

Compassion Resilience Parent and Caregiver Toolkit



Mindfulness Activities Appendix

The goal of mindfulness is to be fully present with our emotions, with others, with our bodies, with our environment, and with the universe (Davidson, 2012). It is through being fully present and aware and observing mindfully that we can participate most effectively in building our own resilience and wellness. We incorporated a mindfulness practice at the beginning of each agenda to model a compassion resilience practice and to give participants a moment to become mentally present in the space. The practice we incorporated into each agenda is the same one. If you'd like variety or if your participants would like additional time practicing mindfulness together, please feel free to utilize the resources included in this appendix.

Setting Your Intention Practice

Eve Eckman, Mindful Healthcare Summit

Script to read or do individually:

- Take a moment with a soft focus or even eyes closed. First check in on the physical body. What does it feel like in your body right now? Is there tension and tightness? Is there ease? Is there fatigue? Is there energy? Take a moment to bring the attention and focus inward to just notice the experience of the body right now.
- And now take a moment to include the mind. What is the quality of the mind right now? Are there many thoughts or few? Might there be some emotional residue from something that happened earlier in the day or something we anticipate later?
- And from this noticing, from paying attention to what our body, our mind, our heart is experiencing, set an intention from here. A simple sentence or even a word: For the rest of the day, my intention is...
- Repeat it silently to yourself a couple of times. It doesn't have to be the perfect one or the right one. It's just what is working right now.
- Gently, if your eyes were closed, blinking them back open. And otherwise just returning your attention and awareness here.



This simple practice of setting an intention can be quite powerful. It can help us throughout the day.

One Minute of Breathing – Three Areas of Attention Practice

Adapted from *3 Breaths*-Jenee Johnson, and *the 3 Minute Breathing Space*



Script to read or do individually:

- Just connect with your breath, find your breath. As you relax into your breath, bring your attention to what is happening right here and now. Notice thoughts, feelings, and sensations as you arrive in this moment, just as it is, just as you are.
- Now feel your breath as it flows throughout your body, relax your body as you feel the breath in your body from your head to your toes.
- As you breathe in and out easily, ask yourself the question, "What is important now?," and then just let that arrive.

The Pause Practice

Adapted from Lubar Solvang, S. (2017, April). *The Pause*. School Community Partnership for Mental Health newsletter

Explain:

Taking a brief pause throughout the day can help us re-center ourselves and calm our minds. Pauses help us to refocus and provide clarity to help guide us to act intentionally, rather than reactively. Pauses give us time to step back from our judging or fixing mode and instead shift our senses and thoughts to the present. One means of taking a “pause” is to focus on your breath.

Share:

- Find a comfortable posture with your feet on the floor and your back erect. You may sit or stand and close your eyes or look at the ground.
- Now find your breath, typically most apparent in your nose, chest, or stomach. **Give your attention to your breathing and attune to it with curiosity.**
- Do not worry about your mind wandering, just gently bring it back to focus on the sensation of breathing, like you are redirecting a puppy that has wandered off.
- Notice how breathing nourishes your body even when you are not paying attention to it.
- Feel your whole body breathe, gently moving with the rise and fall of your breath. **Try to pay attention to at least 5 breathing cycles.**
- Now, release your breath and allow everything that comes into awareness to just be as it is.



Guided Meditation for Relaxation

Guide participants through a grounding exercise

Ask them to sit with both feet on the floor, backs straight but relaxed and away from the back of the chair, palms on knees, and eyes either closed or softly open. If eyes are open, it is helpful to focus on the circle centerpiece.

In a calm and soothing voice, guide them to relax their minds and bodies. Ask them to quiet their minds by simply noticing when thoughts come into their minds and allow them to leave without attention to them. Guide them to relax their bodies from head to toe, one area of their bodies at a time.



Self-Compassion Break

Germer, C. and Neff, K. (2019). *Teaching the Mindful Self-Compassion Program*. New York: Guilford Press.

Script to read or do individually.

When you notice that you're feeling stress or emotional discomfort, see if you can find the discomfort in your body. Where do you feel it the most? Make contact with the sensations as they arise in your body.

Now, say to yourself, slowly:

"This is a moment of suffering"

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- This hurts.
- Ouch!
- This is stressful.

"Suffering is part of living"

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- I'm not alone. Others are just like me.
- We all struggle in our lives.
- This is how it feels when a person struggles in this way.

Now, put your hands over your heart, or wherever it feels soothing, feeling the warmth and gentle touch of your hands.

"May I be kind to myself"

That's self-kindness. Other options might be:

- May I give myself what I need.
- May I accept myself as I am.
- May I live in love.

If you're having difficulty finding the right words, imagine that a dear friend or loved one is having the same problem as you. What would you say to this person, heart-to-heart? If your friend were to hold just a few of your words in their mind, what would you like them to be? What message would you like to deliver? (*pause*) Now, see if you offer the same message to yourself.

Listen to an [audio file](#) of Kristin Neff leading the practice.



Finding Calm

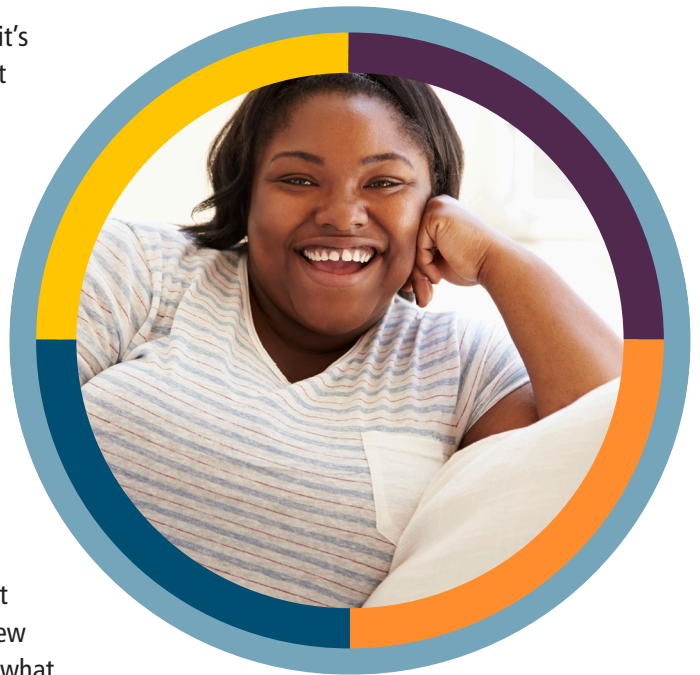
Adapted from practice done by Rick Hanson, PhD

Mindful Education Practice Challenge: Find Calm in Your Body

This is a short practice where we can explore engaging the parasympathetic nervous system which can bring us into a sense of calm. After you learn it and practice it a few times, you can do this practice in 20-30 seconds to help decrease the intensity of a fight/flight response to stress.

As with any practice, do as much of the practice as feels comfortable and right for you.

- You can close your eyes or keep them open during this practice.
- As we begin, getting a sense of this room we are in and that it's OK to be here. Right here, right now. You might push your feet on the floor or tap the arms of your chair. Get a sense, this is my place. It's okay for me to be here.
- And then being aware of your breathing. Notice the sensations and be aware that you're basically all right. Right now. There's enough air to breathe. You're doing okay.
- And then for a couple of breaths let your exhalation of your breath be longer than the inhalation. You can even count inhale, one two. Exhale, one two three four five. The parasympathetic branch of the nervous system handles exhaling.
- Noticing how you are feeling right now. And if you feel a sense of calm, or another positive sensation, really taking that in, noticing it, even savoring it. Perhaps staying with it for a few more cycles of breathing, feeling it in your body and noticing what feels good about it. Calm feels good.



And now letting go of this short practice, coming back to your sense of yourself in the room, and if your eyes were closed, slowly and gently opening them. Just settling for a few moments, and feeling however you are feeling, just as it is. Nothing to do, nothing to change.

Hand Movements Activity

Share the statements below:

- Hold your hands out and squeeze them into fists. (Hold for at least 30 seconds and invite participants to close their eyes for the rest of the activity.)
 - Think about what emotions arise as you close your fists. This is a metaphor for resistance – what it feels like when we fight rather than accept our current reality.
 - Resistance can be helpful if it leads us to discover where we might have some level of control. Yet, staying in the place of resistance can be unproductive and fatiguing.
- Now, bring your elbows to your side, open your hands and turn your palms upward.
 - Think about what emotions arise for you. This is a metaphor for mindfulness, what it feels like when we are present and open to ourselves, our experiences and the changes/challenges/opportunities we are faced with.
- Now extend your palms and your arms forward.
 - Think about how this makes you feel. This is a metaphor for common humanity – what it feels like when we reach beyond ourselves and welcome and include others.
 - In our vulnerability we discover the common aspects of humanity and can form bonds with others. We can act with compassion.
- Now place one hand in the other with both palms facing upward. Slowly bring them to your chest. Feel the warmth and gentle pressure. Breathe naturally.
 - Reflect on your feelings during this last step. This symbolizes self-compassion. Caring for ourselves is the foundation that supports our compassion for others and helps us find comfort in our common humanity.



Other Mindfulness Practices

Visualization scripts:

Read the following scripts out loud to participants. Allow time for participants to follow the directions before moving forward.

- 1. Passengers on the bus** – Find yourself in a comfortable seated position. You may close your eyes if you'd like or allow your gaze to fall just in front of you. Turn your attention toward your breath and pay attention to the thoughts that come to your mind. Begin to visualize yourself in the driver's seat of a bus as all the passengers are noisily chattering, being critical, or shouting. Sometimes, your own thoughts may feel just like these passengers. You can allow the passengers to shout, and you can keep your attention focused on the road ahead. You can allow your thoughts to just be as you turn your focus back to your breath. Take three slow breaths and when you feel ready, bring your attention back to the space you occupy.
- 2. The river** – Find yourself in a comfortable seated position. You may close your eyes if you'd like or allow your gaze to fall just in front of you. Turn your attention toward your breath and pay attention to the thoughts that come to your mind. Begin to visualize yourself sitting on a riverbank. Bring to mind what you might feel, see, and hear as you watch the river. What might you see floating in the river? Perhaps leaves, branches, or bits of mucky debris. Let those things represent your thoughts and watch for a moment as they float on by. Instead of struggling to stay afloat, we can stand tall on the bank watching our thoughts, images, and sensations pass us by.
- 3. The mountain** – Find yourself in a comfortable seated position. You may close your eyes if you'd like or allow your gaze to fall just in front of you. Turn your attention toward your breath and pay attention to the thoughts that come to your mind. Begin to visualize a mountain, standing tall against the horizon. Notice what feelings arise for you as you begin to visualize the mountain's strength and size. Keep the image of the mountain in mind as you bring your attention back to your breath. Whatever the weather, or whatever happens on the surface of the mountain, and even within it – the mountain stands firm, mostly unaffected. Strong, grounded, permanent. We can be like the mountain, observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations and yet know inner stillness.
- 4. The weather** – Find yourself in a comfortable seated position. You may close your eyes if you'd like or allow your gaze to fall just in front of you. Turn your attention toward your breath and pay attention to the thoughts that come to your mind. As those thoughts come to mind, visualize them as clouds in the sky. Whatever those clouds may do – rain, provide shade, sleet, or snow, they move past. We cannot control the weather, so we have to learn to adapt to it. We can put a coat on for instance, but we cannot stop the wind or rain, and it would be foolish to try. Regardless of what we do, the storm will pass. Our thoughts and feelings are like the weather. They come and go. We cannot control or stop them, but we can watch it pass with a raincoat prepared.



Other Mindfulness Practices (continued)

Mindful sensory awareness script:

Find a comfortable position. Staying in this position, listen to the questions below, listening for your response after each question. If you do not have a recording of these questions, you can make one for yourself (or ask a friend to make one), recording each question with about 5 seconds in between.

1. Can you feel your hair touching your head?
2. Can you feel your belly rising and falling as you breathe?
3. Can you feel the space between your eyes?
4. Can you feel the distance between your ears?
5. Can you feel your breath touching the back of your eyes while you inhale?
6. Can you picture something far away?
7. Can you notice your arms touching your body?
8. Can you feel the bottoms of your feet?
9. Can you imagine a beautiful day at the beach?
10. Can you notice the space within your mouth?
11. Can you notice the position of your tongue in your mouth?
12. Can you feel a breeze against your cheek?
13. Can you feel how one arm is heavier than the other?
14. Can you feel a tingling or numbness in one hand?
15. Can you feel how one arm is more relaxed than the other?
16. Can you feel a change in the temperature in the air around you?
17. Can you feel how your left arm is warmer than the right?
18. Can you imagine how it would feel to be a rag doll?
19. Can you notice any tightness in your left forearm?
20. Can you imagine something very pleasant?
21. Can you imagine what it would feel like to float on a cloud?
22. Can you imagine what it would feel like to be stuck in molasses?
23. Can you picture something far away?
24. Can you feel a heaviness in your legs?
25. Can you imagine floating in warm water?
26. Can you notice your body hanging on your bones?
27. Can you allow yourself to drift lazily?
28. Can you feel your face getting soft?
29. Can you imagine a beautiful flower?
30. Can you feel how one arm and leg are heavier than the other?



Other Mindfulness Practices (continued)

Mindful listening script

1. Invite participants to find a comfortable seated position, and close their eyes if they feel comfortable.
2. Share that the following exercise focuses on mindful listening.
3. After turning on the music, ask participants to listen as they normally would.
4. After a minute or two of listening, ask participants to turn their focus to the strings section. Focus on that part of the music only. Be mindful of the strings. Can you distinguish between the sounds of the different string instruments?
5. Now sift your attention to a different instrument section (horns, percussion, woodwinds). Again, first listen for the entire section, and then see if you can distinguish between the different instruments. It is okay to simply note the different sounds.
6. Do you notice anything happening as you shift your focus back and forth between the different instruments? Do you start to focus on the sound of only one instrument? Experiment by shifting your focus back and forth.
7. Finally, bring the entire piece of music back into focus. Be mindful of all the instruments playing at the same time. Do you find yourself noticing certain sounds more than others? Can you hear all the different instruments, while listening to the piece as a whole? What happens when you listen to the whole piece? Does it change into different, bigger sound? Pay attention to how you react to the music.
8. Turn down the music and ask participants to return their attention to their breath and to rejoin the group when they feel ready.

Mindful appreciation script

1. The point of this exercise is to simply give thanks and appreciate the seemingly insignificant things in life; the things that support our existence but rarely get a second thought amidst our desire for bigger and better things. For example, electricity powers your kettle, the postman delivers your mail, your clothes provide warmth, your nose lets you smell the food in the kitchen, your ears let you hear the birds in the tree.
2. Exercise:
 - a. Find a relaxed sitting position.
 - b. You can do this exercise with eyes closed or open.
 - c. Think about one thing in your life that usually goes unappreciated (stop for 30 seconds to let people pick their choice.)
 - d. Try to bring to mind the thing of your choice, whether it's electricity, your thumb, or a person. Observe it with openness and awareness. Try to be aware when you start judging or evaluating the thing that you choose.
 - e. I'm going to ask a series of questions. You don't need to answer these questions out loud (stop for about 30 seconds between questions):
 - Do you know how this thing/process came to exist, or how it really works?
 - Have you ever properly acknowledged how this thing benefits your life and the lives of others?
 - Have you ever thought about what life might be like without this thing?
 - Have you ever stopped to notice its finer, more intricate details?
 - Have you ever sat down and thought about the relationship between this thing and how together it plays an interconnected role in the functioning of the earth?
3. Ask each member to share the thing that they chose. Provide gentle reminders when people start to insert judgment or evaluation while describing the thing of their choice.



Other Mindfulness Practices (continued)

Mindful breathing script:

The primary goal of mindful breathing is simply a calm, non-judgmental awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them.

1. Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
2. Bring your attention to your breathing.
3. Imagine that you have a balloon in your stomach. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates. Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates. Your abdomen rising with the in-breath and falling with the out-breath.
4. Thoughts will come into your mind, and that's okay, because that's just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts, then bring your attention back to your breathing.
5. Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.
6. You don't have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don't judge yourself for having them, or analyze them in any way. It's okay for the thoughts to be there. Just notice those thoughts, and let them drift on by, bringing your attention back to your breathing.
7. Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.
8. It's natural for thoughts to enter into your awareness, and your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.
9. And when you are ready, open your eyes and bring your awareness back into the room.

Creative mindfulness practices

1. [Visual brain teasers](#)

- a. Share one of the visuals from the link provided.
- b. Ask participants to spend 5 minutes focused solely on the brain teaser.
- c. Take a few share outs and reflect on what it was like to pause outside thoughts for the time being.
- d. Invite that practice into the group space.

2. [Share and observation video](#)

3. **Spot the difference photos:**

- a. [Spot the difference, Smithsonian Magazine](#)
- b. [Find the difference in these photos, Reader's Digest](#)

4. **Draw your breath activity**

- a. Provide participants with a piece of paper and a writing utensil.
- b. Ask participants to focus on their breath and draw a line up toward the top of the paper when breathing in, and to draw a line toward the bottom of the page when breathing out. Do this for 1 minute.
- c. Compare drawings with the group and reflect on the visuals seen.

5. **Describe an object activity**

- a. Describe an object with as much detail as possible and have the group guess what the object is.
- b. Have everyone grab a piece of paper. One peer describes an object using ONLY shapes while the rest of the group draws it. The group needs to guess what the object is based on what they were instructed to draw. (Ex: to describe a sun you may say, "Draw a circle. Starting on the outside of the circle, draw lines straight out of the circle all around the circle.")



Other Mindfulness Practices (continued)

Mindful journal prompts

1. Do a word association. Write the top 10 words that pop into your mind when you think of vulnerability. Are there any patterns that emerge? What can you learn about yourself from this exercise?
2. Brainstorm a list of values that are important to you. Circle your top 10. Double circle your top 5. Why did these make the cut? What are some examples of how you 'live your values' in your day-to-day life?
3. Take an inventory of your talents! What are you good at (list at least 5 things)? How would your loved ones answer this question (about you)?
4. Under what circumstances do you feel least vulnerable (the most fortified, strong, invulnerable)? Do you feel more or less connected to others when you are least vulnerable?
5. What motivates you?
6. What are the top 10 situations that you think require the most self-compassion?
7. Write your personal mission statement.
8. The original definition of the word courage is "telling who you are with your whole heart." What does that mean to you?
9. Reflect on times you've felt vulnerable. What were they? How did this impact your relationships with other people?
10. What qualities or traits do you admire most in others? In what ways do you display or embody these traits?
11. Research indicates that self-compassion must include 3 components: mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness. What do you think this means?
12. What factors most influence your sense of happiness? And do you think that expectations play a role?
13. What are the three things you're most proud of in your life to date?
14. What is something (a song, an animal, a flower, a poem, a symbol, etc) that represents you? Why?
15. What does "life purpose" mean? What is yours?
16. List as many things you are grateful for as you can in 10 minutes. (Don't stop writing!)
17. Choose an inspirational quote that is meaningful to you. Of all the quotes in all the world, why did you choose this one? How can you apply this quote to today?
18. When was the last time you really laughed? What did you laugh about?
19. Who do you know that radiates self-respect? How can you tell this person respects themselves?
20. List 10 people you're grateful for, and why.
21. List 10 places you are grateful exist, and why.
22. List 10 objects in your life you're grateful to have, and why.
23. What are some ways you could be more positive in your daily life? How do you think a positive attitude affects confidence and self-esteem?
24. Consider the past week, what brought you bliss? How could you tell you were experiencing happiness?
25. Aside from caffeine or other energy enhancing substances, what lifts your energy levels? What specific emotions/feelings do you experience when you feel 'revived'?
26. Take 3 deep breaths and let your thoughts come and go without judgment. How does staying in the present moment, breathing, and observing your thoughts without judgment help boost confidence?



Adaptive Mindfulness Resources

[Why Your Meditation Practice Must Be More Accessible](#)

After a spinal cord injury, Dr. Rex Marco, a devoted mediator, began his journey to accessible meditation practices. This article provides research around the importance of meditation for those who don't have the ability to hear, see, or touch and provides links to Dr. Rex's own guided meditation practices.

[Deaf Mindfulness](#)

This website provides mindfulness videos and practices in sign language for the deaf community.

[The University of Washington's Center for Child and Family Well-Being's Mindfulness In Sign Language](#)

This website provides resources for mindfulness practices and yoga practices for the deaf community.

