

The Mindful
Teacher's
Toolkit

This book is dedicated to all teachers, everywhere.
You make the world a better place.



Kevin Hawkins
& Amy Burke

The Mindful Teacher's Toolkit

Awareness-based Wellbeing in Schools

Activities
for 4-18
year olds

CORWIN





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About the Authors



Kevin Hawkins has worked with children and adolescents in various contexts for over 40 years as a teacher, school head and social worker, in the UK, Europe and Africa. In London he worked as a counsellor for drug users and as a resettlement worker for homeless young people. He has taught across the age ranges in state schools and in international schools, with a focus on developing the whole child through balancing academic, social and emotional aspects of learning. He was Head of the Arusha Campus of the International School Moshi in Arusha, Tanzania, and for 10 years was Middle School Principal at the International School of Prague in the Czech Republic.

Kevin started teaching mindful awareness to students, teachers and parents in 2008, and in 2012 he co-founded MindWell Education (www.mindwell-education.com) which supports educational communities in developing awareness-based wellbeing through mindfulness and social-emotional learning. His first book, *Mindful Teacher, Mindful School: Improving Wellbeing in Teaching and Learning*, was published by SAGE/Corwin in 2017. Kevin works independently as a speaker, consultant and teacher trainer. He has three grown-up children and is based in Valencia, Spain, where he lives with his wife and co-author, Amy Burke.



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Krysten Fort-Catanese is a contributor to this book and the author of Chapter 1. She has taught and led in progressive and innovative schools for over 20 years. In 2012, Krysten became the founding Director of Social and Emotional Learning and Mindfulness at Phuket International Academy, now the United World College, Thailand. She is a teacher trainer with the Mindfulness in Schools Project and joined the MindWell Education team in 2013. Currently, Krysten is the Head of Friends Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado, USA.

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From Kevin:

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From Amy:

Thank you to my family for loving me always and not just because you have to.

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MindWell Education Weblinks

Visit
www.mindwell-education.com

The MindWell Education website includes a dedicated page for
The Mindful Teacher's Toolkit with resources to further support readers:

www.mindwell-education.com/mtt-resources



Kevin Hawkins and Amy Burke are co-founders of MindWell Education, which supports the integration of mindful awareness training and social-emotional learning in whole school communities in order to foster wellbeing for all.

Amy and Kevin offer a range of training courses in Being Mindful, Teaching Mindfully, and Teaching Mindfulness, as well as dedicated courses for school leaders in Mindful Leadership and Implementing Awareness-based Wellbeing in Schools. For further information on courses, see www.mindwell-education.com/courses.



Foreword



'I am very interested, but where do I begin?', 'How do I begin?' These are questions I hear from many educators regarding nurturing the mindful awareness and social and emotional competence of their students. Kevin Hawkins and Amy Burke, both education visionaries, have created a developmentally focused toolkit for educators from PreK-12 that provides practical support and practices that teachers can begin to use tomorrow. Many educators are puzzled about the similarities and differences between mindful awareness practices and social and emotional learning. Should I focus on awareness? Should I focus on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)? With many years of experience in both teaching and teacher professional development, Kevin and Amy have seamlessly integrated mindful awareness practices and social and emotional learning. This integration is key because developing mindful awareness provides essential support for deepening our ability to care for ourselves and for others, as well as to engage joyfully in learning.

A great strength of this book is its carefully designed developmental approach which begins with simple calming and attentional practices for young children and extends to the developmental needs of teens, including supporting practices to reduce anxiety and helping youth to find their sense of purpose and meaning. Although the core abilities of mindful awareness and attention are important at every developmental phase (including adulthood), how to skilfully support these practices at each age is essential.

Of course, using the various practices in the book effectively depends on the development and embodiment of these values, attitudes and behaviours on the part of the teacher. Here, and in Kevin's previous book (*Mindful Teacher, Mindful School*), there are clear directions for educators to develop their own personal mindful awareness practice and ideas for how to embody and integrate these practices in their teaching. Wisely, the authors conclude the book with a valuable chapter on how to support whole school transformation in which mindful awareness is central to providing a 'true education' for all learners, both adults and children. Reading this book I have feelings of delight and anticipation as teachers find new avenues to cultivate awareness in their students and themselves in support of a more caring and compassionate world for all. Welcome and enjoy!

Mark Greenberg PhD
Emeritus Professor, Human Development and
Family Studies, Penn State University
Chairperson of the Board, CREATE for Education

The title 'How to Use This Book' is written in a large, bold, black serif font. To the left of the title are three stylized stars of varying sizes, some with dashed lines around them. To the right is a line drawing of an open book with several pages fanned out, and a starburst of lines above it.

How to Use This Book

Our book is a structured selection of activities and practices that can be used to introduce mindful awareness training to students in age-appropriate ways across the full range of education. Built into the exercises are notes on how to deliver them as well as advice on issues that might arise based on varied experiences from training students and teachers around the world. Intertwined within the activities and notes are various ways of encouraging and advising teachers on keeping their own practice of mindful awareness alive and connected to their work with their students.

We have set the book up in a way that makes it easy for you to dip into sections that interest you most. We would encourage you to read the **Introduction** first in order to set the scene and establish some common understandings used throughout the book. Then, if you want to get straight into the activities most appropriate for the age group you teach, you will find those in Section I.

Pick `n Mix: Section I

We have divided this section into four different age bands:

Early Years (EYs): 3-6 years

Primary Years (PYs): 7-10 years

Midde Years (MYs): 11-13 years

Secondary Years (SYs): 14-18 years

These divisions are both real and somewhat arbitrary. It makes sense of course to vary the approach and content according to children's stages of development. But these age categories also overlap with each other. Individual students of the same chronological age differ widely in maturity and engagement levels and we have all had the experience of feeling that some classes seem much 'younger' than others of the same age. Some 13 year olds may be very interested in hearing about research, while some 17 year olds may appreciate a theoretical approach similar to what we would use with adults. Almost all of the activities are adaptable

by language, tone and content, so we recommend you start by exploring the most relevant age range and adapt it to suit your students. **Be sure to take a look at the activities in the bands above or below your age group too - there are exercises and approaches there that can also be adapted for your students.**

Experience and research show that students learn these kinds of activities best when presented with a combination of routine and variety, so don't feel you have to keep making everything 'new'. There is a lot to be said for familiarity and deepening through consistency.

Pick 'n Mix: Section II

Section II is mainly structured by role and specialism rather than age group. We encourage you to explore and dip in and out as you like. There are so many areas that overlap in these chapters that they will likely be of interest to all mindful educators. For example:

- An upper elementary class teacher or a secondary PSHE/Life Skills teacher may well be interested to learn about how their students could apply mindful awareness in sports and performance activities.
- Likewise, a PE teacher with an interest in using mindfulness in sports will benefit by finding out about how awareness training is introduced to students and what opportunities there are to apply these skills in other subject areas.
- All teachers have students with neuro-divergent learning needs in their classes so it is well worth any teacher looking over the section on 'Students with Special Educational Needs'.
- Mindful Leadership is not restricted to those with titles and responsibilities - we all take up leadership roles in certain contexts - and so learning about how to sustain our energies whilst embodying self-care and contributing to whole school wellbeing can benefit us all.

What we are saying here goes somewhat beyond the idea of 'How to make best use of this book'. We are advocating for approaches to fostering wellbeing in our students that connect across age ranges and subject divisions and that build bridges between teachers of different subjects and ages in the pursuit of developmentally appropriate and coherent approaches to greater wellbeing in our school communities.

In the latter part of Section II and the Conclusion we broaden our perspective to consider important issues and challenges around implementation, school culture, systems change and alignment with global trends in education and beyond.



Features



This book contains a number of recurring features to help guide you on this journey:

- **Skills Icons** indicate which social-emotional competencies are supported by a particular activity or practice (see **Introduction** for details).

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

Social Awareness

Relationship Skills

Responsible Decision-Making



- **Teacher Scripts** will give you a feel for how we deliver activities and practices but they aren't necessarily designed to be read word for word. They can be seen more as guideposts to support you at the start, and as you continue to develop your personal mindfulness practice and your experience in leading these exercises, you will soon find your own authentic voice.
- **Teaching Tips** are based on practical experiences of delivering specific activities to an age group.
- **Top Teaching Tips** apply to all or most age groups and can be found at the end of Section I (see Chapter 5).
- **Teacher Reflections** invite you to pause, journal and reconnect with your personal practice and experience.
- **Further Reading and Resources** at the end of each chapter highlight additional sources of guidance and ideas. In Section I you can draw from these to further develop activities and approaches that best suit you and your students.
- **Featured Boxes** include Expert Advice, Author Voice, Educator Voice, Student Voice, Case Studies, and Research. These are spread throughout the book and offer experiences and advice from a range of teachers and leaders in wellbeing, SEL and mindfulness in education from around the world.

Taken together, these features offer more than a simple 'toolkit'. The combination of tools, guidance manual and real-life examples provide mindful teachers with everything they need in order to be able to develop their own mindful classroom and contribute to improving wellbeing in their school community.



Key Terminology



This book is primarily designed for educators who have already taken those first steps towards cultivating their own mindful awareness and social-emotional competencies. We focus on showing you how to start and then how to develop **Mindful Awareness Training (MAT)** for your students and we show you how this training connects with **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**.

Seasoning Activities are short calming or energizing moments that can be sprinkled through the school day, allowing teachers and students to pause and reboot.



As you work to help raise your students' awareness and relationship skills, you will most likely feel motivated at some point to collaborate with others in your school community to embed deeper changes into your school systems and culture. **Awareness-based Wellbeing (ABW)** encompasses these broader efforts and is our way of defining the combination of programmes, initiatives, approaches and processes that serve to consciously foster wellbeing in a school community through nurturing understanding of self, each other and the overall school ecosystem and culture.



Be Mindful, Teach Mindfully, Teach Mindfulness ...



Meaningful systemic and cultural change in education *is* possible. In fact, it's essential. In the concluding chapter of this book, we show how people and organizations around the world are already working to achieve this change. As educators we can all play a part in this process, and we can start right here, right now by focusing on *being the change we want to see* in ourselves.



Being Mindful



This core component of mindfulness in education refers to fostering self-care through the development of personal mindfulness meditation practice. Such practices can be approached in various ways, but in general include elements of **formal practices** such as sitting, walking or doing a body scan while lying down; along with **informal practices** applying mindful awareness to everyday activities, learning to live and work more mindfully.

Learning mindfulness meditation is best done with an experienced and certified trainer, either in person or online, but there are also some great self-taught resources available. Through this personal mindfulness training we can begin to develop greater self-awareness and improved emotional regulation, actively sustaining and supporting our positive mental health and resilience. This is what we mean when we talk about **self-care** and its impact on our wellbeing.

We highly recommend that teachers take this first step to establish their own mindful awareness before teaching mindfulness to students.

At the end of the next chapter we offer some recommended resources to help you get started on this amazing journey.



Teaching Mindfully



Once you have begun your training in mindfulness you will likely begin to notice ways in which it starts to impact your work, family and relationships in general. Without even mentioning the word 'mindfulness' in your classroom, you may begin to take with you a heightened sense of awareness and a more embodied presence that subtly begins to change the learning environment for your students. The increased ability to sense into the body can help teachers step out of overthinking, improve emotional regulation and bring greater warmth and even joy to our connections with students and colleagues. We can also use this increased sensitivity to respond more skilfully to challenging moments and to making subtle changes in our teaching to respond more sensitively to the needs of individuals and the group.

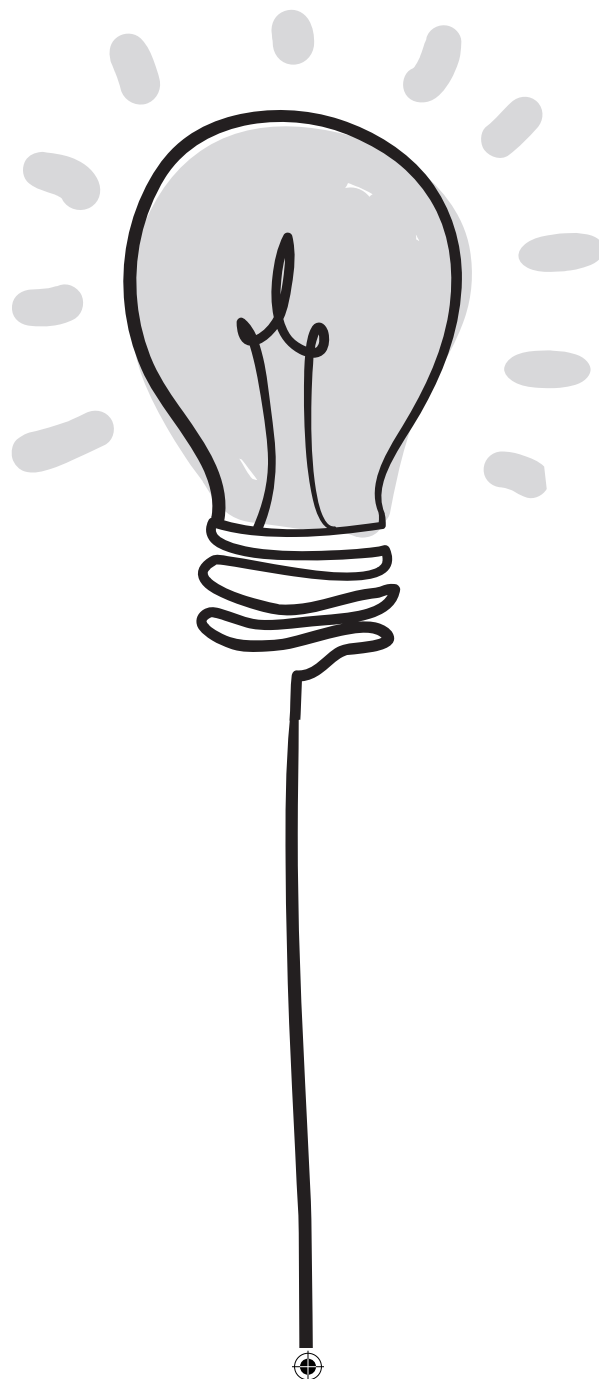
Mindfulness is not a magic pill and it does not make your irritability, frustration or over-reactions suddenly disappear. However, we have noticed a profound impact in our own lives and as well as the research that supports this, we have heard from so many other educators about the positive effects of taking a little time for self-care and nourishment through developing a personal practice.



Teaching Mindfulness



...is the subject of this book. Read on!





2.

Mindful Awareness in the Primary Years Classroom (7-10 year olds)

In this chapter we provide you with:

Mindful Awareness Training	Activities
Awareness of the Senses	Sense 1: Listening Sense 2: Touch Sense 3: Sight Senses 4 and 5: Taste and Smell
Senses Extension	Combining Senses Savouring Sounds
Mindful Movement	Water Walking Feather Walking Crunchy Walk
Seasoning Activities	Standing Seaweed Sensation 30-Second Listening Freezing and Melting Feather Breath Back-to-Back Breathing Shoulder Rolls Foot Stamp Hand Hug and Brush
Teacher Practices	Intentions and Senses Reflection Pause, Reflect, Plan

Working With This Age Group

In this chapter we have focused on the practical use of Mindful Awareness Training (MAT) with 7-10 year olds. In general, young children are already quite good at living in the moment, so with these sessions we tap into this ability, consciously enlivening their natural awareness through the senses and helping them understand how they can use these skills to self-calm and focus. Children at this age benefit from repeating activities, movement and practices that help strengthen the synaptic connections between the hippocampus and the developing prefrontal cortex, helping them to find ways to exert executive control and learn how to regulate and express their emotions.

We love introducing mindfulness to children of this age, opening a door for them into understanding how they access present-moment awareness through their senses.

- Right from the start we are laying the foundations, both intellectually and experientially, for a whole range of 'slowing down and pausing' activities that our students will be able to draw on in the course of our time together in class. This **'seasoning the day'** will enable us to punctuate busy schooldays with moments of calm.
- By leading students to encounter these moments consciously we are helping them develop the capacity to ground themselves and self-soothe through engaging their parasympathetic nervous systems. Over time, we can help provide them with a toolkit of practices and skills that they can draw on to support positive mental health habits and contribute to overall wellbeing.
- In addition, this learning to consciously cool down is the first step towards any effective approach to conflict resolution.

Developmentally, this group covers quite a wide span. The activities and scripts are written as guides to how we deliver them to children approximately in the middle of this range, so you will need to adapt the language and tone to suit your class. Keep it light and fun, encouraging your children to stay curious. Being aware of what is developmentally appropriate is key. Make sure to try the activities out before you introduce them to students - and enjoy exploring!

Before you actually start teaching this, let's check in with personal intentions:

Teacher Reflection: Intentions and Senses



- Why do you want to try this out with your students?
- What is your intention?

Take a moment to reflect and journal on this.

- Be open to asking yourself the same question once more: *Why am I doing this?*
- See if anything else, perhaps a deeper, underlying motivation arises.

Now, finally, let's check in with your own connection to the purpose of these activities – that is, consciously connecting with sensory experiences:

- When was the last time you just took a moment to listen, taste, look, touch, smell?

If you haven't done so recently (and are honest enough to admit it!) try taking a moment to do so now ...

Whilst reading this paragraph, can you allow yourself to slow down a little, continue to read a little more slowly, whilst also becoming aware of sensations in your body, your feet, your hands, your seat; sounds and silences around you; temperature; the breath coming and going ...

Just continue to notice sensations and at the end of this sentence, look up, may be stretch, look around, take a moment to breathe, and notice ...

'Noticing what you notice' is such an important foundation for this work, and the more we can bring our attention back to our own present moment experience, the better prepared we will be to lead others in these important awareness activities.

So, if you are ready, let's now explore bringing this to your students!

Awareness of the Senses Activity

Intention: To provide a series of brief but active experiential exercises that show students how to consciously engage with sensory experiences.

This activity runs through a series of different sense exercises and could take around 30-40 minutes depending on the age group. Alternatively, you could adapt this and shorten it to just focus on one sense at a time, using each activity as a 5-10 minute starter for any class. You could then revisit this same sense in various ways of your choosing over the week.

Today we are going to learn about our senses and how they help us to be more alive and awake to what is happening around us and inside us. Who can name one of our senses?

- Continue to elicit all the senses.

Soc-A

Sense 1: Listening

Let's see, where will we begin? Let's start with our ears and our sense of hearing. I'm going to keep quiet for about 30 seconds and I'd like you to also stay quiet and just notice any sounds that you hear. When the time is up, I will ask you to remember any sounds you noticed. Okay? Let's see how good we all are at listening ...

(Continued)

So just sit quietly and notice what you hear without speaking for 30 seconds starting from, now ...

- In this last sentence you may find that you are naturally slowing down the cadence of your speech and perhaps lowering the volume a little as you ease yourself and your class into quiet listening mode. This embodiment helps set the tone for your students. As the group listening continues, do your best to stay embodied. Don't worry too much or react too strongly if some students are fidgety or making noises, just do the best you can to manage these individuals through eye contact, gestures, etc.

Okay, what did you hear?

- Take offerings one at a time from students using horizontal inquiry (**see Chapter 5 Top Tip 11**), perhaps commenting:

Oh I see others nodding. Did you also hear that?

- Try to get as many different sounds as you can, congratulating the group:

Wow, you guys are such good listeners. What a lot of sounds you heard! I didn't even notice the clock ticking or the bird outside.

- This is an activity you can repeat from time to time. Often children enjoy these listening activities and they like to be praised on how their listening skills are developing. You can also help them link this to the importance of listening in learning, languages, music, relationships, etc.
- Moreover, without forcing it, you have created a shared moment of quiet in the classroom – highly unusual in normal school life! You may decide to address this overtly:

How does it feel to be silent like this together in class? We ask you to listen all the time but we don't often teach you how to listen carefully. That's what we are beginning to do here.

Self-A

Sense 2: Touch

Let's explore our sense of touch next! What do we mostly think of when we think of touch? Yes, our fingers. In these sense exercises try to be very curious, just like scientists, exploring whatever you experience.

Let's do the next activity standing up. Rub your hands together like this.

- Hold hands up palm to palm and rub them back and forth.

Of course our different sense experiences are not separate, they overlap. So while we are rubbing our hands let's also listen to the sounds they are making right now ...

Tune into your hands and fingers, notice the movement, perhaps they are getting warmer ...

Now let's stop and gently place one hand on your chest or heart area and one on your belly. See if you can be very curious now about what your hands are experiencing. Almost like you are listening with your hands.

Can you feel the clothes touching your hands? ...

Any movement in the heart/chest area? ...

And the belly? ...

Now let your hands just hang gently by your sides. And tune in again to any sensations you can notice in your fingers ...

hands ...

arms ...

shoulders ...

or anywhere else in your body right now ...

How are the insides of your body feeling?

Now that we are all quiet, can you maybe notice the movement of breathing in your body?

in your belly ...

in your chest ...

or in your nose ...

- At this point you can close the exercise by asking them again to:

Notice how you feel, notice how the room feels.

- Then, time permitting, you could do another short debrief inviting them to ask a partner, as a curious scientist, what they noticed, emphasizing practising careful listening. Then ask for one or two students to share with the whole class.
- You might also add here a moment to reflect on the purpose of this type of activity, for example:

How might using this sense of touch help us?

(Continued)

- Elicit their ideas, then consider adding a personal example. Here is one of ours:

Sometimes, if I notice I am worrying too much about something, I can use a short focus on my sense of touch to help me worry less. And you can try this with me right now if you want to.

I'm going to try putting my attention into my feet and notice how they feel.

See if you can feel your feet now - from the inside - your toes, maybe the socks and shoes around your feet ...

And now, just notice how you are feeling ...

You may not notice anything different first time. Different practices work for different people at different times. For me, I noticed that when I felt my feet for a moment then I was not worrying about anything and now I feel a little bit calmer.

This activity, or your own variation of it, can be also used as a **Seasoning Activity** at any point during the day. Explore using it at different times and you may find that a short activity, even one minute, can change the atmosphere of the classroom and help students move, settle and re-focus.

TEACHING TIP



Throughout this type of activity, monitor your own experience whilst guiding the children. This is another fundamental principle of MAT. It is our own noticing of sensations in the present moment that can make these short guided practices come alive. This very literal 'embodiment' can also help us maintain flexibility of response when, for example, a sudden noise distracts everyone and we incorporate it into our guidance.

Of course, with a class full of energetic and distractible 8 year olds, there are limits to how much internal monitoring we can maintain! We have to learn how to balance a degree of self-awareness with the need to maintain effective classroom management. This may create a degree of inner tension, but an outer alertness to the realities of the classroom can help us stay focused whilst we can sometimes use our inner ability to 'soften' in order to respond more sensitively to challenging student behaviour.

Keeping a sense of humour can also be very helpful!

Soc-A

Sense 3: Sight

One sense we may sometimes take for granted is our sight. We use our eyes so much that we often forget what an amazing thing it is to be able to see. The world is full of so many beautiful colours, shades and shapes.

Let's just try now for a minute to see if we can explore using our eyes with curiosity. Let's all stand up and move into your own space so you are not too near anyone else.

Take a deep breath in and as you breathe out slowly close your eyes or look down at one spot on the floor ...

Now gently open your eyes and, standing in the same place but turning around very slowly, let's see if we can focus on noticing all of the things in the room that are red (or whatever colour is most obvious in your room).

Without talking, see if you can notice, just with your eyes, different shades of red. Some might be more pinky-red, some might be more orangey-red. Keep looking and noticing.

Now what about blue? Shades of blue. Darker blue. Lighter blue. (If you have a window, you can also include anything you see outside the room.)

And now green.

Now just for a moment look at all the colours around you and see what you notice ...

How do they all look together? What lovely colours we have in our room!

Well done everyone. As I said at the beginning, it's not always easy to appreciate how wonderful it is to be able to see. How beautifully coloured our world is. Some people aren't able to see some colours because their eyes and their brains don't detect them. Do you know anyone like that? And of course some people are born unable to see or they may have lost their sight later on in life. How lucky we are to be able to see.

Remember, our senses are like doors that open to the world and help us understand and connect with everything around us and with all the people in our lives.

TEACHING TIP



Most primary classrooms are quite colourful, but if you happen to be in a bland room, try picking one main colour, even if it is grey or white or brown, and encourage students to notice subtle shades of this colour. Or notice where the light is coming into the room and how it is lighting up different areas. Shapes can work too. It's sometimes shocking to see how many right angles you can find in one room!

Children will naturally want to call out what they are seeing, but we are trying in these practices to help them move towards being able to listen inwardly, so guiding them to 'answer on the inside' may be helpful. We often start these kinds of exercises by saying:

Different people like different activities, and this one may or may not work well for you, but please do your best to not look at others because that might distract them when they might be learning something really important.

Soc-A

Self-A

Senses 4 and 5: Taste and Smell

- This may work best as a separate activity as it does take some preparation and management. If instead you are wanting to finish off the senses introduction now with a short taste activity, you can do so in a simple way, not drawing it out too much, with just a brief settling and then handing out a piece of chocolate or alternative to each student. Ask them to *really* focus on the sense of taste as they quietly enjoy it.
- Here we show how mindful eating can be used as a separate concluding activity, taking some time to pull together everything we have covered so far:

Today we are going to explore two senses we haven't yet focused on. What do you think they are? ... That's right, smell and taste. First though, can you tell me why you think we have been doing all these sense activities? ...

Yes, as we were saying last week, we are so fortunate if we have all of our senses working well and it is really good for us to appreciate them and to be thankful. But there is also another reason. We know from scientists that when we choose to notice what is happening in our bodies through our senses, we can help the brain to focus in a more relaxed way. This can be very good for our minds and feelings and even our bodies. For example, it can help us when we might be worrying too much about something. Let's look at this short animation of someone you may already know worrying about something ...

- In their **'b'** (Stop and Breathe) course for 11-18 year olds the Mindfulness in Schools Project makes inspired use of a lovely clip from *Kung Fu Panda*. You can use it here as a nice focus for introducing the tasting activity: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwqSraJpqfs (YouTube: Search 'Kung Fu Panda, Today is a Gift').
- We have also used this clip to good effect when introducing the Awareness of the Senses activity. (It also works well with older teens, and even university students and adults seem to really enjoy it!)
- The clip ends with Po (the Kung Fu Panda) about to mindfully eat a peach.

Is Po looking as worried now as he was at the start? What was Master Oogway, the wise old turtle, telling Po about the 'gift of the present'? When Po heard that, he looked at the one peach that had fallen into his hand and he now understands that he has the choice to eat that one peach slowly, carefully, really enjoying it, noticing everything about it. Not just stuffing his face as he was doing when he was upset.

In a moment we will try to see if we too can eat something very carefully, with all our sense doors open. Remember I said that we have learned from scientists who have explored how our minds, bodies and emotions work and you know that you are all scientists too. You can use your attention and curiosity to explore things mindfully, with your senses.

As we do this final exploration we will be using all the senses we have investigated up until now. We will look, listen, touch, and yes, smell and taste.

- This eating exercise can be done with almost any food but we have enjoyed using tangerines. They are very good for eliciting all of the senses. If you feel the students have been sitting for too long and need to move, invite them to come up and take a tangerine from a basket (and a napkin), returning to their desk and placing the tangerine on the napkin. It's helpful, but not necessary, to have them in the fridge so they are cold.

TEACHING TIP



You will also have a tangerine and will be doing the same things you ask your students to do. Your present experience of doing this will model the practice to students, and also help inform how you direct the questions, as well as your pacing of the instructions.

Sometimes teachers lead tasting practices without doing it themselves and may either miss opportunities to make it more real and engaging or, as in one case we saw, continue to describe sensations long after the students' (quickly dissolving) treats had gone!

Now that you all have your tangerine in front of you, let's first use our sense of sight to investigate this tangerine.

- You can encourage students to keep the answers to the following questions to themselves, or invite some answers to be shared out loud. The key to this exercise, like so many of them, is to pique their interest - and also of course to make it enjoyable!

What do you notice about the colour? Is it the same colour on the whole tangerine? What about the texture? Is it smooth or rough? And how about the light shining on the tangerine? Are there any reflections? Get to know your tangerine. In fact, get to know your tangerine so well that if I collected all of these and put them back into the basket, you would be able to find yours again!

Don't worry! I'm not going to do that! Just try to notice as much as you can about this tangerine, by using your sense of sight. Everyone has a tangerine in front of them. But only you have this one. It's unique. Just like you.

Now pick up the tangerine and place it in one of your hands. What do you notice from your sense of touch? Is there any temperature to the tangerine? What about weight. Maybe move it gently from one hand to the other and notice how heavy or light it is. Is it smooth or rough to the touch?

(Continued)

Do tangerines make any sounds? Let's hold it up to an ear. Nothing there yet but what if we gently begin to peel the tangerine? Take a moment to get ready to peel it ... now bring it back to your ear and let's just listen as we all begin to peel our tangerines together.

- Allow some peeling and listening time ...

Wow! Do you notice another sense coming alive as we peel this? That's right - smell! What do you notice about the smell? Can you sense it in your nostrils? And what about your mouth now - is it getting ready to eat this tangerine? How do you know? So keep peeling now and keep noticing smell as you gently tear away one section of your tangerine, like this. (Demonstrate by holding one section up.)

Don't eat it yet - but let's do a quick investigation of this section. Hold it up to the light. Feel its weight and texture. And now, put it in your mouth between your teeth on one side - but don't bite it yet!

- Do this yourself at this point. It is difficult to speak with a section of tangerine in your mouth, but it is also humorous and the students can get a kick out of your playfulness.

Notice again what is happening in the mouth. Maybe there's more saliva there? Now, in your own time, start to chew this section of tangerine very slowly, noticing any of the senses as you eat it ...

Keep noticing, tasting ... You may even notice other senses again. There is touch involved in tasting - the tongue touching the tangerine, the insides of the mouth ... Sometimes you might hear chewing ...

- Allow them some time to finish eating and sensing.

And now turn to your learning partner and find out from them what that experience was like for them. You may both eat the rest of your tangerines normally while you take turns sharing about what eating with our sense doors open feels like ...

Do we normally eat like this? Of course we couldn't eat like this all the time, but perhaps you can try to eat really using your senses carefully every now and then, even just a few mouthfuls. You may even want to teach your parents how to eat a tangerine like Po!

TEACHING TIPS



- Introducing food into a class activity brings with it a heightened excitement level which requires careful classroom management. Be clear with instructions and frontload steps on what's to come and what to expect. Try your best to prepare things in advance and go with the flow!

- Don't forget to check about allergies and have some alternatives if necessary.
- Having the tangerines and napkins ready but hidden is helpful so the students don't see them until you are ready to begin the exercise.

(For more tips and pedagogical advice on teaching mindfulness, see **Top Teaching Tips, Chapter 5.**)

Of course, part of what we are doing here with our students is instilling a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the wonderful things that we have and the ways we can connect through our senses. We know from the research (Emmons, 2010) that bringing conscious attention to feelings of appreciation and gratitude can have a positive effect on our wellbeing.

Teacher Voice: What Went Well?

In my classroom, every Friday we do a 'What Went Well?' activity where we reflect on our week in school and remember three small things that went well for us and why. We write these down on a sticky-note, stick these onto the 'What Went Well?' board and celebrate the positive week we have had.

From my experience of embedding wellbeing practices into the schools I have worked in, what I find most effective is explaining succinctly why the practices are important for wellbeing and then helping make it as easy as possible for teachers to adopt the practices too. So, I invited colleagues to my classroom and showed them the board. I briefly explained the research behind the activity and gave them a handout with some links to further reading if they wanted to explore the evidence. Finally, I gave them a stack of sticky-notes and a 'What Went Well?' banner for them to create a display easily in their own classrooms. Busy teachers need to know why something is worth doing and it needs to be easy to implement. That's why this wellbeing practice can work so well in schools.

Adrian Bethune - part-time primary school teacher, Aylesbury, UK and author of *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom: A Practical Guide to Teaching Happiness*, www.teachappy.co.uk

Senses Extension Activities

Combining Senses

In follow-up activities you may sometimes want to explicitly focus students on combining different senses. For example:

- Can they listen to the ticking of the clock and other sounds and be aware of the physical movement of the breath at the same time? You can guide them

(Continued)

gently into these brief practices, for example starting with sounds and then including the awareness of breath movement.

- Can they look at the tree outside the window and notice their breath moving in their body at the same time?
- Can they feel their feet 'from the inside' while listening to the clock?

Self-A

Soc-A

Savouring Sounds

If you want to take the introductory listening activity further, then on another day you could try this:

Let's go back to practising our listening skills. Remember how useful learning to be a good listener is? And how helpful it is to our bodies, minds, and feelings to sometimes just take a moment to be quiet? In a minute I'm going to ring the chime bar so let's sit (or stand) in a way that helps remind us to pay attention. If you feel comfortable you might want to close your eyes. Some people find their listening sense works better when they don't use their sight sense. If you prefer to keep your eyes open, that's fine, just look gently towards a spot in front of you on the floor or the desk.

Now listen to the sound of the chime as it fades away, and when you can't hear it any longer, just see if you can stay quiet, relaxed and awake and simply notice any other sounds or silences that come to your attention ...

No need to try too hard, just allow the sounds to come to you. This time you don't have to remember what you hear, just see if you can enjoy listening to the sounds themselves. Be curious ...

Notice loudness... softness ... high sounds ... low sounds ... sounds outside the room ... sounds inside the room ...

To close, I will ring the chime bar once more, and when you no longer hear the sound, just gently open your eyes.

Notice how you feel. Notice how the room feels. Maybe stretch a little.

How was that? Turn to your learning partner (or someone close to you) and ask them what they noticed. Not just which sounds they heard, but also how did they feel doing that activity?

- If the activity went well, reinforce this with the group:

You know, that was a really lovely silence you guys created while doing that activity. Well done!

- If it was a bit bumpy, then:

Okay, thank you for having a go at this. Mindful listening is not always easy to do. It's actually a skill that needs practice. Some times are easier than others. This is something that we can practice again together.

TEACHING TIP

- Don't prolong this activity too much when you do it for the first time. Feel free to use your own words and allow short pauses throughout the activity. Use your own awareness to sense into when to close it.

Having completed our introduction to the senses, where we go next depends on how much time and space we have available each week and also on our deeper intentions.

What do we really want for our students?

Take the time now to pause and reflect again on where you are heading and how you can continue to sustain yourself on this journey.

Teacher Reflection: Pause, Reflect, Plan

If you are working through this book with colleagues, this could be a good focus activity for pair or group work. If reflecting alone, collect your responses in your journal.

1. What do I really want for my students?

Explore this question for a moment, checking in with any previous intentions and seeing whether anything new arises or whether you want to reconfirm your original ideas.

2. Realistically, how much class time can I make available for:
 - a. Regular mindfulness lessons?
 - b. Short Seasoning Activities?
3. What other opportunities might there be to connect what my students are learning here with other school classes and activities?
4. What support might I be able to get from colleagues, school leaders, and parents?
5. How can I develop and sustain my own wellbeing and self-care at school?
6. How can I find support for sustaining my wellbeing outside of school (e.g. local meditation groups, retreats, yoga classes, tai chi, Qi Gong, online courses, etc? See The Contemplative Tree diagram, Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4.)

As you continue to develop and explore your work in this area you are becoming what we call a 'Champion Teacher', in the sense that, through your personal understanding of the value of self-care and awareness-based wellbeing, you are modelling this in yourself, as best you can. In Chapter 8 we explore further questions and challenges related to your development of this work in schools and how this can contribute to a larger shift of focus in your school community.

Mindful Movement

Having introduced your students to a range of conscious sensory experiences you may want to try out other activities to build and apply present-moment awareness in other fun ways. This next activity is one example of how to do just that.

Soc-A

Self-M

Water Walking

Intention:

- After investigating the senses and how to focus our minds we can also bring that same focus to movement, practising waking up the senses whilst also paying attention to each other.

This activity requires the use of water and cups. If your school cafeteria has reusable plastic beakers, you may want to use these. (See below for alternative ways to approach this activity without using water.)

Preparation:

- This can be done in the classroom, but it can also be useful to do this activity in a bigger space or even outside.
- Fill the cups with drinking water, almost to the brim. Make sure to have one per student plus one for you and any assistants.
- Have a pitcher ready filled with more drinking water.
- If indoors, bring a towel to clean up any spills!

Activity:

- Invite students to take one cup of water each and walk around the room slowly - the intention is to try not to spill any water.
- Children will naturally look at the water as they walk - it helps them focus on not spilling it.
- Continue to guide them with verbal instructions using a light, playful tone:

Walk as slowly as possible to ensure the water stays in the cup.

Notice your classmates as you walk near to each other.

Are you holding your breath? If so, let it out slowly as you continue to walk.

Are you gripping the cup very tightly? See if you can loosen your grip a little.
- As you continue to guide them allow for moments of silence here and there.
- Walk around and use the pitcher of drinking water to fill up random cups a little bit more. This will create a buzz and some students will want more water and some may avoid you! No need to fill up all cups. The random nature of it is part of the fun.

- At a certain point, you may want to ask students to carefully exchange cups with the child nearest to them.
- Continue with slow walking around and then bring them to a final stop.
- One way to end is by bringing their attention to their bodies and breath and then briefly focus on appreciating having clean drinking water. For example:

Now that we have stopped walking, notice if your muscles feel tight. Maybe your shoulders and arms are tight. Try relaxing your shoulders down while still holding the cup. Now, using your sense of sight, bring your attention to the water in the cup. You are standing still but is the water still? Do you notice any movement in the water? And how are you feeling right now?

- Then you can direct students to pour water back in the pitcher or sink or, better still, if there are plants in the room they can water them. If you are doing this activity outside, students can choose to give some water back to the earth or plants nearby.

Optional extension:

Do you notice any temptation to drink the water? Maybe, or maybe not. Our bodies need water every day to help us stay healthy. We are very lucky that we can drink water whenever we want to. If you want to, feel free to slowly take a sip or two of water and use your sense of touch - inside your mouth, like we did with our tangerines - to taste the water. If you do not want to drink, no problem.

Soc-A

Self-M

Water-Walking Variations

- Instead of walking you may have students pass one cup of water around a circle, standing or sitting.
- You can have the whole class do it together, or in small groups. Introduce one cup at the beginning then add more cups to be passed around. Consider changing directions!

Alternative (Dry!) Activity: Feather or Marble Walking

This has a similar intention to Water Walking. Try it out for yourself first and see if you think marbles or feathers would work best for your class.

- Give each student a small feather or marble.
- Model yourself holding the feather/marble in an open palm and encourage them to try to not close the hand around it to secure it. Help them focus before moving; perhaps putting their attention in their feet; tuning in to the sense of touch of the object in their palm without looking at it, etc.

(Continued)

- Then start to move slowly enough that the feather/marble stays in the open palm while they are moving, without needing to close their hands.
- You could even give half the class marbles while the other half has feathers and exchange part way through.

Crunchy Walk

- Make a trail on the floor using crumpled-up newspaper or tissue paper.
- Invite students to walk carefully along the trail, focusing on the 'crunchy' sensations with their feet and ears.
- You can consider making a few different trails with different materials, colours and sensations using scarves, cotton balls, etc., and breaking the class into smaller groups of 'explorers'.
- If possible, try this one outside in the autumn on crunchy leaves!

Educator Voice: Our Wellbeing Journey

I was very fortunate to be Principal of a new public (state) school in Canada and we decided, after lots of research and planning, that mindfulness and wellbeing would be the foundation of our school culture from the beginning.

Through research, we discovered that the MindUP curriculum was a good fit for our school. In order to implement the program all staff participated in three days of training on mindfulness in which they also gained valuable insight into their own wellbeing. Teachers started to notice differences with themselves - they felt calmer in the classroom, they were better able to recognize their emotions and how best to care for themselves. We asked our students if they found the breathing strategies helpful:

They are helpful, if you're mad, you can use it to calm yourself down. Also it gives you a chance to have some time when nobody is annoying you.

Grade 4 Student

I feel more relaxed and ready to learn or else I would totally go off-topic and not do my work. Every day, whenever I get mad, I always take a moment to breathe and forget about it so that it won't be stuck in my head for the rest of the day.

Grade 5 Student

It makes me realize how hyper I actually am. When I do realize, I know that I need to calm down. When I don't realize, I keep on going crazy.

Grade 6 Student

They make it easier for you to focus and they calm you down but you have to actually do the exercises for it to work.

Grade 5 Student

Every classroom has a Calming Corner with mindfulness tools available for students and despite limited space in the school we have a dedicated room for staff mindfulness practices. I will do my very best not to give up this space as it is a refuge for teachers during a busy school day!

Maintaining a focus on wellbeing in the school is a journey and it doesn't happen overnight. Clear communication, professional development and teacher support are key. I am committed to providing time for staff to be trained - it is a continual challenge but this is critical! We can't expect students to practice if WE don't practice mindfulness and our own self-regulation. It is not always easy to find the time for this in a busy school but we always begin our staff meetings with mindfulness and make it a priority in our learning.

Pauline McKenna - Principal, Kanata Highlands Public School, Ottawa, Canada

Seasoning Activities

Once you have laid a foundation for whole-class sensory activities you can build on this by introducing short Seasoning Activities to help students self-calm and/or energize. These brief exercises can be used at the beginning or end of a class; for a transition exercise between activities; or whenever you want the class to pause for a moment. With any age group it is important to provide opportunities for movement and physical grounding, and with 7-10 year olds we need to find ways to allow them to move around frequently. By doing movement with an awareness component we can help students find ways to consciously self-soothe and self-calm. These simple activities can help equip them with a self-care toolkit that they can draw from when needed.

Below are a few sample activities. Once you have a sense of the combination of physical, emotional and mental awareness these activities provide, you will be able to create your own, perhaps even inviting students to suggest exercises that might work for them. At the end of this chapter we point you towards other resources that you can draw from to extend your range of Seasoning Activities.

Self-A

Self-M

Standing Seaweed Sensation

- Invite students to spread themselves around the room, spaced away from each other and facing you.
- Tell them about seaweed and in particular kelp - how it is like an underwater forest, each long strand anchored to the bed of the ocean.



(Continued)

- Model standing tall and loose like kelp and invite them to sense into their feet, the root of the kelp, anchored to the sea bed.
- Close eyes or lower gaze to sense more clearly this feeling through the feet.
- Imagine the sea gently moving around them, back and forth, gently beneath the waves, being pushed and pulled slightly from side to side as well.
- As the waves build, the bodies are rocked more powerfully by the water, but the roots keep their feet in place.
- As the waves begin to gradually calm, the movement slows down until there is just a very slight, gentle rocking movement.
- Finally the waves stop moving altogether and they can stand still - a quiet forest of kelp.
- Invite them to notice whether there are any tiny movements in the body even standing still.
- If their eyes were closed, invite them to open them and notice how they feel. Maybe stretch the arms up high, taking a deep breath in, and bringing the arms down as they breathe out. Then invite them to return to their seats, keeping this sense of being 'calm kelp'.
- If appropriate, congratulate them on how well they participated, how much like a kelp forest they really were and remind them that the seaweed activity is one of the ways we can tune into our senses through the body and that these short moments are really good for helping us stay calm and healthy.

TEACHING TIP

For this activity we sometimes have a background video of kelp swaying in the sea because the visual movement and sounds can help students calm more easily and connect them with the sense of nature and natural movement. For example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCWJPrGTLtU (YouTube Search: 'Spring Seaweeds').

Self-A

Soc-A

30-Second Listening

- This was first introduced in the 'Awareness of Senses' introduction above and can be used as a stand-alone activity at any time.
- Consider extending it by a few seconds each time.
- You can also vary it in the way you draw attention to the sounds, for example: *Let's focus just on sounds from outside the room, or notice today if some sounds are continuous, and some just come and go, etc.*

Self-M

Freezing and Melting

- This can be done sitting or standing.
- Gradually squeeze-freeze the whole body tight, tight, tight, solid like a block of ice.
- Then slowly 'melt', loosening and releasing the tightness bit by bit, perhaps guiding them through one body area at a time.

TEACHING TIP



Some students might automatically hold their breath as they are 'freezing'. Mention this possibility in the moment, as an object of curiosity rather than a 'mistake'. You can also then guide them to notice how we often naturally exhale more deeply when we begin to 'melt'.

Self-M

Feather Breath

- This can be done with a real or imaginary feather.

Hold it between thumb and index finger.

Blow on the feather - as gently as possible - with the intention to maintain a flow of breath, having the feather move, but as little as possible.

Do this a few times, taking a long breath in (careful not to inhale the feather!), then exhaling slowly with gentle blowing.

Notice how you feel.

- Remind them that when we want to slow down a little or calm ourselves, a longer, gentle out-breath helps the body to relax and rest. Slowing down the body can also help slow down the mind when we get over-busy or worried.

TEACHING TIPS



- Watch out for hyperventilating! If children seem to over-breathe or try too hard, just help them to breathe and blow more easily and gently. Even their natural breath will move the feather slightly.
- Prolonged silences and a focus on the breath can be uncomfortable if a student has any trauma in their past. Please refer to the end of Chapter 5 for more information on trauma-sensitive teaching.

Self-A

Soc-A

Rel. Skills

Back-to-Back Breathing

Sit with your back resting against your partner's back. Sit up straight and be still and silent.

One person starts breathing in and out slowly and deeply. The other person tries to sync their breathing to their partner's.

Notice how you feel. Ask your partner what they noticed.

For more Breath Awareness practices, see Chapters 1 and 3.

Shoulder Rolls

Choose a comfortable sitting position.

As you take a slow deep breath in through your nose raise your shoulders up towards your ears ...

Breath slowly out through your mouth, rolling your shoulders back and down as you exhale.

Repeat slowly, rolling your shoulders up and down in time with your breath.

Foot Stamp

- This can be done sitting or standing.

Stamp the feet, starting slowly and building to stamping as quickly and as fast as possible.

- Guide them a little, like an orchestral conductor.

Then begin to slow down, coming to stillness and quiet.

- Draw students' attention to any sensations they might notice in their feet and toes (e.g. warmth, tingling, fizzing, prickling).

Just notice!

Hand Hug and Brush

Rub hands together to create warmth.

Squeeze different parts of your body noticing how they feel before and after.

Pretend your hands are brushes, firmly 'brushing' arms, neck, belly, lower back and legs.

Stand still, lower or close your eyes, notice any sensations left over from the brushing.

Once you have a feel for what works for your students, you can try out some of your own activities or draw from the rich range of resources available in this area. You will find some examples in the Further Reading and Resources at the end of this chapter. And don't forget to consider 'Pick 'n Mixing' some adapted activities from the other chapters in this section.

In Section II you will find many ideas to help you create opportunities for your students to begin to apply the new skills they are learning across the curriculum and throughout the school day. As you begin to contribute to a shifting of your school culture and processes to focus more on awareness, wellbeing and balance, don't forget to keep your own balance and wellbeing at the heart of everything you do.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we have:

- Shown you how to introduce sensory awareness activities to 7–10 year olds.
- Laid the foundation for building attention, listening and emotional regulation skills.
- Provided a range of exercises you can try out to 'season' the school day and extend your students' practice in further developing these skills.

Further Reading and Resources

Curriculum Training

Holistic Life Foundation - various programmes, <https://hlfinc.org/>

Mindful Schools - for ages 5-10, www.mindfulschools.org/

MindUP - for ages 3-13, <https://mindup.org/>

PATHS Program – for ages 3–10, evidence-based SEL Program, (CASEL certified) <https://pathsprogram.com/>

Paws b (Mindfulness in Schools Project) - for ages 7-11, <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/teach-paws-b/>

Still Quiet Place - for ages 5-18, www.stillquietplace.com/sqp-10-week-online-training/

Books

Bethune, A. (2019) *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom: A Practical Guide to Teaching Happiness*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Nhat Hanh, T. and Weare, K. (2017) *Happy Teachers Change the World: A Guide for Cultivating Mindfulness in Education*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax.

Rechtschaffen, D. (2014) *The Mindful Way of Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Books to Read Aloud

DiOrio, R., illustrated by Eliza Wheeler (2010) *What Does It Mean to Be Present?* San Francisco, CA: Little Pickle Press.

Edwards, N., illustrated by Katie Hickey (2019) *Happy: A Children's Book of Mindfulness*. London: Little Tiger Press.

Muth, J. (2002) *The Three Questions*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Willard, C. and Weisser, O. (2020) *The Breathing Book*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

App

Inner Explorer - <https://innerexplorer.org/>

90 days of short accessible guided audio practices for 5-10 year olds (CASEL certified).

Websites

Go Noodle - Movement activities and mindfulness practices, www.gonoodle.com/

Mind Yeti - Mindfulness practices, www.mindyeti.com/