

# **Giving Attention: Mindfulness Tools for Children with Self-regulation Challenges**

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## **Short Time, Many Times**

I would also add here **Anytime**. Mindfulness practice can happen while moving, standing, sitting, or lying down. (So said the Buddha!)

\*Activity: Three gentle breaths before and/or after any moment of transition

## **Mindful Speech**

Paying attention v. giving attention

--What is the object of attention?

Deep breath v. gentle breath

## **Seeing Clearly**

\*Activity: Mind Jar

We use a glitter jar to illustrate the nature of our minds. At first we can see that the waters are calm and we can see through the jar to the other side. What do you see on the other side? This is what our minds look like when we're calm. What do your mind and body feel like when it's calm? What do your mind and body feel like when you are upset? What do your mind and body feel like you have lots of energy and are having a hard time giving your attention? Now let's shake up the jar. The swirling glitter is like our minds and bodies when we are overloaded. The glitter whirls around, just like our energy and our mind. We can't see through to the other side, can we? But look at what happens to the glitter: it settles! Yes, it slowly settles just like our minds and bodies can. Can you see through to the other side now? Yes! Now let's put one hand on our bellies. I am going to shake up the jar again and we are going to sit and take some gentle breaths until the glitter settles. How do you feel after taking these breaths?

Application:

Daily practice in class

After breaks, meals, recess

In the moment of disregulation—use as a focusing and calming tool

*How did your body feel when you were watching the glitter? Was your mind busy or calm?*

### **Listening on purpose**

\*Activity: Gong/Tone bar

Count three breaths in order to settle. Ring the gong/tone bar. Have students place their hands on their heads when they can't hear the sound anymore.

--Possible additions: a mind rock as an additional point of focus or movement to the sound of the gong, starting big and getting smaller as the sound gets quieter.

*How did your body feel when you were listening to the sound? Was your mind quiet or loud?*

### **Looking on purpose**

\*Activity: Mind rock

Find an interesting rock or crystal and place in the middle of the circle. Set a timer for one minute. Have the students simply look at the rock, taking in all the details that they can see from their vantage point. When the timer is up, have students share what they saw.

--Possible additions: Have students make their own mind rocks. They can color them or name them. These can be used as focusing tools or as creatures of comfort during times of stress. Students can also place rocks or stuffed animals on belly to "rock them to sleep" for a lying down practice.

*How did your body feel when you were looking at the rock? Was your mind busy or calm?*

### **Breathing on purpose**

\*Activity: Balloon arms

Start with hands on head, heart, or belly. Stretch arms out as you breath in and bring them back towards your body as you breath out. If extra focus is needed, time the movement of your arms as closely as possible to your breath.

--Great opportunity to speak the inner process. *When my arms stretch above my head, I feel a stretch in my neck. Do you all feel that? When my hands touch my heart, I feel calmer. How do you feel when your hands touch your heart?*

\*Activity: I stop and feel my breathing

*I stop and feel breathing*

*(breathe in and out)*

*Peaceful and calm, I'm ready to \_\_\_\_\_.*

*How does your body feel when you stop and feel your breathing?*

**Sitting practice:****\*Activity: Zip up**

Place one hand on your lower belly and one hand on your lower back. Pretend like you are zipping yourself up into an upright and relaxed posture. Once at the top, wiggle your hands in a silent wave. This can become a nonverbal cue that breathing on purpose is about to begin.

**\*Activity: Tic/Toc**

This helps students find their center on their bottoms. It is also totally okay for students who have a hard time sitting still to use a slight rocking motion throughout breathing on purpose.

*Tic Toc like a clock*

*Now I find my center*

**\*Activity: Counting breaths**

Using any of the above activities as a “warm-up,” ask students to place one hand on their bellies or to keep their hands quiet in their laps. Explain that you are going to count three breaths together and that you will be using your fingers to keep track. Silently track three breaths. After the practice as been established, one of the students can be the leader for this activity.

*What does it feel like when you find your center? What does is the difference between being slumped over and zipped up? How does your body feel after taking three breaths?*

**Movement practice:****\*Activity: Shay Shay**

This is a listen and repeat activity. Start with the words and then build gestures into it. You can start big/loud/fast/silly in order to expend some energy and then gradually get smaller/quieter/slower to bring contain the energy. You can also invite a “leader” up to lead. You simply whisper the words in their ear.

*Shay Shay Coolay*

*Shay Covista*

*La Covista*

*Covista La La*

*Shay Hiyenday*

*Shay Hiyenday*

*1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7*

**\*Activity: Bubble/Mirroring**

Start with students “feeling” the imaginary bubble around them. This bubble keeps them in their own space, without touching their partner. (The bubble can also be helpful during Tic Toc.) What color is it? Is it hot or cold? Feel the bubble expand and contract. After the bubbles are established, stand in front of a partner and start a mirroring exercise. One

student leads then switches and follows. Eventually try to work up to the point where there is no leader and you both are following each other.

*What happens to your mind when mirroring? Does it get quieter? Louder?*

\*Activity: Sound-Around

In a circle, start with a sound that gets repeated and passed around the circle. With the same Shay Shay principle, the sound can start more energetic and then you can transition to something mellower.

Additions:

- Rather than mimic, each student creates a different sound
- Add gesture to sound, either the same gesture for everyone or allowing the gesture to change
- Play with tempo with both sound and gesture
- Do the wave; do the wave in time with the gong
- Silently point across the circle; that student then points at another student
- Toss bean bags instead of pointing; add an additional beanbag into the circle to really ramp up concentration

*How does it feel to have to give attention to the group? What does your body feel like?*

### **Resources:**

Mind jar ingredients:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/Calm-Bottle-aka-Glitter-Jar>

Timer app:

Insight Timer, found in App store

Inner Kids:

Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of *The Mindful Child* and Kate's teacher

<http://www.susankaisergreenland.com>

Mindful Schools:

Online training for incorporating mindfulness in your classroom

<http://www.mindfulschools.org/>

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction:

Secular mindfulness training given throughout the country and online. Search your local area for in-person classes.

<http://www.mindfullivingprograms.com/index.php>

Tara Brach:

Warm, brilliant, nationally recognized meditation teacher

<http://tarabrach.com/howtomeditate.html>