

ACTIVITIES FOR SEL AND MINDFULNESS

1. GRATITUDE (MIND)

OBJECTIVE: To encourage gratitude through introspection in order to facilitate mindset shifts.

MATERIALS: None

TEACHER TALK: When students understand that there are reasons to be grateful, when they learn to acknowledge that they have something to be grateful for, a natural shift in their mindset can occur. When practicing the ‘art of being thankful’, students are able, to see the good over the bad—even when obstacles occur. Students can build resistance and tenacity in times of duress. The practice of gratitude helps us celebrate the present and block negative thoughts by training our minds to see the good in all circumstances. Daily Activity: At the beginning of class, ask students to share any area of their day that they are thankful for:

- a good grade
- something nice a friend said
- spending time with a parent or friend
- a favorite food they get to eat
- scoring a winning goal in soccer
- a moment of kindness they activated

NOTE: Repeat this daily activity prior regular instruction in order to increase a mindfulness mentality in the classroom.

Reflection: Ask class how it feels to discuss how it feels to learn about each other’s ‘gratefulness’. Ask them to think critically about their answer, they can start their sentences off with phrases such as:

- “I like it because...”
- “I feel good when I am grateful because...”
- “When I hear about someone else’s gratefulness, I learn...”

Ask the class why it’s important to share positivity with each other. Chart their responses or ask them to keep a journal of anything that they feel is valuable— they may use this information for a larger project.



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2. BREATH (BODY)

OBJECTIVE To help students begin to learn how to self-regulate through the power of breath and active meditation.

MATERIALS: Empty room for students to spread out and comfortable lie down or for a modification have them sit in their seats.

TEACHER TALK: Have students find a comfortable spot on the floor or just sitting in their chairs and ask them to close their eyes. If they're on the floor have them turn their palms towards the ceiling and have them begin to find their natural breath pattern.

You will act as the conductor of this breathing exercise. Say to the students

“Close your eyes and begin to focus on your breath. Feel the breath go in through your nose, and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this breathing a few more times. Inhale through your nose, and exhale through your mouth.”

Use this time to help students start to find their natural breathe pattern, use a calming voice to help them through this active meditation.

Say to the students

“Put your hands by your side, turn your palms up towards the ceiling, let the energy flow through your body, down your arms, and let the energy escape from the palms of your hands going up towards the sky. Find an image that makes you happy, and calm, maybe it is a beautiful sunflower, perhaps it is the sunsetting, perhaps it is just your favorite color- the color orange, or the color yellow. Place that image in your third eye. The third eye is in the middle of your four head between your two eyeballs. Use that image to focus on, find your natural breathe, and a place of calm.

Walk through the room and make sure the students are focusing. Even if they are fidgeting, or laughing, you can make comments and say to them

“It's OK to feel uncomfortable, it's OK to be exactly where you are, just try to focus, focus on your breathe, be present, and respectful to the rest of the class.

Say to the class:



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“Begin to let go, let go of the day, let go of your homework, let go of your stress, focus on the beautiful image in your mind’s eye. Let go of the stress from home, just be here, be with this room right now, listen to my voice, and focus on your breathe and letting go.”

Say to the class:

“Now we’re going to focus on different parts of your body. We’re going to use isolation activities. You’re going to keep your eyes closed, and work with your breath. Just follow my voice. Keep your eyes closed and we will begin. On the next breathe, begin to stretch your hands, hold them in that position using tension to expand your hands, hold the stretch, and when I say release, just release. Breath in, extend your hands as far as you can, hold it, hold it, and then release.

Do this with each part of the body.

- Hands
- Shoulders
- Stomach
- Thighs
- Calves
- Feet and toes
- Then the whole body
- Add the face to your whole body
- Repeat, whole body again
- Whole body for the last time, and have students hold the tension for an extended amount of time.

If students feel like letting out large sound upon the release of breath, tell them that that is OK. Sound is natural. It is unnatural to hold her breath and not have sound. Give your students to space and permission to breathe naturally exhale for stress release and find their center.

When students have completed their whole body stretch with their eyes closed, have them find their natural pattern of breathing again, bring them back to center, and let them sit/lay and breathe in the quiet for just a few extra minutes.



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3. ACCEPTANCE: COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVE: Students learn how to identify and share a positive attribute about another student-attributes can be physical, personal, intellectual and cultural. Students will also learn how to accept differences by creating positive affirmations about one another.

MATERIALS: SLIPS OF PAPER, PEN/PENCILS

TEACHER TALK: Students are used to put-downs, but what about 'put-ups'? This activity helps students see the positive things that their peers are doing and gives them skills to affirm each other across social boundaries.

1. Inform students that they are going to begin "reading" each other, finding positive attributes that their schoolmates have. They will be giving each other put/lift-ups instead of 'put-downs'. To make it easy for students to praise each other, they can use the Put/Lift-Up slips.
2. Ask students if they know what a put-down is and chose a students to list common put-downs they hear on the board/chart paper.
3. Next, ask them if they know what a 'put-up' is or a 'positive attribute and give some examples:
 - "I notice that Samantha is always smiling and willing to help people"
 - "You can always count on John to hold the door open for you when you enter a room"
 - "I appreciate how Manuel has friends from every group in school"
 - "Liza is so athletic, she's a role model"



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4. Use the following poem to introduce the class how people are always watching what they do:

*I am my schoolmate's reader
He reads me when we meet
Today he reads me in my class
Tomorrow on the streets
He may be classmate or friend
Or slight acquaintance be
He may not even know me
But he is reading me!*

5. Ask the class to interpret the poem: 'How is 'reader used in this poem?' and 'What does it mean to be 'read?'
6. Inform students that they are going to begin "reading" each other, finding positive things that their peers are doing and they will give each other 'put-ups'. To make it easy for students to praise each other, they can use the Put/Lift-Up slips.
7. Have students each share one "put-up" to the entire class or have them drop the slips into a jar and have a different student choose one to read aloud. They should write their names on their slips.
8. Encourage students to be a "put-up ambassador" for students in the grades below them as to model good behavior to younger kids. Likewise, encourage them to cross boundaries and offer "put-ups" to older students and adults in your program or school so that others can see that they are modeling positive behavior to foster a positive school culture. . This also helps them understand that they can cross social boundaries of grades and age and make a positive impact on the entire school.

REFLECTION: Ask the class how it feels when you hear something positive about yourself? Is there anyone in your life outside the class that you'd like to "put-up"?



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4. SOCIAL MEDIA BOUNDARIES: DIGITAL & SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

OBJECTIVE: Students create social media boundaries and expectations for themselves.

MATERIALS: pens/pencils, paper, markers, chart paper

1. **Discuss** different types of posts and what's appropriate or what's confusing:

- "Cute but not too sexy"
- "Innocent and nice but cute"
- "Bragging, inclusion, exclusion (ex: watching Snaps of a party and you're not there, going on vacation and showing off)."

2. Ask:

- What are you "allowed" to post – and what seems to be off-limits? Is that "rule" the same for boys vs. girls? Why or why not?
- Can you show me an example of a "good" post (or a "bad" post)?
- Does social media ever stress you out (and can you give yourself a break)?
- How can kids in your group make group texts or social media nicer for everyone?

3. Have students discuss

4. Have students create their new social media and digital rules in a small group 5. Have student groups write on chart paper and share their rules

3. Reflection: Ask student what the consequences are for poor social media etiquette. Do they have any stories to share?

5. HAVE THEM CREATE A SERVICE, ADVOCACY or COMMUNITY BASED PROJECT WITH IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ANY OF THE LESSONS ABOVE



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