

Mindfulness (Year 1)

Unit Overview

Summary

Pupils will be introduced to the vocabulary of mindfulness and practice a variety of mindfulness techniques. They will explore their own breathing, the sounds around them, touch through barefoot walking, visualisation and the use of focus objects. The lessons aim to introduce techniques to enable pupils to shift their own attention to different aspects of their environment and reflect upon feelings in their own bodies and minds.

Prior learning

This is the first Mindfulness unit the pupils have studied. If pupils have completed the Yoga unit, they will recognise some features of mindfulness within yoga practice.

Teaching Tips

- Timings in the lesson are based on short sessions of 15 minutes.
- You might wish to incorporate these sessions into the school day. For example, a short session after break time to calm and be ready for lessons.
- Pupils should sit in a chair so they can place their feet flat on the floor. Some pupils might be more comfortable in a more relaxed pose such as reclining on a bean bag but a connection between their body and the Earth is important.
- If possible, dim the lighting though it should not be completely dark.
- Carry out the session in a quiet area so that pupils can focus on their thoughts with minimal distraction.
- Lessons incorporate the use of a chime sound. This could be from a triangle or xylophone chime with a soft, reverberating sound.
- The aim of this unit is to introduce the idea of mindfulness as a means to focus attention and increase self-awareness.
- Some pupils will find it hard to focus for a full session initially, praise those pupils for the time that they manage and see whether their ability to focus and pay attention increases over time. Reassure pupils that it is normal to lose concentration at some points and learning to re-focus their concentration again is a valuable skill. The sessions incorporate variety and pupils might find some easier or more attention grabbing than others.
- Pick a time when pupils have been active and are ready to settle down.
- The lessons are written as a script with some suggested actions or activities.

Lesson 1 - Introduction (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To learn what the word 'Mindfulness' means and try some mindful techniques.

Success Criteria:

Pupils can maintain still, quietness for a short period of time.

Key Vocabulary:

Mindfulness, breathe, lungs, relax.

Equipment & Resources:

See Teaching Tips section for advice.

Introduction (5 minutes)

<p>1 Ask, What is your mind? What does it control?</p>	<p>TEACHER NOTES Take all suggestions.</p>
<p>2 Where do your emotions come from?</p>	<p>TEACHER NOTES Emotions might have been suggested in answer to the previous question.</p>
<p>3 What parts of your body are affected by your emotions?</p>	<p>TEACHER NOTES Encourage children to link their mind, their emotions and bodily reactions such as heartbeat, tension and hitting out.</p>
<p>4 Explain that mindfulness is a way to understand how your mind reacts to things that happen and practice ways to settle your mind down. It includes exercises to help you develop your concentration, be aware of yourself and calm yourself.</p>	
<p>5 Briefly discuss ways that children currently do this. How do they settle down to do homework or to go to sleep?</p>	
<p>6 Explain that we will be doing a short session each week to learn techniques.</p>	

Main (7 minutes)

- 1 Today we are going to learn how to get into a good position for mindfulness and concentrate on breathing.
- 2 Find a comfortable sitting position in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- 3 Shut your eyes if you are comfortable to do so.
- 4 Rest your hands gently on your legs.
- 5 Focus your awareness on the feeling of your feet touching the floor, the strong Earth is supporting you.
- 6 Try to straighten your back but don't strain upright. Imagine a string coming out of the top of your head with a floating balloon attached to it. The balloon is stretching you gently upright.
- 7 Relax your shoulders. If they feel curved inwards, try to roll them back and relax the muscles.
- 8 Focus on your mouth and your tongue. Your tongue should be lying relaxed in your mouth, not pushing anywhere. Your mouth should not feel tight and tense, think about how you have your mouth when you are going to sleep; relaxed and not clenched tightly shut.
- 9 Breathe quietly through your nose, feel your lungs fill and empty. Sit quietly just concentrating on your breathing for a while.
Clean air coming in to your lungs, feel your lungs expanding like balloons and then silently let the air out again and feel your lungs contracting.
Think about how your body feels when your lungs fill, do they pull your spine up straighter? Does the breath relax your muscles?
Breathe silently for a few minutes*

VARIATION

As noted in the teacher's notes, make adaptations for children who cannot sit still in an upright position but encourage contact between the feet and the ground if possible.

VARIATION

Some children will feel more focused if they shut their eyes, others will not feel comfortable doing this. If they do not feel comfortable with eyes shut, they should gaze gently towards the ground, not at other people.

VARIATION

If children have a blocked nose, they should breathe in whichever way is most comfortable. Breathing should be quiet.

TEACHER NOTES

*Judge the length of time that you feel children can sit breathing silently. As this is the first session, it is likely to be short. You can extend the silent time in future sessions.

10 If your mind wanders and you start to think of other things, try to bring your mind back to just focusing on your breathing.

11 I am going to play a chime in a moment, this will be the sign to open your eyes and bring your mind back to the room.
Play the chime.

Conclusion (3 minutes)

- 1 Ask children to reflect briefly upon how they feel now. Firstly, how does their body feel? Then how does their mind feel?
- 2 Did they find it difficult to concentrate on their breathing? Did their mind wander to other things?
- 3 Do they feel more calm or ready to concentrate on school work now than they usually do at this time?

TEACHER NOTES

You are likely to get a variety of positive and negative responses. The hope is that by encouraging children to reflect, they are also supporting peers in recognising and sharing their opinions and similarities. Giving those children who could not get into the experience, through self-consciousness or preoccupations, guidance and confidence in giving it a go another time.

Lesson 2 - Sounds (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To practise a mindful exploration of the sounds around.

Success Criteria:

Pupils are beginning to be able to move their mind focus and attention to environmental aspects and then back to themselves.

Key Vocabulary:

Mindfulness, breathe, lungs, relax.

Equipment & Resources:

See Teaching Tips section for advice.

Introduction (3 minutes)

- 1 Explain that we are going to settle into a good position for Mindfulness.
- 2 Find a comfortable sitting position in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- 3 Shut your eyes if you are comfortable to do so.
- 4 Some children will feel more focused if they shut their eyes, others will not feel comfortable doing this. If they do not feel comfortable with eyes shut, they should gaze gently towards the ground, not at other people.
- 5 Rest your hands gently on your legs.
- 6 Focus your awareness on the feeling of your feet touching the floor, the strong Earth is supporting you.
- 7 Try to straighten your back but don't strain upright. Imagine a string coming out of the top of your head with a floating balloon attached to it. The balloon is stretching you gently upright.
- 8 Relax your shoulders. If they feel curved inwards, try to roll them back and relax the muscles.
- 9 Focus on your mouth and your tongue. Your tongue should be lying relaxed in your mouth, not pushing anywhere. Your mouth should not feel tight and tense, think about how you have your mouth when you are going to sleep; relaxed and not clenched tightly shut.

TEACHER NOTES

The introduction for these sessions is kept deliberately very similar so that children can learn how to get into the physical position to begin mindfulness. Give as much or as little guidance as you feel your class needs.

VARIATION

As noted in the teacher's notes, make adaptations for children who cannot sit still in an upright position but encourage contact between the feet and the ground if possible.

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Breathe quietly through your nose, feel your lungs fill and empty. Sit quietly just concentrating on your breathing for a while.

Clean air coming in to your lungs, feel your lungs expanding like balloons and then silently let the air out again and feel your lungs contracting.

Think about how your body feels when your lungs fill, do they pull your spine up straighter? Does the breath relax your muscles?

Breathe silently for a few minutes*

VARIATION

If children have a blocked nose, they should breathe in whichever way is most comfortable. Breathing should be quiet.

TEACHER NOTES

*Judge the length of time that you feel children can sit breathing silently. As this is the first session, it is likely to be short. You can extend the silent time in future sessions.

Main (10 minutes)

1 Now bring your focus to any sounds that are around us. Continue listening for a few moments. Firstly, focus on loud sounds around us. Continue your breathing while you let these sounds come into your mind, then try to bring your focus back to your breathing.

2 Now, try to listen for some quiet sounds.

3 Can you focus on the sounds of nature?

4 Explain that you are going to play the chime sound. Listen to the sound, see if you can focus on it until you can't hear the chime any longer. Ring the chime.

5 Everyone should keep their eyes closed if possible and raise one hand. Keep your hand up until you can no longer hear the chime, then put it back in your lap. Remember this is personal to you, it is not a test, you don't need to compare yourself with others. Play the chime again.

6 Now, can you bring your focus back to the sounds around you for a few moments.

7 Now bring your attention just to your breathing again.

8 If your mind wanders and you start to think of other things, try to bring your mind back to just focusing on your breathing.

9 I am going to play a chime in a moment, this will be the sign to open your eyes and bring your mind back to the room. Play the chime.

TEACHER NOTES

Use examples from your own environment; children in another class, cars on a busy road etc.

TEACHER NOTES

Use examples from your own environment; for example, can you hear a clock tick, a tap drip, the hum of a computer, birds in the trees, a distant plane?

TEACHER NOTES

This will depend upon your setting.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

- 1 Talk about the sounds that children heard, the loud sounds and the quiet ones.
- 2 Ask children to reflect briefly upon how they feel now. What ***aren't*** you thinking about when you are being mindful?

TEACHER NOTES

Responses will depend upon your class' experiences but could include arguments in the playground, worries about things - this is an opportunity to express how Mindfulness can be used to help you to calm your worries and settle your emotions.

Lesson 3 - Breathing Buddy (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To explore breathing with a breathing buddy.

Success Criteria:

Pupils gain a deeper understanding of the effect of breathing on their body and mind.

Pupils experience using a buddy to help them focus.

Key Vocabulary:

Equipment & Resources:

See Teaching Tips section for advice.

- In advance of the lesson, ask children to bring a favourite cuddly toy to school.
- You might wish to have a selection of cuddly toys in class for children who forget.
- If children do not want to use one, they could use a bean bag, small cushion or rock instead. The item should have some weight to it.
- Children will be lying down for this session, ensure that there is space for this, if you have hard floors you might want to use P.E. mats.

Introduction (3 minutes)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Explain that we are going to settle into a good position for Mindfulness. Today children are going to do Mindfulness lying down so everyone should find a space with their cuddly toy and lie down.2 Your cuddly toy is going to be your breathing buddy. Place your buddy on your tummy. | |
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Main (10 minutes)

- 1 Watch your buddy as you breathe.
- 2 Your breath is like the ocean, rolling in and out, your buddy is bobbing on your ocean.
- 3 I am going to count to three to help you breathe in more deeply. Begin breathing in when I start. When I get to three, I will count backwards back to 1 while you breath out. See if you can stretch your breath out as well.
- 4 Now, I want you to count to yourself in your head just like I did and try to breathe in deeply while you count.
Repeat this a few times.
- 5 Let's explore some types of breathing with your buddy. Each time see how you buddy moves.
- 6 First, the shallowest breathing; nose breathing. When you do this, you take small breaths through your nose, they are quite quick breaths.
Try this for a bit. How does your buddy move?
Thank about how this breathing makes you feel.
- 7 Now, make your breath a little deeper; chest breathing. You should try to breathe into your chest but not fill your lungs completely. Does you buddy move more? How does it make you feel?
- 8 Let's return to the deep belly breaths for a few moments. You can close your eyes if you wish to help you relax.
I will ring the chime when it is time to open your eyes and sit up.
- 9 Tell children to thank their buddy for helping them calm.

TEACHER NOTES

Count slowly to three 1,2,3 while children breathe in. Then 3,2,1 while children breathe out.
Repeat this a couple of times.

TEACHER NOTES

Deep belly-breathing signals the nervous system to relax. This helps to lower stress and slow the heart rate.

VARIATION

If children breathe too fast, they might get dizzy. They need to return their breathing to its normal pattern to feel better.

TEACHER NOTES

When a person is anxious they might take small, quick shallow breaths. Children might feel 'on edge', lively, or 'not good' doing this breathing.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Ask children to reflect briefly upon how the different types of breathing made them feel. Which was most calming?2 Explain that your breath can really affect how you feel. The next time you feel a strong emotion like anger, see if you can recognise the type of breathing you are doing.
You could even see whether bringing your breathing back to deep belly breathing changes the way you feel.3 See if you can find some opportunities to try this out this week and see how it makes you feel. | |
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Lesson 4 - Barefoot Walking (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To explore barefoot walking.

Success Criteria:

Pupils are developing the ability to control their focus from the external to the internal.

Key Vocabulary:

Equipment & Resources:

See Teaching Tips section for advice.

- Children will be walking around barefoot for this session, ensure that there is space for this and no potential safety issues.
- Ideally this session will be carried out outdoors on grass but can also be done inside.

Introduction (3 minutes)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Today children are going to do mindfulness walking around barefoot so they should remove their shoes and socks.2 Ask children to find a space to start in and stand up in their space.3 Spread their toes on the ground and feel their strong body balancing and the Earth supporting them. | |
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Main (10 minutes)

- 1 Ask children to walk slowly around the area focusing on the way the ground feels beneath their feet.
Do this for a minute.
- 2 Now concentrate on the way their feet move when they walk. Focus on the way the heel touches the floor and the rest of the foot rolls onto the floor.
Walk like this for a minute.
- 3 Can children spread their toes when they touch the floor and stretch out every toe.
Continue to walk mindfully for a while.
- 4 Now, standing on the spot, children should alternate bringing their body-weight onto their heels with toes raised and then onto their toes with toes spread, then raise heels to tip-toe and reverse and repeat.
Concentrate on how this feels.
- 5 Resume walking slowly around the area and bring the focus to their breathing. What type of breathing are they doing? Can they deepen their breathing while they walk like they did with their buddies last session?
- 6 Explain that you are going to ask them to move more quickly in a moment. When they hear the chime they should do this.
When they hear the chime for the second time, they should stop and stand still.
- 7 When they stop, ask the children to bring their focus to the breathing and notice if it has changed due to the faster activity?
- 8 Can they try to bring their breathing back to the slow deep breathing and notice how this makes their body and mind feel. Having eyes closed may help with this.
- 9 Give children time to calm their breathing before proceeding.

VARIATION

Some children might prefer to stand still with eyes closed to do this.

VARIATION

Depending upon the space available, this might be running, jogging, fast walking or dancing. Instruct children as to the best method.

VARIATION

You can use music as an alternative to the chime if you wish. When the music stops, they should stop.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Were children able to control their attention to bring their focus onto the ground, then their feet, then their breathing?</p> <p>Did their mind wander at times and were they able to regain their focus?</p> <p>Does it feel good to be able to be in control of your attention and focus?</p>	
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Lesson 5 - Focus Objects (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To practice close attention with the aid of stones and leaves as focus objects.

Success Criteria:

Pupils are developing the ability to control their focus and attention from the external to the detail to the internal.

Key Vocabulary:

attention, noticing,

Equipment & Resources:

See Teaching Tips section for advice.

- Some large smooth stones; there should be enough stones for each child to look closely at one. Ideally one per child.
- Some leaves - one per child. The children could find these themselves prior to the session if you wish.

Introduction (3 minutes)

- 1 Explain that we are going to settle into a good position for Mindfulness. They will be placing objects on a table to look at later so they should sit near a table.
- 2 Find a comfortable sitting position in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- 3 Shut your eyes if you are comfortable to do so.
- 4 Rest your hands gently on your legs.
- 5 Focus your awareness on the feeling of your feet touching the floor, the strong Earth is supporting you.
- 6 Try to straighten your back but don't strain upright. Imagine a string coming out of the top of your head with a floating balloon attached to it. The balloon is stretching you gently upright.
- 7 Relax your shoulders. If they feel curved inwards, try to roll them back and relax the muscles.
- 8 Focus on your mouth and your tongue. Your tongue should be lying relaxed in your mouth, not pushing anywhere. Your mouth should not feel tight and tense, think about how you have your mouth when you are going to sleep; relaxed and not clenched tightly shut.
- 9 Breathe quietly through your nose, feel your lungs fill and empty. Sit quietly just concentrating on your breathing for a while.
Clean air coming in to your lungs, feel your lungs expanding like balloons and then silently let the air out again and feel your lungs contracting.
Think about how your body feels when your lungs fill, do they pull your spine up straighter? Does the breath relax your muscles?
Breathe silently for a few minutes*

VARIATION

Some children will feel more focused if they shut their eyes, others will not feel comfortable doing this. If they do not feel comfortable with eyes shut, they should gaze gently towards the ground, not at other people.

VARIATION

If children have a blocked nose, they should breathe in whichever way is most comfortable. Breathing should be quiet.

*Judge the length of time that you feel children can sit breathing silently. Notice whether children are able to sit like this for longer than they did in the first session.

Main (10 minutes)

- 1 Now bring your focus to any sounds that are around us. Continue listening for a few moments. Firstly, focus on loud sounds around us then switch your attention to the quieter sounds.
Continue your breathing while you let these sounds come into your mind, then try to bring your focus back to your breathing.
- 2 While children are sitting in silence, quietly place the stones within their view.
- 3 Explain that you are going to play the chime sound as a sign to return their focus to the room and open their eyes if they are closed.
Ring the chime.
- 4 Look at your stone. Reach out and feel it, notice the weight of the stone.
- 5 Is it cold or warm?
- 6 Is it smooth or rough?
- 7 Place the stone back on the table and look at it.
- 8 Bring all of your attention to the look of the stone.
- 9 Notice the overall shape of the stone and the way it rests on the table. Does it make a shadow?
- 10 Now let your eyes focus on the details of the surface of the stone. What do you notice?
- 11 Are there any marks on it? What colours can you see?
- 12 Try to deepen your attention do you notice any new things?
- 13 Try the same exercise with the leaves:
 - Begin with touch and smell.
 - Then focusing on the overall shape and position of the leaf
 - Then moving to a focus on the details.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="94 231 1455 329">1 Were children able to control their attention to bring their focus onto the focus objects?<li data-bbox="94 379 1404 477">2 Did they feel calm when doing this activity? Did their mind wander to other things or could they maintain concentration.<li data-bbox="94 528 1352 575">3 Does it feel good to be able to be in control of your attention and focus?	
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Lesson 6 - Visualisation (Year 1)

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives:

To reflect upon their experiences of mindfulness using guided walk visualisation and think of everyday mindful activities to try.

Success Criteria:

Pupils can explain how they could make mindful moments part of every day life and how this could improve the way they feel.

Key Vocabulary:

Visualisation exercise.

Equipment & Resources:

- See Teaching Tips section for advice.
- You could use a lavender spray as part of the visualisation exercise; it should be a silent spray rather than an aerosol. You can make a lavender spray by mixing some water with a little lavender essential oil in a spray bottle.

Introduction (3 minutes)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Ask children to think back to the mindful activities that they have done over the past weeks.2 Make a list of the aspects of mindfulness that they have explored. They can add things that they have tried outside the sessions as well.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breathing and types of breathing.• Mindful walking.• Using a breathing buddy.• Using a focus object.• Using breathing to calm strong emotions. | |
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Main (10 minutes)

- 1 Explain that we are going to settle into a good position for Mindfulness. This session we are going to go on a mindful walk in our minds. This is sometimes called a visualisation exercise.
- 2 Find a comfortable sitting position in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- 3 Shut your eyes if you are comfortable to do so and rest your hands gently on your legs.
- 4 Focus your awareness on the feeling of your feet touching the floor, the strong Earth is supporting you. Stretch your spine and roll back your shoulders.
- 5 Picture yourself standing in a lush green field.
Feel the grass between your toes.
Feel the warm sunlight shining down on you.
- 6 Bring the focus to your breathing. It should be calm and relaxed.
- 7 Picture yourself crossing the field, there is a forest on the other side of the field and you are walking towards it.
Notice that the field is sloping upwards a bit so you need to put effort into your walking.
Your breath speeds a little.
- 8 You reach the edge of the forest at the top of the hill.
You stand still for a bit.
Listen.
Can you hear your heart beating?
What sounds can you hear around you? The sound of birds or a distant plane.
Perhaps you can hear the leaves of the trees rustling gently in the breeze. Can you hear movement in the forest?
Take some calming breaths while you listen to the sounds.
- 9 You continue your walk through the forest, can you feel and hear the crunchy leaves beneath your feet?
What can you smell?
What can you hear?
- 10 You see that the trees are thinning out and ahead you see something else. You are not sure what it is. You feel curious.
Walk to the edge of the forest and look out. You are on the ridge of a sand dune that slopes down to the sea.

VARIATION

Some children might like to have bare feet for the visualisation to come.

VARIATION

If you have a lavender spray you could use it now.

- 11 Step onto the sand.
Feel it between your toes.
Is the sand warm or cool?
It is soft sand.
Take a moment to breathe at the top of the dune. Listen to the calls of the sea birds.
- 12 You can hear the gentle waves at the coastline below.
Look at the shimmering sea. Gaze at the gentle waves moving up and down.
Slow your breathing to the speed of the waves... up... and down..... up and down.
- 13 Walk slowly through the sand towards the sea.
Can you see anything on the sea? Maybe you can see some sail boats in the distance. Maybe a big ferry on the horizon.
As you are walking notice more details around you; white froth on the tops of the waves, birds diving into the sea, perhaps a fish jumping out and then down again beneath the waves.
Gentle shouts of people playing by the sea.
- 14 Sit down on the sand. Feel it between your fingers.
Feel the warm sun on your body.
- 15 Lie back and look at the fluffy clouds above.
A distant plane is soaring across the sky.
The clouds are drifting.
You hear the sounds around you but you are totally relaxed.
You close your eyes and just breathe...
- 16 In a moment you will hear a chime, this is your sign to return to the room and open your eyes.
- 17 Ring the chime.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Ask children how they are feeling. Did they enjoy the visualisation? Did they manage to get absorbed into it and keep other thoughts out of their mind?2 Reflect upon how powerful their minds are; they can take adventures like this whenever they wish just by taking a mindful walk.
They could also make any real walk a mindful walk by noticing things that they usually miss and by stopping to look and feel what is around them. | |
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