

# Mindful Minutes

## Incorporate Daily Mindfulness Exercises

Mindfulness is being aware of yourself and your environment in the present moment. It is not clearing your mind all thoughts.

Mindfulness has been shown to be effective in improving emotion regulation, anxiety, anger, stress, and attention when implemented regularly. It can be taught to young students through adults.

This resource provides a number of mindfulness exercises you can incorporate into your daily routine. It fits perfectly at the beginning of the day, before an activity that requires focus or following a transition.

Core mindfulness exercises include breathing, body scan, heartbeat awareness, and posing. All of these are easy to do in a classroom at student desks.

When introducing mindfulness to students, make sure they are in a calm state the first time and never use it as a disciplinary tool. Emphasize to them that during mindful minutes we let thoughts come and go without judgement. Students will often have persistent thoughts. During mindfulness, they want to let those thoughts pass and bring focus back to their breath or their heartbeat or whichever mindful minute they are doing.



## Beginning Mindful Minute

Get your body still, close your eyes, sit tall, relax your hands in your lap. Pay attention to our beginning bell until the sound is completely gone.

— Ring a bell or use another lingering noise. You can even hum. —

When you can no longer hear the sound, place your hand on your stomach. Feel your breathing. In and out, in and out.

— In a calm voice, remind students to breath in and out, feel their breath. Ring bell to end the minute. —



## Superhero Mindful Pose

Stand up. Feet shoulder width apart. Shoulders back. Chest out. Hands on hips.

Breath in deep. Let your breath fill up your chest. Stand tall and proud.

Breathe out slowly. Let your chest come back down inch by inch. Keep your spine straight and your stomach flat.

—  
Complete 5 more times. Bring focus to the breath and focus on letting your chest slowly rise and fall with your breath.  
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## Quiet Tree Pose

Stand tall with your feet together. Let your hands hang down at your side. Close your eyes and keep your head facing straight ahead.

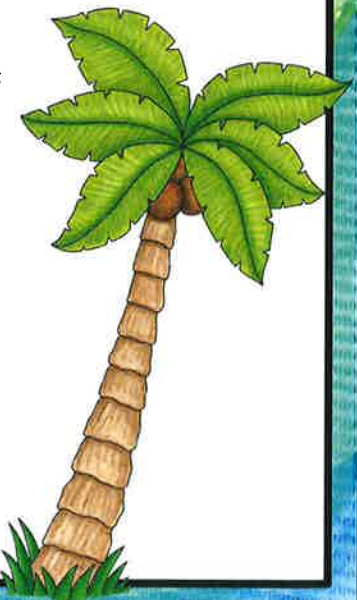
Imagine you are a tall, palm tree near the beach on a small island.

Your feet are planted in the ground like its thick roots.

Your body is like its strong trunk.

A ocean breeze comes and sways you gently back and forth.

Take a deep breath in and slowly breathe out.





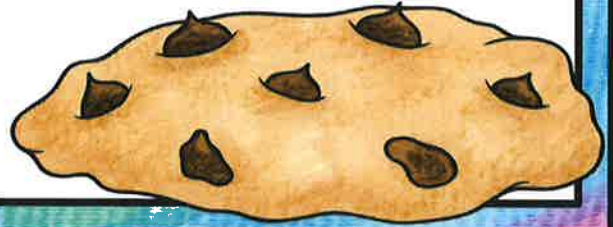
## Belly Breath

Sit in your chair with your body tall, shoulders back, eyes closed. Lay your hands in your lap. Nice and relaxed.

Picture that I just baked some chocolate chip cookies. Take a deep breath in and smell the cookies. Hold that chocolatey smell for 3, 2, 1.

Slowly breathe out.

Let's repeat that again.



## Heart Beat

Stand behind your chair. We are going to do 15 jumping jacks. Stand up tall, hands at your side.

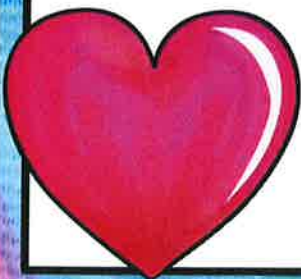
Okay, let's start. 15, 14, 13, 12 ...

Now sit down in your chair. Body still and tall. Eyes closed, shoulders back.

Breathe in deep and out slowly.

Put your hand over your heart. Focus on feeling and hearing your heart beat.

Breathe in deep and breathe out.



## Jellyfish

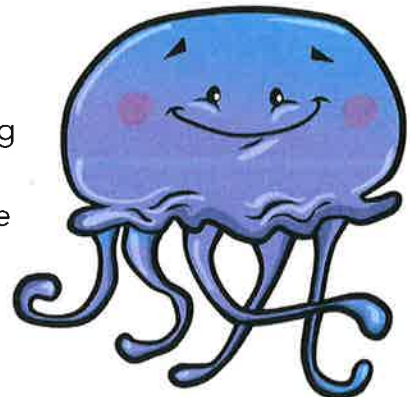
Sit in your chair with your body tall, shoulders back, eyes closed. Lay your hands in your lap

Pretend you are a jellyfish. As jellyfish swim, they tense their body up tight and then relax.

Make each of your hands into a fist. Hold it really tight. Feel your fingers digging in your palms. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Relax.

Press your arms against your body. Tighter and tighter. Hold it. Feel the tension in your arms. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Relax.

—  
Keep going with other parts of the body.  
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## Balloon Bounce (game)

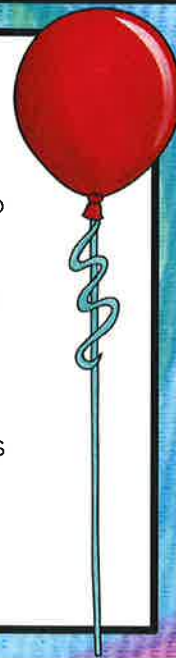
—  
Take an inflated balloon. Gather students in a circle and tell them they have to work to keep the ball off the ground.

That is not the primary goal though. Emphasize that they have to do it **silent** and **slow**.

Using a calm voice, you can narrate the balloon's slow movements.

Remind students to focus on keeping their bodies relaxed, with even breaths and silent voices.

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## Pinwheel Breaths

(pinwheel needed)

*Sit in your chair with your body tall, shoulders back.*

*Hold your pinwheel up to your mouth, a couple inches away.*

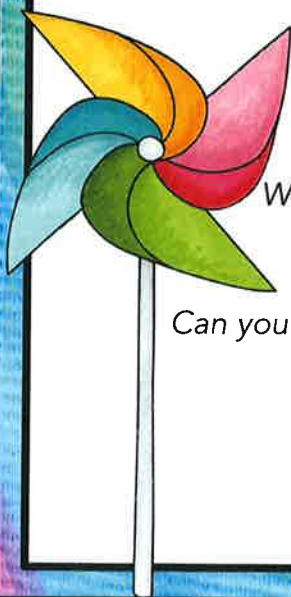
*Slowly breathe out. Breathe out harder until you can make your pinwheel spin.*

*Focus to control how fast your pinwheel moves.*

*How does the air feel on your lips?*

*Wet your lips a little and breathe out again.*

*Can you feel your breath more this time?*



## Sounds

(play rain sounds)

*Sit in your chair with your body tall, shoulders back.*

*Breathe in deep, hold, and out slowly.*

—  
*Start playing rain sounds.*

—  
*Continue your breathing. Listen to the sounds of the rain as your breath goes in and out.*







# Mindfulness Exercises



## Mindfulness Meditation

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Find a place where you can sit quietly and undisturbed for a few moments. To begin, you might want to set a timer for about 10 minutes, but after some experience you should not be too concerned about the length of time you spend meditating.

Begin by bringing your attention to the present moment by noticing your breathing. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and then leaves your body. Before long, your mind will begin to wander, pulling you out of the present moment. That's ok. Notice your thoughts and feelings as if you are an outside observer watching what's happening in your brain. Take note, and allow yourself to return to your breathing.

Sometimes you might feel frustrated or bored. That's fine—these are just a few more feelings to notice. Your mind might start to plan an upcoming weekend, or worry about a responsibility. Notice where your thoughts are going, and accept what's happening.

Whenever you are able to, return your concentration to your breathing. Continue this process until your timer rings, or until you are ready to be done.



## Body Scan

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During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body—to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.



## Mindful Eating

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Choose a food you would like to practice with (preferably something you can hold in your hand without getting messy). Something as simple as a single raisin will work well. Move slowly through these steps, taking a moment to focus on each one.

Before you pick up your food, notice how it looks on the table in front of you. Notice its color, how the light reflects from its surface, and its size.

# Mindfulness Exercises

Now, pick up the food. Notice the weight, and how the food feels against your skin. Roll the object between your fingers, or roll it in your hand, and notice its texture. Notice if it's smooth, rough, slick, soft, firm or if it has any other properties. Hold the food to your nose, and pay attention to its smell.

Next, place the food in your mouth, on your tongue, but don't eat it. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Does the texture feel the same as on your hand? What do you taste? Roll the food around in your mouth and pay attention to the feeling.

Finally, begin to slowly chew your food. Notice how your teeth sink into it, and how the texture is different inside. Pay close attention to the flavor, and how it spreads across your tongue. Notice how your body changes--does your mouth fill with saliva? Does your tongue feel hot or cold? Continue to chew your food, paying close attention to the many sensations as you finish.

## Five Senses

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Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses.

**What are 5 things you can see?** Look around you and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or a knick-knack in the corner of a room.

**What are 4 things you can feel?** Maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders, or the temperature on your skin. Pick up an object and notice its texture.

**What are 3 things you can hear?** Notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as an air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars on a distant street.

**What are 2 things you can smell?** Maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either: maybe there's an overflowing trash can or sewer.

**What is 1 thing you can taste?** Pop a piece of gum in your mouth, sip a drink, eat a snack if you have one, or simply notice how your mouth tastes. "Taste" the air to see how it feels on your tongue.

The numbers for each sense are only a guideline. Feel free to do more or less of each. Also, try this exercise while doing an activity like washing dishes, listening to music, or going for a walk.

# Mindfulness Exercises for Children

## Build a Stress Ball



If you're feeling brave, and are prepared to clean up a mess, provide the children with balloons, flour, and funnels to build their own stress balls (you may want to double-layer the balloons). Some other filling options include rice, small beads, or the leftover dots from punched paper. Once the kids have built their own stress balls, try using them with *The Feeling Exercise*.

## The Body Squeezing Exercise



Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and ask them to squeeze and relax each of the muscles in their body one-by-one. They should hold each squeeze for about five seconds. After releasing the squeeze, ask the kids to pay attention to how it feels when they relax. Children understand this exercise better if you help them visualize how they can squeeze a particular muscle using imagery, such as the following:

1. Curl your toes tight like you are picking up a pencil with your feet.
2. Tense your legs by pretending like you are standing on your tippy-toes, trying to look over a fence.
3. Suck in your stomach as if you are trying to slide through a narrow opening.
4. Make fists with your hands and pretend like you are trying to squeeze all of the juice out of an orange.
5. Pretend like a bug landed on your nose, and you're trying to get it off without using your hands. Try to scrunch your face and move your jaw to make it fly away!

## The Five Senses Exercise



Take the children outside if the weather is nice, and have them lie silently in the grass. Begin to call out each of the five senses in turn (sight, smell, sound, taste, touch), and ask the children to notice everything they can with that particular sense, until you call out the next one. This exercise can also work well on walks, and in a number of other situations.

# Mindfulness Exercises for Children

## The Feeling Exercise



Collect a number of interesting objects such as feathers, putty, stones, or anything else that might be interesting to hold. Give each child an object, and ask them to spend a minute just noticing what it feels like in their hand. They can feel the texture, if their object is hard or soft, and the shape. Afterwards, ask the children to describe what they felt. With bigger groups, pair children off to take turns completing the exercise together.

## The Seeing Game



Ask the children to spend one minute silently looking around the room. Their goal is to find things in the room that they've never noticed. Maybe there are some big things like a poster or a picture, or just little details like cracks in the ceiling or an interesting pattern on the door. After the minute is up ask the kids to share the most interesting new things they noticed.

## Ocean Breathing



Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Ask everyone to slowly breathe in through their nose, and then out through their pursed lips (as if they are blowing through a straw). Point out that the slow and steady breathing sounds like ocean waves, gently crashing on shore. Let the children continue breathing and making the ocean sound for one to two minutes.

## The Power of Listening



Ring a bell, a wind chime, or anything else that creates a long trailing sound. Ask each child to listen, and silently raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound. After the ringing ends, ask the children to continue listening to any other sounds they can hear for the next minute. When the minute ends, go around the room asking everyone to tell you what sounds they heard.

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. This exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation, but it's best to practice frequently. With experience, you will become more aware of when you are experiencing tension and you will have the skills to help you relax. During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. Let's begin.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds.

*(brief pause)*

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.

Take in another deep breath and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Again, slowly release the air.

Even slower now, take another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air.

*(brief pause)*

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension in your foot. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower leg. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation. Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg and pelvis. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together. Make sure you feel tenseness without going to the point of strain.

*(5 second pause)*





# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.

Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation.

Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air fill your lungs, and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your neck and your head. Tense your face and your neck by distorting the muscles around your eyes and mouth.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, head, and neck. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different it is from the feeling of tension.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Adjust your arms and legs.

Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.

