

**In the following excerpts, you will find multiple activities that can alleviate stress and boost positivity for you and your loved ones. We hope you find these activities very helpful.**

### **What is Mindfulness?**

**The Way of Mindful Education: Daniel Rechtschaffen Jon Kabat-Zinn**

- Have you ever been playing sports, making music, or creating art, when all your thoughts seemed to move into the background and you were totally absorbed in the present activity?
- Have you ever been in a dangerous situation where your senses became highly attuned and your attention was laser focused?
- Have you ever looked into the eyes of a baby and felt yourself dumbstruck with love and wonder?
- Have you ever become engrossed in a story where some complete stranger's successes felt like your successes, their hardships were your hardships, their joy was your joy?

The mindful way is to unravel some of these old standards so that we can feel happy exactly as we are. For adults mindfulness returns us to direct engagement with the present moment, like you were kneeling down on one knee and getting engaged to this moment, and saying yes!

## Activities:

**#1: Mindful Breathing: This activity aims to allow you to become aware of your mental state and to ensure you are living with the present in mind.**

*Italics* are instructions for you. Normal font is the script.

### Past/Present/Future (best for 3rd–5th)

Raise your hand if when we do mindfulness you find mindful breathing easy. Raise your hand if you find it hard. Raise your hand if you notice that even though you are trying to stay focused on your breathing you often realize you are thinking about things instead.

When we can pay attention to our breath mindfully, we are in the present moment. But our mind has a habit of wandering to the past and the future to think about other things.

For example, let's say that where I am standing right now is the present, and I'm trying to pay attention to my breathing, but then my mind starts to think about lunch and wonder what I will be eating. *Move your body to the right.* My mind has gone into the . . . *let them answer.* Yes. And I

notice that and then bring my mind back to my anchor, my breath.

And I am paying attention again . . . *pause a moment as you are paying attention* . . . and then my mind starts to remember what happened yesterday at recess. Oops, my mind has wandered into the . . . *move your body to the left and leave a pause to let them answer*. Yes, I have gone into the past. I notice that and then I bring my attention back to my breath, the . . . (*moving your body back to center*) *let them answer—present*.

Are you ready to try? Ok. We will be mindful of our breath for one minute and you will watch to notice if your mind escapes to the past or the future. We will start with both our hands resting on our belly. When you notice you are thinking about the future, take your right hand gently off your belly and over toward the right. (*Demonstrate*) When you notice you are thinking about the past, take your left hand gently off your belly and over toward the left. Then bring your attention back to your breathing.

*Practice for 1–2 minutes*

Raise your hand if you were able to just pay attention to your breath and no thoughts interfered.

Raise your hand if you noticed a thought.

Raise your hand if you noticed your mind wandering away to the past or the future.

*Let them tell you where it went if they want.*

Raise your hand if you had a thought about the past or the future, but you noticed it and you brought yourself back to the present.

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*See Wrap Up and Journal Questions below.*

**#2: Dialogues with Others: This activity will help to allow you and your family members to openly discuss any issues that have surfaced because of a diagnosis.**

**Teaching Quote**

*“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in a moment of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”*

—Martin Luther King Jr., clergyman and activist

**Council Dialogue**

*The participants pass the talking piece around the circle and answer the following questions:*

- Tell a story about a time when you were in an argument with someone you completely disagreed with.
- Looking back from the other person's point of view, can you acknowledge their perspective?

**Present Moment Tools**

- Notice what thoughts and emotions you are experiencing before responding.
- Take a moment to place yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Speak your truth clearly, without aggression and violence.
- Use “I” statements and don't place blame.
- Brainstorm with those involved to negotiate alternative solutions.
- Seek counsel or mediation when additional advice is needed.
- Evaluate the short- and long-term consequences of your response.
- Maintain humility and explore ways to transform conflict into opportunity.

### **#3: Sending Love to Others: This activity will allow you to stretch your body and mind. In addition, the goal is to focus your energy on providing positive vibes to a loved one.**

Mindfulness Practice: Loving-Kindness

The most important people in our lives are often not the ones who have the most knowledge or who are the most

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popular, but rather those who treat us and the world that surrounds them with empathy and compassion. The intent of this mindfulness practice is to experience what it feels like to allow a genuine sense of loving, empathetic concern for others to arise in our hearts. In this practice, we foster an attitude of love, compassion and a genuine wish for others to find happiness, knowing that the gift of wishing others happiness is also a present to ourselves.

**Here's How:**

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs and allow your shoulders to drop.
- Close your eyes or soften your gaze downwards, look for a reference point somewhere on the floor that you can return your eyes to, when they get distracted and begin to wander around the room.
- Allow your spine to grow tall and noble like the trunk of a tall tree.
- Focus your attention to the flow of your breath.
- Bring to mind someone dear to you, someone toward whom you feel deep gratitude and tenderness.
- As you hold this person in your thoughts, begin to send them well wishes for happiness, good health and peace.
- Now, begin to direct your well wishes to someone with whom you feel neutral—someone you neither like nor dislike. An example of this could be the bus driver, the corner storeowner or the waiter at a restaurant.
- As you hold this person in your thoughts, begin to send them well wishes for joy, health and peace with the same goodwill that you feel toward those who are close to you.

**Activity #4: Journaling:** This activity encourages the use of a journal to monitor your emotions. By monitoring your emotions in positive and negative moments, the activity hopes to ensure you are able to positively regulate your responses to situations.

**m.Activity:** During the next week, **notice** when you are faced with a dilemma or you have a strongly held position about something. **Explore** what it may mean to respond with discernment and restraint in that situation. **Be aware** of what you feel in that moment. Bear in mind the short-and long-term consequences of your actions. **In your journal, summarize your findings** and address how you can act in a way that is consistent with your highest values.

**Activity #5: Circle of Gratitude:** This activity aims to bring positive energy and love to your support network. It allows you to develop precious moments of thankfulness in the face of hardship.

#### Close the Council

Members stand in a circle to close the meeting with **Circle of Gratitude**. One person in the circle turns to the right and says to the person standing beside them, "Thank you for being here." Each message of thanks is passed from person to person, until everyone in the circle has said and received thanks.

You can find podcasts and more information at <http://mindfulnesswithoutborders.org/podcasts>.