



# Mindfulness Practices for the Classroom



## Mindfulness is...

*“The awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.”<sup>1</sup>*

Being aware of what is happening right now, inside and around you.<sup>2</sup>

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### Three Foundational Mindfulness Practices<sup>3</sup>

#### Present moment awareness

Our minds spend a lot of time thinking about the past and the future. Mindfulness trains the mind to become aware of what is happening now.

#### Bell as a reminder to notice

The mind naturally strays from its present moment awareness, so an occasional bell or other sound can serve as a prompt to focus on the present.

#### Breath to anchor the mind

Focusing on the breath – its speed, or the feeling of air leaving your nose – can help the mind stay in the present moment.



## Research Evidence

There is a growing body of evidence supporting the use of mindfulness-based interventions in schools to promote social and emotional competencies among K-12 students. Although there are very few school-based interventions designed specifically for youth with LDs and/or ADHD, emerging research suggests that these programs produce similar outcomes as universal programs delivered to the general student population.<sup>4</sup>

Mindfulness interventions have been shown to support **executive functioning**, **attention**, and **emotional regulation**.<sup>5</sup> Interventions that target these areas are particularly relevant for students with LDs, who often experience difficulties in these areas.



## Mindfulness Activities for Students

This package includes descriptions of the following mindfulness activities:

- Body Scan
- Martian Meditation
- Glitter Jar
- Hourglass Exercise
- Guided Meditation



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### Body Scan<sup>6</sup>

Instruct students to lie down or sit comfortably, depending on the available space. Move through the body, instructing them to bring attention to their toes, feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, and so on, scanning from the toes to the top of the head, and back down again. Alternatives include having students touch each part of their body to help focus their attention, or instructing them to squeeze and release the muscles in that part of the body.

The script below may help you get started:

“

*Lying with your eyes closed, take a deep breath in through your nose. As you exhale through your mouth, imagine all tension and stress leaving your body.*

*Bring attention to your toes. Wiggle your toes, squeeze them together, then let them be still. Invite your toes to relax. Feel any tension melt away from them.*

*Bring attention to your ankles. Roll your feet around the ankles, flex and point your feet, then let them be still. Invite your ankles to relax. Allow the ground to absorb any tension they may be holding.*

*Bring attention to your calves and shins. Squeeze the muscles in your calves and shins, then release and let them relax. Allow your lower legs to melt into the ground.*

”

You can make this activity as long or as short as you need depending on the number of body parts you choose to focus on.



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### Martian Meditation<sup>7</sup>

In this activity, students pretend that they are a Martian, discovering an object on planet Earth for the first time. Give students a small object, such as an eraser or paper clip, or something edible, such as a raisin or jujube. Instruct students to bring a curious and open mind to the activity, and to use all of their senses to explore the object. Follow the script below, or make up your own.

“

*Start by looking at your object. What does it look like? What colour is it? What shape is it? What shadows does it make on the table or floor?*

*Next, touch your object. How does it feel? What kind of texture does it have? How heavy is it?*

*Listen as you explore your object. What sounds do you hear? Which sounds are louder? Which sounds are pleasant?*

*Now smell your object. What does it smell like? Does it have a smell at all? Does the smell make you think of anything?*

*[If the object is edible] Finally, taste the object. How does it taste? Think about the texture again. Feel the object on your tongue or your teeth.*

*What did you learn about the object? Did you discover anything you had not noticed before? What did you like about this exercise?*

”

Alternatives include exploring an object with a blindfold on to heighten the other senses, or looking at a photograph and trying to describe the senses (e.g., smells, sounds, textures) that would be associated with what is depicted. This can be done as a partner exercise or as an individual reflection.



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### Glitter Jar<sup>8</sup>

#### Objective:

The glitter jar provides a visual for students, to help them understand what goes on in our minds when we become stressed, angry, afraid, distracted, or over-stimulated.

#### Materials:

- 1 medium clear plastic jar with a lid that seals tightly
- 1 handful of **sequins or glitter**
- Enough **glycerine** to fill half the jar:  
*glycerine can be found at drugstores or craft supply stores.*
- Enough **water** to fill the other half of the jar

#### Instructions:

- 1 Open the jar, and add the handful of sequins or glitter.
- 2 Pour in glycerine until about half full.
- 3 Pour in water until full.
- 4 Seal the jar tightly, and shake well.

#### Demonstration:

When we leave the jar sitting for a few minutes, all of the glitter falls to the bottom and becomes still. This represents our minds at ease.

When we shake the jar, the glitter flies around and prevents us from seeing through to the other side. This demonstrates our state of mind when we experience stress.

#### Extensions:

The glitter jar can serve as a good tool to introduce mindfulness in the elementary grades. It can also help some students focus during a meditation; if a student is not able to sit with their eyes closed, they can use a glitter jar, shaking it up to imagine a busy mind, and then setting it down and breathing deeply as the sequins settle. If they are focused on the jar, they are in the present moment.

Another way to use the glitter jar is to leave it somewhere visible in the classroom; when the class is acting up or feeling tense, the educator may shake the jar to make students aware of what is happening. The educator can then place the jar on a table and model breathing and calming strategies to help the class settle down.



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### Hourglass Exercise<sup>9</sup>

This activity can be used to help with transitions between activities or between classes, or as a way to refocus after a disruption. Using a three-minute hourglass or other timer, take a break to help students focus on their breathing.

For the first minute, guide students to pay attention to what is happening in their minds and bodies:

“ *What thoughts are going through your mind? What emotions are you feeling? Where are you holding tension in your body? Where do you feel relaxed? How is your heart beating? What is your breathing like?* ”

For the second minute, guide students to pay attention to their breath:

“ *Inhale through your nose, feeling the air in your nostrils, feeling your lungs expand and your belly rise. Exhale through your nose, feeling the air graze your top lip, feeling your lungs contract and your belly fall.*

*Count how many seconds your inhale lasts. Count how many seconds your exhale lasts. Is your breath getting faster or slower? Practice non-judgement, and do not try to change what is happening naturally.* ”

For the third minute, guide students to expand their field of attention:

“ *Pay attention to the feelings in your body once again. What do you feel? What is the same or different compared to the beginning of this exercise?*

*Pay attention to the room we are in. What is the temperature like? What sounds do you hear?*

*Finally, think about what you need and what you can do. What do you need in this last moment before we open our eyes? What do you need the rest of the day? What can you do for yourself, to release anything you may be hanging onto, and to take on whatever is next in your day?* ”



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### Guided Meditation

Instruct students to put down anything they are holding and to remove any objects, such as cell phones, from their pockets. Instruct students to find a comfortable position, with their feet on the floor, so they will not need to move for three minutes, taking a moment to notice how the position feels. Instruct students to close their eyes. Follow the script<sup>10</sup> below at a calm and easy pace.

“

*We're going to start with a sound of the bell. And I invite you to allow it to cut through whatever busy thoughts you have, and invite your mind to try and rest on the sound of the bell, beginning to arrive in the present moment fully, stopping running to the future or the past.*

[Ring the bell]

*Breathing in, I become fully aware of my entire in-breath, noticing it entering my lungs and filling my belly. Breathing out, I become fully aware of my entire out-breath.*

*Breathing in, I can focus on the word, "in." Breathing out, I can focus on the word, "out." In, out.*

*Breathing in, I notice my breath is becoming deeper. Not forcing it to change, just bringing my full attention. Breathing out, I become aware if my breath is becoming slower.*

*Breathing in, I can focus on the word, "deep." Breathing out, I can focus on the word, "slow." Deep, slow.*

*Breathing in, I invite my mind to feel the calmness of this moment, where I have nowhere to go and no one to manage. Breathing in, breathing out, I invite my body to feel fully at ease in this moment.*

*Breathing in, calm. Breathing out, ease. Calm, ease.*

*Breathing in, I invite my mind and body to fully arrive in this present moment, letting go of any thoughts that are rushing in to pull me away. Breathing out, I touch the qualities that make this a wonderful moment, a moment where I can be with myself and I have nowhere to go and nothing to do.*

*Breathing in, present moment. Breathing out, wonderful moment.*

*continued on next page...*

With the next sound of the bell, we'll allow our minds to come back from wherever they are, resting fully on the sound and spending one more moment with ourselves and our breath.

[Ring the bell]

Then invite students to open their eyes, stretch a bit, and come back to the classroom. Invite them to reflect on their experience:

What's going on in your body right now? Does it feel any different than before we started?

Does your mind feel the same or different? Are you calmer and slower, or are you tight and anxious?

What are some key words you might use to describe the experience you just had?

## References

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- <sup>3</sup> Weisbaum, E. (2016). *Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms, and School Communities* [Webinar]. Retrieved from <https://www.ldatschool.ca/webinar-mindfulness/>
- <sup>4</sup> Haydicky, J., & Wiener, J. (2014). *Mindfulness for Social and Emotional Competence: A Review of the Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.ldatschool.ca/section-title-promoting-social-and-emotional-competence-through-mindfulness/>
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