

# Simple Ways to Practice Mindfulness

Katy Wagner, EdD Candidate

[kwagnerw@pps.net](mailto:kwagnerw@pps.net)

- ❖ **In Transit**. On your way to work or school, take some deep breaths, relaxing throughout your body.
- ❖ **Stay Present**. As you walk in the door to work, instead of letting your mind spin off into yesterday or today, take three breaths. Focus on your breathing, and sense the effects of breathing throughout your body.
- ❖ **Notice 5 Things**. Before students arrive, instead of hurrying to your usual routine, slow down and *notice 5 things* about the morning, such as a flower that bloomed outside, the sound of birds, the rain on the roof.
- ❖ **Announcing a Break**. Whenever an announcement comes over the PA system, take a moment to notice 5 things you see and 5 things you hear.
- ❖ **"I am having the thought..."** When a colleague or student says something annoying it is easy to get "hooked" (tangled up in difficult thoughts/feelings). Use your irritation as a cue to notice your thoughts and feelings. Say to yourself "I am having the thought that...", and then accept these thoughts and **get present**. When you are not hooked, what new possibilities for the situation are evident?
- ❖ **Take a Minute**. When sitting at your desk or keyboard, become aware of the subtle signs of physical tension. Take one minute to get present. Stretch and walk around, noticing how your body feels.
- ❖ **What's Your Cue?** Use the repetitive events of the day – School bell, a knock on the door, walking down the hall – as cues for a **mini-relaxation**.
- ❖ **Mindfulness Bell**. Use a bell with a pleasant and sustained sound to signal a brief break and have students check their breathing. This can be used to get attention, signal transitions, or slow down momentum to pause and reflect.
- ❖ **Walk mindfully** to the school restroom. What new things can you see and appreciate? How is it walking without rushing?
- ❖ **Notice One Pleasant Event** every day for a week and write it down on a calendar or journal. Describe any thoughts or emotions you experienced before, during, and after the event.
- ❖ **Smooth Transition**. As you return home, consciously make the transition into your home environment. If possible, after greeting your family or housemates, give yourself a few minutes alone to ease the transition.
- ❖ **As you go to sleep**, let go of today and tomorrow, and take some slow, mindful breaths.

## Three Gates

Carefully observing and assessing a situation before acting, or before speaking, is an important life skill. This exercise encourages children and adults to ask themselves three questions before they speak:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it necessary?
3. Is it kind?

## Centering Exercise

1. Plant your feet on the floor and gently push your feet down.
2. Notice the floor supporting you.
3. Notice the muscle tension in your legs
4. Notice your entire body and feel gravity flowing from head into your feet.
5. Take a deep breath.

## Body Scan Meditation

1. Lie on your back in a comfortable position, legs straight and uncrossed with arms at your side. Take a minute to notice the points of contact your body has with the surface you are on.
2. Begin to notice your breath, feeling it as it moves throughout your body. Notice the feeling of your belly rising on the in-breath and falling on the out-breath. Don't try to change your breath, just notice it.
3. Focus on the tips of your toes on your left foot. Try to feel each toe and the spaces between them without moving them. Picture your breath at the tips. Slowly move your awareness to the bottom of your left foot, to the ball of your foot, then to your heel and what it is in contact with. After a few moments, move to the top of your left foot and ankle.
4. Continue to your lower leg, your calf muscle, your knee and your upper thigh. Try to feel any contact your left leg has with the surface you are on. Once you have reached your left hip, move down to the toes of your right foot and repeat with your right side. Once you have reached your hip on your right leg, focus your awareness on both of your legs.
5. Move your attention to your pelvic area while on your way to your lower back. Slowly moving up your back, notice each bone and muscle you encounter as you move to your shoulders. Breathe into any tension you have in your back or shoulders and releasing any tension you have on the out-breath.
6. Move to your abdomen. As you move up to your chest and ribs, try to feel your heart beat.
7. Bring your attention to the tips of your fingers. Try to feel each finger and the spaces between them, without moving them. Pay attention to the air around your fingers and any contact your hands have with anything else. Notice any sensations in your hands. Move up through your palms and the back of your hands to your wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arms, and shoulders.
8. Slowly move up to the back of your neck and head. Try to notice the hair on your head. Move forward to the front of your face. Notice your forehead, eyebrows, eyelashes and eyes. Notice your ears, cheeks, nose, mouth, tongue, teeth, jaw, chin, and throat.
9. Now focus your awareness on your entire body. Imagine a tiny hole the size of a quarter on the top of your head. Imagine breathing in through this hole, then gently moving the air all the way down through your body and releasing it through the tips of your toes. Slowly breathe in and out like this for a minute.
10. Notice how you feel at this very moment. To bring yourself back from the meditation, gently wiggle your toes and your fingers. If your eyes are closed, slowly open them when you are ready.

Adapted from *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens*, **Gina Biegel, MA, LMFT**