

Mindfulness Month

- week one

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Audio

Begin this Mindfulness Month by using some core mindfulness practices. Today we'll start with Pause Breathe Smile's "Straight Back, Soft Belly" practice.

Settle into a posture that feels both relaxed and alert. The basis of this practice is to use your body to help train your mind.

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Mindfulness is more than mediation and more than a technique. Mindfulness is the quality of attention we can bring to each moment of our living. Try this as a simple way of bringing your attention to little moments in your everyday life.

1. Be attentive to filling the kettle with water – the sound of the water running, the weight of the kettle changing as it fills, the click of the kettle turning on
2. Listen mindfully to the water coming to a boil while also taking a moment to notice your breathing
3. Avoid the urge to do something else while the water heats up. Whenever your mind wanders, just note it and then bring all your attention back to the breathing and the sound of the kettle heating up your water
4. Notice the act of pouring tea – the sound of the water hitting the cup or teapot; the water changing colour; the steam rising; the aroma of tea filling your nostrils...
5. Sitting comfortably, feel the weight of the cup in your hands; notice the warmth
6. And finally, mindfully sip the tea – noticing all the flavours and aroma; the act of swallowing and the warm afterglow of a good cup of tea!



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Find a window to look out or step outdoors if you can.

Let your eyes take in everything there is to see. Avoid labeling or categorizing; instead of naming things, see if you can notice the colors, the patterns, or the textures.

Pay attention to the movement of the grass, leaves, or clouds. Notice the many different shapes. Can you see the world freshly as if seeing it for the first time?

If you become distracted, take a few mindful breaths and gently turn your mind back to what your eyes can see.

Name it to tame it

When we experience an unpleasant emotion, such as frustration, anger, anxiety, or agitation, it helps to name it.

When we name our emotions, we activate the part of the brain responsible for language, which is an important step for self-regulating.

When you feel an uncomfortable emotion rising, try these steps:

1. Give the emotion a name e.g., sadness, anxiety, anger
2. Accept the feeling for what it is, without judgment e.g., tell yourself that "it is ok to feel this way".
3. Focus on your breathing. It might help to silently say on each in-breath "anger, I am here for you" and on the out-breath; "it's ok to feel this way"
4. Allow the feeling to pass

Practicing these steps can help to validate the emotion without becoming overwhelmed by it.

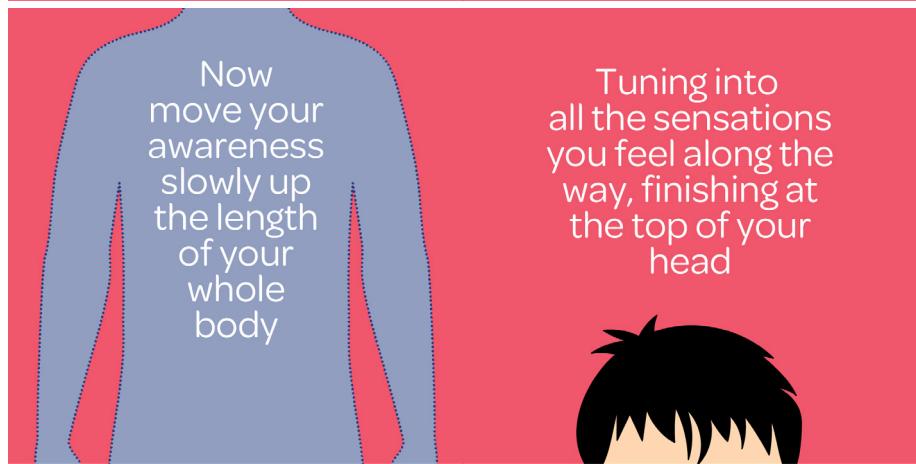


Lay down or sit in a comfortable upright position

Start by bringing your awareness to your feet



Notice all the sensations in your feet and toes



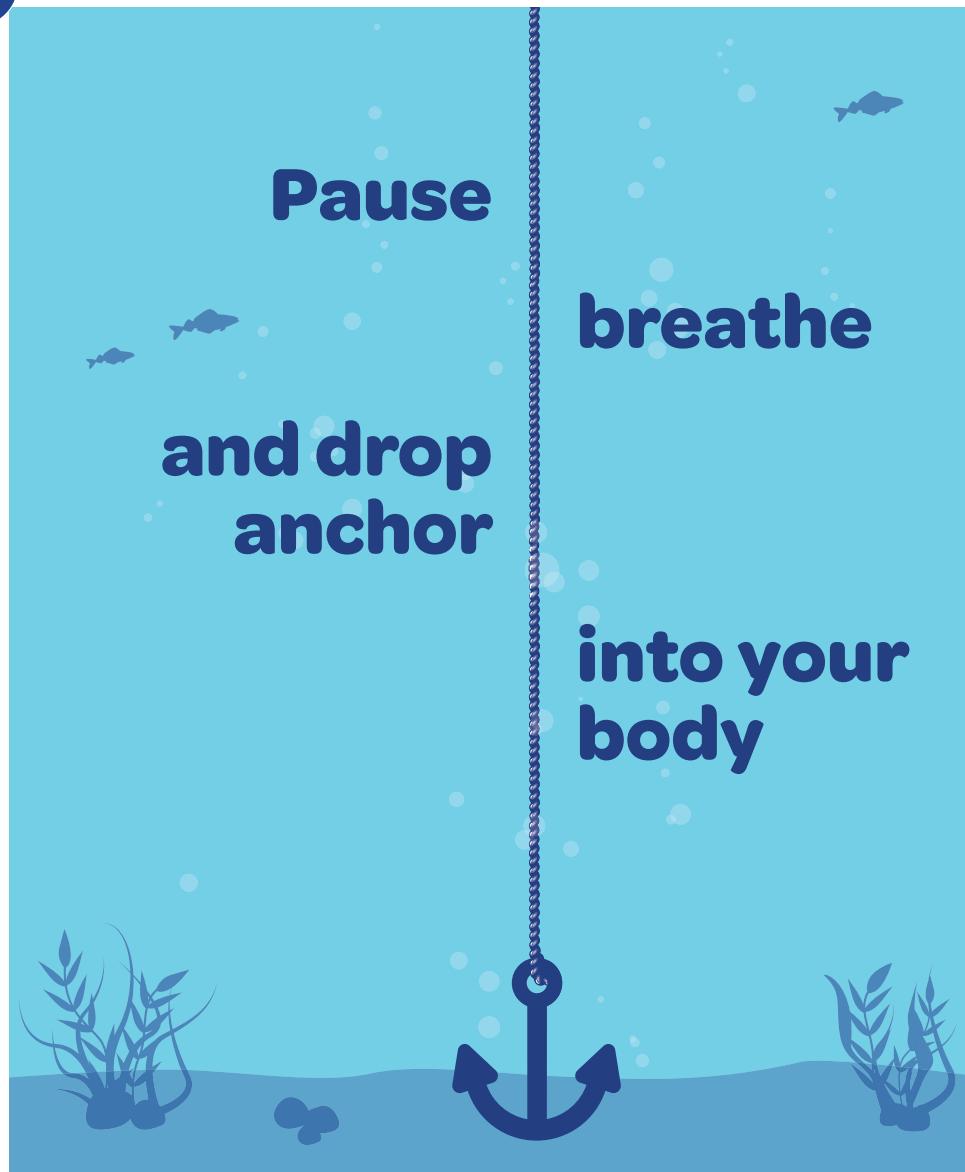
Now move your awareness slowly up the length of your whole body

Tuning into all the sensations you feel along the way, finishing at the top of your head

Throughout your day, do mini-body scans. Keep it simple: pause and notice your feet on the earth or feel where your body contacts the chair you're sitting in.

Can you notice the sensations in your body and allow that awareness to spread through your body in a non-judgemental way?

The best thing is that you can do a quick body scan anytime and anywhere. Noticing your body and how it feels can help ground you back into the present moment and come home to now.



Are the waves of the sea and the noisy winds rocking your boat?

When you feel upset, overwhelmed, or other big feelings, remember: Pause, Breathe, and drop anchor into your body.

When you notice your breathing and drop anchor into your body, you can settle your boat even if the storm is still raging around you.

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Journalling is a supportive exercise that helps to reflect on what you are grateful for and tracks your thoughts, progress, and growth.

Take a few minutes and fill in this section of the Pause Breathe Smile Student Learning Journal. In it, jot down how you have found this first week of mindfulness month.

See if you can reflect on at least one thing that has brought you joy this week.