

# Mindfulness in Afterschool

A 16-Session Curriculum of Mindfulness  
Activities for Young People in  
Afterschool Programs



**TEMESCAL** Associates



Connecting Best Thinking to  
Strategy and Practice



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Developed by Temescal Associates  
in partnership with  
Mindful Impact



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# Mindfulness in Afterschool

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## About Temescal Associates

Temescal Associates is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who are serious about improving the lives of young people. Their clients include leaders of youth serving institutions and organizations, school and youth program practitioners, public and private funders, intermediary organizations, and policy makers. Their work ranges from building large-scale youth and community initiatives to providing services to young people on a day-to-day basis. To accomplish this, Temescal Associates draws on a pool of gifted and highly experienced consultants who excel at eliciting the internal knowledge and wisdom of those they work with while introducing new knowledge and strategies that can transform the day-to-day practices that lead to improved youth outcomes. For more information, visit [www.temescalassociates.com](http://www.temescalassociates.com).

## About this Curriculum

Mindfulness training for young people has been successfully used by schools across the country to help young people during the school day. These mindfulness sessions have helped young people better pay attention in the classroom, control their impulses and anger, reduce their stress levels, and create a healthier school community. Our belief is that extending mindfulness to the afterschool setting will have similar results.

This 16-session curriculum is designed to accompany the *Mindfulness in Afterschool* training offered by Temescal Associates. The number of sessions conducted each week (1 or 2 per week) is the decision of the program leader. Each session should run between 20–25 minutes. Each session is preceded by a photograph or drawing. This drawing can be shared with the group of young people as a clue to the next session – a device designed to peak their curiosity and allow them to predict what the clue signifies in terms of the next session.







# Session 1: Hello Brain! - I'm Listening...

## Learning Objectives:

- Youth will understand what a brain expert is and how we are going to become them
- Youth will be able to identify 2 parts of the brain:
  - Cortex and Amygdala
- Youth will learn how to pay attention to sound

## Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A water bottle filled with sand or glitter
- A simple map of the brain
- The Brain Story Script
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

## Why:

*Background* - Youth have a natural curiosity about their brain and how their brain works. This lesson sets the groundwork and mindset for investigation of how mindfulness matters for their day-to-day lives.

*Context* - Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment without judgment. Through mindfulness we practice placing our attention on physical sensations. The first sense we focus on is hearing.

## How:

### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

*Say: "Today we begin our journey as brain experts! We have a question to answer. It is: How can we help our brains make wise choices? Turn to someone next to you and come up with three ways you know right now to help your brain make a wise choice."*

Have three youth give their answer to the question.

Say: *"Those are GREAT ways to help your brain make a wise choice. What does wise mean?"*

*"We are going to use this time to explore all the different ways we can help our brain make wise choices.*

*Everyone stretch their arms in the air over your head. Place one hand on your heart. Repeat after me: I have the power to make wise choices! Now sit down like me (pick up one foot and cross it over the other foot, slowly sink to the ground, you will be seated in a cross legged position sometimes known as criss-cross apple sauce)."*

## **2. Story**

With script in hand say, *"Once upon a time, there was a brain. The brain is made up of a lot of different structures. The limbic system controls our emotions. The amygdala (which means almond in Latin) is an almond shaped structure that reacts to danger and threat."*

Point to two youth and ask them to come up and make the shape of an almond with their arms and bodies.

Say, *"The amygdala--which means? (youth should call out Almond!) acts as the brain's security guard and gets the body ready to defend against danger."*

Point to two other youth and ask them to stand next to the Almond as body-guards.

Give the four youth a line, *"Stop! Danger!"* and have them say it together.

*"This is great! Because when the threat is real--like being attacked by a tiger--everyone ROAR like a tiger--Amygdala and body-guards say, Stop! Danger!--Great, take a bow and let's give them a hand! You can sit down now.*

*When the threat is real, we need to be ready! Ready to do what? That's right--RUN or protect yourself! What kinds of things does your body do when you are prepared to run or protect yourself?*

*So a funny thing happens when your brain is telling your body to run or fight--Your brain stops any information from getting to the front of your brain, that's called the pre-frontal cortex--used for reasoning and judgment. So you actually cannot, learn, or pay attention or even hear when you are afraid or upset.*

*This is important information because the amygdala (which is shaped like a ?) Is a really, really old part of the brain and therefore pretty rusty. So, a LOT of times it reacts like you are being attacked by a tiger when really what happened was your baby sister took your ball, or someone called you a name, or you got a bad grade on your test when you studied really hard.*

*This is kind of what happens in your brain when you're upset."*

Shake the bottle with sand and glitter.

*"All the information is swooshing around and we can't think clearly, pay attention or learn.*

*Can anyone think of time when they were so worried or upset or mad that your mind was working like the shaken bottle? What helped you think more clearly?"*

### **3. Connect and Practice**

*Say, "We're here to practice mindfulness which can help us think more clearly. If we are thinking more clearly, can our brain make wise choices?"*

*What is mindfulness? Mindfulness means paying attention. One thing we can do is learn to become present. Being present means being here, In mindfulness there is a specific way to do it. I call it the 5 Ss. Right now we are just going to do four.*

- *Straight back*
- *Still*
- *Silent*
- *Soft breathing*

*Now we are going to learn to pay attention to sound.*

*Listen to this. (Ring the bell).*

*What do you think? How did that make you feel?*

*Want to hear it again? This time let's listen to the sound with our eyes shut—that's the 5<sup>th</sup> S. Raise your hand when you don't hear the sound anymore.*

*Did you notice anything different between listening with our eyes opened or closed?*

*Now let's close our eyes and listen to any sounds you hear—they can be sounds inside the room, outside the, or even sounds from your own body. Let's listen for 30 seconds."*

After 30 seconds say: *"Eyes open, what did you hear?"*

*Say, "How many of you play sports or an instrument? What do you need to do to get better at the sport or instrument? It's the same with mindfulness, to get better at mindfulness, I'd like you to practice listening to sounds between now and the next time I see you; walking home, on the bus, where you live. Next time you can tell me what you heard."*

### **Reflect**

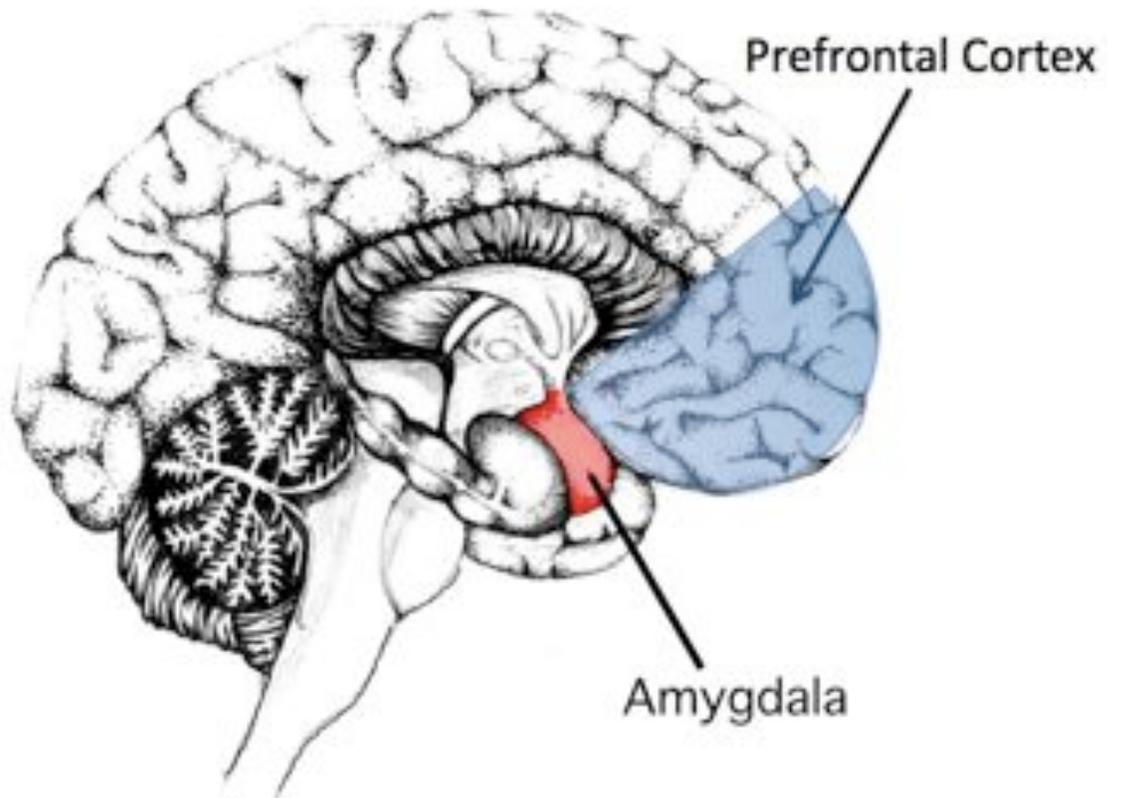
*Say, "So—how do you think paying attention to sound helps our brain make wise choices?"*

*Each time we meet for mindfulness, you will get a chance to write in a journal. The journal is just for you. Today I'd like for you to write or draw your brain and what it listened to today.*

*To end, let's practice listening one more time. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."*

Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, *"Thank you so much. I had so much fun!"*

## Simple Map of the Brain









## Session 2: Come On Brain—Just Breathe!

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to focus on the breath
- Youth will identify what happens in the mind when attempting to focus on the breath

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - Focusing our attention is a learned behavior. Our mind has a natural tendency to wander during our attempts to focus. This is what the mind is built to do! We train our minds by noticing that we are thinking and re-focus our attention on our breath—just this one breath in and this one breath out.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

*Say: "Hello! Let's get started. Everyone stretch their arms in the air over your head. Place one hand on your heart. Repeat after me: I have the power to make wise choices! Now sit down like me (pick up one foot and cross it over the other foot, slowly sink to the ground, you will be seated in a cross legged position sometimes known as criss-cross apple sauce)."*

*Say: "Who practiced listening to sounds? Can you share what you heard?"*

Hear from three or four youth.

*Say: "How did it feel when you were just listening to sound? When we feel relaxed, we are helping the body guards of our brain relax. How does that help our brain make wise choices?"*

## 2. Connect and Practice

Say, "Today we are going to focus on our breath. I'll ring the bell to start and then we'll just pay attention to our breath for 30 seconds. Let's get into our 5 S bodies:

- *Straight back*
- *Still*
- *Silent*
- *Soft Breath*
- *Shut eyes"*

Ring the bell. After 30 seconds say, "I'll ring the bell. When you can't hear it anymore, raise your hand and open your eyes (ring the bell). What was that like? How did it make you feel to focus on your breath? Was it hard to do? Did anyone have any thoughts while they were breathing?"

Let's try this again. This time, everyone put their hand on their belly. Take some breaths in and out. Now put your hand on your chest and take some breaths in and out. Put your hand in front of your nose and breath in and out. Now, where do you feel your breath the most? In your belly, your chest or your nose? Take a minute to close your eyes and decide where you feel it the most.

Everyone put your hand on the place where you feel your breath the most. Let's focus on our breath again for 30 seconds. I'll ring the bell to get us started (ring the bell)."

After 30 seconds say, "I'll ring the bell, when you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."

### Reflect

Say, "Who wants to share how that was different from the first time? What did it feel like to focus on your breath? How does it help our brains make wise choices? When might it be good for us to focus on our breath?"

Before we do Mindfulness again, I'd like you to practice taking some mindful breaths or listening to sounds. Each time we meet, we'll spend some time just focusing on our breath.

Today I'd like for you to write or draw where you feel your breath the most—at your nose, your chest or your belly.

*To end, let's practice mindful breathing one more time for 30 seconds. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell twice—once to signal the beginning of the practice and again to signal the end of the practice. When you hear the second bell, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."*

Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, *"Thank you so much!"*







## Session 3: Come On Brain—Get Happy!

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to practice gratitude
- Youth will understand the connection to feeling positive emotions and the physical effects on the body.

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - Gratitude brings us happiness and boosts other positive emotions. Feeling positive emotions helps to strengthen the immune system, lowers blood pressure and makes us less bothered by pain. This lesson creates the groundwork for a gratitude practice.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

*Say: "Hello! Today we are going to help our brains be happier! Does anyone remember what our question for investigation is? That's right: How can we help our brains make wise choices? Do you remember what we did last time we were together? Turn to your partner and come up with three things we did."*

Have three youth give their answers to the question: What did we do last time we were together?

*Say: "Excellent—you are all on your way to becoming brain experts."*

*Everyone stretch their arms in the air over your head. Place one hand on your heart. Repeat after me: I have the power to make wise choices! Now sit down like me (pick up one foot and cross it over the other foot, slowly sink to the ground, you will be seated in a cross legged position sometimes known as criss-cross apple sauce)."*

Say: *"Who practiced listening to sounds or breathing? Can you share how that was?"*

Hear from three or four youth.

## **2. Connect and Practice**

Say, *"Who knows what gratitude means? That's right, it means being thankful. Let's get on our 5 S bodies:*

- *Straight back*
- *Still*
- *Silent*
- *Soft Breath*
- *Shut eyes*

*I'll ring the bell. Listen to the sound until you can't hear it anymore (ring bell)."*

*When bell ends, say, "Stay with your eyes closed and stay silent. I'm going to ask you some questions, but I don't want you to answer out loud just yet. We will have time to talk in a moment. I want you to think about someone you see every day that you love very much. It could be your mom or dad, it could be your brother or sister, it could be an auntie or an uncle, a grandma or grandpa, it could be a friend of yours, it could even be a pet you have. For now, just picture one person or your pet. Take a deep breath in and out. Think about what that person or pet does that makes you happy. Take one more deep breath in and out.*

*Now, I'd like you to think about where you live. I'd like you to think about your most favorite room. Maybe it's a bedroom, or the kitchen, or the living room. Pretend you are in that room right now. Is there an object in that room that makes you happy? Maybe it's a picture or a chair or a bed or a toy. Take a deep breath in and out. Think about what you like so much about that object. Take a deep breath in and out.*

*Now, I'd like you to think about yourself. What is it about yourself that you are thankful for? It could be that you are really good at something, like sports, or school, or cooking or coloring. It could be that you are always kind to people. Maybe you're thankful for your strong legs or arms. Right now choose one thing about yourself that you are thankful for. Take a deep breath in and out.*

*I'll ring the bell, listen to it from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes.*

*We can be thankful or have gratitude for so many things! We can have gratitude for people—who would like to share the person they love very much? What is it that person does to make you so happy? (Based on what the youth say, your wrap up can be phrased like this example: Yes, Juan, we can all be grateful for parents who feed us good food!)*

*We can be thankful or have gratitude for objects—who would like to share an object where they live? What is it about that object that makes you so happy? (Based on what the youth say, your wrap up can be phrased like this example: Yes, Jessica, we can all be grateful for cozy places to sleep!)*

*We can be thankful or have gratitude for ourselves—who would like to share what they were grateful about themselves? (Based on what the youth say, your wrap up can be phrased like this example: Yes, Kameesha, we can all be grateful for our ability to do something really well!)"*

### **Reflect**

*Say, "How did that practice make you feel? Wow! We just helped our brains feel happier and when we did that our bodies felt more relaxed! Did you know that practicing gratitude can make you live 7 years longer? How do you think being thankful or practicing gratitude can do that? How does it help our brains make wise choices?"*

*Before we do Mindfulness again, I'd like you to practice gratitude or listening to sounds.*

*Today I'd like for you to write or draw three things you are grateful or thankful for.*

*To end, let's practice mindful breathing. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell twice, once to start our practice and once to signal the end our practice. When you hear the bell the second time, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."*

*Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, "Thank you so much. I'm looking forward to next time!"*







## Session 4: Thinking Kind Thoughts

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to practice heartfulness and experience kind thoughts
- Youth will understand the connection between thinking kind thoughts and their own sense of happiness, connection and compassion.

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - Kind thoughts lead to happiness, compassion and empathy. Practicing heartfulness in this way releases the feel-good neurotransmitter dopamine in our brains. Kind thoughts can help lead to selfless acts, interconnectedness, and an ability to notice your impact on others. In this practice, be sure to guide children to visualize someone they see often. If they choose a loved one they've lost, there might not be space to help them process big feelings. If they do get sad, be sure to validate the feeling and practice empathy by saying something like "I see that you are sad because your grandma passed away. I can understand why you are sad. I am glad that you're here safe with us. You are not alone with your feelings."

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

Say: *"Hello! Today we are going to help our brains think kind thoughts! First let's wake up our brains and help them focus by singing a song most of you know from when you were really little."*

Lead "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" song while criss crossing your arms between each gesture. For example, when you move your hands from your head to your shoulders, cross your right arm over your left. Cross back the other way before touching your knees. Continue the pattern as you connect with each body part in the song. Sing a second time through even faster.

Say: "Good! Now take a deep breath bringing your shoulders to your ears...and release it! One more big breath...release and sit. Criss crossing our hands in front of our bodies is a great way to help our brains focus. And what is it we're trying to help our brains do by practicing mindfulness? Right! Make wise choices."

Say: "Who here practiced gratitude this week? Turn to someone next to you and share one thing that you noticed you were grateful for."

Hear gratitudes from three or four youth.

## **2. Connect and Practice**

Say, "Who here knows that we all have the power to think kind thoughts? Well, those kind thoughts can help us do kind things and feel more connected to each other? Let's practice. Remember our 5 S's:

- *Straight back*
- *Still*
- *Silent*
- *Soft Breath*
- *Shut eyes*

I'll ring the bell. This time, practice listening with one hand on your heart. Listen to the sound until you can't hear it anymore (ring bell)."

When bell ends, say, "Stay with your eyes closed and stay silent.

With your eyes still closed, try to picture someone in your life who you get to see almost everyday. Imagine that you can see them before you and it makes you so happy to be with them. Visualize them healthy and strong.

Picture a huge smile on their face- they are so happy and doing something they love.

Imagine that they are surrounded by a feeling of calm...of peace. Their heart is full of love.

With your hand still on your heart, send kind thoughts to the special person you are picturing. Imagine your heart getting so full of love, that you just have to share it. Your heart is overflowing with kindness, and we'll send out kind thoughts together. You can repeat after me.

- *May you be happy. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May you be healthy. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May you be safe. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May you have peace. (wait as kids repeat)*

*Keep letting the kind thoughts flow from your heart to theirs while I ring the bell. When you can't hear it anymore...open your eyes and raise your hands.*

*Turn to the person next to you and share with them who you sent kind thoughts to.*

*How was it to practice thinking kind thoughts? (Choose 2 kids to share) How do you feel in your body after that practice? (Choose 2 kids to share) Isn't it amazing that in only one little minute, you could help yourselves to feel so happy? That's because when we think kind thoughts, our brains produce a special chemical called dopamine. That's how our brain encourages us think and act with kindness. When we do, we feel good!*

*Now, let's practice sending kind thoughts to ourselves. Remember our 5 S's. Close your eyes and repeat after me.*

- *May I be happy. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May I be healthy. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May I be safe. (wait as kids repeat)*
- *May I have peace. (wait as kids repeat)*

*Now, open your eyes, wrap your arms around yourself and give a big hug."*

### **Reflect**

*Say, "Wow! How did it feel to think kind thoughts about yourself? How could thinking kind thoughts about ourselves and others help our brains make wise choices?"*

*Before we do Mindfulness again, I'd like you to practice sending kind thoughts to yourself and others.*

*Today I'd like for you to draw 2 big hearts. In one heart, write or draw the things you love about the special person you sent kind thoughts to today. In the other heart, write or draw the things you love about yourself.*

*To end, let's practice mindful breathing. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell twice, once to start our practice and once to signal the end our practice. When you hear*

*the bell the second time, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."*

Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, *"Thank you so much. I can't wait to see you brain experts next time!"*





## Session 5: Hey Brain- How Does My Body FEEL?

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn what a sensation is and how to notice them in our bodies without judgment
- Youth will practice doing a body scan to support body awareness and curiosity about how our body feels.

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal
- Several objects with different textures (pinecone, smooth stone, cotton ball, etc)

### Why:

*Background & Context* - A body scan is a mindful practice with many benefits. It's a way to get in touch with the sensations in our body, train our attention, relax, get curious and notice the feelings in our body without judgment. Body scans are the foundation for mindful movement.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

*Say: "Hello future brain experts! Today, we get to practice something called a body scan, but first- let's warm up with a little tapping. Just follow me. Hold out one hand and cup it, like you are holding a palm full of water. Now take that cupped hand and gently slap it down and over your other arm. Be gentle with yourself- the cup should make a great sound but no hurting. While you tap down this arm, everybody say- this is my arm, (kids repeat) my arm belongs to me (kids repeat). Good! Now switch to the other arm- This is my arm, (kids repeat) my arm belongs to me. (kids repeat). Keep tapping over your chest, gently down your belly. Now to your legs. Say- these are my legs. (kids repeat) My legs belong to me (kids repeat). Good! Now go up the back of your legs, over your hips, up your back and land on your shoulders. Everybody say- These are my shoulders (kids repeat) My shoulders belong to me (kids repeat). Very gently, tap the back of your neck with your fingertips. And up*

*to the top of your head, over your face- very gently. Now pause with your palms over your eyes. Deep breathe in and out. Move your arms to your sides. And sit. Wonderful!"*

*"Did anyone send some kind thoughts last week? Who did you send kind thoughts to?" Choose 3-4 kids to share.*

*"With the kids around you, make a circle of 3, than pause and look at me. Great! I'll go around and give each small group an object. I want you to pass it around your group and describe how it feels inside your hand. The sensation your hand feels holding the object may be something like spiky, tingly, smooth, wet, hot, cold, heavy or light. Once you have your object, you may begin passing and describing." Collect objects and ask the group to come back to sitting in a circle.*

## **2. Connect and Practice**

*Say: "Today, we are taking a tour of our own bodies. I'll lead you to notice how each part of your body feels and you'll notice any sensations- like tingly, smooth, hot, cold, heavy, light or nothing at all. There is nothing you have to do when you notice how your body is feeling, just be aware of the sensation. You are getting to know your body- like you're meeting a new friend.*

*Remember our 5 S's:*

- *Straight back*
- *Still*
- *Silent*
- *Soft Breath*
- *Shut eyes*

*I'll ring the bell. This time, practice listening with one hand on your heart. Listen to the sound until you can't hear it anymore (ring bell)."*

*When bell ends, say, "Stay with your eyes closed and stay silent."*

*"With your mind, start to notice your feet. Wiggle your toes without moving your shoes. What sensations do you feel? Are there soft socks your feet are touching? Are they touching the smooth, cool floor?"*

*How about your knees? What sensations are in your knees? Maybe tingling, warmth or nothing at all.*

*Notice your legs.*

*Your belly and put a hand on your belly as an anchor. Take one mindful breath.*

*Notice your shoulders. What sensations do you feel? Are your shoulders relaxed or are they tense and crunched up near your ears?*

*How are your hands feeling?*

*Your fingernails?*

*Neck.*

*Face. Put your hands over your eyes and press lightly. Now move them back just a little and let your eyelashes flutter against them. Good, and put your hands back in your lap.*

*Notice any sensations in your head. Can you feel your hair without touching it?*

*Notice your ears. Are they ringing? Tingly? Cool?"*

Ring the bell and wait for kids to open their eyes and raise their hands.

### **Reflect**

Say, "What sensations did you notice in your body?" Choose 3-4 youth to answer. "Where did you feel the most sensations? Did anything change once you noticed it?"

*"Before we do Mindfulness again, I'd like you to practice noticing the sensations in your body. When you go to bed, you can use a body scan to help you fall asleep. Anytime you are sitting and waiting for something to begin, you can breathe and practice this mindful body scan. You can teach this body scan to someone in your family. It might help them to fall asleep easier, relax or be more calm.*

*Today I'd like you to draw a picture of yourself- your whole body, in fact. Draw special symbols to show the sensations in the different body parts. Like squiggles in the arms if you felt tickling or the color blue around your feet if they felt cold. Then write about all the ways we use our bodies- running, climbing, making art, eating food. Being mindful helps us notice and take better care of our bodies.*

*To end, let's practice mindful breathing. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell twice, once to start our practice and once to signal the end our practice. When you hear the bell the second time, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes."*

Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, "Thank you so much. I'll see you soon to practice more mindfulness!"





## Session 6: Come On Brain—Get Focused!

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn to notice how our brain wanders.
- Youth will learn one strategy to help us focus on our breathing.

### Materials or props:

- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - One main job of the brain is to think, plan, and reflect. When we pause to focus on our breath, we notice that the brain is thinking, thinking, thinking! Our job when doing mindful breathing is to notice that we are thinking and gently guide the mind's attention back to the breath.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Invite youth to stand up and make a circle.

Say: *"Hello! Today we are going to investigate what our brains are doing when we get distracted."*

*Everyone stretch their arms in the air over your head. Place one hand on your heart. Repeat after me: I have the power to make wise choices! Now sit down like me (pick up one foot and cross it over the other foot, slowly sink to the ground, you will be seated in a cross legged position sometimes known as criss-cross apple sauce)."*

Say: *"Who practiced gratitude or the body scan? Can you share how that was?"*

Hear from three or four youth.

#### 2. Connect and Practice

Say, *"What activity do you do that captures your full attention?"*

Hear from two or three youth. They will say things like watching TV or playing video games.

Say, "Sometimes when you are doing those things, are you so focused on something else that you don't even hear your mom or dad or auntie or grandma calling you for dinner? You are so focused that NOTHING distracts you.

Now, can you think of a time when you are doing something and you get distracted a lot?

Let's get curious about what's going on in our brains when we get distracted and how we help our brains focus.

Let's get on our 5 S bodies:

- Straight back
- Still
- Silent
- Soft Breath
- Shut eyes

I'll ring the bell. Listen to the sound until you can't hear it anymore (ring bell). We are going to practice mindful breathing for 30 seconds. Notice what's happening in your mind. I'll ring the bell at the end to let you know when time is up."

When bell ends, say, "What happened in your mind? I think I have a way to help get our minds' focused back on our breath when we notice that it has stopped focusing on the breath. When we breathe in, we're going to say in our minds—breathing in; when we breathe out, we're going to say in our minds—breathing out. Are you ready to try? Let's do one minute of mindful breathing. We'll say in our minds breathing in and breathing out. When we find our minds wandering, we'll just come back to saying—breathing in and breathing out.

I'll ring the bell to get us started and again at the end."

When the bell ends, say: "Was time two different than time one? How was it different?"

### **Reflect**

Say, "Where in your life can you see that it might be important to help our brains focus attention, just like when we're watching TV or playing a video game?"

Hear from some youth.

*Say, "Focusing your attention can help us calm down, do our homework, pay attention in class, and help you get better at doing things you really want to do well like playing sports, or dancing or playing an instrument."*

*Before we do Mindfulness again, I'd like you to practice just noticing when you get distracted—that's it—just say to yourself—Distracted!*

*For your journal, draw a picture of yourself doing something with your full attention or draw a picture of yourself distracted.*

*To end, let's practice mindful breathing. Let's get on our 5 S bodies. Straight back, still, silent, soft breath, shut eyes. I'll ring the bell twice, once to start our practice and once to signal the end our practice. When you hear the bell the second time, listen from beginning to end. When you can't hear it anymore raise your hand and open your eyes. Remember to say breathing in, breathing out."*

*Ring bell. When everyone has their hands up, say, "Thank you so much. I'm looking forward to next time!"*







## Session 7: Here Goes My Brain...Thinking!

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to notice our thinking- past/present/future or first thought
- Youth will practice kindly labeling or noting our thinking and bringing our awareness back to our breath
- Youth will understand that we can train our brains to pay attention to our breath instead of our thoughts and this helps us feel calm instead of stressed or worried.
- Youth will explore playful and mindful ways to clear our minds of thoughts

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - It can be a huge relief for kids to learn that thoughts are just thoughts- they come and go, sometimes they repeat when they don't need to, and they are not always true. This awareness helps kids use their power to self-soothe, stay emotionally regulated and deal with stress.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

*Say: "Hello Brain Experts! I am so happy to see you again. Today, we practice being mindful of our thoughts. Raise your hand if you have a brain that THINKS? Oh, I'm so glad. Everyone's brain is working. Thinking is just what your amazing brain is supposed to do. But who here has ever thought about the same thing over and over...like "will I ever get this homework done?" or "what grade did I get on that test?" and it started to feel like worrying? Right! Or, how about a time when your job was to listen to your coach but your mind was wandering and you were thinking of other things? Mindfulness can help us train our brains to stay focused on the things we are learning, the things that make us feel happy or to clear our minds, thinking of nothing*

*at all. Let's start today by clearing our minds. Please stand up and look at me.*

*Pretend you are dogs who just got a bath. When I ring our bell, shake from head to toe like a wet dog. Be careful not to touch anyone else. When I ring the bell again, please stop and we'll take three breaths together. Ready...go! (ring bell. Wait 15 seconds, than ring again.) Good. Bring your shoulders to your ears and breathe in, let them drop and breathe out...Again...and one more breath. How did that feel? (Take 3 answers) Yes, shaking is one way our bodies love to help our brain relax its thinking.*

*Another way is laughing. Let's play "Laugh Attack!" When I ring the bell, start giggling, laughing and making silly faces. Stay in charge of your bodies at the same time- stand tall like a tree without falling down or touching anyone else. Let yourself laugh until I ring the bell a second time. Then, you will stop and we'll take three breaths together. Ready? Set? Laugh! (ring the bell to begin...wait 15 seconds and ring the bell again) Good. Now put your hand on your belly. Feel it move as you breathe in...and out. Put your hand on your heart. Breathe in...breathe out. Put your hand in front of your nose. Feel the air of your breathe as you breathe in...breathe out. Good and please sit."*

## **2. Connect and Practice (10 minutes)**

*Say: "Shaking awake or laughing are great ways to clear your minds and find a mindful breath before a test, after watching a movie that scared you or if you are bored and daydreaming instead of listening. What are other things you could do to help your brain stay calm and focused when you are feeling stressed? (Take 5 answers) Great ideas! Let's practice a few more.*

*Find your mindful body- straight back, soft breath, be still, silent, shut eyes. Notice your breath for one minute. Say to yourself, "breathing in" when you are breathing in and "breathing out" when you are breathing out. Keep breathing until I invite you to open your eyes. (ring bell and practice for one minute)*

*Please open your eyes. Did anyone notice that your mind started wandering away while you were breathing? This is normal- it happens to most of us. Our minds can wander even if we ask it to stay put.*

*Right now, I am standing up straight in the present moment. My mind is focused on my breath. But if I start thinking, "I wonder what I get to eat for dinner tonight?" (lean to one side as you say this) then my thoughts have*

wandered forward into the...(let them guess) right, future. I can go back to my anchor breath, by saying "thinking, thinking" and get centered again. Everybody say "thinking, thinking." Good.

If my thoughts wander back to "I can't believe my friend said that to me yesterday..." (lean to the other side) than my thoughts have taken me backwards into the...(let them guess) yes, past. I can go back to my anchor breath by saying "worrying, worrying." I could also say "planning, planning" or "imagining, imagining" to note or label whatever my thoughts are doing.

Let's try for one minute. Find your mindful bodies. Anchor your breath with breathing in, breathing out and label your thoughts quietly in your own mind if they pop up." (ring bell)

### **Reflect (5 min)**

Say: "Raise your hand if you stayed in the present moment and no thoughts popped up.

Raise your hand if you noticed a thought.

Raise your hand if your mind wandered into the past? Into the future?

Turn to the person next to you and share one thought that came in while you were breathing. (Help kids find a partner or group of 3 if they are not sure who to share with) Raise your hand if you noted your thinking with "thinking, thinking" "worrying, worrying" or "imagining, imagining?" Fantastic.

You have the power to take charge of your thoughts- especially ones that bother you- by noticing them and practicing mindful breathing. You can also clear your mind by shaking awake or laughing. This week in your journal, write or draw about all the ways you can help your brain relax and focus when you feel stressed. Who has some ideas right now before we say good-bye? (Take 3) Wonderful! See if you can practice one or two of these things before I see you next time.

Let's end with a one minute practice. Use your anchor and say "breathing in, breathing out" to yourself. Note and label your thoughts as they wander away. You have the power to bring them back. That's what makes you brain experts in training. Mindful bodies...and begin (ring bell and practice for one minute.)

*I can't wait to see you next time and hear about the mindful practices you try out!"*





## Session 8: Mindful Seeing

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to look closely with awareness to notice what's around us
- Youth will practice really "seeing" what's around us in our everyday environment
- Youth will understand how mindfully seeing others around us can help us stay safe and have more fun

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Classroom set of everyday object (coin, marble, rock, leaves, pencils)
- Chart paper and markers
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - Awareness is a safety skill that allows kids to notice problems before they start. Really seeing what's around them helps kids identify possible fun as well! Learning to read facial cues and body posture is a key component to social/emotional learning, leading to friendship skills, empathy and the ability to solve social problems. Mindful seeing also sharpens observation skills that lead to better focus and foster visual curiosity that deepens learning.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Say: *"Hello Brain Investigators! What mindful practices have you used since I saw you last? (Take 3 answers)*

*Good! I am so happy to hear you are trying out mindfulness in your everyday life. Let's start with a 2 minute practice. Find your mindful bodies...use your anchor for breathing in, breathing out...bring your mind back to the breath if you start thinking, thinking...I'll ring the bell once to begin and once to end. (ring bell, allow 2 minutes and ring bell again) Good. Please open your eyes and look at me. So far, we know that we have mindful ears that help us...(let*

them fill in the blank). Yes, listen. We also have 5 S's to help us remember our mindful...(wait) of course, bodies. Today, we get to use our eyes and practice mindful SEEING. This is a way of paying attention and noticing the details of what's around you."

## 2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)

Say: "Right now, you are in the same classroom you've been in all year. Probably, you've noticed the \_\_\_\_\_ over there. When you see it, please point to it without talking. Use your awareness to find the \_\_\_\_\_ and point to it. How about the \_\_\_\_\_? Good. That's great awareness and now let's practice using our mindful eyes to really SEE some of the things in this classroom where you've been all year. Please pick a spot in front of you in the room and focus your eyes on an object there. When I ring the bell, you'll practice mindful seeing but noticing all the details you can about this spot. What colors do you see? What textures? What light, shadow, lines, curves, or unique things do you see on or around your object? What is your object touching? Where is there space? If your eyes move away during this practice, kindly bring them right back to focus. Here we go...(ring bell and allow for a 1 minute practice) Great mindful seeing. What did you notice about your object? (Take 3-5 answers) Good!

Let's do another practice. Use your mindful seeing to notice things or people. (Take a wide stance with arms crossed over your belly, a furrowed brow and a frown.) What do you see my legs doing? (Take an answer- encourage scientific observation, like "wide stance" rather than "you look mad") Yes, and how about my arms? (Take an answer) What are my eye brows doing? And my mouth? What about my eyes? If you saw a kid on the playground who looked like this, could you assume they were in a bad mood that day? Sure and you could make the choice to play with other friends until that person is in a better mood.

What if I was kid who looked like this... (Put your head down, hold your wrist like it hurts and wipe away pretend tears) Use your mindful seeing to notice my eyes. What are they doing? How about my hands? What about my shoulders? How do you imagine I am feeling? What could you say if you noticed someone with eyes pointed down, a hand holding their wrist and shoulders hunched? Sure.

Let's do one more. Imagine I was a kid in this afterschool program and I looked like this. (Smile, stand confidently with shoulders back and wave) What do you see my hands doing? My mouth? My eyes? My shoulders? Do I look like

*someone it might be fun to get to know? Sure. If you felt like hanging out, I look friendly and easy to approach. Everybody wave to me and say "Hey, do you want to hang out?" Say, "come sit with me!" Great job."*

### **Reflect (5 min)**

*Say: "You are using your mindful seeing to notice who and what is around you. This can keep you safe from possible problems and help you find the fun you might want to be a part of. What ideas do you have about how mindful seeing could help your brain make wise choices?"*

*(Chart answers)*

*"Now you are thinking like brain experts! Mindful seeing can train your brain to notice what's around you so that you can think and act wisely. Let's do a closing practice. Find your mindful body, but keep your eyes open. Practice SEEING things in the room while staying calm, focused and mindful. (Ring bell and allow for a one minute practice)*

*In your mindful journal, you'll get a chance to practice really SEEING an everyday object. Your job will be to stare at the object mindfully for 1 minute, noticing every detail you can. Then, you'll put the object away and draw a picture of it in your journal. A partner will look at your drawing and describe all the details they see in it. Then, you can bring the object back and together, fill in any details you missed."*







## Session 9: Practicing Kindness

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how kindness is contagious and what effect being kind has on the brain
- Youth will practice noticing how it feels to choose kindness in real life scenarios
- Youth will understand how Practicing kindness gives us the power to make ourselves and others happy.

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - At this point in the mindfulness practice, your kids have a lot of tools in their toolkit! They are noticing themselves, their bodies and their thoughts. They are beginning to be more aware of others, know how to send kind thoughts and are ready to imagine how kind action can make a difference in the world. Mindful action and choosing kindness not only build empathy in kids, but they create a sense of belonging, empowerment and overall happiness. This lesson feeds kids natural curiosity about how the brain connects to feelings, friendships and one another.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

*Say: "Hello everyone. I am so happy to be here with you again. Let's start by reaching your arms around yourself and squeezing in a big hug. Good! Please put your hands by your sides. Let's play a game. I'm going to make a face. Use your mindful seeing to watch me closely. Try to imagine how I'm feeling. Notice how you are feeling while you watch me.*

*(Smile big, giggle, light up your eyes so that you look happy and excited. Notice if kids respond in their faces or mirror the giggling themselves)*

*How does it look like I'm feeling? (Take 2 answers) What did you see with your mindful eyes that helped you know I was happy or excited? (Take 2*

answers) And how did you feel watching me? (Take 2 answers) I wondered about that- some of you started to make the same face I was making, so I thought maybe you felt that way. (Say only if this is true)

Here's another one. Watch closely and really scan your body to notice what feelings come up as you watch. (Suck in your lip, squint your eyes, look down and close down your body as if you are about to cry. Quicken your breath and sag your shoulders as if you are very sad.) How does it look like I'm feeling? Yes, sad. What happened for you when you saw me looking so sad? How did you feel? (Take 3 answers)

Pretend I stubbed my toe really badly. (Make a face like you are in pain) Can you imagine how it hurts? You might even feel a little flinch or flutter in your stomach just thinking about it. This is because your brain is working really well! Our brains have mirror neurons- a kind of nerve cell that helps us copy the feelings others are having around us. When we see someone making a very sad faces, our faces might look sad, too. When we see someone yawn, we usually yawn too. This means our mirror neurons are doing their job. Why do you think our brains have neurons that help us notice and feel what others are feeling? (Take 3 answers)"

## **2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)**

Say: "Have you ever heard someone say that smiling is contagious? That's because of the mirror neurons in our brains. Smiling is contagious, kind words are contagious, kind actions are contagious. Let's make a list of kind actions we have taken in this group. (Chart moments where individual kids or adults in your community showed kindness. This could be big things, like service projects or little things like smiles, high fives or an offer to help. Keep this list visible and add to it over time)

Mindfulness helps our brains make wise choices about how to act in the world. Let's do some mindful listening and imagine different scenarios. Find your mindful bodies...your anchor breath, breathing in and breathing out...

Imagine that you are playing a game with a group of friends. Picture the leader of your group saying no when a new kid wants to join. Imagine that as the new kid walks away, everyone in your group laughs. Maybe you laugh, too or maybe you just watch and do nothing. Notice how this feels for you. Imagine how the kid might feel who walked away.

This time, imagine that you are playing the same game. When a new kid wants to join, the leader of your group still says no, teasing the kid and your

*friends laugh. Imagine you say "please stop." Notice how it feels to stay calm and speak up. Imagine the look on the new kids' face when you say that. Imagine how the new kid might be feeling.*

*Please open your eyes and look at me. What feelings did you notice when you laughed or watched as another kid was teased? (listen and validate each response without judgment)*

*What feelings did you notice when you said "Please Stop?"*

*Choosing kindness isn't always easy. Even if we know the right thing to do, we may not want to do it. How can our brains help us make wise choices?" (Take 2-3 answers)*

### **Reflect (5 min)**

*Say: "Mindfulness can help us choose kindness even when it's hard. The good news is that acts of kindness usually feel good and trains our brains to want to do more kind things. Our mirror neurons inspire us act kindly when we see others being kind. That is a powerful thing!*

*This week in your journal, make a list of all the acts of kindness you do. This could be at home, school or anywhere you go. Write or draw about how it felt to do those things. List kind things you saw other people do. Write or draw about how it felt to see them act kindly.*

*I can't wait to hear how your kindness practice goes. Good-bye and I'll see you next time."*







## Session 10: Being Mindful of Big Feelings

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how practicing mindfulness creates space between a feeling and an action
- Youth will identify and mindfully observe a variety of feelings- some that feel good and some that don't
- Youth will imagine safe ways to express big feelings without hurting others or ourselves

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Waterbottle with glitter and water inside
- Chart paper and markers
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - This lesson has the potential to be the most powerful of all. Now that kids can identify parts of the brain and how each part helps us, these brain experts get to experience this knowledge in action by using all their mindful tools. Learning to be mindful when having big feelings is a skill that kids can really feel benefiting them in their everyday lives. It gives them a greater sense of control as they get to feel in charge of their emotions. Connecting information about how their brain responds under stress to real moments allows kids to experience themselves as scientists. This builds confidence, mastery and more moments of peace and optimism in their lives.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

*Say: "Hello everyone. Did you get a chance to practice being mindful since I saw you last? Turn to someone next you and share one thing you were mindful of. Raise your hand if you need help finding a partner. (wait and assist any kids who need it) I'm so glad you have these mindful moments to talk about! The more mindful we are, the better we feel. But what about when we don't feel good? Who remembers the part of the brain that tries to protect us*

*when we feel frightened or upset? Right, the amygdala and it's shaped like an....almond, right! Remember this?"*

(shake up the water bottle with glitter that you used on the first day)

*"This is what can happen in our brains when we are having a big feeling, like fear or anger. We are not thinking clearly because the amygdala is blocking any information from getting to the...what part of the brain helps us to think logically, decide things or stay focused...our computer...right! The Prefrontal Cortex. It only gets to focus, think clearly or make wise choices when we are calm.*

*Use your mindful eyes to watch the glitter settle in this bottle. (shake again) This is like when our minds are clearing. The amygdala is able to send calm, clear messages now so that the Prefrontal Cortex can receive it and the hippocampus can remember it. Everybody take a deep breath in...and out. Good! Breath is a superpower that helps us get calm and make wise choices.*

*All of us have feelings that come along. Sometimes these feelings feel good. What are feelings that feel good to you?"*

(Take 5 ideas and chart them for the kids to see. If your group has strong regulation skills, have them make a face or frozen statue to show each of these feelings)

Say: *"And how about the feelings that don't feel good?"*

(Take 5 ideas and chart them. Add embarrassed, lonely, mean or rejected if the kids don't come up with them. Do not embody these feelings- writing them up is enough)

## **2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)**

Say: *"Would you please come up and stand right here by me? (invite a mature youth who is able to be calm in front of the group and stand shoulder to shoulder) One of the words on our list is anger. Let's pretend I am the feeling of anger (make an angry face) Is our amygdala activated right now? YES! (to the youth volunteer) Pretend you are our reaction. Without being mindful, how might someone react when they are angry? (take 3 answers) (to the youth volunteer) Pretend we are not being mindful, so our reaction is to throw something. Make a pose to show that and freeze. Good. Without mindfulness, there is not space between our big feeling and our reaction to that feeling. The information in our brains is like glitter in the bottle after we shake it up.*

*Everybody take a deep breath. Calmly say, "angry, angry, angry." Good. Being mindful by breathing and labeling our emotions makes space between our big feeling and our reaction. (to the youth volunteer) Please walk calmly to the other side of the circle, and face me. (to the group) This is our brain with mindfulness. Even if I am angry, (make a face) I can breathe and label my big feeling. Again, say "angry, angry, angry" so there is lots of space between my feeling and my reaction. Now that we ARE being mindful, how might my reaction to anger be? (Take 3 answers and encourage your youth volunteer to act out an idea like "ask for help" or "go on a walk." Encourage a round of applause for your volunteer before asking them to sit)*

*Brain experts, please stand up. If we were on a playground and got super excited about something- make a frozen statue that shows excited...good! What anchor word could you say to yourself and stay calm as you breathe? Right, everyone breathe and calmly say, "excited, excited, excited." You are helping your brain make wise choices about how to ACT excited in way that is still safe. Now, make a frozen statue that shows bored. Breathe mindfully and use the anchor word...(wait for their answer) Right! "bored, bored, bored." Right now, we're saying the anchor words outloud so we can practice. Let's do another sitting down. Imagine you are feeling disappointed. You weren't able do something that you really wanted to do. Let's find our mindful bodies... straight back, be still, be silent, shut eyes and soft breath...breathing in, breathing out,...imagine that you are feeling disappointed and pretend to label that feeling, "disappointed, disappointed, disappointed" as you breathe. Keep breathing, noting thoughts or feelings if they pop up and bring your attention back to your breath. When you can't hear the sound of the bell anymore, open your eyes and raise your hand." (allow for a 2 minute practice before ringing the gong)*

### **Reflect (5 min)**

*Say: "Raise your hand if you were able to use your anchor words to label a thought or feeling. What anchor words did you use? (Take answers like thinking, thinking or excited, excited or imagining, imagining) What happened to that feeling of disappointed while you breathed? Did it change or stay the same? What did you notice?"*

*Isn't it amazing how mindfulness can create space between our feelings and how we react to them? This is why I teach mindfulness- I LOVE how powerful it is and how much power it gives us to make wise choices.*

*In your mindfulness journal, please draw at least 5 faces that show different feelings. Label the feeling underneath your drawings and use colors in the background to represent breath and mindfulness. We will always have feelings. Mindfulness doesn't make them go away- it just helps us know what to do with the feelings we have.*

*See if you can practice being mindful of big feelings this week. I can't wait to hear what happens! See you next time."*





# Session 11: Mindful Bite

## Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn how to notice the flavor, texture and temperature of food as we eat
- Youth will understand how eating mindfully could affect our overall health
- Youth will activate the prefrontal cortex through mindful observation and notation of food qualities

## Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A vibratone
- Enough small morsels of food for each child to get one (chocolate chip, raisin, small pretzel or strawberry- be aware of food allergies!)
- A variety of take-out menus, cereal boxes or packaging from kid-friendly food
- Paper and pencils for noting food descriptors in groups
- Mindful Journal

## Why:

*Background & Context* - Inviting kids to slow down and experience eating mindfully will most likely be new for them. Taking time to taste their food and observe as brain experts can build their descriptive skills, lead to self-regulation and a willingness to try new food. This practice can help them grow an appreciation for healthy eating and plant a seed for tolerance of cultural traditions different from their own.

## How:

### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Say: *"Hello everyone. I am so happy to see you. Today, we get to practice mindful eating. Think for a moment about one thing you have already eaten today. Would someone like to share? (Take 3 answers) Pretend you are eating that thing- for lunch, breakfast or a snack and without talking, show HOW you ate this food."* (wait a few moments as kids act this out)

*"Good! Please take your last pretend bite, stop and look at me. Would you say you ate this food mindfully or without really paying much attention?"*

*Sure! Most people eat quickly without really noticing what goes in our mouths. But guess how long it takes the stomach to send a signal to the brain when it's full? (Take 3 answers) Great guesses! It takes 10-15 minutes for our brains to know when we are full. How could it affect our health if we always eat without being mindful? (Take 3 answers)*

*Let's practice mindful tasting today."*

## **2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)**

*"Find your mindful bodies. Breathing in, breathing out. Let's sit and notice our breath for 3 minutes. When we're done, I'll ring the bell. When you can't hear it anymore, please open your eyes and raise your hand. (Lead this visualization as part of the 3 minute practice)*

*Imagine that I gave you a lemon. Picture it's bright yellow color...the round edges. Imagine the bright, fresh smell as I cut into it. Next, imagine bringing a slice of lemon to your lips. Picture yourself slowly putting the lemon into your mouth and bite down into the pulp. Feel the sour juice on your tongue. Notice the feel of the bitter lemon rind on the edge of your teeth. Take time to savor this bite- enjoy it!"*

(ring the bell and wait for kids to open their eyes)

*"Could you taste the sourness of the lemon? What did you notice in your body as we imagined eating a lemon slice? Did you have any physical sensations like mouth watering or puckering lips? Isn't it amazing that all of this could happen in your body, even though you were just imagining the lemon? This is because our minds and bodies are so connected.*

*Let's explore some words people use to describe the taste of food. Your job is make a list of at least 5 descriptive words. I'll hand your group some food descriptions for inspiration."*

(Quickly gather kids into groups of 3-4 and hand them some menu's/ food packages as inspiration. Prompt each group to note their 5 words on a separate piece of paper. Let the kids work for 5 minutes before collecting their materials)

*"Fantastic work, Brain Experts! Did you feel your Prefrontal Cortex working to gather all that data? Let's hear what you came up with."*

(Either have kids take turns reading their list aloud, or collect papers and read them to the group yourself)

*"Now that we have a great list of adjectives to help us- let's actually taste something. Your Prefrontal Cortex needs to stay on-duty to help you notice the flavor, texture and even temperature of the food morsel you'll get to try."*

(Pass out the food morsel to each child and remind them to wait mindfully before tasting)

*"Please take a deep breath in, and out. Let this breath calm your amygdala and prepare yourself to be mindful. Slowly pick up your food and hold it in your hand a moment. Notice the feeling or texture against your skin. Bring the food up to take a deep breath and notice how it smells. Place the food on your tongue, but don't bite down. Close your eyes as you feel the food on your tongue. Try to focus on how it feels in your mouth. Is it smooth? Heavy? Move it around in your mouth and notice how that feels. Is your mouth watering? Heart beating? Now, take a bite and observe the flavor. How does it taste? How does it feel as you slowly chew and swallow? Seeing and smelling while you eat, can make eating more fun...and more delicious."*

*What words would you use to describe the food you tasted? (Take 5 answers)  
How does it feel to eat mindfully? (Take 2 answers) How could mindful eating be good for our health?"*

### **Reflect (5 min)**

*"In your journal, your job is to write or draw about your favorite food. Add as many descriptive words as you can about this food. What does it taste, smell, look and feel like? Practice mindful eating this week. Your family at home might want to practice with you at breakfast or dinner. You can lead the same experiment we did together here. I can't wait to hear how it goes!"*

*Let's end with a 30 second practice. Find your mindful bodies. Breath in...breathe out. When you can't hear the bell anymore, please open your eyes and raise your hand. (Ring bell)*

*I'll see you next time!"*







## Session 12: Come on Brain – Put One Foot in Front of the Other

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will notice the muscles and mechanics of the body while walking
- Youth will learn the definition of proprioception

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A sign that reads: Proprioception—the ability to sense the position and location and movement of the body and its parts.
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* – We only have one body in this lifetime. Slowing down to notice the particulars of how our bodies move and feel bring us closer to understanding what our bodies need to feel good and what we need to do to care for our bodies.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

*Say "Hello everyone. I am so happy to see you. Today, we get to practice mindful walking. First, I'd like to hear who practiced mindful eating since we last met?"*

Hear from 3 youth.

*"Fantastic! Did anyone teach mindful eating to someone? Each time we practice mindfulness or teach someone what we learned, we are making our brains stronger, calmer, and WISER.*

*Let's practice mindful walking now."*

#### 2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)

*"Please stand up! Stretch your arms over your head—reach, reach, reach! Touch your hands to your knees, or your ankles, or your toes. Take a deep breath in and let it out your mouth with a big sigh. Do it again, deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth with a sigh. Please sit down quietly. We are going to stand up very slowly.*

*Let's get on our 5 S bodies: Seated with a Straight back, Silent, Shut Eyes, Soft breath. We are going to do mindful breathing for 2 minutes. I'll ring the bell to start the practice and ring it again to signal the end of the practice. The second time the bell rings, listen to it until you can't hear it anymore, then raise your hand and open your eyes."*

(ring the bell to signal the start of the practice, after two minutes ring it again and wait for the kids to open their eyes)

*"Thank you. I would like you to stand up very slowly, paying attention to what your muscles are doing to help you get up off the floor. When you are standing—wait for the next instruction.*

*I'd like everyone to turn very slowly to the right and face the other direction. We are going to take 5 steps in SUPER SLOW MOTION. First shift your weight on to your left foot. Slowly pick up your right foot and place it in front of you. Notice how your foot contacts the floor. The heel of your foot touches down first, then the ball of your foot. Pause here. Shift your weight to your right foot. Pick up your left foot. Notice how your foot leaves the floor. First your heel lifts off the floor, then the ball of your foot, then your toes. Put your left foot in front of your right foot. Notice how your foot touches down. Pause. Can you sense your body in space? There is a special word for your body's ability to sense itself in space—or know where it is—that word is proprioception. Now, on your own, I'd like you to experiment with 3 more steps. Try to take one step with one breath. See how mindful you can be and what you notice about walking. When you are done with 3 steps, pause and use your proprioception to feel your body in space."*

*"I'd like everyone to mindfully turn around and mindfully walk back to the circle and take a seat.*

*Turn to someone next to you and share what you noticed as you walked."*

(Have 2 or 3 pairs share out with the group)

*"Great noticing! Where else in our lives would be a good time to practice mindful walking? How can mindful walking help our brains make wise choices?"*

## Reflect (5 min)

*"In your journal, your job is to write or draw two places you can practice mindful walking. I'll ask you about your practice next time we meet.*

*Let's end with a 1 minute practice. Find your mindful bodies. Breathe in...breathe out. When you can't hear the bell anymore, please open your eyes and raise your hand."* (Ring bell)

*"I'll see you next time!"*







## Session 13: Leading Others

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn to lead mindful breathing
- Youth will become aware of self as a leader

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A container with each child's name on a piece of paper
- A sheet of paper with mindful breathing instructions
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - There are four formal sessions left in the curriculum. Now is the time to begin to transfer leadership to the group so they can continue a mindful practice together when the curriculum ends.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

*"Hello everyone. I am so happy to see you. Who of you practiced mindful walking or any other kind of mindfulness?"*

Hear from some youth. The youth should be eager to share at this point. You may want to give extra time to hear from everyone.

*"I am so happy to hear that you are practicing on your own. That's a very good sign because we only have four more mindfulness session together. It's time now for you to be the leaders of mindfulness. Today, we're going to practice being mindful leaders. Are we up to that challenge? I thought so!*

*We will all have a chance to be a leader. How many of you will have a chance to be a leader? That's right, ALL of you. Right now, we are going to choose our first leader by pulling out a name from this container.*

*\_\_\_\_\_ (name of youth in group) will you please choose the first name?"*

## 2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)

" \_\_\_\_\_(name of youth that was chosen to lead) please come up and sit next to me. Do you remember how I am when I lead mindful breathing? How am I? Can you hear me? Yes, I have a strong voice. Does anyone remember what I say? Great remembering! But don't worry, I've written out the instructions, so you don't have to remember it exactly!

So, \_\_\_\_\_(name of youth that was chosen to lead), are you ready to lead, be a model and have a strong voice? Here are the instructions. You'll see at the end that you will ask people how the mindful breathing was for them today. Take three or four responses by calling on people who have their hands up. When you're ready you can start."

(When the leader is complete, ask for a round of applause for their effort and bravery. Ask the youth who led—"What did you do great? And what can you do better next time you lead?" Then ask the group—"What did \_\_\_\_\_ do great? And What is one thing they might do differently next time?"

Let another youth lead the group (or as many youth as there is time for) and repeat the debrief process above.)

"What fantastic leaders! I'm excited to see the rest of you lead next time we meet."

## Reflect (5 min)

"In your journal, write down what you want to remember when you lead the group in breathing. If you were a leader today, write down what you did great and what you'll do differently next time.

Your job is to practice some form of mindfulness everyday. I'll ask you about it next time.

Let's end with a 1 minute practice. I'll choose a leader to lead it."

(Ring bell)

"I'll see you next time!"

## Mindful Breathing Instructions

It's time to practice mindfulness.

Can we all be seated with our 5S bodies?

Seated with a Straight back, Still, Silent, Soft breath and shut eyes.

We'll practice mindful breathing for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

I'll ring the bell to signal the start of the practice and again at the end of the practice.

When I ring the bell a second time, listen until you can't hear it anymore, raise your hand and open your eyes.

How was that today?

Thank you very much.







## Session 14: Leading Others—Part II

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will learn to lead mindful breathing
- Youth will become aware of self as a leader
- Youth will learn how a leader “keeps the brain in mind” when leading

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A container with each child’s name on a piece of paper
- A sheet of paper with mindful breathing instructions
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - As a leader, we can use the “triune” brain to help guide our actions. In this session, leadership is linked to the brain.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

*“Hello everyone. I am so happy to see you. What kind of mindfulness have you practiced?”*

Hear from some youth. The youth should be eager to share at this point. You may want to give extra time to hear from everyone.

*“How is your practice helping your brain make wise choices?”*

*We’re going to continue practicing our mindful leadership. Did you know you can be a leader with the brain in mind?*

*Who remembers the amygdala? And what is the job of the amygdala? Right—it’s the body guard of the brain and helps to make sure that this body is safe.*

*As a leader, you can help the brain’s need to be safe by doing things in a structured way. How is mindful breathing structured? That’s right, we say*

*the same thing every time and we sit the same way every time. When we know what's going to happen, we feel safe.*

*Who remembers the hippocampus? And what is the job of the hippocampus? The hippocampus helps us with emotion and memory. Any information that we connect to an emotion has a good chance of being stored as a memory.*

*As a leader, you can help people build memories of important information by helping connect it to an emotion. Where in our mindful breathing do we help people connect to emotions? That's right, at the end when we ask, "How was that today?" And what important information do we want them to remember?*

*Who remembers the pre-frontal cortex? And what is the job of the pre-frontal cortex? That's right, it's the part of the brain that makes decisions, plans for the future, and controls our emotion. This part of the brain learns through feedback.*

*As a leader, you can strengthen your skills through feedback. Where in our mindful breathing practice do we provide feedback? That's right, when we reflect on what we did great and what we'll do differently.*

*As a leader, we always want to be thinking about how to make things safe, how to help people remember important information, and how to provide opportunities for feedback."*

## **2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)**

*"So, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of youth that was chosen to lead), are you ready to lead, help people feel safe, remember important information and provide opportunities for feedback? Here are the instructions. When you're ready you can start."*

*(When the leader is complete, ask for a round of applause for their effort and bravery. Ask the youth who led—"What did you do great? And what can you do better next time you lead?" Then ask the group—"What did \_\_\_\_\_ do great? And What is one thing they might do differently next time?"*

*Let another youth lead the group (or as many youth as there is time for) and repeat the debrief process above.)*

*"Wow! We are doing a great job—don't you think?"*

## Reflect (5 min)

*"In your journal, draw or write down your biggest strength as a leader. Do you think it's helping people feel safe, helping people remember important information, or providing opportunities for feedback?"*

*Don't forget to practice some form of mindfulness everyday. I'll ask you about it next time.*

*Let's end with a 1 minute practice. I'll choose a leader to lead it."*

(Ring bell)

*"I'll see you next time!"*







## Session 15: Brain Expert Review

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will review learning to date
- Youth will plan a special ending

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A container with each child's name on a piece of paper
- Chart paper
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - There is one session left after today. We begin our review of learning and plan for our ending.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

*"Hello everyone. I am so happy to see you. What kind of mindfulness have you practiced?"*

Hear from some youth.

*"Today we begin our review of what we have learned as we have become Brain Experts. But first, let's practice mindful breathing. Can someone choose the name of our leader today?"*

*So, \_\_\_\_\_(name of youth that was chosen to lead), are you ready to lead, help people feel safe, remember important information and provide opportunities for feedback? Here are the instructions. When you're ready you can start."*

(When the leader is complete, ask for a round of applause for their effort and bravery. Ask the youth who led—"What did you do great? And what can you do better next time you lead?" Then ask the group—"What did \_\_\_\_\_ do great? And What is one thing they might do differently next time?"

## 2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)

*"We are going to work in groups of three. Each group will have a piece of chart paper that looks like this":*

Brain Expert Review	
1. Parts of the brain and what they do:	2. My favorite mindfulness sessions were.... because...
3. A wise choice my brain made because of mindfulness was...	

*"For number one, you can draw a picture of the brain or part of the brain. For questions number 2 and 3, you want to complete the sentences. You will have 5 minutes to complete this as a group and then you will have a chance to report out as a group what you wrote on your chart. Any questions? OK, you can start now."*

(While the groups are working, wander around the room and offer any support they may need. After 5 minutes, have each group report out. Make sure to applaud the group after each report out.)

*"Who is surprised that we all became Brain Experts in such a short amount of time? I am so impressed with how your brains are making wise choices!"*

*We have one more session together. I think it should be a special time. What could we do to celebrate that fact that we have all become Brain Experts and the time we have spent learning mindfulness?"*

(Record responses on chart paper and plan your celebration!)

## Reflect (5 min)

*"In your journal, write down your favorite mindfulness sessions and what about those sessions made them your favorites?"*

*Don't forget to practice some form of mindfulness everyday. I'll ask you about it next time.*

*Let's end with a 1 minute practice. I'll choose a leader to lead it."*

(Ring bell)

*"I'll see you next time!"*







## Session 16: Celebration

### Learning Objectives:

- Youth will receive certificates
- Youth will celebrate

### Materials or props:

- A sign that reads: How can we help our brains make wise choices?
- A container with each child's name on a piece of paper
- Certificates
- A vibratone
- Mindful Journal

### Why:

*Background & Context* - After a mindful check in, it is time to celebrate the accomplishment of being a brain expert. Conduct your celebration in the way that the youth planned it in the previous session.

### How:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

*"Hello everyone. It's our last mindfulness session. You have all received the title of Brain Expert! Congratulations. Did anyone practice mindfulness since the last time we met?"*

Hear from some youth.

*"Let's practice mindful breathing. Can someone choose the name of our leader today?"*

*So, \_\_\_\_\_(name of youth that was chosen to lead), are you ready to lead, help people feel safe, remember important information and provide opportunities for feedback? Here are the instructions. When you're ready you can start."*

(When the leader is complete, ask for a round of applause for their effort and bravery. Ask the youth who led—"What did you do great? And what can you do better next time you lead?" Then ask the group—"What did \_\_\_\_\_ do great? And What is one thing they might do differently next time?"

## 2. Connect and Practice (15 minutes)

Enjoy your celebration!

### Reflect (5 min)

*"I would like to present you with a certificate of completion. When I call your name, please stand and come forward."*

(Call each youth forward, present the certificate and ask: *"What has been most memorable?"*)

*"Today, you can write or draw ANYTHING related to mindfulness in your journal."*

*I have been so happy to spend this time learning with you about mindfulness. You all have done such a great job and I'm excited to have you continue to lead us.*

*Let's end with a 1 minute practice. I'll choose a leader to lead it."*

(Ring bell)

*"Thank you all so very much."*

*This paper certifies that the person named below  
is now a Mindful*

# *Brain Expert*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Brain Expert

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
20\_\_\_\_  
Mindful Brain Institute



# Mindfulness Bibliography

## Research

Because of the effectiveness of mindfulness practice, research is expanding rapidly. Forty peer-reviewed papers are published monthly on the benefits of mindfulness in a variety of fields: [www.mindfulexperience.org](http://www.mindfulexperience.org). Below we offer several citations of research that have examined the impact of these techniques on children, schools, and adults.

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- **Mindfulness practice has numerous health benefits, including increased immune functioning** (Davidson et al., 2003; see Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004) **improvement to well-being** (Carmody & Baer, 2008) **and reduction in psychological distress** (Coffey & Hartman, 2008; Ostafin et al., 2006).
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The Mindful Child, Susan Kaiser Greenland

The Emotional Life of Your Brain, Richie Davidson

Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children, Linda Lantieri

Heal Thyself, Saki Santorelli

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