



# Mindfulness

This lesson is designed to help students understand what it means to be mindful and how being mindful can affect their mental and physical health. The goal is to give students strategies on how they can practice mindfulness.

## Essential Question

How can I develop the expertise and mindsets I need to accomplish my most important goals, despite the challenges I face along the way?

## Guiding Question

What does it mean to be mindful? How can I practice mindfulness?

## Objectives

- Students will explain what it means to be mindful and how this practice can have a positive effect on their mood and health.
- Students will learn several different ways to practice mindfulness.

## Advance Preparation

- Display Do Now.
- Have video and rainforest sounds clip loaded.
- Select and load additional sound clips representing beach, zoo or other settings (see below).
- Prepare student handouts and have them ready for students to pick up as they enter the classroom.

## Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 2.5 (adapt as needed)
- Video and sound clips

## Student Materials

- “Introduction to Mindfulness” handout
- “What You Say vs. What You May Feel” activity sheet
- Half sheets of paper for exit ticket

**Vocabulary**

- Mindfulness
- Amygdala
- Hippocampus
- Prefrontal cortex

**Do Now**

2-3 min.

Slide 1: Students share with a partner their answers to the following questions:

Have you heard the term “mindfulness”? What does it mean to you, or what do you think it might mean?

**Introduction (Framing/Overview)**

2-3 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 seconds)
2. Tell students that today’s topic is mindfulness. Tell students, “Many people talk about being mindful, but we will think about what that really means and how we can practice mindfulness ourselves.” Share the lesson agenda (slide 4).

**Activity 1: Introducing Mindfulness**

15-20 min.

3. Before starting the lesson, tell students that while the term “mindfulness” has become very popular, it is often misunderstood. Invite students to share what they think of when they hear the term “mindfulness.”

Show the video to begin the conversation (slide 5):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsUEOUaWpY>

Tell students, “As you watch the video, jot down some ideas on your Introduction to Mindfulness handout about what being mindful is and how mindfulness might be helpful. What are some ways we can practice mindfulness?”

4. Invite students to comment on the video. What did they learn that was new to them, or that surprised them?

Display slide 6. Tell students, “Mindfulness means paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and without judgment. You focus attention on one specific aspect of your experience. For example, you can think about the parts of your feet touching the ground, or the weight of your phone in your hand (slide 7). Mindfulness is not just about sitting and meditating and does not require a clear mind. You can be mindful while you walk, listen to music, or eat.”

**Whole Class Discussion****Media Interaction****Whole Class Discussion****Direct Instruction**

(Slide 8) “The first step of being mindful is being open to all feelings, even unpleasant ones. It is also important not to judge or criticize yourself for however you are feeling. (Slide 9) Another part of being mindful is to pause and take inventory of your body. How are you feeling? Is there tension anywhere? Do you have any pain anywhere? What emotions do you have? Is something bothering you? What are your thoughts like? Are they positive or negative?”

Invite student questions or comments on what you have shared so far.

**Whole  
Class  
Discussion**

5. Show slide 10 and tell students, “One of the reasons we want to focus on mindfulness is that it can be very helpful for all people, including students. You are all so busy and dealing with many different stressors. Sometimes you need to slow down and be present. Very often we focus on the past or the future, but mindfulness is about the ‘Now.’ We also have so many different emotions and thoughts, it can be difficult to identify how we are feeling at any given moment. Pausing to ask can be helpful.”

**Direct  
Instruction**

Share the following information with students (slide 11): “Mindful practices can help you better understand your emotions and increase positive emotions, focus, memory, attention, and compassion. You may feel less stressed or negative after being mindful. Some studies even show that mindfulness can boost your immune system and change parts of your brain (slide 12). For example, the amygdala is part of the brain that is where emotions live. People who practice mindfulness have a slightly smaller amygdala, which means they may experience less stress and fear. The hippocampus (slide 13) is the part of the brain that is important for memory. People who practice mindfulness may have a more active hippocampus, so more learning is occurring. Lastly, the prefrontal cortex (slide 14), the part of the brain that helps us make decisions and control behaviors, also becomes more activated because of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us develop better planning and problem-solving skills.”

**Mindfulness myths:** Show slide 15. Instruct students to work with their partners to read the statements listed and determine which ones are true and which ones are myths. Answers should be recorded in the chart at the bottom of the “Introduction to Mindfulness” handout.

**Cooperative  
Learning**

**Activity 2: Practicing Mindfulness**

10-15 min.

6. Advise students that there are various ways to practice mindfulness. Explain that breathing slowly and deeply helps to calm the body and mind. One way to do this is to count to three as you inhale and then again as you exhale; sometimes people use their fingers to help maintain that rhythm. Demonstrate the breathing exercise (“belly breathing”) described on slide 16, using your own hand, and then lead students through the exercise.

**Teacher Modeling**

7. As another way to practice mindfulness, invite students to close their eyes and listen to one minute of this recording (slide 17):

**Student Practice**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STWVMI\\_cGuc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STWVMI_cGuc)

Before playing the clip, advise students to pay attention to how their senses (hearing, touch, smell, etc.) react as they are listening to it. As it plays, quietly prompt students by asking, “What do you hear? What do you smell? How does your body feel? Are you feeling tense?”

Then, have students practice listening again, this time to the sound clip(s) you prepared from beach, zoo, or other settings. Invite students to try to identify some of the different sounds. After 60 seconds, ask students, “What do you hear?”

Other mindful practices (slide 18) include:

- Mindful coloring
- Listening to music
- Going for a walk and paying attention to the sights, sounds and smells

Tell students (slide 19) that mindful listening also includes listening to someone speak and focusing on what they are saying. The goal is to try to understand them rather than respond. This slight change in communication style can help ensure that you understand and avoid miscommunication.

**Activity 3: What Might You Really Mean?**

10 min.

8. Tell students (slide 20) that part of being mindful is being aware of your own feelings as well as those of the people around you. Direct them to work with a partner, reading some statements people may make and trying to identify what the speaker may be feeling when making these statements. Have them complete all or part of the “What You Say vs. What You May Feel” activity sheet.

**Student Practice**

## Closure

3 min.

Students complete an exit ticket by answering the following questions:

1. What does it mean to be mindful?
2. What are two ways you can be more mindful in your life?

## Extensions

To manage classroom time, use more or fewer sound clips for students to identify (activity 5) or invite students to offer suggestions of ways to be mindful that they've found helpful. If time is short, only assign a portion of the questions on the "What You Say vs. What You May Feel" activity sheet.

If you wish to assign homework, have students finish the "What You Say vs. What You May Feel" activity sheet (if they did not do so in class).

Introduction to Mindfulness



As we watch the video on mindfulness, jot down some ideas about the following:

What does it mean to be mindful?

What are some benefits of being mindful?

What are ways we can practice mindfulness?

Mindfulness Myths

Read the mindfulness statements below and decide whether they are facts or myths.

Mindfulness Statement	Fact	Myth
1. Mindfulness can only be practiced by adults.		
2. To be mindful, you need to be sitting in a quiet room.		
3. Mindfulness is just about paying attention and being intentional.		
4. Identifying negative thoughts is part of being mindful.		
5. Practicing mindfulness can make you smarter.		
6. Mindfulness can change your brain.		
7. Mindfulness can reduce your stress level.		
8. In order to be mindful, you need to clear your mind.		

## What You Say vs. What You May Feel

Part of being mindful is being able to label how we are feeling. Read the statements below and identify the feelings that are represented by the statement. Think about ideas for things the person could do—or a friend could do—to help them feel better.

1. “Leave me alone. Nobody cares about me.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

2. “I don’t need your help. I can do this alone.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

3. “We’re supposed to be best friends! I can’t believe you told on me!”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

4. “Yeah, I guess I was mean to her. I shouldn’t have said what I did.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

5. “I can write in my book if I want. It’s mine. I can do what I want with it.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

6. “You never get mad at *her*, just at me!”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

7. “I’ll never do as well as he does, no matter how long I practice.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

8. “There’s nothing to do. I’m bored.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

9. “I give up. I can’t figure it out. I’ll never be able to figure it out.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

10. “This is dumb! I hate school.”

Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Action ideas: \_\_\_\_\_