

Mindfulness Exercises for the Classroom
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These mindfulness practices are a combination of inspiration from other mindfulness authors and my own inspiration from years of teaching mindfulness exercises to students. I have attempted my best to give credit to the source after years of implementing these exercises.

Mindful Listening

This mindful listening exercise with a singing bowl, chime, or bells allows us to focus our minds on the sensation of sound. It is a form of attention training and a simple way to build our mindfulness muscle. Mindful listening can be built into your classroom routine as a way to obtain students' attention and communicate that class time is beginning. It can be used as a way to communicate "quiet mouths and eyes on me." It can represent the transition between unstructured class time where students are socializing to structured class time where students are ready to listen and learn. Additionally, mindful listening can be a simple and effective way to refocus the class when students appear distracted.

Prep and Materials:

All that is required is a singing bowl, chime, or bells. Prep students before their first mindful listening practice on the behavior expectations. For example, "Every time you hear me invite the sound from this singing bowl, immediately turn your body to face me and practice mindful silence with your body and mouth. Practicing mindful silence by not distracting others ensures that we can all receive the benefits of this mindfulness exercise. Close your eyes and listen to the sound of the tone. When you no longer hear the tone, open your eyes and quietly look at me for further instruction." It can also be fun to invite a different student each day or week to lead the class through the mindful listening exercise! This is a wonderful way to engage students with their mindfulness practice!

Script:

Let's start the day with a mindful listening exercise to communicate to our minds that it is time to learn. You're only instruction is to sit quietly and listen to the sound of the singing bowl/chime/bells. Let's get our bodies really comfortable and ready to receive the sound by placing our feet flat on the floor and growing our spines tall to the sky. Rest your hands comfortably in your lap or on the desk. Allow your eyes to close so you can fully attend to the sensation of sound. When I invite the sound, simply notice with your attention when the sound begins and what the quality of the tone sounds like. I will invite the sound several times. Notice if you can pick up on any little changes within the quality of the sound from moment to moment. When the sound of the tone ends, open your eyes and look at me staying silent. Notice what the silence sounds like. Explore with your attention if you hear complete silence or other noises like the air conditioning or students out in the hallway.
(Ring the bell 5-10 times)

Reference: Inspired from A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions.

Body Scan

The body scan mindfulness practice allows us to calm our minds and relax our bodies. This is a beneficial practice to implement with students before stressful school experiences such as tests or presentations. In the body scan practice, you will systematically guide students to direct their attention to different regions of the body. When we do this, we can notice where we are feeling tense/anxious/restless and how that tension/anxiousness/restless can dissipate simply by holding our attention on the area of the tension/anxiousness/restlessness. Additionally, when we purposefully direct our attention to some sensory experience (in this case with the body scan, somatic sensations), our anxious and distracted minds tend to settle. We can think clearer and feel more balanced.

Prep:

The body scan can be practiced with students sitting or lying down. Consider what will work best for your classroom and your students. If you direct students to lie down on the floor, it is important to give students an opportunity to sit in chairs as an alternative. Not everyone will feel comfortable lying down on the floor, and it could be triggering for individuals who have experienced trauma in the past. Consider dimming the lights and/or softly playing relaxing music in the background. Communicate behavioral expectations prior to beginning the exercise such as practicing mindful silence, keeping hands and feet to self, being respectful of others' mindfulness experience by avoiding distracting behaviors, etc. Let students know that you will be asking questions throughout the practice. Instruct them to think about the answer in their minds and not share out loud. If time allows, let them know they will have an opportunity to share their experience after the exercise is complete. Perhaps you could give students an opportunity to journal about their experience. However, if there are students that have an aversion to writing, this could interfere with them receiving the benefits of the body scan practice.

Script:

Let's invite a little calmness to our bodies and clarity to our minds with this body scan mindfulness practice. For the next 5 minutes (or alternate length of time), I will guide you through a body scan mindfulness practice. The only direction is to focus your attention on the region of your body that I am guiding you to. If your mind becomes distracted or drifts off, that is ok. That is what our minds do. When you notice this has happened, focus your attention back on my instructions. We will begin by finding a comfortable seated position. Try scooting to the front of your chair, placing your feet flat on the floor, and growing your spine tall towards the sky. If this is not comfortable for you, find any comfortable way to sit. Find a comfortable position for your hands by placing them in your lap or resting them on the desk. (Alternate phrasing if guiding students from a lying down position: *Let's begin by finding a comfortable lying down position on our backs. Explore for a moment whether it feels better to lay your legs flat on the ground or to bend your knees while placing your feet flat on the floor. Find a comfortable position for your arms by either resting them alongside your body, perhaps with your palms facing up, or by placing your hands on your belly.*) Allow your eyes to close if you feel comfortable, or simply allow your eyes to relax.

Start to become aware of your breath flowing in and out of your body. Notice when you are breathing in, and notice when you are breathing out. Find where you feel the movement of the breath most in your body. You may feel it most in your belly filling full of air like a balloon on the inhale and deflating on the exhale, you may feel it most in your lungs moving out on the inhale and falling back on the exhale, or you may feel the breath most in the nostrils with the cool air flowing in on the inhale and the warm air flowing out on the exhale. (Spend about 30 seconds on the breath for a 5 minute body scan.)

Guide your attention up from the breath to the top of your head. Simply becoming aware of where the top of your head is located within your body. Observe what you feel. Perhaps you feel tingling, temperature, or lightness. Whatever sensations are arising for you right now is ok. There is no wrong way to feel during the body scan. Now, bring your attention to your forehead. Notice what you feel. Do you sense looseness or relaxed sensations or do you feel any tightness, tension, or aches? If you feel tension, see what happens as you just breathe and rest your attention on your forehead? (Pause for 10 seconds). Did your tension relax? If not, that's ok too. Just becoming aware that the tension is there is beneficial for your health. Maybe that is your body telling you, you need to drink more water or get more sleep at night. Now direct your attention to your eyes. Just notice how your eyes feel. (Pause for 5 seconds) Now, shift your attention to your cheeks exploring what sensations are arising here. Can you sense temperature? (Pause for 5 seconds) Bring your focus to your nose. Feel the air flowing in and out of the nostrils as your breath for a moment. (Pause for 5 seconds) Direct your attention to your lips for a moment (Pause for 5 seconds), and then your chin. (Pause for 5 seconds) Rest your awareness on your jaw. What do you notice about how your jaw feels? Does your jaw feel clenched, tense, or tight? If so, just breathe and notice what happens to your jaw. (Pause for about 10 seconds). Does your jaw feel more relaxed? Whatever you are experiencing is perfectly ok.

Guide your attention to your neck. Breathe and investigate what feelings you notice there. (Pause for 5 seconds) Now move your focus to your shoulders (Pause for 5 seconds), your upper arms (Pause for 5 seconds), your elbows (Pause for 5 seconds), your lower arms (Pause for 5 seconds), and now your hands. Investigate what sensations you feel on your palms. Are you

feeling any tingling, temperature, or moisture? Or do you feel something else? (Pause for 10 seconds. Bring your attention around to the backs of the hands. Notice the knuckles and the finger nails. (Pause for 5 seconds) Glide your attention back up your arms and shoulders, around your neck, and into your back. What do you notice about the way your back feels? Just breathe and observe. (Pause for 10 seconds) Shift your attention to your heart. How does your heart feel? Can you feel your heartbeat? If not, that's ok too. (Pause for 5 seconds) Direct your awareness to your lungs. Notice how your lungs and ribs move with the breath. (Pause for 5 seconds) Now, rest your attention on your belly. Feel how the belly moves with the breath. (Pause for 5 seconds). Now bring your attention to your upper legs. Can you feel the backs of your thighs resting on the chair/floor? (Pause for 5 seconds). Now rest your attention on your knees for a moment. Notice the kneecaps, the sides of the knees, the backs of the knees. (Pause for 5 seconds) Bring your attention to your lower legs. (Pause for 5 seconds) Settle your attention on your feet. What sensations do you feel in this moment? Can you feel your socks and shoes around your feet? Can you feel your feet/heels resting against the ground? (Pause for 5 seconds) Now, with a big inhale, expand your attention to include your entire body. Simply notice how your entire body feels in this one moment. Start to become aware of your rhythm of breath again watching inhalation turn to exhalation and exhalation turn to inhalation. (Instruct students to attend to the breather the remainder of the 5 minutes). Now, gently open your eyes and bring a little movement to your body. Perhaps circling your wrists and ankles or wiggling your fingers and toes or taking a fully body stretch with arms reached up overhead.

Reference: Inspired by Jon Kabat-Zinn in Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness.

Rock breathing

Rock breathing is a mindfulness practices that promotes diaphragmatic (belly) breathing. When we breathe in this way, our minds become clearer, our attention increases, and our central nervous system relaxes, which results in feeling less anxious, stressed, and restless. We shift from sympathetic to parasympathetic nervous system functioning, which allows our brains to receive information and learn. When we are in a state of high sympathetic arousal (even when we are not in life threatening situations), the body and brain is focused on survival diminishing our ability to learn. This is why diaphragmatic breathing is so important. With this rock breathing exercises, students lie down on the floor and place a rock on their belly. Students fill their bellies full of air on the inhale raising the rock to the sky and watch the rock return towards their spines and earth on the exhale. The rock serves as an anchor to focus attention and connect to the breath. Rock breathing can also be completed sitting in a chair if needed. In this scenario, students would hold the rock against their belly with their hand and focus on filling their bellies full of air on the inhale pushing the rock towards the wall in front of them and then feeling the rock return towards their spines on the exhale.

Prep and Materials:

One rock for each student is all that is required for rock breathing. You may wish to store the rocks in a basket or a jar. Any type of rock will work! Smooth river rocks work well. You could even allow each student to paint a river stone that they keep with them for the exercise. (If you do this, have some extras rocks available for students who misplace or forget them). Communicate the behavior expectations before passing out the rocks. For example, "Hold the rock in your hand as I pass them out. Keep the rock in your hand and avoid tossing it in the air or banging the rock against other objects. Practice mindful silence throughout this mindfulness practice by not talking or distracting others with your body. This will allow everyone to have a chance to experience the benefits of rock breathing." You may wish to dim the lights and softly play relaxing ambient music. Have students get in the posture they will complete the exercise in (lying down or sitting up) before you pass out the rocks. If you direct students to lie down on the floor, it is important to give students an opportunity to sit up as an alternative. Not everyone will feel comfortable lying down on the floor, and it could be triggering for students who have experienced trauma in the past.

Script:

We are going to spend 5 minutes (or alternate period of time) rock breathing. Rock breathing allows our bodies to receive all the oxygen we need as we intentionally take belly breaths. Place the rock on your belly and rest one hand on top of the rock. Allow your other arm to rest comfortably on the floor. Notice how the surface of the rock feels. Explore the texture and

temperature of the rock. As you breathe in, fill your belly full of air like a balloon and feel the rock lift up towards the sky. As you breathe out, feel the air flow out of your belly like a balloon deflating and feel the rock return towards your spine and the earth. Let's try a few deep breaths where I will count for you. We will breathe in for two counts and out for four counts. Try your best to follow along with me. It's ok if you are not yet able to extend the breath like this. It can take some practice. Whatever your experience, let's keep open minds and explore the breath with curiosity. Let's begin. Breathe in for one...two and out for one...two...three...four. Breathe in for one...two and out for one...two...three...four. Breathe in for one...two and out for one...two...three...four. *(Repeat approximately 5 to 10 times)* Now allow for your natural rhythm of breath to return. Simply feel the rock move up towards the sky on the inhalation and fall back to the earth on the exhalation. You may want to watch the rock with your eyes or maybe you want to just feel the movement as you close your eyes. *(Allow students to practice rock breathing for the remainder of time left. It can be helpful to gently remind students of the instructors about every 30 seconds. When the exercise is complete, invite students to gently open their eyes and bring a little movement to their bodies.)*

Note: This script example was designed for students to lie down. Modify the language accordingly if you prefer to have students sitting up.

Reference: Inspired from A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions.

Color Breathing

The color breathing mindfulness practice combines diaphragmatic (belly) breathing with mental imagery. The added mental imagery gives the mind an anchor to focus on throughout the practice. Children who struggle to sit and breathe in more traditional mindfulness practices, often find this practice more engaging and accessible. In the color breathing practice, students are guided to practice belly breathing while visualizing breathing in a color on the in-breath and breathing out another color on the out-breath. Color breathing can be implemented when students are feeling anxious, fidgety, or distracted. It can be helpful to practice before stressful school experiences such as tests or presentations.

Prep:

This mindfulness practice can be engaged in either sitting or lying down. Consider what will work best for your class. You may wish to softly play relaxing music or dim the lights. Communicate the behavior expectations before you begin (ex. practicing mindful silence, keeping hands/feet to self, and staying in seat/place).

Script:

Let's take a brain break for a few minutes with color breathing. Let's find a comfortable seated position. Try placing your feet flat on the floor, scooting to the front of your chair, and lifting your spine to the sky. Find somewhere comfortable for your hands to rest. If sitting like this does not feel good, it is ok to sit another way that will help you find comfort. Allow your eyes to gently close, if you feel comfortable, or just allow your eyes to relax. Begin to direct your attention to your breath by noticing when you are breathing in and noticing when you are breathing out. Allow for your natural rhythm of breath for a few moments. Observe the in-breath turn to the out-breath and the out breath turn to the in breath over and over again. Notice the small, quiet pauses between the in-breath and the out-breath and the out-breath and the in-breath. If you find that your mind wanders off, simply notice that it has happened, and re-focus your attention back to your breath. This is how you grow your mindfulness muscle. *(Pause for about 15 seconds)* Now begin to practice belly breathing. As you breathe in, fill your belly full of our like a balloon, and as you breathe out, allow the air to flow out of your belly like the balloon in deflating. As you breathe in, pick a color and imagine yourself breathing that color in. And as you breathe out, pick another color and imagine yourself breathing it out into the space around you. Each time you breathe in, visualize yourself breathing in your in-breath color. And each time you breathe out, imagine yourself breathing out the out breath color. *(Give students about 20 seconds to practice this)* Now, let's practice deepening the breath a little more. I'll count as we breathe in for two counts and out for four counts. Just try your best. If this is a challenge for you, that's ok. It will get easier with practice. Continue to imagine breathing in and out your colors. Let's begin. Breathe in for one...two, and breathe out for one...two...three...four.

Breathe in for one...two, and out for one...two...three...four. Breathe in for one...two, and out for one...two...three...four. *(Guide students through this four about a minute)* **Now allow your breath to return to its natural rhythm. Notice how your body feels. Notice what your attention is like. Gently open your eyes and bring a little movement to your body like circling your wrists and ankles or reaching your arms overhead and taking a full body stretch.**

Mindful Movement/Yoga

Mindful movement or yoga is a great way to cultivate emotional balance, focus, and mental alertness among your students. Movement can help students better manage stress and decrease anxiety. Additionally, yoga offers many physiological benefits including increased blood flow, flexibility, and strength. Mindful movement/yoga can be utilized as a brain break throughout the day. It can be beneficial both when students appear lethargic and when students are highly energetic and fidgety. Yoga can help bring us back to balance regardless of what end of the energy spectrum we are on in the moment.

Prep:

There is an endless amount of possibilities on how you can lead mindful movement/yoga! Get creative with it, and have fun! Mindful movement/yoga can be practiced standing, sitting in a chair, or lying/sitting on the floor! It can be easily adapted to meet the needs of your classroom! If you are new to practicing mindful movement/yoga, keep the mindful movement/yoga simple. Use common sense when considering whether a yoga posture is safe or not for you to instruct. If you are unsure of whether a yoga posture is safe, avoid teaching it. Avoid any yoga pose where students bear weight on their heads and necks. Those types of poses should only be taught by a trained yoga instructor. If you desire to enhance mental alertness when students appear lethargic, try flowing through movement more quickly. If you want to promote calmness when students appear anxious or fidgety, try slowing down the movement.

In mindful movement, we are directing our attention to our bodies. When guiding students through the poses, emphasize placing one's attention on how it feels to move moment to moment. Moving purposefully and noticing how the somatic sensations of the body change each moment with movement is what makes the movement mindful. Communicate the behavioral expectations before beginning (i.e. practicing mindful silence, keeping hands/feet to self, not teasing/making fun of others). Do not force a student to participate. Give students who do not wish to participate an option to stay quietly seated while paying attention to their breath. Also, communicate to students that it is ok to skip a yoga pose that does not feel good for their bodies. Give students the option to rest in Mountain pose or a seated posture. Below is one short example of how to lead basic mindful movement in standing postures.

Script:

Let's take a brain break with some mindful movement by standing up and finding some space where we will not bump into anyone when stretching our arms out to the sides and in front of us. *(Ensure that students have enough space before beginning)* **We will begin in Mountain pose with our feet facing forward about hips width apart and our arms slightly away from our body with our palms turned forward. Grow your spine tall to the sky. Close your eyes for a moment and connect to your breath. Notice when you are breathing in and notice when you are breathing out.** *(Pause for about 10 seconds)* **As we practice mindful movement, focus your attention on how it feels to move your body moment to moment. Investigate what muscles you feel stretching and what feels good to your body. It is very important that you listen to your body. If something I am guiding you to do does not feel good for your body, you can skip it and quietly focus on your breath in Mountain pose. Bring your focus to how it feels for your feet to be connected to the earth below you. Open your eyes. On an inhale, raise your shoulders towards your ears, and on an exhale, lower your shoulders back down.** *(Repeat 2 more times)* **Now, roll your shoulders in circles going backwards.** *(Pause for about 10 seconds)* **Reverse the direction of the circles.** *(Pause for about 10 seconds)* **Allow your shoulders to rest in Mountain pose now. Close your eyes for a moment and notice where your attention is being drawn to within your body. Perhaps it is your shoulders, neck, or arms. Open your eyes, and on an inhale, flip your palms up and circle them up to the sky bringing palms to touch overhead, and on an exhale, turn your palms down while floating your arms back to your sides.** *(While saying this, demonstrate side sweeping your arms up to the sky bringing palms to touch overhead and then lowering your arms back by your sides. Flow through this movement for approximately 20 seconds)* **Now reach your arms up to the sky and grab your left wrist with your right hand. Take an inhale, and on an exhale, bend over to the right making a banana**

or crescent moon like shape with your body. *(In this side body stretch, both hips and shoulders should be facing forward)*
Remember to breathe. On an inhale, raise your arms back up to the sky grabbing your right hand with your left wrist, and on an exhale, bend over to the left making this same banana or crescent moon like shape. *(Spend about 5 seconds on each side)* On an inhale, reach your arms back up to the sky, and on an exhale, make cactus arms *(Making field goal post shaped arms where the arms are out the side with elbows bent at 90 degrees)*. On an inhale, reach the arms back up to the sky, and on an exhale, make cactus arms. One more time, as you inhale, reach your arms to the sky, and as you exhale, find cactus arms. Reach your arms back up to the sky as you inhale, and lower your arms back to your sides in Mountain pose as you exhale. Step your feet out so they are a little wider than hips width apart and bring your arms out to a “T”. Turn your right foot out to the right side wall and keep your left foot facing forward. Take an inhalation, and on an exhalation, bend your right knee as we find the Warrior II pose. Perhaps try looking over your right hand towards the right side wall. *(Look up this pose online for assistance if needed. In Warrior II, the knee should not bend past the toes. If this happens, that means one should step out a little farther with the front foot.)* As you inhale, straighten your right knee, turn your right foot back to the front wall, and turn your left foot to the left side wall. Inhale, and as you exhale, bend your left knee into Warrior II. Look over your left hand to the left side wall if that feels good for your neck. *(Spend about 10 seconds in each pose.)* On an inhale, straighten your left knee, turn your left foot forward, and step your feet closer together into Mountain pose again. Now as you inhale, move your arms out to a “T” and bring the sole of your right foot to the inside of your left leg for the Tree pose. You can explore with resting the ball of your right foot on the ground, placing it on your lower left leg, or resting the right foot on the inner thigh. Do not place your foot against the side of your knee to keep your knee safe. Maybe you try extending your arms to the sky. Don’t worry if you are wobbling around. However you are experiencing the Tree pose is great! Focusing your eyes on a fixed point ahead of you can help with balance. Also, remember to breathe! On your next exhale, bring your right foot to the ground and re-center yourself for a moment by reconnecting to the breath. Now, as you breathe in, bring your left leg into the Tree pose. *(Allow for about 10- 20 seconds in each pose.)* Let’s close our mindful movement practice with spending a few moments with our breath as we stand in Mountain pose. Feeling the in breath turn to the out breath and the out breath turn to the in breath.

Mindful Eating

Mindful eating is the practice of paying attention to the sensory experience of eating. It allows us to focus our mind on the present moment and is a great exercise to implement with students when transitioning between classroom activities, when students appear uninterested in the academic topic, or when students seem lethargic. In mindful eating, you will systematically guide students through each of the senses while eating.

Prep and Materials:

All you need is a bite of some type of food. Raisins or other dried fruits are traditionally utilized in mindfulness programs because the delightful and simple sweetness of these foods often go unnoticed when compared to more decadent foods like chocolate and candy which are so readily available to us. When we eat a raisin mindfully and more slowly, we can notice qualities of the raisin that we are typically unaware of when eating quickly with distracted minds. However, any food will work such as a cracker or piece of chocolate. If students have snacks with them, you could guide them through one bite of their snack. Let students know that you will be asking questions throughout the mindful eating practice. Instruct them to answer in their minds and not out loud. If time allows, offer students an opportunity to share their experience and what they noticed. **Caution: Ensure that students are not allergic to any food provided for mindful eating.**

Script

Let’s put on our mindful scientist hats and investigate this raisin as we practice mindful eating. Just like a scientist, you must use the method of observation through your five senses to explore the qualities of this raisin. I’m going to give you each a raisin now. Do not begin eating it until I instruct you to. Simply hold it in your hand and wait for my directions. *(Pass out food item. If the food item has a wrapper, direct students to withhold from opening it until you give them the instruction.)*

Pretend like you are an alien from outer space, and you have no concept of what a raisin is or what it tastes like. Try to let go of your thoughts about the raisin tasting good or bad. When thinking about the raisin tasting good or bad, you are focusing on your past experiences. Your past experiences can color or shape your present experience like you are looking through tinted glasses. So just for these next few minutes, try to experience the raisin like you have never experienced one before.

Begin by holding the raisin on one of your palms. Let's begin with the sense of sight. With your eyes, take in the image of the raisin. What shape do you see? Is it round or more oval? Is the shape symmetrical or asymmetrical? What color is the raisin? Is the color uniform throughout the raisin? Can you see light reflecting off of any part of the raisin? What does texture of the raisin look like? Is it smooth or rough? Now, let's explore the sense of touch with our attention. What is the weight of the raisin? Is it heavy or light? What is the temperature? Is it cold, warm, or neutral? What does the texture of the raisin feel like? Does it feel smooth or rough? Perhaps, rub the raisin between your thumb and pointer finger and notice what you feel. Now, let's shift to the sense of hearing. Hold the raisin against one ear? Do you hear anything? You might not. Try tapping a finger on the raisin or rubbing it between your fingers and notice if you sense any sound. Now, let's switch to the sense of smell. Hold the raisin in front of your nose and observe the scent. What do you smell? Does it smell sweet or savory? Do you notice any smell at all? Now, let's direct our attention to the sense of taste. Place the raisin in your mouth, and see if you can pause and observe the taste for a moment without taking a bite. What do you notice? Now, take just one bite. What do you notice? Now, slowly take one bite at a time bringing your attention to what you taste and feel. When it is time to swallow your raisin, note in your mind that you are choosing to swallow the raisin now so it's done mindfully and intentionally.

Note: Raisin is used as an example. If mindful eating is completed with another food, interchange raisin with the food item you are using. You may want to have a second food item available to allow students to go through the exercise on their own after.

Reference: Inspired from A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions.

Tips for Teaching Mindfulness to Students

- Communicate clear expectations and boundaries on behavior before beginning a mindfulness practice. Try communicating positive expectations and boundaries (i.e. communicate what you want students to do as opposed to what you do not want them to do). Here are a few suggestions:
 - Find a comfortable sitting position (or laying down if appropriate)
 - Stay in your seat
 - Keep your hands and feet to self
 - Practice mindful silence which means not making noise with your mouth or body
 - Be a mindful listener
 - Be mindful and respectful of others' experience
- We live in a very fast paced, driven, and hurried society. Our society sends many messages about self-worth being tied to accomplishments, and this can be quite harmful to one's emotional well-being. Additionally, our youth are overstimulated with technology. So the practice of mindfulness, the practice just being, many feel very uncomfortable to students at first. Cultivate patience and compassion as students are learning. Do not expect perfection, because there is really no such thing as perfection with a mindfulness practice.
- Allow students to know that however they are practicing mindfulness is right (as long as they are following the behavioral expectations and staying safe). Students are so used to being graded on completing work right or wrong. When students are reassured that there is no wrong way to practice mindfulness and that whatever they are doing is right (again, as long as they are following the behavior expectations), they are more receptive to the practices. These practices can be particularly beneficial to students who struggle academically or behaviorally and are used to receiving negative feedback about their performance. It can be refreshing to know that however they are being in the mindfulness practices, is right.
- Because the mindfulness practices may be novel and unfamiliar, some students may find them to be silly or feel concerned that they look funny. Children are typically very concerned with not looking different and fitting in at this age. It can be

helpful to normalize this experience. For example, “I know this may look or feel kind of silly, and that can be a very normal experience when mindfulness is new to you. But we can all be silly together. Sometimes when something is new, it can feel uncomfortable at first, but once you become familiar with it, it starts to feel normal. You might even begin to enjoy it. Let’s make an agreement to respect everyone’s feelings in here and not make fun of anyone. Try giving mindfulness a chance, and I bet you will find that it’s not silly at all! Mindfulness can help you focus your attention better, feel less stressed, and feel happier.” When mindfulness is new, give students a chance to giggle and let their nervous or uncomfortable laughter out.

- Never force a child to participate in an exercise. Give students an alternative option like sitting quietly in their chair. In yoga, it is very important to encourage students to listen to their bodies on what poses are ok and not ok for their bodies. Let them know it is ok to skip poses that do not feel good. We do not always know when a child is not feeling well or experiencing an injury.
- Use common sense when considering whether a yoga posture is safe or not for you to instruct. If you are unsure of whether a yoga posture is safe, avoid teaching it. Avoid any yoga pose where students bear weight on their heads and necks. Those types of poses should only be taught by a trained yoga instructor.
- If you direct students to lie down on the floor in a mindfulness exercise, it’s important to give students an opportunity to sit in chairs as well. Not everyone will feel comfortable lying down on the floor, and it could be triggering for individuals who have experienced trauma in the past.
- Only implement what you feel comfortable teaching. Use common sense. Always stay within your realm of competency.