



# MindUP Booster Lesson

## Introduction to MindUP

### Lesson 1: Turning on our Mindful Bodies

Grades 3 – 5

**Length of Lesson:** 30 minutes

#### Summary

- Introduce the definition of mindfulness
- Introduce anchor breathing
- Explore distractions and how they relate to mindfulness
- Practice focusing and how focusing connects to being present in the moment

#### Lesson Materials

- 1 Barrel of Monkeys (for the facilitator to use as a prop and visual aid)
- Ice Cubes (one per student) transported in a cooler
- Paper bowls (one per student to hold the ice cubes over)
- 1 roll of paper towels (for any spills associated with the ice melting)

#### Did You Know? (Grades 3-5)

##### Neuroplasticity [*noo r-oh-pla-stis-i-tee*] & Focusing

- The neural [*noo r-uh l*] networks that regulate executive function are made stronger through **Focusing**.
- Just as lifting weights is a physical exercise that makes muscles stronger, **focus** is a mental exercise that develops new neural pathways and strengthens existing ones.
- **Neuroplasticity:** the capacity of neurons and the neural networks in the brain to change in response to experiences – Neurons that fire together wire together.

##### Mindfulness Defined

- Mindfulness trains attention and awareness to, and in, the current moment. These are skills for lifelong learning. They contribute to academic achievement as well as social and emotional learning.
- Mindfulness is about direct experience of what’s happening in and around you. It’s not about changing the nature of the experience. Instead, it’s about increasing the skill with which you live that experience.

## INTRODUCTION & BREATHING ANCHOR WARM UP (5 – 10 min.)

### SAY

Hi everyone. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and welcome to the first MindUP booster lesson. We are here to review some of the material you learned in your MindUP lessons with your teacher and practice ways to focus our attention to be more mindful.

Before we begin, let’s make sure we are all on the same page about mindfulness. Who can tell me what being mindful means? *Look for answers like, “mindfulness is paying attention to what is going on right now”, “being present”, “knowing how you feel right now”, “paying attention on purpose”.* Yes, all of those are great examples of mindfulness and how we can practice being present right now. Mindfulness is about knowing what we are feeling, thinking, and what is happening in and around us.



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First, we will start with a mindful breathing exercise where we choose a breathing anchor. An anchor is something that you choose to focus on in the here and now to help us ignore distractions and turn on our mindful bodies.

**PREPARATION:** all students should be sitting either at their desk in a chair or on the floor.

### DO

- Ask the students to sit with their back straight, body relaxed, resting their hands gently on their knees, and closed eyes if they're comfortable.
- Tell the students the goal is for them to find a breathing anchor by noticing where they feel their breath most easily – near their noses, in their chests, or inside their bellies. When we pay attention to the feeling of breathing where we notice it most is helps us to relax and focus on the present moment.

### SAY

- We are going to start with a body scan – “Feel your eyelids close (or look down at the floor), feel your shoulders relaxed, feel your hands touching your knees, feel your legs touching the floor/chair.”
- Notice what it feels like to breathe in and out right now. Let’s take 2 breaths together. Place one finger under your nose and feel your breath going in and out (*model placing your finger under your nose*). Can you feel it? Let’s take 2 more breaths like that.
- Next, place your hand on your chest, above your heart (*model placing your hand above your heart*). Can you feel your hand moving when you breathe? Let’s take 3 breaths together here.
- Now place your hand on your belly (*model placing your hand on your belly*) and feel the movement of your breathing there. Can you feel your belly rise and fall? Let’s take 3 breaths together here.
- Put your hands back on your knees and breathe naturally. Notice where you felt the movement of your breath most easily. Is it just beneath your nose, at your chest, or at your belly?
- Now I’m going to ask you to make a choice and focus on your breathing where you feel it most. Wherever that is, that’s the place I’ll be talking about when I use the word “anchor”. We’re going to use this anchor for the rest of the activity, so if you need to check again to see where it’s easiest to feel your breathing right now, go ahead. *Pause and wait for everyone to choose an anchor before you continue.*
- Great. Let’s close our eyes again and try this for 3 more breaths together. Notice what it feels like to breathe in and out right now.
- See if you can keep your body relaxed and focus your attention on your anchor at the same time. This is how we rest in the feeling of the movement of our breath.
- You can return to breathing with your anchor anytime during the day to take a break, calm down, and turn on your mindful bodies.

Now let’s practice focusing on the present and explore different ways we get distracted.



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### VISUAL DEMONSTRATION OF DISTRACTIONS (10 min.)

**PREPARATION:** 1 Barrel of Monkeys for the facilitator to use as a prop and visual aid.

#### DO

- Hold up the Barrel of Monkeys and remove some Monkeys for all the students to see.

#### SAY

- We are going to use these Monkeys to help us talk about distractions. The moment we recognize we are distracted is us being mindful, because in that moment we know what our mind is thinking about – the distraction.
- Do you ever notice instead of paying attention to what’s happening in the moment, you become distracted by a thought of something in the past or something that might happen in the future?
- What are some examples you can share? *Pause, and allow a few students to share their answers.* Thank you for sharing, those are good examples.
- In this activity, each monkey represents a thought, emotion, or feeling that has grabbed our attention. *Offer an example of a distracting thought and hold up a monkey (ex: thinking about your lunch, thinking about the conversation you just had with a friend in the hallway).*
- Now I need your help, can you give me more examples? For each distraction we think of, I’ll add another monkey on the chain. *Take about four or five examples from students and add a monkey to the chain for each example.* Thank you for all your examples, we have a long chain of distractions now.
- Hold up the monkey chain and ask students, “What do we call the moment we notice we are distracted?” *Students should answer – “Mindfulness!” because they know where their minds are at that instant – on the distraction.*
- That’s right, we call it mindfulness! It’s ok to be distracted. When we are aware of where our mind is at we can decide to be distracted or to focus on the now – which is practicing being mindful.
- If all these monkeys are distractions, we can let go of them, right? We don’t need any of these thoughts and emotions distracting us right now, so let’s drop them back in the barrel. *Drop the monkey chain back into the plastic barrel.*
- That was fun! When we notice distractions, we can let go of those thoughts and focus on the present, which helps us practice being mindful and focusing on the current moment.

Now that we have turned on our mindful bodies and practiced letting go of distractions, let’s practice mindful feeling.



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### MINDFUL FEELING: ICE MELTING ACTIVITY (10 – 15 min.)

**PREPARATION:** Ice Cubes (one per student), and all students sitting at their desks.

#### DO

- Pass out one paper bowl with an ice cube in it for each student in the room (teacher if desired).
- Pass out a paper towel to each student to use during this activity.

### Before Picking Up the Ice (2 – 3 min.)

#### SAY

- Before we begin, this activity does involve ice and it is important to remember the ice should not touch anyone else, anything else in the classroom, or any other part of your body except your hand. If you cannot follow these instructions, you will not be able to complete the activity with the ice.
- While we are passing out the bowls, please leave them untouched on your desk until we give you instructions.
- This activity helps us to practice not reacting right away and become more mindful.
- We will hold an ice cube in our hand and allow it to melt so we can notice the difference between having a feeling/sensation and reacting to that feeling/sensation.
- Before you pick up the ice, notice how you feel. Do you notice what thoughts and feelings you have just knowing the ice is going to touch your hand? Who can share what thoughts they have? *Pause, and allow a few students to share their answers. Some answers might be, “nervous”, “stressed”, “anxious”.*

### Holding the Ice (2 – 3 min.)

#### SAY

- Now go ahead and pick up the ice cube and place it in your hand. We are going to hold it in our hand while it melts. It might feel uncomfortable to hold the ice, but it is safe and won't hurt you. Let's hold the ice over the plate, so we don't get the desk/floor wet.
- Try to really feel what it is like. Even though we are feeling the coldness of the ice, see if you can stay calm. If the ice feels uncomfortable, take a few deep breaths, try focusing on your anchor breath, and relax your hand and arm.
- Right now, there are two things happening – the actual sensation/feeling of the ice in your hand and the reaction to that sensation/feeling.
- If holding the ice is too hard, don't worry – put it back in the bowl for a moment, then pick it back up and try again.

### Mindfully Observing the Ice (2 – 3 min.)

#### SAY

- Without talking, notice how the ice feels in your hand as it melts. Do you like how it feels? Do you not like it? Do you want to drop it? *Wait about thirty seconds before moving to the next step.*
- Notice how the ice looks, is it cloudy? Is it clear? *Wait about thirty seconds before moving to the next step.*
- Notice what it feels like as the water drips off the ice and onto your hand. Is the ice getting more slippery? *Wait about thirty seconds before moving to the next step.*
- What is the shape of the ice now? Is the shape changing? *Wait about thirty seconds before moving to the next step.*



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- How heavy does the ice feel? Is it light? Is it heavy? *Wait about thirty seconds before moving to the next step.*
- Notice how your hand feels now. Are the feelings in your hand changing? What about your thoughts?
- Now let's squeeze the ice in our hand. Let's switch hands and move the ice to the other hand. Try to notice what happens as you change hands. Does it feel different? *Wait about 30 seconds before moving to the next step.*
- Great job, if you have any ice left you can place it back in the bowl. Go ahead and take a moment to dry your hands.

### DO

- Collect all the plates and ice and place in trashcan.
- Pass out more paper towels as needed.

### Mindful Reflection (3-5 min.)

#### SAY

- Who can describe how the feelings in their hand changed the longer they held the ice? What did it feel like? *Pause, allow a few students to answer.*
- Raise your hand if you wanted to drop the ice at any time. Who can share with me why they wanted to drop it? Was it right away? Was it later? What stopped you from dropping it? *Pause, call on a few students who raised their hand and ask why they wanted to drop the ice.*
- Who can share with me what they were thinking and feeling while holding the ice? *Pause, allow a few students to answer.*
- Did it get easier to hold the ice at any time? Did it get harder? Why? *Pause, allow a few students to answer.*
- Did anyone try focusing on their anchor breathing? Did anyone try any other ways to stay calm? *Pause, allow a few students to answer.*



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### WRAP UP & CLEAN UP (5 min.)

#### DO

- Double check that all plates, ice cubes, and paper towels are collected and placed in trash can.
- Clean up any wet spots on the desk or floors that may have occurred during the ice exercise.

### Breathing Anchor (1 min.)

#### SAY

- Let's take a moment to go back to our breathing anchor to calm our bodies after all that excitement.
- Your anchor was either near your nose, in your chest, or in your belly. Take a moment to find your breathing anchor again. See if you can keep your body relaxed and focus your attention on your anchor at the same time.
- Notice what it feels like to breathe in and out right now. Let's try this for 3 breaths together.
- Great job, now I think we are back to our mindful bodies.
- Who can share with us where they found their breathing anchor – near the nose, in the chest, or in the belly? *Pause, allow for a few students to share.*

### Discussion Points (2 – 3 min.)

#### SAY

- Who remembers what we call the moment we notice we are distracted? *Pause, allow for a few students to share. The answer is mindfulness.*
- What can we do when we notice distracting thoughts – do we have to focus on them or can we let them go like when we dropped all the monkeys in the barrel? *Pause, allow for a student to share.*
- And lastly, who can help me remember how we defined mindfulness in the beginning of the lesson? *Pause, allow for a few students to share.*
- Thank you all for having us today and practicing ways we can turn on our mindful bodies.

### References for this lesson:

- Greenland, Susan Kaiser, and Annaka Harris. *Mindful Games: Sharing Mindfulness and Meditation with Children, Teens, and Families*. Shambhala, 2016.
- *The MindUP Curriculum. Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning-and Living*. Scholastic, 2011.