

Monday, August 17, 2020

Dear Briarwood Families,

This semester, Casey and I wanted to start off the year sharing with you how excited we are to be back among both our families and colleagues here at Briarwood. What a year this has been! When we first decided to send out Mindful Mondays and Wellness Wednesdays during distance learning, we never thought we would end up doing it for the whole semester! We had such great responses to the blogs that we decided to continue it this year.

This semester, we will be sending out Mindful Mondays and Wellness Wednesdays on alternating weeks; for example, this week you will receive a Mindful Monday and next week you will receive a Wellness Wednesday. We hope they will be beneficial to you and help us all get through this continued time of uncertainty.

We hope to be a source of support and a resource during distance learning and when we eventually return to campus. For today, we would encourage you to take some time, either by yourself or with your student, to practice a bit of mindfulness. At the bottom of this page, you can find a simple, quick body scan to help you check in with yourself and how you are feeling.

Take care,

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Middle Upper Counselor

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Lower School Counselor

The CALM Body Scan

Start by finding a comfortable position to stand, sit or lie down. Allow your eyes to close if you feel comfortable. Begin with a few deep breaths, allowing your body to relax as you breathe out.

C-Chest

After a few breaths, bring your awareness to your **chest** and **torso** area. Open and lift your chest, creating enough room for your lungs and belly to fully expand. Bring your awareness to any sensations there.

Is your breath shallow and short, or slow and even? As you regulate your breath, you regulate your body and brain, and in turn your emotions, impulses, and attention. Is your heart beating fast or slow? Is there any tightness or tension in your chest?

Lastly, tense all the muscles throughout your chest and torso, hold for a count of three as you notice what tension feels like, then allow your muscles to relax and feel the tension flow away and relaxation flow in with the next few breaths

A-Arms

Now shift your awareness into your arms, from your shoulders down to your fingers. Lift and drop your shoulders once and let your arms fall to your sides or into your lap.

Are they shaking or still? Are they tensed partly into fists? If so, just release that tension. Are your hands sweaty or clammy? Scan up your arms to your shoulders, continuing to notice any other sensations that might give you a clue as to your emotional state.

Lastly, squeeze your fists, tense your arms all the way up to your shoulders and hold for three breaths, feeling the tension, and then release and let your arms relax completely. Take three more breaths, enjoying the relaxation you feel in your arms.

L-Legs

On the next breath, direct your attention down to your **legs**, from your hips down through your toes, allowing your attention and breath to flow through your thighs, calves, and feet. Often our legs can be shaking with anxiety, or hold tension and stress. Notice if your legs are communicating anything in this moment, and just allow them to become still if they are.

Then, gently squeeze the muscles in your feet, up through your legs and around your waist, holding that tension for three breaths, noting the sensations, and then release. Take three more breaths as you feel the tension flowing out of your legs.

M-Mouth

Lastly, shift your awareness to your **mouth** and jaw, a place where many of us hold tension and clench our muscles without realizing it.

What expression is your mouth communicating—stress, anxiety, anger? Notice this and any other sensations in your mouth and even the rest of your head and neck. Now clench your mouth and other muscles around it, holding for three breaths and release.

As you let go of the tension, allow your mouth to relax into a small smile to yourself and to the world around you. Take a few more moments to enjoy the sensations of relaxation and smiling.

As you come to the end of your practice, you might take time to reflect on where in your body you tend to hold emotions and tension, and adjust or breathe into those areas before opening your eyes and continuing to your next task or activity. Remember too that at any point in your busy day you can choose to check in with your body and relax.