

This guidebook is designed for teachers, parents, counselors, and caregivers to teach mindfulness to young children (ages 5–11) in simple and easy ways.

The curriculum includes the following:

- Background on mindfulness supported by current empirically based literature
- Comprehensive lesson plans for 5- to 11-year-olds that can be adapted for younger children or teens
- More than 40 activities written in an easy-to-understand format
- Meditation scripts to cultivate awareness of the breath, loving-kindness, body scans, and more

NOTE: The training and activities in this guidebook are secular and not intended to promote any spiritual or religious beliefs.

THE VOWELS OF MINDFULNESS



“Between stimulus and response is a space. In that space you have the power to choose your response.”

THOUGHTS

VIKTOR FRANKL

Let's say this is anger.
Hold up one finger.

And this is our reaction.
Hold up one finger from the opposite
hand right next to the anger finger.

Without mindfulness,
these two fingers (my anger and my action)
are right next to each other.

Where there is mindfulness,
it comes between these two fingers
and pushes them apart so that the action
is not close to the anger.

Mindfulness helps create a space between a strong emotion and our action.
Mindfulness creates that space so we can make a different decision.

Introduction

Say that the fourth vowel is O: Observe.

LESSON BODY

O is for Observe

Every day, we have thousands of thoughts. Many of them are the same thought over and over. Of those repetitive thoughts, the majority are often negative. The strong, negative thoughts tend to stick in our minds more than the positive thoughts.

Psychologist Rick Hanson states that “the brain is like Velcro for negative experiences, but Teflon for positive ones” (Hanson 2018). Velcro is sticky, and Teflon—like in a frying pan—is slick. The good thoughts slide by (Teflon), and the negative ones stick in our heads (Velcro). There is actually an evolutionary reason for this: negative events (such as an attack by a wildcat) need to be paid


much more attention to than positive events in order to help us survive. However, in the modern world, most of the time kids are not facing life-threatening events.

Most people do not realize that the mind can actually tell us some wonderful stories; it is a storytelling machine. Unfortunately, the story is often not a great one, often full of negativity and judgments. Why does this happen? It is simple—it all has to do with our brain's survival instinct.

In the past, the amygdala and survival parts of the brain (remember Lesson 3) were busy helping us survive by protecting us from predators and finding food and shelter. Real threats. These days, most of us are so lucky to live great lives where we have all our basic needs met and much more. What that means is our minds get busy worrying about other stuff.


For example, if someone was mean to you once, and it caused a reaction in your mind or body, the chances are that same thought and emotion will repeat for you for a long time and possibly throughout your life. The mind thinks there is a threat. However, this time the threat is more emotional and psychological rather than based on life or death. The brain sets in motion to release all the necessary chemicals you may need to fight, flight, or freeze (APA 2018; McCorry 2007).

T H E V O W E L S O F M I N D F U L N E S S

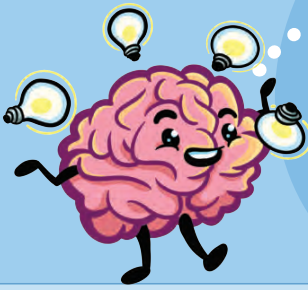


THOUGHTS


Imagine your sibling keeps bothering you, and you want them to stop. Instead of reacting by yelling at them, take a breath, and allow some space so you won't say something you might regret.




THOUGHTS



Here is another idea to help you think about mindfulness. I hope it can work for you to be mindful of your responses in difficult situations.





Hold your index finger close to the second finger. Use mindfulness and open the two fingers to make space. You just created the peace sign.

S.T.O.P. = Stop, Take a breath, Observe your thought, Proceed.

ACTIVITY: Firefly catch, finger breathing, count to 10—count each breath for one minute.

Vowels of Mindfulness

Vowels of Mindfulness • Can you find all the words?

Z M I N D F U L N E S S I S S
 N P R A N C H O R W O R D S E
 S M E L L E M V N C E A S M I
 P T R Y R C H E R T A N G I N
 O E X P E R I E N C E K E L V
 S I V I L G R A T I T U D E E
 T O E B A L A N C E O N T T S
 U B L O X P N A T U U F A H T
 R S A D I N G N A L C E T O I
 E E F Y B B R E A T H E T U G
 E R O S T A S T E E A L E G A
 F V C C S A T N S E E I N H T
 E E U A R W L R I K I N T T E
 N I S N X A Y E N I K G I S C
 D U N D E R S T A N D S O R T
 T E E R X E T E R D I T N R E

mindfulness
 gratitude
 body scan
 see
 taste
 touch

smell
 smile
 breathe
 love
 attention
 experience

investigate
 observe
 understand
 posture
 balance
 relax

kind
 anchor words
 thoughts
 feelings
 focus
 aware



See if you can notice what your body feels like right now.

Do you ever feel tense or notice tight muscles when you are annoyed?

Does your heart beat fast or stomach feel squishy before you take a test?

If you notice these sensations, you can investigate them further.

How can you make your body calm and relaxed?



Try the body scan at night

to help you calm down or sleep.

I is for Investigate

Are there any physical sensations that you can feel right now?

We call this the “physical sensations” in the body. What does the physical body feel like when you are nervous, excited, tired, happy, or having a strong emotion?

ACTIVITY: Trip around the body/body scan, slow-motion movement, balance—Tree Posture, squeeze and relax.