

## **Introduction to mindfulness with the five senses**

Many of these are adapted from the Mind Up Curriculum

**I strongly recommend trying these yourself first: we can't teach what we don't know.**

Themes: The fun and value of paying close attention.

Common outcome: It's like rebooting a computer. Students' attention and focus is better.

A couple simple ways to introduce mindfulness are:

1. Introduce awareness of breath and awareness of sounds. Students can pick one or the other or choose something else to focus on quietly.
2. Use the five senses mindfulness practice with the students.
3. Mindful movement: choose some simple yoga-like exercises. Invite the children to do them slowly and ask them to notice as much as they can about the body while it is moving. If you are stretching and lowering your arms, can you feel your shoulder as the arms go up and down, can you feel the heaviness of the arms as you slowly lower them?

### **Mindful Listening**

Here are three different activities. Afterwards, you can have a brief discussion: what do notice? what did you like? what was it like to pause and listen carefully?

1. Tell students that you will make a sound and ask them to think if they can identify the sound. Sounds can include: tapping a pencil, crumpling paper, shuffling cards, tearing newsprint, shaking coins in a jar, to name but a few.

With younger students, tell them to not to say what they think it is until you raise your hand. With older students, you can ask them to write down what they think it is.

2. Bring a meditation bell or something that makes a sound that resonates for awhile, like a piano. You can Google sounds and play a sound on your cell phone or the computer.

Invite but don't require students to close their eyes, and then raise their hand when they can no longer hear any sound.

3. Invite the students to sit silently for a minute and identify all the sounds they hear.

### **Mindful Seeing**

1. Bring a variety of objects for the students to examine: a pencil, glass beads, a rock, a seashell, a wooden cutting board, etc. Think of objects that are common and, on closer examination, will yield more information. You can also bring pictures from magazines: butterfly, dolphin, octopus, moose, or magnification of small animals: ant, plankton, etc.

Options: Put students into small groups of 2 – 3. Each group gets one picture to examine for 30 – 60 seconds in silence. Older students can write what they notice. Then each person in the group shares one thing s/he noticed. They continue to take turns until they run out of observations. When you go around the class, each person can share the most interesting or new thing they noticed.

2. Bring a clear bowl filled with water. Put several drops of food coloring and ask them to describe what they see. Add red and blue at the same time. What do they notice?

3. If they have recess or lunch, ask them to look for things they haven't noticed before. One variation is to have them look up.

**Mindful Smelling** (use the same approach here as with mindful seeing)

You can bring various objects to class: bark cinnamon, lavender, vanilla, baby powder, peppermint, etc. Note: check for allergies first.

### **Mindful Touching**

Bring a number of everyday objects (pen, sandpaper, screwdriver, hammer, eraser, stapler, seashell, paper clip, etc. Place one item in a cloth or plastic bag.

Each student gets a chance to put their hand into the bag and identify what they felt.

Ask them to identify the qualities of what they are touching and see if others can figure out what it is, e.g. with a screwdriver: long and skinny, bottom is pointy, top is round, etc.

### **Holistic exercises**

I have had the success with raisins, strawberries, clementines/small oranges, and apples. The last two get expensive with a large class.

#### Sequence

1. Describe what just your eyes tell you about this object.
2. Describe what just your fingers tell you about this object. Encourage, but don't require them, to close their eyes while their fingers explore the object.
3. Describe what just your nose tells you about this object.
4. Describe what just your mouth tells you about this object.
5. Name the jobs that people did to bring this object to you here now.  
This step adds a sense of appreciation for and gratitude to all the people whose effort was required to bring this food to us
6. You might ask each child to think of something important they noticed about the object that they had not noticed before.

#### Steps for each food:

1. Give students 15 – 30 seconds with each sense.
2. You may want the students to raise their hands and then speak when you recognize that student. For more participation, after a student shares an observation, you can ask who else had that same observation to raise their hand.
3. Stay with descriptive language as opposed to metaphoric language (e.g., craters like on the moon for raisins) because this exercise is focusing on direct observation--here we want to bring more careful attention to the object.

### **5 Senses Meditation** from <http://mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk/exams>

This can be done anytime, especially useful when stressed, including just before a test.

1. Pause what you are doing for a moment and take one or two deep breaths to help bring you into the present moment.
2. Look around you, and silently name three things that you see in your immediate vicinity
2. Now opening to the sounds around you, silently note and name three things that you can hear right now
3. Bringing your attention to your body, silently name three sensations that you can feel in this moment ( maybe warmth, tingling, contraction, coolness..... )
4. Bringing your attention to smell and taste, what do you notice in your immediate awareness when you bring your attention to these senses; lightly name what you notice.
5. Take one or two breaths to finish this mindfulness exercise.