



K-5 Classroom Teacher Mindfulness Manual

K-5 Classroom Teacher: Mindfulness Manual

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I. A Collaborative Approach

Mindfulness programs help students to develop self-awareness and pro-social, positive mind states like empathy, kindness, generosity and gratitude. The revolutionary approach of mindfulness is that these qualities are not simply innate traits, but are skills that can be actively fostered and strengthened through mental training. Research suggests that the application of mindfulness by students may improve academic achievement, mental health, and inter- and intra-personal relationships.¹

We see this program as a partnership between you, your students, and your mindfulness instructor. Your instructor has specific training to teach mindfulness to children, yet your support and encouragement is what will make this program a success. Our goal is to provide you and your students with enough tools and understanding of mindfulness that you can continue to incorporate mindfulness in your daily curriculum, should you choose.

¹ [http://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/
http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603/full](http://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603/full)

The Classroom Teacher's Role

Your students look to you for guidance on how to respond to their surroundings, so you can greatly influence the success of the mindfulness program. If you are excited and involved in mindfulness, they will follow suit. If you are disinterested or ambivalent, they will reflect this as well.

It might be tempting to use the 15 minute lessons for other work, like grading papers or preparing a lesson. Our number one request is that you join us during mindfulness, and participate in each lesson along with the students. This sets a positive example for your class, and you'll also begin to reap the benefits of the training yourself. Many teachers report reduced stress, better focus, and improved job satisfaction.

- Please have your students ready for mindfulness at the scheduled time.
- Please join us and participate in the lessons, which sets a positive example.

These two requests allow your class to have the full fifteen minutes, and will show the students that you value mindfulness.

Student Behavior and Discipline

We ask that classroom teachers allow the mindfulness instructor to handle student behavior issues. This sends a clear message to the students that the instructor is empowered to lead the class, and allows the instructor a chance to use whatever is happening in the room as potential material for teaching mindfulness.

Of course, there are times when we may need your support in managing challenging classroom behavior. In general, after the mindfulness instructor has made two interventions with a student who is unable to settle down, we welcome any assistance you might be able to offer. This may look like a quiet word or two to the student, asking the student to come sit near you, or other strategies you have found effective with them. If a particular student is having a hard time, and is intentionally or unintentionally making it difficult for others to focus, please feel free to sit next to them and encourage their attention and participation.

Feedback

This program is meant to support both you and your class. In order to make it as effective as possible, we welcome and appreciate your feedback any time throughout the program. If something is not going well in your class, or if you have ideas about how to improve something, please let us know sooner than later. If there are things we can adjust to make the class better, we want to know as soon as possible.

Should you have any questions about mindfulness during our course, or even after the program ends, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We want to support you in your efforts to use mindfulness in your classroom and in your life.

II. Using Mindfulness Throughout the Day

You and your students will see the most benefits from mindfulness training if you practice a little bit every day. There are many simple ways to incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine without taking too much time or breaking the flow of your normal activities, from using the bell during transitions to short practices.

We encourage you to start using mindfulness with your students whenever you feel comfortable and confident. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

A Specific Quality

Mindfulness is meant to convey a very specific quality. Because it is a tool that students can utilize throughout their life, it's important that the connotation remain accurate.

- Mindfulness, when applied appropriately, includes the following qualities:
 - Present-moment awareness
 - Non-judgment or acceptance
 - Stillness (in heart and mind; the body may be moving)
- Mindfulness should be used to lovingly encourage awareness.
- Mindfulness is not a disciplinary tool.
 - Although it may be tempting, never use mindfulness to demand a certain behavior. It inherently includes the quality of acceptance.
- Avoid using the mindfulness vocabulary or practicing mindfulness with irritation, frustration or impatience.

- You could say to your students, “Wow, I am really feeling frustrated with the class right now. I think we should all take a minute to practice mindfulness.” This will ensure that your students don’t view it as another disciplinary tool.

Using the Bell

Set up the use of the bell to be something very specific. When you start using your classroom’s mindfulness bell, talk about its purpose. Here are some examples:

“The sound of the bell reminds us to be in the moment, to fully experience what’s happening right now. When you hear the bell, it tells us to stop whatever we’re doing; talking, writing, reading, walking, running, laughing, etc. Whatever we’re doing, we are just going to instantly stop, become still and relaxed in whatever posture we’re in, close our eyes and breathe mindfully for 15 seconds. Sometimes, we will go right back to whatever we were doing. Sometimes, I might give some instructions for transition. Sometimes, we will decide to do a little more. Let’s practice.”

Example: *“Wow! We’re really riled up and we need to transition to math/art/reading, etc. Maybe some mindfulness will help.”* (Practice with the bell and/or mindful breathing)

“Notice How You Feel Right Now”

You can use this suggestion throughout the day. You don’t need to take any time to set it up or reflect. Just suggest it whenever it comes to mind.

- *“Okay, we’re about to take a test so just notice how you feel.”*
- *“We’re done with our test. Just notice how you feel right now.”*
- *“We’re about to go to recess. Before we line up, notice how you’re feeling right now.”*
- *“There’s a lot of activity in the classroom right now. Just notice how that feels.”*

Ideas for Daily Follow-Ups

We encourage you to practice mindfulness on the days we are not there right from the beginning. Remember, the more often your class practices, the more benefits they will experience. Here are some tips that will help your class accomplish this.

- **Practice every day!** The sooner you begin integrating the mindfulness exercises into your daily classroom routine, the quicker it will sink in for the students and become a part of the school culture. Even if you take just 30 seconds or a minute, it will create some continuity.
- **Choose a time for Mindfulness.** We are creatures of habit! Pick a time of day and put mindfulness on your schedule (perhaps the same time your mindfulness teacher comes). Try to always practice mindfulness at the same time(s). Many teachers find after recess or after lunch important and helpful times for the class to settle down with some mindfulness.
- **Get the students involved.** The best way to make sure you remember to do mindfulness is to enlist the assistance of your students! Use the sample "schedule" at the end of this manual to create a rotation for who gets to ring the mindfulness bell. If you do it at the same time every day, pretty soon you won't have to remember. *Whoever's turn it is will surely remind you!*
- **Use Simple Scripts.** You can use any of the sample scripts / instructions at the end of this manual for your daily mindfulness lesson. These lessons can be done in just one or two minutes, taking more time if you like.
- **Stay simple.** Although we give a list of potential ways to follow up, it's really fine to do the same thing every day. A simple lesson to repeat daily is one minute of mindful listening and one minute of mindful breathing.
- **Share. Talk about Mindfulness.** Because students respond well when we relay our own experience, you can share with the students if, how and when you are using mindfulness in your life. If you share a recent story of when you were overcome with emotion or used mindfulness to help you deal with an emotion, they can hear how it is applied. Your vulnerability can elicit from them the attempt to apply mindfulness to a similar situation.

III. Additional Resources

This section contains additional resources to support your integration of mindfulness in the classroom. Feel free to talk to your instructor if you have questions.

Journals

Because writing and reflection reinforces learning, we ask that you dedicate five minutes to journal writing/drawing immediately following each 15-minute mindfulness lesson. Often, the mindfulness teacher will suggest something to write about. If not, below is a list of prompts you can use. (Your students may have ideas too!) You can even journal after short, simple mindfulness lessons on days that your instructor is not there.

K-1st Grade

Kindergarten and first graders may draw instead. Encourage them to draw something they learned about that day. Drawing themselves and how they felt is a good direction, regardless of the lesson. "Draw a picture of you listening to the bell." "Draw a picture of your face feeling...happy, excited, angry, sad, silly." This helps them recognize that mindfulness is within themselves rather than something external.

Suggested Journal Prompts

- How did you feel during mindfulness practice today?
- What do you enjoy most about mindfulness practice? What do you enjoy least?
- Does your body feel different when you practice mindfulness? How?
- To whom did you send kind thoughts and why?
- When do you think that mindfulness can help you in your life? Can you identify the last time that mindfulness could have helped you, if you had known about or remembered it?
- Do you think you could practice mindfulness for a few minutes every day? What time of day would work best for you?
- If you were to choose the best place for you to practice mindfulness outside of the classroom, where would that be?
- Do you think mindfulness could make a difference to your class if everyone did it every day? Do you think the world would be different if everyone practiced mindfulness? How?
- Have there been any changes in your life since you began practicing mindfulness?

- Where is it easiest for you to feel your breath?
- Do you have any friends or family that you would want to teach mindfulness to?
- Is being able to focus important? If so, why?
- Is it hard for you to focus on your breath? If so, what are you thinking about? What are ways that might help you just focus on your breath?
- How does mindfulness affect the way you think about yourself? About others?
- Does mindfulness make you feel calm? If so, what does calm feel like? Do you need calm in your life?
- Who else in your life needs calm? Could you teach that person about mindfulness? Do you think he or she might enjoy it?
- Think of a time in your life when you feel anxious or stressed out. Could mindfulness help you in that situation? How?
- Could practicing mindfulness help you with your friends? If so, how?
- Does practicing mindfulness in class help you in other parts of your life? How?
- Do you think that mindfulness practice affects your teacher? How?
- Is practicing mindfulness hard to do? If so, what makes it hard? What could make it easier?
- What happens to your brain when you practice mindfulness?
- Describe a time when you have used mindfulness.
- Does practicing mindfulness get easier the more you do it? If so, how and why do you think so?

Classroom Bell Rotation

Attached is a sample Bell Rotation Schedule. Fill this out with all of the student's names in your class. If your students know it's their day to lead mindfulness, they will remember and you won't have to.

Sample Mindfulness Scripts

Below are some sample scripts you can use with your students on days when your mindfulness instructor is not visiting, as well as suggestions for follow-up discussions or activities you can do for specific lessons. At the end of this manual are two general mindfulness scripts which you can remove and laminate for your students to use when they leading mindfulness.

Simple Mindfulness Practice

1. Remind students to begin by getting into their mindful bodies (still and quiet, sitting upright): *"Okay everyone, let's get into our mindful bodies."*
2. Invite students to place their attention on hearing: *"Now put ALL your mindful attention into hearing—just listening."*
3. Ring the mindfulness bell, or have a student ring bell.
4. Have students raise their hands when they can no longer hear the bell.
5. When most or all have raised their hands: *"Now slowly, mindfully move your hand to your stomach or chest, and just feel your breathing."*
6. You can help students stay focused during the breathing if you like with reminders like: *"Just breathing in . . . just breathing out . . ."*
7. Ring the bell to end.

Mindful Listening

Listening can be done with a bell or with ambient, external sounds.

1. Get into a mindful body and let your eyes close.
2. Put all your mindful attention into listening.
3. Listen to the sound from beginning to end.
4. *(Ring bell.)*
5. Then listen to the sounds around you.
6. Listen to sounds coming from outside the room.
7. Listen to sounds coming from inside the room.
8. Are you quiet enough to hear sounds in your body?
9. Listen for 1-2 minutes.

Here are some additional suggestions for practicing with mindfulness of hearing:

1. Invite them to notice if there are some sounds that they like and others that they don't like. *"You don't have to say anything or do anything differently. Just notice when you like a sound and when you don't like a sound. Then just keep listening again."*
2. Invite them to count how many sounds they hear in one minute. *"Be very quiet and try to hear a sound that you normally don't hear in the classroom."*
3. Invite them to become very still and quiet. *"For mindful listening today, notice if there is any moment during this one minute that you only hear silence."*

Heartfulness

Follow-up suggestions for heartfulness lessons include:

1. Write about all the kind things you most wish for yourself.
2. Send kind wishes to yourself for one minute.
3. Send kind wishes to the whole school for one minute.
4. Send kind wishes to the whole world for one minute.
5. Pick a secret buddy for the day. Don't tell anyone who your secret buddy is. Just send them kind thoughts.

Generosity

Follow-up suggestions for generosity lessons include:

1. Today, make a list (or a classroom collage) of 20 kind words.
2. Today, make a list (or a classroom collage) of 10 generous acts.
3. Think of something generous that you saw someone else do. How did you feel?
4. Think of something generous that you did? How did you feel at the time? How does it feel now, to remember having done that?

Gratitude

Follow-up suggestions for generosity lessons include:

1. Today, make a list (or a classroom collage) of 10 things you're grateful for.
2. Think of something someone did for you that you appreciate. Remember it in as much detail as you can. Notice how you feel. Feel your mindful breathing as you remember how that felt.

Kind and Caring on the Playground

Follow-up suggestions for lessons on kindness include:

1. Discuss with the whole class: When we are angry, what are other choices we could make?
2. How else can you express anger without being mean? Talk about it. Take a breath. Walk away. Ignore it.
3. As a class, make a list of all the emotions that people have. Where in our body do we feel these emotions? Chest? Stomach? Fists? Head? What do you feel in those areas when you are angry, sad, happy, excited, frustrated, afraid....
4. If an incident has happened and you are talking with a child, stay focused on how they feel, where they feel it in their body, and what it feels like in their body. Also, listen and respond with a message of acceptance of their feeling/emotion. Their actions don't have to be accepted, but their emotions should be.

Movement/Walking

Follow-up suggestions for lessons on mindful movement include:

1. Every time they are transitioning you can remind them to move mindfully. While you move from the rug to your desk, walk mindfully. When you line up for recess, walk mindfully. When you are done with your test, mindfully bring it to the front of the room and then wait mindfully at your desk until everyone is finished.
2. Every time they are walking somewhere, you can remind them to walk mindfully. In the hallway/walking past other classes/to the playground/or the cafeteria, you can all walk mindfully.
3. Remember to invite this kind of mindful movement as a suggestion rather than a demand or a disciplinary tool!

Pre-Test Practice

You can use this script for a short mindfulness practice with your class before any test. Be sure to leave some quite space after key instructions, when appropriate.

- Sit comfortably.
- Place your hands on your lap.
- Let your eyes close.
- Open your ears. Put all of your mindful awareness into listening.
- *(Ring bell)*.
- Listen carefully. Raise your hand when you don't hear the sound anymore.
- Place one hand where you feel the movement of your breath.
- Take three slow, deep breaths...normal, natural, calming breaths.
- Notice how your body feels.
- If you feel anxious, nervous or tense notice where you feel that in your body.
- If you feel anxious, breathe in one deep breath and as you breathe out, breathe out the anxiety.
- If you feel nervous, breathe in one deep breath and as you breathe out, breathe out the nervousness.
- If you feel tension in your body, breathe in one deep breath. As you breathe out, breathe out the tension.
- On your next breath, imagine ease coming into your body.
- Breathe calm into your body.
- Imagine yourself taking your test with ease.
- Imagine ease in your body and in your mind through the entire test.
- Imagine putting your pencil down with ease at the end of your test.
- *(Ring bell)*

A Simple Mindfulness Practice Script

Please get into your mindful bodies.

Place your hands on your lap and let your eyes close.

Let your whole body get still and quiet, as you listen to the sound of the bell.

(Ring Bell)

Put one hand on your anchor spot.

Please feel your mindful breathing.

(Ring bell again after 1-3 minutes).

A Simple Mindfulness Practice Script

1. Please put on your mindful bodies.
2. Please let your eyes close.

(Ring Bell)

3. Please bring your hand mindfully to your anchor.

4. Please . . .

- take three mindful breaths. *or*
- feel your mindful breathing for one minute.

(Ring bell again).

