



## Week 9

# Mindfulness of Thoughts

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### MINDFULNESS PRACTICE: Mindful Breathing

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Practice a fundamental skill of Mindfulness.
- Practice Counting Breaths.
- Practice kindness.

**PREPARE:**

- A bell or chime
- Kindness Pals list
- Copies of My Kindness Pals Favorite Things Worksheet (See Resource Section)
- Optional: Talking Object

In this unit, we are turning our attention to noticing our thoughts. Metacognition, or thinking about thinking, is a powerful tool to help us develop self-awareness. Through mindfulness practices such as the one we will do today, we learn to notice where we tend to focus our thoughts and to gain control over how we direct our attention. We start here with a mindful breathing practice called “Count Ten Breaths” that prompts students to notice when their attention has wandered and then bring it back to focus on their breathing. Having our minds wander is completely normal; being able to bring our attention back to where we would like it to be is a skill we can develop and strengthen.

### Mindfulness Practice

#### 1. Introduce the Practice

**You might say:** *Today we are going to continue practicing mindful breathing. Let's do a few of our own Mindful Movements to get us started. Do you remember some of the Mindful Movements we've done before? Let's think of some new ones!*

**Do** a few of their Mindful Movements.

**Say:** *Today we are going to be focusing on our breath in a new way. We are going to use it as an anchor or a home base. Put your hands on your belly and take a few breaths.*

*Did you notice that your breath has two parts? The breath goes in and the breath goes out. Today we are going to focus on our breath.*

*But first, let's get set up to practice.*

**Consult** your alphabetical roll list, and choose the first student to be the Mindfulness Helper for the day.

**Invite today's Mindfulness Helper** (MH) to come to the front of the class to sit next to you on a chair.

**Say:** *Let's all be happy for \_\_\_\_\_.* (sign language applause)

**Prompt the MH to say slowly:**

Let's get into our mindful bodies. **Pause**

Let's close our eyes or look down. **Pause**

Let's take three deep breaths. **Pause**

## **2. Lead the class through a new practice: Count Ten Breaths**

**Say:** *Let your breath settle back into its natural rhythm. You don't have to change it at all.*

*While you are breathing, place your hand on your belly and feel the little movement that happens when your breath goes in and out.*

*Now move your hand to your chest and see what you feel there when your breath goes in and out. Notice where you felt your breath the most and keep your hand there, either on your belly or your chest.*

*Now we're going to count ten breaths. You can count them any way you want to. You can count one in-breath, or inhale, and one out-breath, or exhale, as one whole breath. Or you can count each inhale and exhale as one breath. It doesn't matter how you count them. Try to keep your mind focused on counting your breaths.*

*As soon as you notice that your mind has wandered away, try to bring it back to your counting, starting again at one. Try not to count higher than ten. Once you get to ten, start over at one or you can count backward.*

*Okay, let's try it. Remember, this is just for fun. Don't worry if your mind wanders. Just try to bring it back when you notice it has wandered. Let's start now.*

**You can give them a minute or more to try this, whatever seems appropriate.**

*Okay, now you can stop focusing on your counting, and let your mind be free to think or not think, whatever your mind wants to do.*

**Wait about 15 seconds.**

*Now let's take one more deep breath in and out. In a moment you will hear the sound of the bell and that will mean that it is time to open your eyes or look up.*

**Ask** the MH to ring the bell when the mindful breathing is complete.

**Ask** the MH to return to their seat.

### **3. Share**

**Ask:**

- What was that like for you?
- Was it hard to keep your mind focused on your breath?
- Did counting help you to focus?

**Remind the students:** *It's perfectly normal for our minds to wander. This happens to all of us. With practices like this one, you are developing your ability to bring your focus back to what you need to be focusing on, even when it's not always super exciting. You're building a really important skill.*

*Try to practice this a couple of times this week and see if it gets any easier.*

### **Kindness Pals**

**Invite** students to share what they did for their previous pals over the last week.

**Assign new Kindness Pals** after they are finished sharing.



### Kindness Pal Activity: My Kindness Pal's Favorite Things

**Pass out** one copy of the worksheet to each pair and ask them to sit together facing each other.

**Go over the questions** on the worksheet and make sure everyone understands the questions.

**Say:** *When I say go, you are going to start to interview each other. You can take turns asking each other questions and then go on to the next question.*

*Sometimes people get stuck on thinking of a favorite thing. If you don't have a favorite book or movie or food just name one that you really like.*

*Also try to share the "Whys." Why do you like spaghetti? Why is Peace of Mind Class your favorite part of the school day? ;) Try to listen really carefully to your partner's answers.*

*When we are finished with the interviews I'm going to ask you to share some of what you learned about your Kindness Pal.*

*Okay, let's get started.*

This might take 15-20 minutes although some kids will be done quickly. If kids are done too quickly, you might ask them to think of some bonus questions, offer some additional questions yourself, or ask them to go more into the "whys."

**Share:** Go through each question on the sheet and ask for some students to share what they learned about their Kindness Pal.

**Ask:** *Was anybody surprised about what they learned about their Pal? Did you find out that you had things in common that were unexpected?*

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

*Let's have a nice quiet moment for the bell. If you want to, you can close your eyes, picture your new Kindness Pal, and imagine yourself doing something kind for him or her this week.*

**Ring the bell.**