

Mindfulness: Practice and Movement

Being mindful can apply to the way our bodies move and feel. In between movement, the body gains benefits by focusing on the pauses or rest.

What You Need

- Electronic devices for each participant or one with a larger screen that can be seen by all
- Internet connection
- Foam mat, blanket or soft area for mindful movement practice

Introduction to Mindfulness

Ask participants the following questions:

- Have you ever had a time when your mind is so caught up in what happened earlier in the day that you can't focus on the now?
- Or maybe you are worried about something for tomorrow?

Explain that sometimes we spend so much time worried about the past or being anxious about the future that we can't focus on what's happening now.

That's where [mindfulness](#) can help. Mindfulness is the observation of the present moment, without any judgement. It reduces anxiety by focusing on the present moment—not the past or the future, both of which can create anxiety and stress. Play this video for a brief introduction to mindfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHuK0oJMAzY>

Tell the group that instead of reacting right away to a situation, they can take the time to notice, without judgement, how they are feeling. Taking the time to notice how they are feeling can help them decide how they want to react.

Sometimes the worst part about a stressful event is what goes through our heads as we are worrying or wondering. Ask the group to think of a time when they were late for something, maybe for school.

- What was going through your mind as you were on your way?
- Perhaps scolding yourself for not getting up early enough (past), worrying about what your teacher might say (future) and generally making yourself miserable?

By practicing mindfulness and staying in the *present moment*, we can acknowledge when we are anxious about being late and then concentrate on things that are happening right now. Ask the following questions:

- How does your body feel when you are anxious?
- What do you notice about what is happening around you?

A decorative horizontal band with a repeating pattern of blue, swirling, concentric lines.

It can be difficult to remain in the moment when we are worried about the past or the future. One of the best ways to practice mindfulness is in situations where it is easy. The more we practice mindfulness in our day to day activities, the easier it will be to be to stay in the moment when a stressful situation comes up. Below are a few examples of ways teens can use mindfulness in their daily lives.

Mindful Eating

Many of us eat on the go – in our cars, at our desks, in front of the TV or with others at a restaurant. This exercise will help participants tune into all the sensations while eating to make it a more meaningful experience. This exercise will also help them to become aware of the bodily sensations while they eat: hunger, when they stop feeling hunger, and when they feel satisfied.

[Mindful Eating Exercise \(pdf\)](#)

Mindful Walking

This is an exercise for teens to use when out for a walk or just walking as part of their daily routine. Teens should start by taking a deep breath and clearing their mind as they begin their walk. Then, they should walk slowly and feel the sensation beneath their feet. They should breathe slowly and feel the movement in their legs and sensations across their body. Suggest that teens practice this for 2 minutes or as long as they feel comfortable.

[Mindful Walking Exercise \(pdf\)](#)

To continue the conversation about how to incorporate mindfulness into every day, share these tips with teens:

- 1. Morning is a great time to put mindfulness into practice.**
Mornings are usually the quietest part of the day – both in schedules and in the mind. They are a great time to set a mindful intention for the day while you brush your teeth or eat your breakfast.
- 2. You don't have to sit cross-legged on the floor with your eyes closed to be mindful.**
If it feels comfortable to sit on a yoga mat, then go for it! If not, just settle into a space you feel comfortable. This could mean on the couch, sitting upright on your bed, in the passenger seat of a car or on the bus. It's less about the place and space your body takes up and more about the quality of your attention.
- 3. Start by focusing on the breath.**
Our days are busy but a constant for each and every one of us is our breath. To quiet the mind, focus on your breathing.
- 4. Mindfulness is a practice, which means just that – it takes practice.**

The natural state of the mind is sort of like a busy monkey – curious and easily distracted. When your mind wanders (which it will!) gently recognize the distraction and come back to each inhale and exhale. After time and practice this will get easier and easier to do.

What is Mindful Movement?

Mindful movement means slowing down. Being present in what we are doing at any one time. By practicing mindful movement we can slow down to hear or discover what we are thinking and feeling. We can then allow that pause to help us decide what to do with the feelings or thoughts.

Practicing mindful movement can help us in our everyday lives. There are movements that calm, movements that energize, movements that help with sleep, movements that ignite gratitude and movements that improve athletic performance. Depending on what kind of movement teens are interested in, go through the mindful movements below as a group.

Reduce Anxiety

- Eagle Pose - beneficial for quieting the mind and bringing the attention to the body.



- Legs Up The Wall Pose - a simple but effective anxiety-busting posture that calms the chatter in our minds.



- Fish Pose - can be used for fatigue and anxiety relief, as well as gentle back and shoulder stretching. Beginners may want to place a thickly-folded blanket beneath the head for neck support if they are experiencing any discomfort.



Calm

- Standing Forward Bend - forward bends are excellent for calming our nervous system, providing a release of the upper body and soothes the mind through gentle inversion.



- Balancing Poses - quiet the mind and cultivate focused awareness.
 - Half Moon Pose



○ Tree



○ Airplane



Energize

- Childs Pose - stimulates your nervous system and helps reenergize your body.



- Warrior II – awakens and energizes the body and empowers strength.



- Chair Pose – awakens and energizes the body and empowers strength.



- Upright Cat & Cow – a seated version of the classic cat/cow move is designed to move energy through the spine, by activating through rocking the spine back and forth without putting pressure on it.



Sleep

- Easy Forward Bend – creates an overall sense of ease in the body while opening the hips.



- Plow Pose – turning the blood flow around can bring the body a calming sense of vitality, great for sleep.



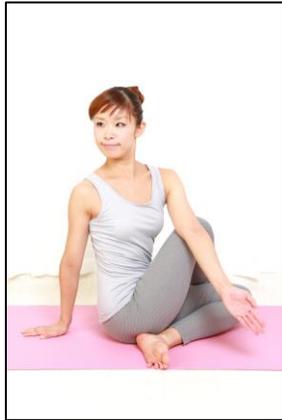
- Corpse Pose – gets the body into a relaxed state to focus the attention on the breath and calming.



- Spinal Twists – gentle twists relieve tension through the spine to rinse out tension from the day.
 - Supine Spinal Twist



- Seated Spinal Twist



- Reclined Butterfly – helps the body get ready to rest and observe the breath. It can be helpful to place one hand on the heart and one hand on the belly to feel the rise and fall of each inhale and exhale.



Improve Athletic Performance

- Seated pigeon - improves mobility.



- Cobra – releases pressure in the spine.



- Dolphin - stretches the upper back and shoulders, hamstrings, calves and foot arches at the same time.



- Frog - improves strength of connective tissue around the ankles and knees, which makes it a great warm-up movement prior to lower-body exercises.



- Supported Backbends - they very lightly stretch tight spots, while giving athletes a chance for deep relaxation, which speeds up recovery.

- Fish



- Bridge



- Reclined Big Toe - strengthens the knees and can target the IT band (a common tight spot in runners) and can relieve backaches and sciatic pain. Using a band/strap makes it accessible for everyone.



- Boat Pose – increases abdominal and hip flexor strength.



- Bow Pose – stretches the front of the body, improves posture and strengthens the back muscles.



Conclude by asking the group to share the different scenarios/settings where practicing these mindful movements would be beneficial.

Optional: Chill at Home Skill Building Activities

- ✓ **Gratitude Note:** write a gratitude note to someone you care about and read it aloud to them
- ✓ **Mindful Eating:** as you eat your next meal or snack, be mindful about it. Notice the smells, tastes, textures and colors of what you are putting in your body.
- ✓ **Listening:** have a conversation with a family member, friend or teacher and focus all your attention on being present and listening. Share with that person something new you learned from the conversation.
- ✓ **Connecting:** ask your parent/guardian about their day and share something about your day.
- ✓ **Lend a Hand:** help your parent/guardian/friend make a meal. Focus on being present with each step of the meal preparation process and enjoy the fruit of your labor at the end!
- ✓ **Unplug:** take a walk this week, but leave your cell phone at home. Notice the things around you: sounds, smells, nature and objects you have not paid attention to before.
- ✓ **Take a Break:** devote 20 minutes to reading a book without interruptions – leave your phone in a different room!
- ✓ **Be Present:** pick one day this week and leave your cell phone at home in the morning. Go the entire day at school without being connected. Take time to notice your feelings, emotions and observations without the interruption and distraction of your phone.
- ✓ **Get Some Rest:** commit to getting at least 7 hours of sleep 3 days this week. If you feel up for it, jot down how you feel in the morning and reflect back on your notes at the end of the week.
- ✓ **Take a Deep Breathe:** practice deep breathing once a day. Count to 3 as you inhale and count to 4 as your exhale, repeating as many times as you want.