

Mindfulness Activities

Mindfulness is the state of being aware and present in a moment. In the current day, it is quite common to lose track of yourself, and the moment, due to the frenzy around you. Mindfulness exercises allow you to center yourself and reengage with the world. Often, in school, students can find it hard to focus or can be impacted by events around them. You can use these exercises to bring students back to the moment.

“Twist & Shout” – Have each student take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Then, have them write down the words Twist, Shout, Baby and Shake. The teacher plays the first minute of the song “Twist & Shout” by the Beatles. As they listen have them tally how many times each of these four words are said.

The Name Game – Sit or stand in a circle as a class. The first person will say the name of a famous person (e.g., Michael Jordan). The next person will say a name that starts with the first letter of the previous last name (e.g., J - Jennifer Lopez). If both the last and first name start with the same letter (e.g., Janet Jackson) the circle reverses direction.

I Am Poem – Print out the attached poem and provide a copy to each student. Have them fill in the blanks with what they feel about themselves, in a positive light. <https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/Education/learning-resources/lessons-activities/self-portraits/i-am-poem.pdf>

Color Mandalas – Print out several types of mandalas for students and provide colored pencils or markers. Allow them to spend some time, either alone or in pairs, to color. Go to this website to learn more about what is mandala is, and how to use it: <https://100mandalas.com/what-is-a-mandala/>.

Gratitude Jar – At the beginning of the year, help students create their own gratitude jars. Once complete, have students write down gratitude statements on slips of paper to add to their own jar. This can be done at any point during the day,

and however often you want it to. The student can take home the jar or look at it whenever needed.

Smart Letters – Write nine letters on a board or hand out a sheet with them to students. Students will then try and make as many words as they can from these letters.

Mindful Fishbowl – Played like charades. Have students write on slips of paper words/actions related to what they are grateful for, what makes them feel peaceful, etc. Place the papers in a bowl and split the students into two teams. A player on each team acts out as many slips of paper as they can in one minute for their own team to guess. Each team can keep the slips of paper they guess right, and the team with the most slips of paper at the end wins.

Initials – Students get into groups of four to five people. One person will begin and think of anything from the name of a famous person to a common catch phrase. They will then let the group know the initials of what they are thinking of. For example, a tennis ball would be “TB.” The group will then begin to ask questions, in a yes/no format, to narrow down options and hopefully guess the initials.

5-4-3-2-1 – This five-step exercise can help students focus on the present and observe the world around them. Have students either think or write down five things they can see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste.

Mindfulness Debriefing Guide

Overview

Use this guide of questions after having students engage in a mindful activity. Choose the questions that best reflect the activity’s goal and allow students to dive deeper into it. It is ok if not everyone speaks, and this should be a calming conversation. If students do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, suggest that they write them down for themselves.

Debriefing Questions

1. What did you experience during this activity?
2. What thoughts did you have? Did you catch yourself getting caught up in them?
3. If your mind wandered, what did you do to bring your attention back to the present moment?
4. What physical sensations did you notice before, during and after the mindful activity?
5. What emotions came up during the activity? What did they look like?
6. Check in with yourself, how do you feel now compared to before the activity?
7. What was most beneficial to you about this activity? How can you take this and apply it to your life?
8. Do you think you could use this mindfulness activity out of the classroom? In what ways might it be helpful?
9. What are some ways you might incorporate this activity, or activities such as these in your daily life? What may prevent you from putting them into action?
10. Name a way that you can take care of yourself today. What will you do? What will it look like?

Mindfulness Activities

Simon Says – Select one individual to go to the front of the classroom, either a student or yourself. Instruct that they must do every movement the leader does, but they have to say “Simon says...” before the instruction. If not, then they should remain still. Try and play with multiple leaders!

Pinwheel Breathing – As a teacher, provide each student with a pinwheel. First, have them focus on taking long, deep breaths to move the pinwheel. Then have them take short, quick breaths to move the pinwheel. Finally have them breathe normally into the pinwheel. Ask students how they felt after each exercise.

Golden Moment – Instruct students to either sit or lay comfortably, and if they are comfortable, shut their eyes. Ring a bell, tuning fork, or a video/app version. Asks students to raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound or ringing.

Color Hunt – Walking and observing is a great mindfulness skill. This activity engages these aspects and adds a twist of fun. Have students choose any color they want and ask them to walk around and write down everything they see of that color. This can be done indoors or outdoors.

Finger Labyrinths – These maze puzzles are a lot of fun. Search up finger labyrinths and find one that is the right level for your students. Print them out and provide writing utensils for students to work on them.

iSPY – Gather students together and walk outside as a class. Place students into groups of two, three or four. Each student will choose an object, and state “iSpy...”. The other group members will try to guess what they see. Once one person’s object is found, the next group member can go.

Bubble Balloons – Blow up multiple balloons for the class and have them gather in an open space. Have the class play “don’t –touch –the –floor” with the balloons, focusing on gentle movements and touches to the balloons.

Fortune Wheel Yoga – Create a fortune wheel either online or in the classroom. Assign a different yoga pose or movement to each piece. Pick a student to come to the front of the room and spin the wheel. The class will then practice that yoga pose or skill together. This can be done multiple times or just once.

Dance Party – Dancing is a terrific way to engage with one’s body and listening skills. As a teacher, pick a song, any song that is appropriate, but it must be an instructional dance song. For example, the Cha Cha Slide or The Chicken Dance. Put the song on, along with a video if you would like, and have students dance along with it.

Worry Monsters – Have students create their own worry monster. The idea is that the monster will eat any worries that they have. Provide students with a box, scissors and any other craft supplies they would like. The only requirement is that the monster has a cut-out mouth that can eat all their worries if they put them in.

Mindful Counting – Have students close their eyes, and independently count backwards from 100. To alter this activity, you can have students count backwards by twos or sevens, etc.

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