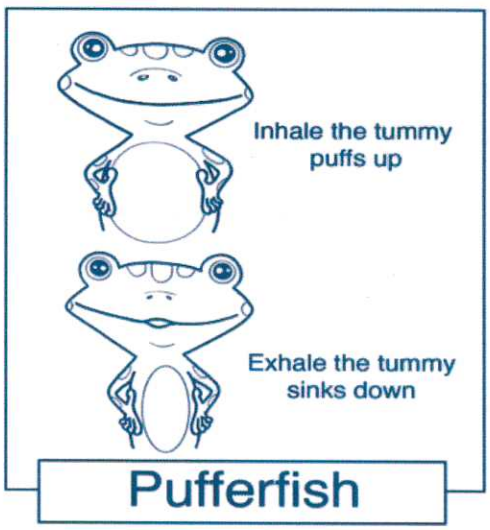
Animal Arms

- Combine the exercises in a sequence, or just choose one or two to do at a time.
- If you have a harmonica, use the harmonica tone to indicate inhale and exhale.
- Count slow breaths and use an even tone of voice.

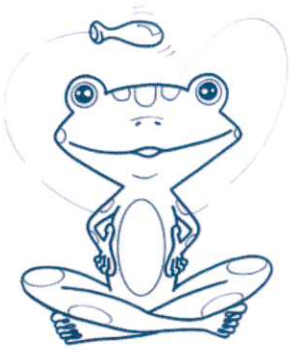






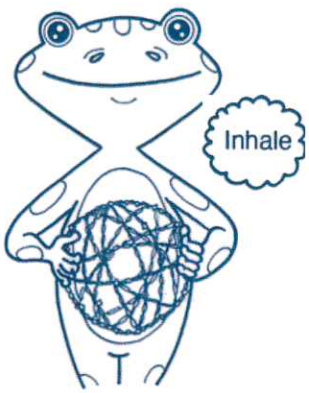


Breathe



Balloon Breathing

1. Rest your hands on your tummy and try 3 Balloon Breaths.
2. Breathing in fills the balloon with air.
3. Breathing out empties the balloon of air.
4. Repeat three times.
5. Notice how you feel in your body. In mindfulness, there's no right or wrong answer; just notice what you are feeling right now.



Breathing Ball

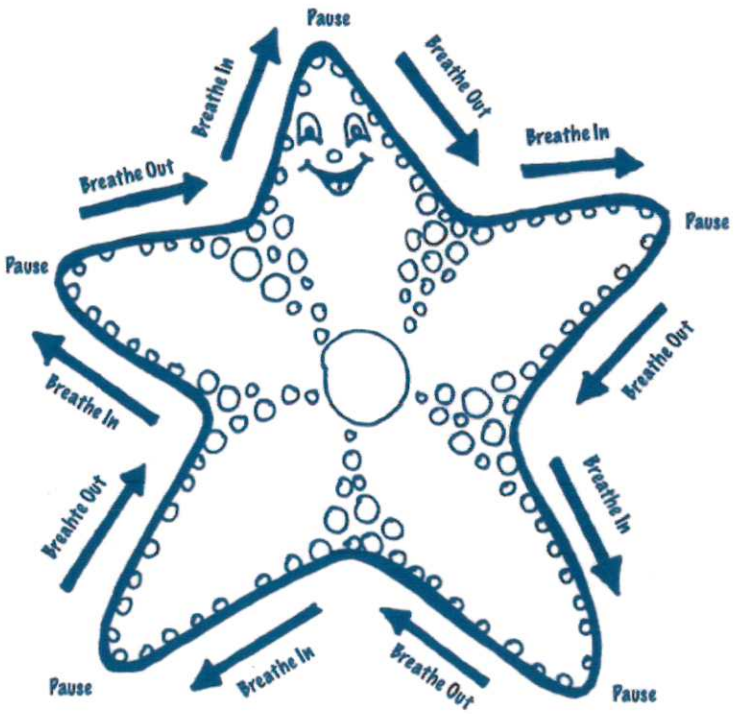
1. Start in Seated Mountain.
2. Take a breath in as the ball opens.
3. Breathe out as the ball closes.
4. Can you breathe in time with the breathing ball?

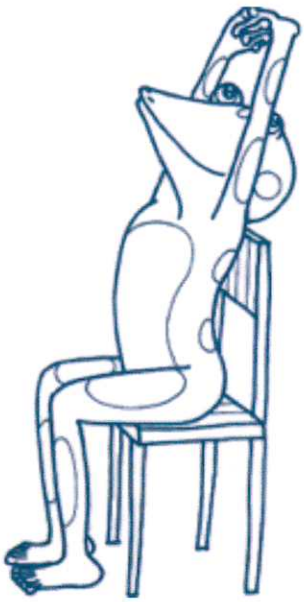
- This is generally a favorite and keeps the children's attention.
- We use a Hoberman Sphere™ as a breathing ball.
- You can have children take turns leading a few rounds with the breathing ball.
- Be careful to keep fingers safe!

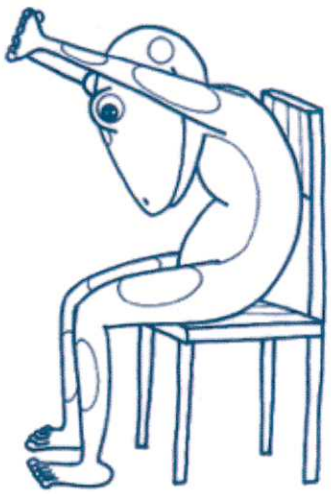
Starfish Breathing

1. Make a starfish with one hand, fingers spread wide.
2. Put the index finger from the other hand on the outer base of the thumb.
3. We are going to trace the outline of our starfish hand. Keep looking at your pointer finger while you do your breathing.
4. Inhale (finger traces to top of thumb).
5. Exhale (finger traces down the other side of thumb).
6. Repeat until you have traced the outline of the starfish hand.

- Learners are synchronizing their movement, breath, and gaze. On the inhale, index finger and eyes trace upward along a finger; on the exhale, index finger and eyes trace downward along a finger. Each upward movement is coupled with an inhale, whereas each downward movement is coupled with an exhale.
- After Starfish Breathing, you can have learners rest their hands on their chest, continuing to breathe mindfully, as they silently recall three things for which they are thankful.



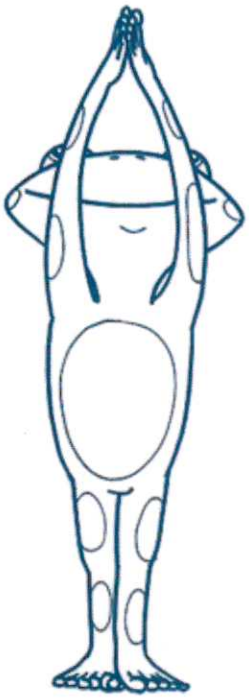




Chair Cat/Cow

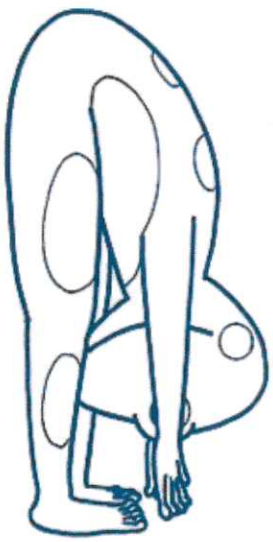
1. Sit in Seated Mountain with hands on knees.
2. As you inhale, stretch your arms overhead and interlace fingers. Reach the center of your chest up toward the ceiling, and lift your chin so that you are looking at the ceiling. (Cow)
3. As you exhale, in one movement bring your hands forward, round your spine and drop your chin toward your chest. (Cat)
4. Repeat for several breaths: inhale, arms up, gaze lifts, chest up. Exhale round the spine, chin tucks, hands forward.
5. Return to Seated Mountain.

- You can have young learners moo like a cow and meow like a cat. Just make sure the do a few rounds moving with the inhale and exhale first.
- If on the floor, learners can come to hands and knees. Inhale, the belly drops down toward the floor and we look up toward the ceiling (Cow). Exhale, look at your belly button and round your spine (Cat). Repeat for several breaths.



Sunrise/Sunset

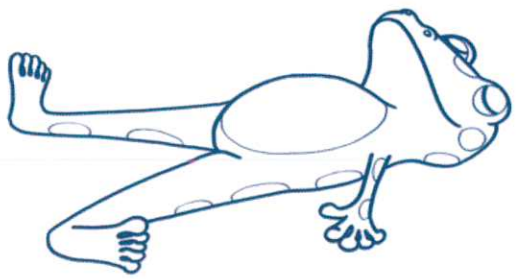
1. Start in Mountain Pose.
2. Inhale, reach your arms up overhead (this is Sunrise Pose).
3. As you exhale, fold forward. Put your hands on your shins, or your ankles, or maybe the floor (this is Sunset Pose).
4. Inhale all the way back up to Sunrise.
5. Exhale hands down for Mountain.
6. Repeat a few times. Notice how you feel.

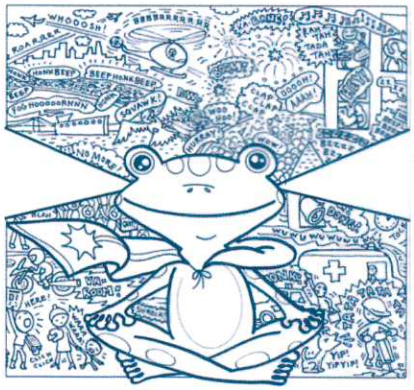


Guided Rest

1. Lie down on the floor on your back. Spread your feet apart. Turn your palms up to face the ceiling and close your eyes.
2. Put your attention on your forehead. Feel your forehead relax.
3. Put your attention on your eyes. Feel your eyes relax.
4. Put your attention on your cheeks and jaw. Feel your cheeks and jaw relax.
5. Put your attention on your neck. Feel your neck relax.
6. Put your attention on your shoulders. Feel your shoulders relax. (Repeat for arms, wrists, hands, fingers.)
7. Put your attention on your chest. Feel your chest relax.
8. Put your attention on your back. Feel where your back touches the floor (or the chair).
9. Put your attention on your belly. Notice how the breath moves the belly softly up and down.
10. Put your attention on your hips. Feel your hips relax. (Repeat for legs, knees, ankles, feet, toes.)
11. Bring your awareness to your breathing, and notice where you feel the breath in your body. Maybe you notice it in your nostrils. Maybe you feel it in your chest. Maybe you feel it in your belly.
12. See if you can get really quiet. Maybe you will even feel your heart beating inside your body.
13. Let learners rest in silence for a few moments.
14. Ring chime.
15. Slowly start to wiggle your fingers and toes. Take a deep breath in and stretch your arms overhead. As you exhale, relax.
16. Open your eyes and slowly return to a seated position.
17. Notice how you are feeling.

- If space permits, have learners lie down in a circle with their heads pointing toward the center. Learners may practice Guided Rest seated at their desks if lying down is not convenient.
- Using a soft stuffed animal as a "breathing buddy" can help learners relax. The breathing buddy can rest on the learner's belly and help the learner to notice their breathing.
- You can shorten the exercise by leaving out some body parts.
- Learners who do not feel comfortable lying on their back may lie on their bellies, although lying on backs is the ideal position for helping the body to relax in this exercise and should be encouraged.
- 5 minute exercise.





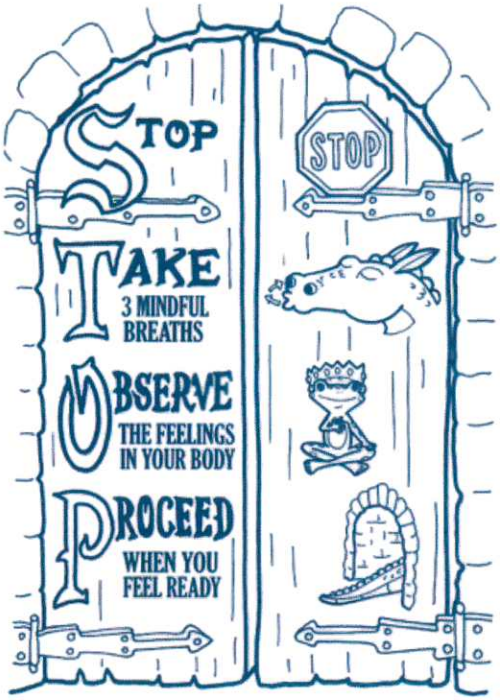
Mindful Listening

1. Close your eyes.
2. I'm going to set the timer to 45 seconds.
3. In your mind list the items you (hear, feel, think) while we are sitting silently.

- Have learners share their experience at the end.

One Minute Reflection

4. Before leaving school take a moment to pause and reflect on today.
5. Sit comfortably, either at your desk or on the floor.
6. Were there things you did today that you are proud of? Let them soak in for 20-30 seconds.
7. Feel good about your accomplishments.
8. Were there things you felt you could have done better or differently? It's okay to make mistakes or missteps.
9. Tomorrow, with a fresh mind and even breathing, you can try again.



STOP*

- STOP is an exercise designed to help learners practice self-regulation when they are experiencing strong emotions.
- Learners learn to go through the four steps: S-T-O-P
- It is a good idea to practice this exercise when learners are not experiencing strong emotions, so that they will be able to implement it when they are.
- The main focus is to hone learners' observation skills to help them make more mindful choices.
- When we observe, we are just noticing what we feel in our bodies, we are not saying if something is good or bad.
- For further exploration, ask learners how the quality of their breath changes when they are laughing, sobbing, anxious, frightened, angry, relaxed, surprised, or startled.
- Underscore two important features of mindfulness practice:
  1. Consistent practice—keep trying!
  2. Learn from unmindful moments, without being too harsh on yourself.

Thumb Staring

1. Start in Seated Mountain with hands in your lap.
2. Gaze softly down at your thumbs.
3. Try to keep your eyes on your thumbs until I ring the chime again.

- Ring the bell... and wait 30 seconds.
- Ring the bell again and ask learners for feedback. Were they able to keep their gaze on their thumbs the whole time? If so, how did they do it? Did they experience any distractions?
- This exercise complements "Listen to the Chime" except it focuses on the sense of sight more than the sense of hearing. You can offer both exercises, and ask learners what feels different with eyes open versus eyes closed.

*Elisha Goldstein, "Stressing Out? S.T.O.P.," *Mindful*, May 29, 2013.