

Body Scan/Mindfulness Meditation for Students

Purpose: The Body Scan/Mindfulness Meditation is an effective method to introduce mindfulness into your classroom. This exercise helps to develop body awareness and bring a sense of calm and relaxation to both body and mind. By bringing awareness to various parts of the body, students are able to relax and focus, experiencing the many health benefits discussed in the presentation.

Note: This is a full body scan and takes anywhere from 15-30 minutes. If you have less time, concentrate on the belly, solar plexus, chest, shoulders, face and head. You may shorten the silent/rest time as well. I choose to start at the feet and work toward the head, but you may prefer starting at the head and moving down. It's a matter of personal preference, and there is no right or wrong.

Teacher script for meditation:

In this experience, we will explore different sensations in the body. Rather than **thinking** about the body, we will directly feel and experience our body. Try to be patient with yourself, keeping as still as possible and refraining from judging what you feel. The idea is to **notice** and be **aware** rather than label or be critical. (Note: it is preferable to lie in this exercise, but it can be done in a comfortable seated position or even a chair).

- Please lie down on the floor with your legs uncrossed, feet falling out to the side. Your arms can be by your side, palms facing up or, if you are more comfortable, your hands can be relaxed lightly on your belly.
- Start to disengage the mind from busy thoughts and ideas. Close your eyes softly and bring your awareness to your body. How does it feel right now? Which areas of your body feel comfortable and relaxed? Which areas are you experiencing tension, tightness or discomfort? See if you can notice these areas without judgment. No feeling is right or wrong; simply notice what you feel as you scan your body.
- Notice your breath. Breath in and out through your nose. As you move through various parts of the body, bring a gentle and kind awareness to the body. Try to reel in all thoughts that take you to the outside world. Allow those thoughts to dissolve, maintaining your focus on your body. Practice kindness with your body and the thoughts you have about it.
- Begin by bringing your attention to your feet and toes. Allow the feet to become heavy, releasing them towards the floor with each exhalation. Notice any sensations in the toes, soles, heels or tops of your feet—tingling, heat, whatever you may feel. Continue to breathe through your nose.
- Bring your awareness to your legs. Notice your calves, your knees, your thighs and all the muscles in your legs. As you inhale, imagine your breath moving down into the legs. With the exhalation, allow the legs to release and dissolve into the floor.

- Notice your hips. It is not uncommon for tension, even emotions to settle into our hips. Exercise such as running and cycling close and tighten our hips. Breathe into the space in and around the hips and relax.
- Focus on your back. Bring your mind to the top of your spine. Recognize any area of tension that may have built up around the spine. Place your mind on these areas of tension and allow the knots to unravel as you focus on them. Allow the tension to dissolve down your spine and out through the soles of your feet, into the ground.
- Now bring your awareness to your belly. Begin to deepen the breath into the abdomen. Breathing in through your nose. If your hands are resting gently on your belly, feel the belly rise as you breathe in deeply. When you exhale from your nose, feel the belly soften and release. Allow your belly and organs to rest, releasing toward the floor. Spend a few breaths here, allowing the belly to rise and fill as you inhale, relax and release as you exhale.
- A few inches above your belly is your solar plexus. Within the solar plexus lies the diaphragm. The diaphragm is the dome-shaped sheet of muscle that separates the chest from the abdomen. It is the main muscle of respiration, playing a very important role in the breathing process. Picture this muscle within the solar plexus. Watch it rise into the thoracic/chest cavity when you inhale. Watch it fall into the abdominal cavity as you exhale. Spend a few breaths here, watching the diaphragm in your mind.
- Bring your awareness now to your chest. Notice how your heart and lungs feel. Begin to deepen your breath into the heart center. As you exhale, feel the heart and lungs soften. Let them relax. Become aware of your heartbeat. Can you feel it? It's easy to feel our heart when we are frightened or stressed. It beats fast and strong. Just notice if you are able to connect with your heart in this relaxed state. You may not feel it this time, but as we practice, you will become aware of your heartbeat in a calm and quiet state. Just notice. Be sure to continue breathing while you notice. We'll spend a few breaths here, experiencing the art of hearing our heartbeat.
- From here, shift your awareness to your fingertips. There are thousands of nerve endings in our fingertips. Just notice any sensations in your fingertips. Again, there is no right or wrong. Some of you may not notice anything and this is fine. Over time and with practice, you may begin to be aware of tingling or other sensations in your body as you practice focusing and awareness. The idea here is to be present and aware, to be mindful of your experience.
- Notice your hands and wrists. Notice your forearms. Relax them as you continue to breathe.
- Bring your attention to your elbows and your upper arms. As you inhale, imagine your breath moving down your arms into your fingertips. As you exhale, allow your arms to become heavy and relax into the floor.
- Think about relaxing your shoulders and neck. This is an area where nearly all of us carry tension and stress. We are often hunched over a computer or desk. Breathe into the space in your shoulders and neck. As you do this try to feel that any tension

or weight that you are carrying in your shoulders melts away. Tell yourself “my neck and shoulders are now comfortable and relaxed.”

- Breathe into your throat. Notice how when you inhale through your nose, the air is cool. As it settles into your throat, the air warms.
- Notice your jaw. Are you able to relax your jaw by separating your teeth? Lightly place your tongue against the back of the top, front teeth or on the roof of your mouth. This will automatically release your jaw, allowing it to relax and open.
- Bring your awareness to the muscles of your face. Notice your mouth, your nose, your eyes. Allow them to relax and soften. Soften your forehead and temples, imagining any tension or headache or pain dissolving away. Watch as the tension drains from your forehead, down through your body and into the ground.
- Your focus is now on the crown of your head. Notice the clarity in your mind. Notice how comfortable and relaxed your mind feels.
- Spend a few moments scanning your body again, releasing and softening any areas you may still be holding onto. Allow the body to rest, watching your mind and any thoughts that arise while we rest. Simply watch them passing by, as if they were on a cloud, floating overhead. When your mind wanders, gently call it back by focusing your attention on your breath, telling your self, “Breathing in I feel calm, breathing out I let go.” (Note: you may spend up to five minutes in this state of rest)
- Now slowly begin to deepen your breath, and as you exhale, continue to let your body relax more deeply. When you are ready, begin to move your fingers and toes. Stretch your arms overhead or in any way that feels good to your body, being mindful of the others around you.
- When you are ready, roll over onto your right side and bring your knees close to your chest. Allow your head to rest on your right arm. Pause for a moment here and notice how your body and mind feel.
- Taking your time, slowly come back to a seated position. Cross your legs gently and allow your hands to fall lightly into your lap or on your knees.
- Spend a moment here noticing. Notice how your body feels. Notice how your mind feels. Calm body. Calm mind. Peaceful breath. See if you can bring this feeling of peace with you into the rest of your day.

Note: While the above script is my own, the practice of the body scan has roots in both Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and yoga nidra. Jon Kabat-Zinn founded MBSR in 1979 and the Center for Mindfulness in 1995. For more information, see <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/index.aspx>. The Yoga Nidra (deep relaxation) technique I use comes from Integral Hatha Yoga based on the teachings of Sri Satchidananda. More information can be found at <http://www.yogaville.org/integral-yoga/>.

For additional resources, please refer to the Resource Page included in the handouts for this session.

Pre-Exam Stress Reducing Techniques

Purpose: Prior to beginning an exam, practice the following techniques to help reduce test anxiety and test-related stress.

Note: Allow 5-10 minutes for the activities and practice regularly prior to exams for optimal results.

Research has shown that our emotional state and our thoughts react to our physical posture. Practice these exercises in the same place and position students will be in for the exam

1. Provide students with paper to write on. Have students ask themselves: *“What would happen if I stopped worrying and learned to relax?”* Allow students to reflect and respond for several minutes. The idea here is, rather than to write their fears, they respond in a positive manner. Worrying only leads to more anxiety. Instead, ask them to imagine success. Their responses can be used to set a daily intention.
2. Each morning, students can sit quietly and reflect for a few minutes deciding on how they want to feel about the day ahead of them, specifically how they want to prepare for future assessments. There is a saying in yogic philosophy: “As you think, so you become.” Think in terms of positive and success is likely, just as the opposite is true.
3. Allow students time to imagine success. They may ask themselves:
 - a. What will I feel as I learn I’ve been successful?
 - b. How will I feel as I realize I can answer the questions on the exam?

Having the mindfulness to envision success is a powerful tool to create confident feelings on a daily basis.

4. *Use of a positive phrase or mantra helps to bring attention away from the anxiety and to the present moment. Some phrases students use include:*
 - a. *I am successful.*
 - b. *I feel relaxed and ready for this assessment.*
 - c. *I am confident in my abilities.*
5. Share concerns or fears with someone who listens with understanding—a friend, parent or counselor perhaps.
6. Practice healthy physical habits. Sleep during revision times essential. Set aside at least eight hours of sleep each night prior to an exam. Eat well and keep hydrated.
7. During revision sessions, sit in a relaxed, comfortable posture, breathing through the nose, gently close your eyes and recall the information in your mind. Breathing through the nose, alone, creates a sense of calm. Recalling the information with a quiet mind helps cement it into the memory.
8. Prior to beginning the exam, practice any one of the relaxing breathing exercises provided. Exercises like belly breathing or three-part breath bring in up to 7x more oxygen to the brain and blood cells. Alternate nostril breathing balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, maintaining balance in the brain. The wake-up breath energizes the body and reduce lethargy.

Breathing Techniques for Relaxation

Belly Breathing (deep abdominal breathing): *A calming and grounding breath good for anxiety, anger, nervousness and restlessness.*

1. The best way to practice this is lying down on your back; however, a comfortable seated posture works well too. Two options for hand placement: either both hands gently placed on the belly or gently place one hand just below your navel and the other hand on your chest, over your breastbone. This is a tangible way for students to feel the movement of the breath.
2. Open your mouth and gently sigh, “aaahhhh.” With the sigh, allow the shoulders to relax down, away from the ears.
3. Now close your mouth and **slowly** inhale through the nostrils, pushing your stomach out as you breathe in. Inhale deeply, filling the belly up with air as you would a balloon. The belly expands and fills. You’ve reached maximum capacity when you can comfortably stop without bringing the air into the chest cavity.
4. Pause briefly and exhale slowly and deeply from the nose. Feel the belly collapse toward the spine.
5. Repeat for 10-12 breaths.

Note: It is possible that students will experience reverse breathing, where the belly collapses on the inhale rather than rises and fills. It is important that students are patient with themselves as they learn the proper technique. As students improve over time, they can begin to extend the length of the inhalation and exhalation following a 1:2 ration. For example, inhale for 3 counts, exhale for 6 counts.

Three-Part Breath (a technique to use once belly breathing is mastered): This calming breath promotes proper diaphragmatic breathing, relaxes the mind and body, oxygenates the blood and purges the lungs of residual carbon dioxide.

1. The best way to practice this is lying down on your back; however, a comfortable seated posture works well too. Gently place one hand just below your navel and the other hand on your chest, over your breastbone. This is a tangible way for students to feel the movement of the breath.
2. Begin by observing the natural inhalation and exhalation of your breath without changing anything. If you find yourself distracted by the thoughts in your mind, acknowledge them and then let them go, bringing your attention back to the breath.
3. Begin with belly breathing for 3-5 breaths.

4. On the next inhale, fill the belly up as you would in belly breathing. Then when the belly is full, draw in a little more breath and let that air expand into the rib cage causing the ribs to widen apart.
5. On the exhale from the nostrils, let the air go first from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together, and then from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine.
6. Repeat this deep breathing into the belly and rib cage for about five breaths.
7. On the next inhale, fill the belly and rib cage up with air as described above. Then draw in just a little more air and let it fill the upper chest, all the way up to the collarbones, causing the area around the heart (referred to as “the heart center” in yoga), expand and rise.
8. On the exhale from the nostrils, let the breath go first from the upper chest, allowing the heart center sink back down, then from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together. Finally, let the air go from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine.
9. You are practicing the three-part breath. Continue at your own pace, eventually coming to let the three parts of the breath happen smoothly without pausing.
10. Continue for another 8-12 breaths.

Alternate Nostril Breathing: *A calming breath that soothes anxiety and stress, balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain as well as the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, and it promote clear thinking.*

1. Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position or on a chair with both feet on the floor.
2. Using your right hand, fold your pointer and middle fingers into your palm, leaving your thumb, ring finger, and pinky sticking up.
3. Bring your thumb to the right side of your nose and your ring finger and pinky to the left side.
4. Inhale, then close off your right nostril with your thumb.
5. Exhale through your left nostril.
6. Inhale through your left nostril, then close off your left nostril with your ring finger and pinky.
7. Open and exhale through your right nostril.
8. Inhale through your right nostril.

9. Close off your right nostril with your thumb.
10. Open and exhale through your left nostril.
11. Inhale through your left nostril.
12. Continue this pattern for another 7-10 times.

Wake-Up Breath: *This breath is designed to energize the body and promote clarity in the brain and reduce lethargy.*

1. Begin by standing up. Feet firmly grounded into the earth.
2. Inhale through the nose as you raise both arms overhead, fingers spread.
3. Close the thumbs into the palms, then fold the fingers over the thumb.
4. Exhale through the mouth with a sigh (“aaahhh”) as you pull the arms down to chest level.
5. Open your fists.
6. Repeat steps 2-6 for 5-7 breaths. All ages of kids like to do this and get louder with the exhale of each breath. Have fun with this and let them let it out!

Resources for Relaxation and Mindfulness



Heather Sheridan

I am the grade 9 counsellor at CDNIS and a full-time mother to three daughters, ages 14, 10 and 5. I first discovered Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in 1996 in graduate school and took the course again last year in Hong Kong. I discovered the many benefits of yoga as a school counsellor at the International School of Brussels when pregnant with my first daughter in the late 90's. Since then, I became a certified yoga teacher and am currently teaching classes in Yoga for Relaxation, Yin Yoga, Mindful Meditation and Teen Yoga. My personal practice includes daily meditation, meditative runs and a regular Hatha yoga practice. I can be reached at heathersheridan@cdnis.edu.hk.

The following is a list of trainings that I have completed and drawn upon for my personal practice and for the contents of this presentation as well as my teaching of private classes and with students at The Canadian International School of Hong Kong (CDNIS).

1. *Integral Hatha Yoga Teacher Training* (www.yogaville.org).
2. *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Eight Week Program* (<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress/index.aspx>).
3. *Teen Yoga Teacher Training by Erin Lila Wilson* (<http://www.erinlilawilson.com>).
4. *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction in Hong Kong* (<http://www.mindfulness.hk/en/home>).
5. *Mindfulness Matters Mindfulness Training for Children* (<http://www.academyformindfulteaching.com>).
6. *Raja Yoga Teacher Training* (www.hershayoga.com)

The following list comprises resources I regularly use or recommend:

Curriculum:

<http://learning2breathe.org/> (easy to follow, very reasonably priced, MBSR-based)

Apps:

- The Mindfulness App
- Simply Being
- Headspace
- Meditate
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Calm
- Breathe2Relax

- Omvana
- Take A Break!
There are tons more, but these are the best rated and the ones I've had the most experience with either on my own or with colleagues.

Books:

- *Living the Mindful Way*
- Any book by Thich Nhat Hanh, though I'm partial to *Peace is Every Step* and *The Miracle of Mindfulness*
- Any book by Jon Kabat-Zinn, though I'm partial to *Arriving At Your Own Door* and *Full Catastrophe Living*
- Mark Williams of DotB fame has a great resource he co-wrote with many other mindful leaders: *The Mindful Way Through Depression* and on his own, *Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world*
- *Get Some Headspace* (from the creator of Headspace app)
Again, loads more, but I'm a fan of the three authors mentioned above--THN, JKZ and Mark Williams.

iTunes U.:

- Mindfulness Meditations by UCLA
- Mindfulness Meditation at the Hammer by UCLA
- Lots from UCLA on iTunes U

I've downloaded many of these and will often listen to the while I run as a way to get out of my head.

Loads of TedTalks on the topic

Here's a website to try MBSR on your own: <http://palousemindfulness.com/>

<https://chopracentermeditation.com/>

Positive and Negative Coping Skills to Manage Stress

Positive and Negative Coping Skills

People react differently to stressful situations. Following is a list of what would be considered "positive" responses.

**First print out the following form, then check off the appropriate response for each of these. If there are other positive ways that you deal with stress, please list them at the bottom of the list.

Response	NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN
Meditate	_____	_____	_____
Stretch	_____	_____	_____
Engage in progressive muscle relaxation	_____	_____	_____
Listen to music	_____	_____	_____
Exercise aerobically	_____	_____	_____
Watch television	_____	_____	_____
Go to the movies	_____	_____	_____
Read	_____	_____	_____
Work on puzzles or play games	_____	_____	_____
Go for a leisurely walk	_____	_____	_____
Go to a health club	_____	_____	_____
Relax in a steam room or sauna	_____	_____	_____
Spend time alone	_____	_____	_____
Go fishing or hunting	_____	_____	_____
Participate in some form of recreational activity such as golf	_____	_____	_____
Do some work in the yard	_____	_____	_____
Socialize with friends	_____	_____	_____
Sit outside and relax	_____	_____	_____
Engage in a hobby	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Listed below are some negative ways (risky behaviors) of reacting to stress. Check off the appropriate column for each of these. If there are other negative ways you react to stress, list these at the bottom of the list.

Response	Never	Sometimes	Often
Act violently	_____	_____	_____
Yell at someone	_____	_____	_____
Overeat	_____	_____	_____
Do not eat for long periods	_____	_____	_____
Drink for excessive amount of alcohol	_____	_____	_____
Drink lots of coffee	_____	_____	_____
Smoke tobacco	_____	_____	_____
Kick something	_____	_____	_____
Throw something	_____	_____	_____
Drive fast in a car	_____	_____	_____
Pace up and down	_____	_____	_____
Bite your fingernails	_____	_____	_____
Take tranquilizers	_____	_____	_____
Take valium or other drugs	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

You should compare the number of positive and negative responses. If your negative responses outnumber your positive responses, you have reason to be concerned about your stress level.

You will need to try some of the positive responses in an attempt to reduce your level of stress.

Source: http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0079876543/student_view0/junior_year-999/living13/coping_skills.html

Modified from Anspaugh DJ, Hamrick MH, Rosato FD: *Wellness: concepts and applications*, St. Louis, 1991, Mosby.

