

Two–Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Mindfulness

Mindfulness can help us understand, tolerate, and deal with emotions in healthy ways. We can alter habitual responses by pausing and then deliberately choosing how we want to act. When we are mindful, we recognize our thoughts and learn how our minds work, so we are better able to label and manage our thoughts and feelings, instead of allowing them to overpower us and dictate our behavior.¹ Mindfulness activities train our minds to observe our own thoughts, feelings, and sensations with an objective view. As a facilitator of mindfulness activities, it is important for staff to show compassion when participants lose patience with themselves, particularly in the early stages of practice. As we become more mindful, we learn to release judgment, have more patience, and live in the moment. We also increase our mental agility, emotion regulation, and self-acceptance—all of which helps to build compassion for ourselves and others.²

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to integrate a mindfulness activity into your program.

A Trusting and Safe Relationship is Key

Before you integrate mindfulness activities, make sure your program has established program norms and behavioral expectations. Take time to build relationships with each participant individually so they feel safe trying something new. Mindfulness activities can make people feel vulnerable. Keep that in mind if participants are reluctant or uncomfortable, at first it might look like acting out. Also acknowledge and adapt to those cues.

Try the Activity on Your Own and Model

Your comfort and buy-in will go a long way. Try the activity first on your own and familiarize yourself with the timing, prompts, feelings, and thoughts that the activity brings up. Then model mindfulness to those around you.

Prepare a Space

Make sure the space is quiet and free of distractions. Help participants get comfortable and relaxed. Consider additional relaxation supports like cushions, sitting on a carpet, turning off the lights, eye masks, aromatherapy, soothing music, or a white noise machine.

Integrate Choice and Feedback

Give them options, ask for feedback, and build upon the positives until you land on a practice that works for everyone.

Start Off Short and Simple

Start off by trying a mindfulness activity for 30 seconds, or a minute. Prepare a simple introduction like, "This is a time to relax, reflect, and transition into programming."

Let Go of Expectations

Integrating mindfulness is a process of figuring out what your participants need and respond to. It will be a process of hits and misses. That's okay and is to be expected when introducing a new type of activity. The key is to be responsive to your participants' verbal and behavioral cues.

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) a young person at Launch at Maple Elementary lead a mindfulness activity.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹ Firestone, L. (2013, March 6). Benefits of mindfulness. *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/compassion-matters/201303/benefits-mindfulness>

² Ibid.

Helpful Resources

- InspirED. (n.d.). Mindful breathing. *Inspired.com*. breathing. <https://inspired.fb.com/activities/mindful-breathing/>
- InspirED. (n.d.). Body scan. *Inspired.com*. <https://inspired.fb.com/activities/body-scan/>
- Roman, K. (n.d.). 7 Fun ways to teach your kids mindfulness. *Mindbodygreen.com*. <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-18136/7-fun-ways-to-teach-your-kids-mindfulness.html>
- Cassie. (2017, August 29). 18 Amazing mindfulness activities for the classroom. *Teach Starter, Inc.* <https://www.teachstarter.com/blog/classroom-mindfulness-activities-for-children/>
- Rudell Beach, S. (n.d.). 10 Ways to teach mindfulness to kids. *Left Brain Buddah*. <http://leftbrainbuddha.com/10-ways-teach-mindfulness-to-kids/>
- 3 Videos to introduce the concept of mindfulness to your participants
 - Salzman, J.B. & Salzman, J. (2015, January 26). “Just breathe” [video file]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>
 - Happify.com. (2015, December 7). *Why mindfulness is a superpower: An animation* [video file]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>
 - Harris, D. & Davis, K. (2015, June 24). *Meditation 101: A beginner’s guide* [video file]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kMJBWk9E0>

