



MindUP Booster Lesson

Lesson A: Mindful Observation

Grades 4 – 5

Length of Lesson: 20 – 30 minutes

Objective of Lesson 1: Students define mindfulness and practice anchor activities to help them remain in the present moment and deal with challenges during the day.

Summary of Unit 1 – Lessons delivered by teacher

Objective of Unit 1: Students gain self-regulation skills and the capacity to absorb information by learning about the brain and calming strategies.

- **Lesson 1** – Students learn about the three parts of their brains that help them think and respond to stress.
- **Lesson 2** – Students compare two types of behavior: mindful (reflective and purposeful) and unmindful (reflexive and unaware) and identify the parts of the brain responsible for controlling each type.
- **Lesson 3** – This lesson introduces daily strategies for calming down and paying attention. Students begin to learn ways to help their brains work more mindfully.

Lesson Overview

1. Introduction: 2 min
2. Seeing Clearly: 5 min.
3. Resting and Noticing: 5 min.
4. Mindful Observation: 10 – 15 min.
5. Wrap Up: 2 min.

Lesson Materials and Preparation

Materials:

- 1 plate (per student) with 1 scoop/bag of various beans and macaroni
- Chime – 1
- Glitter ball – 1

Preparation: Students to be seated during activities.

For Parent Review: Facts from MindUP lessons 1 – 3

- The **amygdala** [*uh-mig-duh-luh*] is the part of the limbic system that is the brain’s “security guard” and protects us from threats. It detects things that are scary or dangerous in our environment.
- The **hippocampus** [*hip-uh-kam-puh s*] is also part of the limbic system and lives right behind your ears (point behind your ears) and is the storage vault of memory and learning.
- The **prefrontal cortex** [*pree-fruhn-tl kawr-teks*] is our brain’s wise leader and the learning, thinking and reasoning center of the brain. It regulates the stress response by making things seem less scary.
- **Unmindful behavior:** a reaction happens before the mind thinks about it such as reacting to a “false alarm” of danger.
- **Mindful behavior:** a reaction that happens after our mind thinks about it and we consciously process the input allowing the prefrontal cortex time to analyze, interpret and prioritize information – this allows us to pick the best course of action.
- **Focused breathing:** helps calm the body by slowing heart rate, lowering blood pressure and sharpening focus. Supports strong functioning of the higher brain, lessens anxiety by overriding the “fight, flight, or freeze” response from the amygdala, and helps students become more self-managed and mindful.



MindUP Booster Lesson

INTRODUCTION (2 MIN.)

Hello everyone, my name is _____ and today is our first MindUP booster lesson for this year! Let's start the lesson by defining mindfulness and ways we can be mindful. **How do we define mindfulness? What does acting mindfully in a situation mean?**

Wow! Those are great answers and some great suggestions on how to be mindful. **Mindfulness is about exploring/knowing what is happening inside and around you. Mindfulness helps us by training our attention to what is happening right now.**

Acting mindfully means that we have consciously process the information/situation allowing our prefrontal cortex (brain's wise leader) time to analyze, interpret and prioritize information which means we can pick the best course of action. Essentially it means we are **taking thoughtful action and not being reactive right away.**

Practicing these skills can help us in school, in friendships and managing our emotions.

For today's lesson we will do a few activities to help us **develop our mindfulness skills** so we can use these easier when we need them.



MindUP Booster Lesson

SEEING CLEARLY (5 min.)

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE: A glitter ball is used to help students understand the connection between mind and body.

PREPARATION: Students remain seated at their desks.

Before we practice mindfulness let's talk about how stress affects our bodies. I brought a glitter ball with me today so we can use it to discuss how stress triggers reactions in our body. **Hold up the glitter ball.**

Who can tell me how your body feels when you are stressed? Allow 1 – 2 students to answer.

Nice answers! **Stress is the body's reaction to harmful situations**, whether they are real, or perceived. When you feel threatened, a chemical reaction occurs in your body that allows you to act in a way to prevent injury. This is known as "**fight-or-flight,**" and **your heart rate increases, breathing quickens, muscles tighten, and blood pressure rises.**

When I hold the ball still you can see through to the other side because the glitter is settled, this is like our mind when we are calm – very clear. **What will happen when I shake it – will you be able to see clearly through it?**

When we are stressed what happens in our minds? Allow 1 – 2 students to answer. Some people might have trouble relaxing and quieting their mind, becoming agitated, frustrated, moody and distracted.

Shake the ball to move the glitter.

Can everyone place their hand on their stomach and focus on their breathing?

Keep holding the ball still and allow the glitter to settle.

Can we see through the ball now that the glitter has settled? Yes, for the most part we can, but the glitter is still there, and it doesn't entirely go away. **That is the same with our thoughts and the stress of our daily lives – they don't entirely go away.**

Mindfulness practices like breathing exercises can help us manage our stress and settle our minds so we can see more clearly – like when the glitter in the ball settled.



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RESTING AND NOTICING (5 min.)

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE: Students practice intentional breathing to help them anchor themselves to the present moment and deal with challenges during the day.

PREPARATION:

- Have students sitting
- Chime – optional to start and close the breathing exercise

Let's move into a **breathing exercise that will help us** focus our attention on our breathing and **calm our amygdala** – our brain's "security guard" that protects us from threats. It can take less than a minute to cue our minds to relax and focus.

Thoughts and emotions will come up naturally during a breathing exercise just like the glitter in the ball, but we try not to pay much attention. If that happens, just say to yourself, "thinking" to acknowledge it and return your attention back to your breathing.

I am going to ask everyone to sit with their **back straight, body relaxed and resting your hands** gently on your knees or lap. Close your eyes if you are comfortable or gaze softly in your lap or on the desk.

Let's find our breathing anchor. Take a moment to notice where you feel your breathing the most – **near your nose, your chest, or your stomach.** Let's rest in the feeling of breathing together, paying attention to our anchor.

When you breathe out, see if you can lightly **rest your attention on your out-breath** and stay with it all the way to the end. Let's do this for a few more breaths. Now, **don't pay any attention to your out-breath, simply rest in the natural rhythm of your breathing.**

You can open your eyes.



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MINDFUL OBSERVATION (10 – 15 min.)

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE: Students practice mindful observation by using their sense of touch to remain focused on the sensations in their hands and fingers.

PREPARATION:

- Students at their desks and ask for assistance (docent, teacher) to pass out and collect supplies.
- 1 plate (per student – return to supply bin to re-use)
- 1 scoop/bag of various beans and macaroni (return to supply bin mixed up again)
- Chime

Let's move into a **mindful observation activity** where you will sort out different materials on your plate focusing on your sense of touch. **I am going to pass out a plate with items on it – when the plate is put in front of you please place your hands in your lap** and do not touch the plate yet.

Pass out plate with various beans and macaroni on the plate.

Now that everyone has their plates, keeping your hands resting in your lap, let's relax our bodies and focus on the items on our plate. **Who can describe what they see on the plate? Allow 1 – 2 students to answer.**

Great answers! Now **close your eyes (if uncomfortable they can gaze into their lap)**, keep your hands in your lap, and **feel your breathing just like we did in the beginning.**

When I ring the chime, keeping your eyes closed you can start carefully and slowly sorting the beans and macaroni into piles on your plate. The goal is to **keep your eyes closed the entire time while sorting the different beans and macaroni on the plate.**

This is not a race, it **should be done slowly and quietly.** The point of the game is to **feel the beans and the macaroni very carefully with your fingers and notice how they feel** while you move them around the plate.

Ring Chime. Pause and allow for silence before giving more prompts.

Focus on what the items feel like and what your breathing feels like. **Circulate around the room to pick up any loose items and help/redirect as needed.**

When you are finished you can place your hands in your lap and open your eyes. Quietly look at your plate.

Who can share with me:

- What was it like to sort the beans and macaroni with your eyes closed?
- How do you feel now? Do you feel different than before you started sorting?
- What techniques did you use figure out the different items using your sense of touch only?

We often rely on our sense of sight to help us complete tasks. **When we take away our sense of sight, we can also learn a lot about things through our other senses, like our sense of touch.**



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WRAP UP (2 min.)

I will come around and start collecting the supplies before we finish today's lesson.

Ask for help of teacher/additional docent to collect plates (return to supply bin) and macaroni and beans (mixed back up and returned to supply bin).

Thank you for practicing mindful observation with me today. Remember you can use these skills anytime you need to refocus when you feel distracted or frustrated.

REFERENCES

- Greenland, S. K., & Harris, A. (2016). *Mindful games: sharing mindfulness and meditation with children, teens, and families*. Boulder: Shambhala.
- The Hawn Foundation. (2011). *In The MindUP Curriculum: Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning and Living* (pp. 24 – 49). New York, NY: Scholastic.