

Lesson 8

Remote Control Breathing

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase awareness of when our thoughts wander
- Learn about metacognition
- Practice noticing thoughts
- Practice kindness
- Assign new Peace Partners

PREPARATION:

- Review lesson
- Your Peace Partners list
- Copies of the “Remote Control” worksheet found at the end of this lesson for each student
- If you choose, prepare to show Peace of Mind’s Remote Control Breathing video, taking care to avoid YouTube ads: <https://youtu.be/b8tQt4wovDU>
- Optional: bell or chime
- Optional: student journals

This lesson helps students notice their thoughts and make choices about which thoughts they want to focus on and which ones they want to let go of. This awareness of what our mind is doing is called metacognition. Throughout this curriculum we will be helping students to learn how to pay attention to what their minds are doing, developing the skill of metacognition.

This lesson introduces a mindfulness practice called Remote Control Breathing, a practice that helps with metacognition. We will return to this mindfulness practice many times in the rest of the curriculum.

You might like to watch Peace of Mind’s Remote Control Breathing video before you teach this practice. Feel free to share this with your class if you think it would be helpful. <https://youtu.be/b8tQt4wovDU>

When we recognize our thoughts, we have the opportunity to control our thoughts rather than having them control us. This practice gives kids a way to notice what story they are telling themselves about future or past events, and to reflect on whether what they think is actually true.

You might like to reinforce the concept that having thoughts is normal, and that we are not asking them NOT to have thoughts. Instead, we are practicing the difficult skill of noticing our thoughts and then choosing to let them go or redirect them if we want to.

Introduction

Say: *Today we're going to try a different mindfulness practice. This time we are going to try to focus our attention on counting our breaths. Sounds easy, right? But it's actually kind of hard. Let's try it right now. Just close your eyes or look down and try to count 5 breaths.*

Pause

How did you do? Did your mind wander away and start thinking about something else? Maybe you noticed you were hungry or maybe you were thinking "this is weird!" or maybe you were wondering if you were the only one sitting here with your eyes closed. What did you notice?

Take a few answers.

Say: *One thing we probably all notice is that our minds wander. The good news is that this is perfectly normal. It happens to everyone.*

The difference is that when your mind wanders when you are in math class you might not notice it until the teacher calls on you and you suddenly realize you have no idea what is going on. That's not a great feeling.

Mindfulness helps us notice that moment when our minds wander and see where our minds go. Then we can decide if we want to redirect our minds. That's part of the fun. The ability to notice what is happening in our own minds is called metacognition. We'll be talking a lot about metacognition in Peace of Mind class this year.

It's sort of like you have a remote control in your mind. You might have decided to watch the "Listen to the teacher channel" or the "Do your math homework channel" but your mind might take the remote and change it to the "Think about unicorns channel" or the "What's for dinner? channel." This can happen when we are doing mindfulness too.

Today we are going to try to turn our remotes to the "Counting our Breaths Channel." Now this might not be the most exciting channel so we need to help it a bit.

Try to get really curious about what breathing is like. What does it feel like? What is a whole breath? Where do you feel each part of your breath in your body? Do you feel it in your stomach, or chest or nose or throat? This curiosity might make it a little easier to keep your mind on this channel.

Our minds really like to change the channel so as soon as you notice that instead of watching the "Counting Your Breaths Channel" your mind has switched to the "I have a basketball game later channel" or the "Why did I say that embarrassing thing in music class yesterday? channel," see if you can take the remote back and reprogram it to the "Count your breaths channel." You might have to change the channel over and over and that is perfectly fine. Trying to get better at this is one of the most useful things we can do!

Mindfulness Practice

Invite today's Mindfulness Leader(s) (ML) to come to the front of the class.

Prompt the ML to say: "Let's sit up a little straighter. Close your eyes or look down into your lap. Let's take 3 deep breaths."

Remote Control Breathing

Say: *Now let your breath settle back into its natural rhythm. Just breathe. Put your hand on your belly to help you to focus on your breath.*

When you are ready, turn your remote control to the "Counting Your Breaths Channel" and start counting your breaths. Then just try to notice if your mind changes the channel and change it back. You might have to do this over and over. That's perfectly fine. Whenever you notice that your mind has changed the channel you might make a little gesture like you are changing the channel back.

Wait about a minute or so (or longer if it seems like they are able to do more) **and then say:** *Now you can just let your mind be free to think or not think.*

After a moment say: *Now take a nice deep breath.*

Optional: Ask the ML to ring the bell.

Say: Open your eyes or look up when you are ready.

Ask the ML to return to their seat(s).

Reflect and Discuss

Remote Control worksheet

Hand out Remote Control worksheets. Have students list any thoughts or feelings they remember having. This activity can also be done in their journals.

Discuss:

- Did your mind change the channel a lot or a little today?
- Was it tempting to stay on a different channel?
- Was it easy or hard to change the channel back?
- When could it be useful to redirect your focus?
- Is there something that you notice yourself thinking about all the time? Are you happy about this or is it something you would like to change?
- **Ask:** Would anyone like to share some of the channels you listed on your worksheet?

Play the Count to Ten Game as in Lesson 3.

Feel free to add this game and other icebreakers into any lesson. They can be helpful in strengthening a sense of community and adding some fun into otherwise challenging lessons.

Peace Partners

Give students time to share what they did for the Peace Partners.

Do the Peace Partner activity as before.

Assign new Peace Partners. Remind your students that their job is to do at least one kind thing for their Peace Partner this week.

Closing words: Okay, our time is up for today. Thank you for a great class, everyone.

Optional: Let's have a nice quiet moment for the bell. If you want to, you can close your eyes, picture your new Peace Partner, and imagine yourself doing something kind for them this week.





Lesson 8

Remote Control Breathing

Your Name _____

Did your mind change the channel during your mindfulness practice?
List some of the channels that you noticed:
