

Mindfulness Activities



Mindful Tasting

In modern society, we often eat quickly and “mindlessly”. This activity will engage all five senses in an effort to connect participants with food and promote mindful eating.

Materials:

A piece of individually wrapped dark chocolate for each participant.

Directions:

1. Distribute a piece of chocolate to each participant. Explain that we will be using our senses to participate in mindful eating today.
2. First, have participants look at the chocolate. What colors do they see on the wrapper? What text? What shape is the chocolate? Are there any imperfections?
3. Next, have participants unwrap the chocolate. Encourage them to listen attentively to the sound of the chocolate being unwrapped. Have them describe the sound.
4. Next, have participants feel the chocolate. What is its temperature? What is its texture? How heavy is it?
5. Now have the participants smell the chocolate. Encourage them to describe the smell. Does it conjure any memories for them? Is it pleasant or unpleasant?
6. Next, have the participants consider the journey that the chocolate has taken to get to them. It was grown on a farm, harvested, manufactured into chocolate with other ingredients, packaged, shipped to a store, purchased, and brought to them. Let them sit with this journey for a moment.
7. Lastly, have the participants taste the chocolate. Have them describe the taste. Again, does it remind them of anything? Is it pleasant or unpleasant?
8. Explain that, by eating mindfully, we can be more aware of what we put into our bodies, the preparation and journey the food has taken, and better enjoy the flavors and aspects of the food.

**Ask: can we mindfully eat something unpleasant? Absolutely! Life is full of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Mindfulness does not ignore the unpleasant moments- it acknowledges them and recognizes them. Mindful eating promotes the practice of receiving both pleasant and unpleasant experiences non-judgmentally.*

Volcano Breath

This easy stretch centers participants and allows for building empathy and compassion for others. Adapted from YogaCalm.

Materials:

None

Directions:

1. Begin by having participants sit up straight in their chairs (or cross-legged on the floor).
2. Have students place hands together at their hearts. On the inhale, have students move hands straight upward over their heads slowly. Hands are still together at this point.
3. For the exhale, hands will come apart, stretch outwards, and sweep downwards. Palms may face up or down during the exhale. Connect the movement to lava shooting from a volcano and pouring out. Have participants reflect on the strength and power of a volcano; they should feel strong in their bodies during this exercise.
4. Repeat this for several breaths.
5. At this point, have participants continue the movement at their own pace and encourage them to close their eyes. With eyes closed, have them think of someone who they care about. This could be a loved one or a pet. Explain that we will now send good wishes to that person. Read the following phrases aloud and have the participants wish these thoughts for that individual while continuing the movement:

May you be happy.

May you be healthy.

May you be safe.

May you live with ease.

Mantras

Have students sit quietly, inviting them to close eyes if comfortable. Slowly and peacefully read a mantra and encourage them to embrace the words for themselves. You may repeat 2 or 3 times. Example mantras found attached. Feel free to create your own that may resonate with your group.

Materials:

None

Directions:

1.) "May I be happy,
May I be healthy,
May I be free from suffering,
May I live a life of ease."

2.) "I am loved,
I am capable,
I am smart,
I am important."

3.) "Every day,
In every way,
I am getting better and better."

4.) "I am a good person,
My best is good enough,
I trust myself,
I have my own back."

5.) "I choose to enjoy this day,
There is no one like me- that is my
magic,
I am worthy of the good things
coming my way."

***We use the following mantra as a greeting at the beginning of each session. It is said with eyes open and is call-and-response style.**

Facilitator: "I see you."

Group: "And I am here. And I see you."

Facilitator: "And I am here."

7-11 and 11-7 Breathing

Breathing can help us calm down, but did you know it can also help us become more alert and awake? This breathing technique uses the nervous system to raise or lower energy based on our needs.

Materials:

None

Directions:

To Raise Energy: Breathe in slowly for a count of 11 and out for a count of 7.

To Lower Energy: Reverse the above strategy; Breathe in for a count of 7 and out for a count of 11.

Texting Compassion

Compassion doesn't have to be face-to-face. Anyone with a cell phone can spread compassion through this easy activity!

Materials:

A cell phone with texting capability

Directions:

1. Explain that compassion can be simple and free. Often, we think we must go to great lengths to encourage others through major projects, extensive uses of time, or through spending money. Rather, anyone with a phone can complete this instant action of compassion.
2. Have participants think of someone they care about- perhaps even someone they haven't heard from in a while.
3. Have the participants grab their phone and send a quick text of encouragement to that person. Tell them not to overthink it, just do it! As an example, they may say "Thought about you today! Wishing you a wonderful day!"
4. Open up a discussion with the group; what are some other quick and easy ways to spread compassion? How can we show compassion to ourselves?

**Encourage participants to choose a certain day of the week in which to send a compassionate text to a friend. They can even set reminders on their phone so they don't forget!*

Garden Guided Imagery

Begin by having participants get into a comfortable position sitting or lying down. Do some group deep breathing for a few moments before reading the following guided imagery to them. Read the text aloud. Any text in ::these markings:: are actions for the facilitator and are not to be read aloud. Read in a quiet, gentle voice. Adapted from STARBRIGHT: Meditations for Children by Maureen Garth

Now that you are feeling more relaxed, I want you use your imagination with me. I want you to imagine that you are now standing outside of a garden. This is your very own private garden that you can visit anytime you wish.

Before you go into your garden, you notice that there is a tree outside of the entrance to your garden. This is a Worry Tree. It is a tree where you can place your worries before entering your garden. It is a withered, old tree- perfect for holding your worries and troubles. Imagine now that you are removing your worries and placing them on the Worry Tree. ::pause here::

Once you have removed your worries, you decide to enter your garden. Your private garden is beautiful. It is your own special place made for you. You notice flowers and plants of many types and colors. The grass is a vivid green. The sun warm on your skin. You feel peaceful and safe. You decide to explore and take in all the beauty around you. Take a moment now to look around your garden. ::pause::

Your garden can be big or small. You may notice a creek or pond. You hear birds singing. A gentle breeze blows by. You feel happy and at ease. What else can you find in your garden? Do you recognize it, or is it a totally new place? Stop and rest in your garden for a moment. ::pause here::

It is time now to leave our garden. Remember that your garden is always available for you to visit whenever you need. Return your attention to your breath. Feel the rise and fall of your chest as you inhale and exhale. Return you attention back to being in this place. When you are ready, you may open your eyes.



The Rainbow Connection

A simple grounding activity, this “mindful scavenger hunt” encourages participants to observe their surroundings through color. This activity can be completed inside or outside.

Materials:

None

Directions:

1. Explain that participants will be engaged in a mindful scavenger hunt. In this scavenger hunt, participants will be finding objects nearby that reflect the various colors of the rainbow.
2. Begin by instructing participants to find something nearby that is red. Encourage participants to walk around the area nearby to find an object of that color. (Optional: you may challenge participants that they *must* find something red before proceeding to the next color!)
3. Once the red object has been located, participants may move on to orange.
4. Continue with the colors yellow, green, blue, and purple. You may wish to add pink, white, black, brown, or other colors.
5. Encourage participants to do this activity on their own to bring themselves into the present, ground themselves when feeling overwhelmed, or spend some time mindfully while waiting in line!

**Take participants on a nature walk or simple stroll outside your facility and complete this activity together!*

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This activity is great for releasing tension and is particularly useful for those who struggle falling asleep at night. Can be done seated or lying down. The following is a script adapted from Berkeley Law which was in turn adapted from The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook by Edmund J. Bourne. Feel free to read the following to participants.

Materials:

None

Directions:

1. Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that relaxes your mind and body by progressively tensing and relaxation muscle groups throughout your entire body. You will tense each muscle group vigorously, but without straining, and then suddenly release the tension and feel the muscle relax. You will tense each muscle for about 5 seconds. If you have any pain or discomfort at any of the targeted muscle groups feel free to omit that step. Throughout this exercise you may visualize the muscles tensing and a wave of relaxation flowing over them as you release that tension. It is important that you keep breathing throughout the exercise. Now let's begin.
2. Begin by finding a comfortable position either sitting or lying down in a location where you will not be interrupted. Allow your attention to focus only on your body. If you begin to notice your mind wandering, bring it back to the muscle you are working on. Take a deep breath through your abdomen, hold for a few second, and exhale slowly. Again, as you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air. As you exhale, imagine the tension in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale. Feel your body already relaxing. As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing.
3. Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for about five seconds. And abruptly release feeling that tension fall away. Pause for about 10 seconds. Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, appreciating the softness in your face. Pause for about 10 seconds. Next,

tighten your eye muscles by squinting your eyelids tightly shut. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds. Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, feeling the tension melting away. Pause for about 10 seconds. Now feel the weight of your relaxed head and neck sink. Breathe in...and out. In...and out. Let go of all the stress In...and out.

4. Now, tightly, but without straining, clench your fists and hold this position until I say stop. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds. Now, flex your biceps. Feel that buildup of tension. You may even visualize that muscle tightening. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, enjoying that feeling of limpness. Breathe in...and out.
5. Now tighten your triceps by extending your arms out and locking your elbows. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds. Now lift your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold for about 5 seconds, and quickly release, feeling their heaviness. Pause for about 10 seconds. Tense your upper back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.
6. Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, hold for about 5 seconds, and exhale, blowing out all the tension. Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Pause for about 10 seconds. Gently arch your lower back. Hold for about 5 seconds, relax. Pause for about 10 seconds. Feel the limpness in your upper body letting go of the tension and stress, hold for about 5 seconds, and relax. Tighten your buttocks. Hold for about 5 seconds..., release, imagine your hips falling loose. Pause for about 10 seconds. Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together, as if you were holding a penny between them. Hold for about 5 seconds...and release. Pause for about 10 seconds.
7. Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold for about 5 seconds, and relax, feel the weight of your legs sinking down. Pause for about 10 seconds. Curl your toes under tensing your feet. Hold for about 5 seconds, release. Pause for about 10 seconds. Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet. Feel the weight of your relaxed body. Breathe in...and out...in...out....in...out.

Partner Pull

This partner activity encourages trust while engaging in an easy yoga stretch. Great for building community and connection in a group. Adapted from Yoga Calm.

Materials:

None

Directions:

1. Have participants partner up. If left with an odd number, the facilitator can participate.
2. Have each partner grab the other's right wrist. Their left hand will be free.
3. At this point, have the partners step backward away from each other approximately 2 feet while still holding wrists.
4. Now, have partners sit back until thighs are almost parallel with the floor and the back is flat. Partners should still be holding wrists allowing for a balancing stretch.
5. Have the partners breathe while deepening the stretch.
6. Repeat with the opposite side. You could have participants find a new partner at this point.
7. Ask participants how the stretch made their bodies feel. Connect to trust and relying on others to keep from falling.

**Variation: have participants partner up with someone they don't know, someone wearing similar shoes, someone who has the closest birthday to theirs, etc. This will encourage branching out and building trust between those who may not know each other very well.*

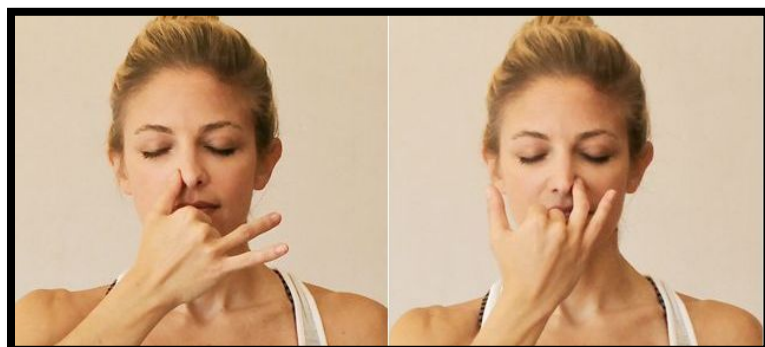
Alternate Nostril Breathing

This breathing exercise both calms and awakens by harmonizing both hemispheres of the brain through alternation of breath. Use before a stressful event, at night to settle the mind, or to oxygenate the brain to bring alertness. Youth participants have reported using this technique during class and before exams. Adapted from ArtofLiving.org.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Have participants sit in a comfortable, upright position to allow lungs to breathe at full capacity. Participants may close eyes if desired.
2. Place the little finger (or ring finger) on the left nostril, and the thumb on the right nostril. Use the little finger to open and close the left nostril and use the thumb for the right nostril.
3. On an exhalation, close the right nostril with your thumb and breathe out through the left nostril.
4. Breathe in through the left nostril and then close with the little finger.
5. Release the thumb on the right nostril and breathe out through the right nostril.
6. Inhale through the right nostril, close with the thumb, release the little finger from the left side and exhale through the left nostril.
7. These two full breaths are consider to be one round of Alternate Nostril Breath.
8. Perform 5 to 9 rounds of this alternating breath between the nostrils.
9. Remember to always inhale through the same nostril you just exhaled through.



Changing Channels

Rumination is the constant replaying or revisiting of thoughts. Oftentimes, we can “replay” negative images or ideas, and can thus promote toxic thought patterns. This activity helps to “rewire” thought patterns and interrupt rumination. Adapted from Yoga Calm.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Have participants close their eyes and enter into silence. Encourage them to notice what thoughts arise.
 2. Explain that we are going to practice “changing the channel” in our brain, much like one changes the channel on a TV. You will give the group a series of scenarios and, for each scenario, the participants are to change their thoughts and imagine the scene presented.
 3. First, begin by having the participants imagine they are on a beach. (Use lots of sensory details as this aids the imagination!) They are laying on a beach towel. The sun is warm on their skin. They can hear the sound of waves crashing on the beach. Have them sit with this scenario for a moment.
 4. Next, have them change the channel to a new scene. You will do this several times. They will sit with each scene for a few moments before presented with a new scenario. Present them with a scenario of your choosing, or use the examples given below:
 - a. Curled up on the couch with a fuzzy blanket drinking a warm cup of hot chocolate
 - b. Snuggling a favorite pet
 - c. Walking outside while snow is falling
 - d. Getting a hug from someone they care for
 - e. About to take a big bite out of their favorite food.
 5. Once finished, ask participants when this might be helpful? Why is it good brain exercise to practice changing thoughts? Explain rumination and thought patterns listed above and encourage participants to practice on their own.
- *Variation: Include unpleasant scenes! Changing the channel does not always have to include positive scenes. In fact, being able to shift from negative to positive thoughts is great practice for rewiring the brain.***

Hoberman Sphere Breathing

This easy breathing exercise is a great way to begin a daily mindful practice with a group and to get participants involved in leading mindfulness. Adapted from Yoga Calm.

Materials:

Hoberman Sphere (can be found on Amazon)

Directions:

1. Begin by introducing the group to the Hoberman sphere. Explain that you will be using the sphere as a model for breathing. Participants should inhale as the sphere expands and exhale as the sphere closes. Each inhale-exhale cycle equates to one breath.
2. Ask participants if anyone would like to lead the activity. Once you have selected your leader, ask them to choose the number of breaths we will be completing today (between 5-10 breaths). Have your leader select another participant who will count each breath aloud as the sphere closes.
3. Complete the activity. Ask participants to reflect on how they feel after taking a few moments to breathe and re-center themselves.



Listening Bell

An excellent activity for introducing mindfulness to a group. This activity calls upon the listening sense and is a great tool for refocusing attention. Adapted from MindfulSchools.



Materials:

A Tibetan Singing Bowl OR any instrument which can sustain a note (many apps offer chime or singing bowl sounds. *InsightTimer* App offers a variety of sounds.)

Directions:

1. Explain that, for this activity, participants will be listening mindfully. Note that you will be playing a sound and the participants will be listening intently to the sound played. Once the sound has completely stopped, the participant will raise their hands to signal that they can no longer hear the sound.
2. Conduct the activity. Have students reflect on what they noticed during the activity.
3. For a variation, have participants close their eyes and repeat the activity. This usually produces a more pronounced difference of *when* the hands are raised. Ask participants again to remark on what they noticed.

**With teens, this is a great opportunity to note that we often feel we must go with the crowd. During the eyes-closed variation, individuals were able to raise hands without seeing the other participants and thus the pressure to go-with-the-crowd is removed. Reflect on how this could be translated into daily life.*

DIY Glitter Jar

This activity works two-fold; both as a calming tool and also as a metaphor for settling the mind. Note to participants that the glitter in the jar can represent our scattered thoughts. At times, we can get overwhelmed and our thoughts and feelings can feel out of control. By using mindfulness, we can “settle our glitter” much like the glitter settles inside the jar. Participants may also shake their glitter jars and breathe slowly as the glitter settles, thus settling the mind and body.



Materials:

1 standard Mason jar with lid
Food coloring (your choice of colors)
Craft glitter (your choice of color)
Glitter glue (your choice of color)
Hot glue gun
Hot Water

Directions:

1. Pour a quarter-sized amount of glitter glue into your jar.
2. Shake craft glitter 3-5 times into your jar. You can add more if you want!
3. Add 2-3 drops of food coloring. Be careful not to add too much- it will make your water too dark!
4. Add hot water
5. Let jar cool for several minutes
6. Seal lid on jar. Preheat hot glue gun.
7. Once hot glue is heated, glue both the top and bottom seams of the lid to prevent leaks
8. Shake and watch your glitter settle!

Pulse Count

This simple activity not only encourages mindful attention to self, but also connects to health and physical fitness. Pulse Count promotes the idea that we do have control over our bodies and can train our sympathetic nervous system to be less reactive to stressors. Adapted from Yoga Calm.

Materials:

Stopwatch or clock with second hand

Directions:

1. Explain that we are going to listen to our bodies by checking our pulse. You may ask the group why checking pulse may be helpful. (Answers might include to monitor heart rate while working out, to check if someone is ill/ in need of help, etc.)
2. Note that we can check our pulse at any time to learn more about our bodies' reaction to stress.
3. Have participants press gently into their neck until they find their pulse. Participants can raise their other hand to indicate when they have found their pulse. This allows for the facilitator to assist those who may be struggling to find their pulse. Using the wrist to find a pulse is acceptable.
4. Have participants count pulse beats silently to themselves for 30 seconds. Use your stopwatch or clock to let them know when to begin/end.
5. Have participants double their pulse count to find their beats-per-minute.
6. At this point, lead the group in a calming mindfulness exercise (i.e. Hoberman Sphere) then have participants check their pulse again. See if they notice any difference in their beats-per-minute from before and after breathing slowly.
7. Use this as an opportunity to connect mindfulness to controlling our bodies' reactions to stressors. We can gain awareness of moments of stress by counting our pulse, and then calm ourselves accordingly using breathing techniques. The body and mind are connected; using mindfulness can help us respond better to stressful events.
8. Challenge participants to take their pulse periodically throughout the day. Not only will they mindfully attend to their bodies, but they will also gain better understanding of their bodies' reactions to stress, excitement, calm, etc.

Tools for Evaluation

The Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) is a 10 item evaluation that conceptualizes mindfulness as a trait, hypothesizing that individuals have a tendency to be more or less mindful, independent of time. The CAMM assesses the following elements of mindfulness; acting with awareness, observation of present-moment experience, and accepting without judgement.

Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM)

We want to know more about what you think, how you feel, and what you do. **Read** each sentence. Then, circle the number that tells how often each sentence is true for you.

	Never True	Rarely True	Sometimes True	Often True	Always True
1. I get upset with myself for having feelings that don't make sense.	0	1	2	3	4
2. At school, I walk from class to class without noticing what I'm doing.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I keep myself busy so I don't notice my thoughts or feelings.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I tell myself that I shouldn't feel the way I'm feeling.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I push away thoughts that I don't like.	0	1	2	3	4
6. It's hard for me to pay attention to only one thing at a time.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I get upset with myself for having certain thoughts.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I think about things that have happened in the past instead of thinking about things that are happening right now.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I think that some of my feelings are bad and that I shouldn't have them.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I stop myself from having feelings that I don't like.	0	1	2	3	4

CAMM: Scoring instructions

First reverse all scores by changing 0 to 4, 1 to 3, 3 to 1, and 4 to 0 (2 stays unchanged). Then sum all items. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of mindfulness.

For more information, see:

Greco, L., Baer, R. A., & Smith, G. T. (2011). Assessing mindfulness in children and adolescents: Development and validation of the child and adolescent mindfulness measure (CAMM). *Psychological Assessment, 23*, 606-614.

Resources

Classes/Trainings:

Mindful Schools:

- Mindfulness Fundamentals
- Mindful Educator Essentials

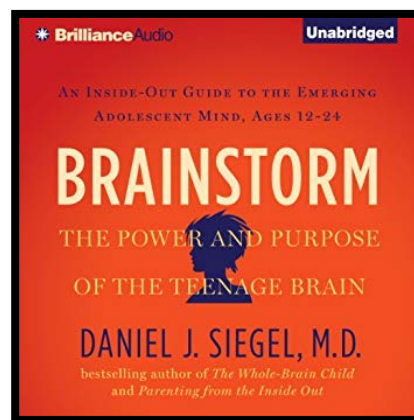
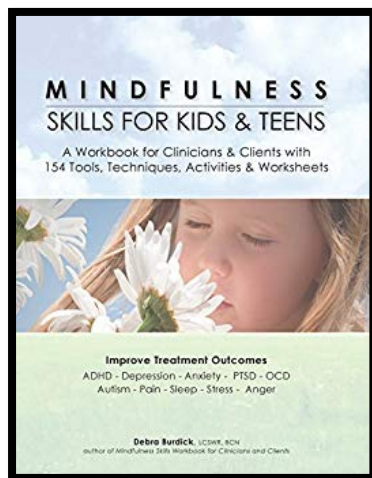
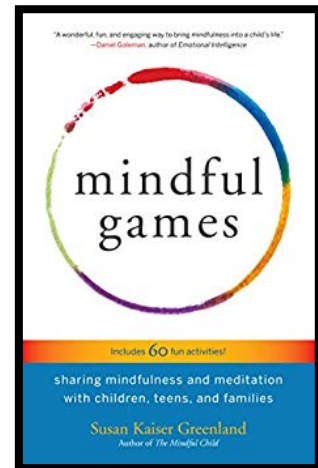
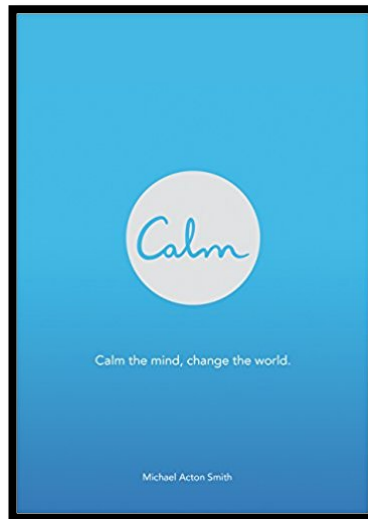
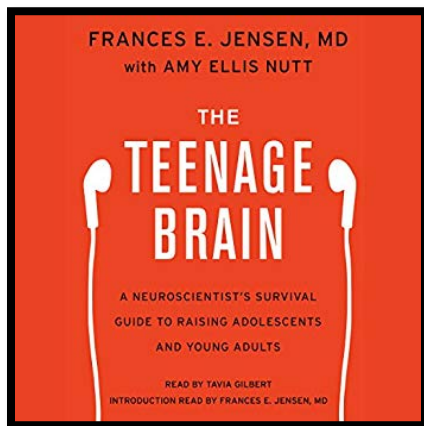
PESI:

- Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Children and Teens

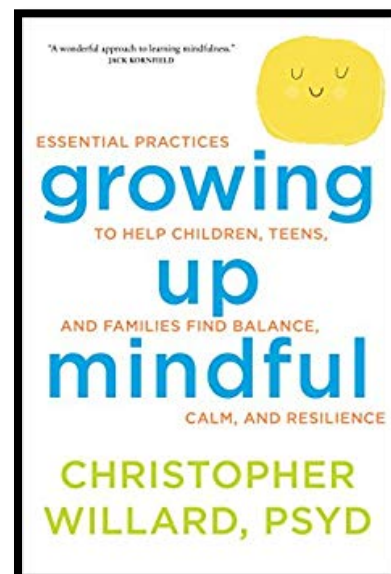
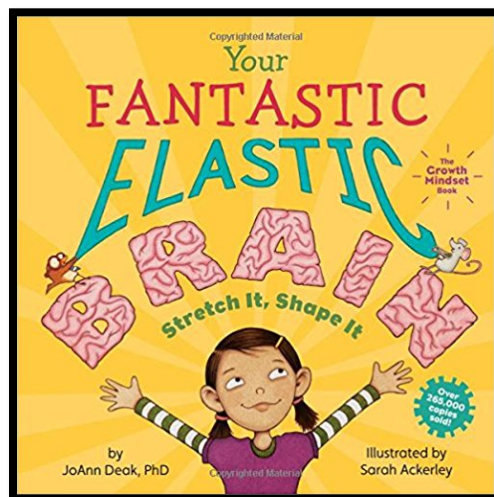
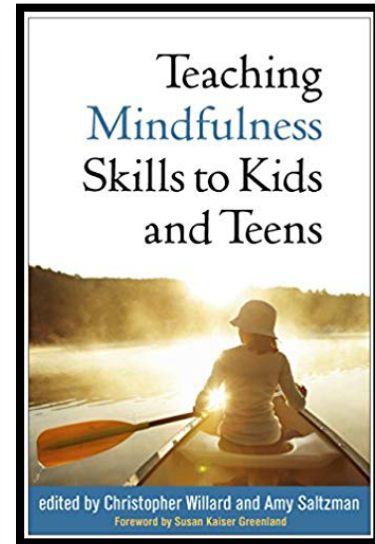
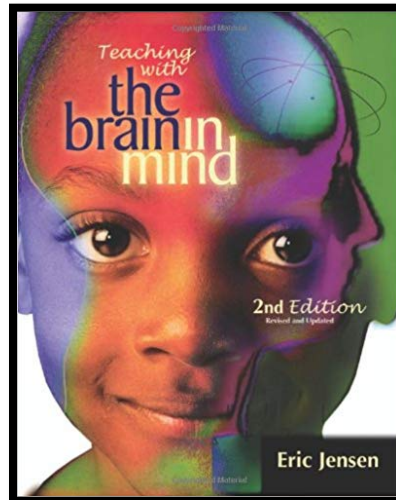
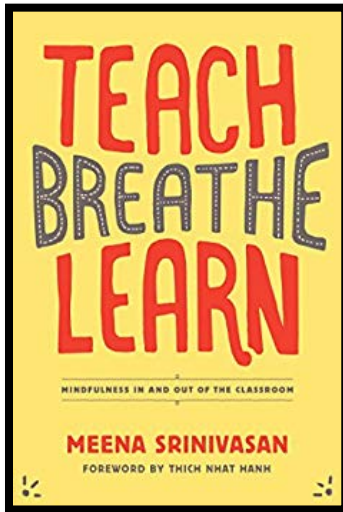
Yoga Calm:

- Mindfulness and the Brain (fully online)
- Youth Instructor Certification (fully online available)

Books:



Resources



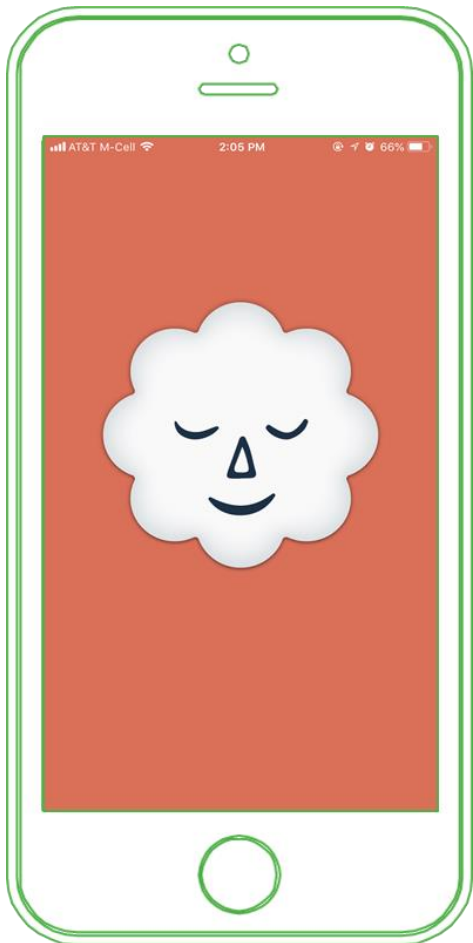


MINDFULNESS APPS



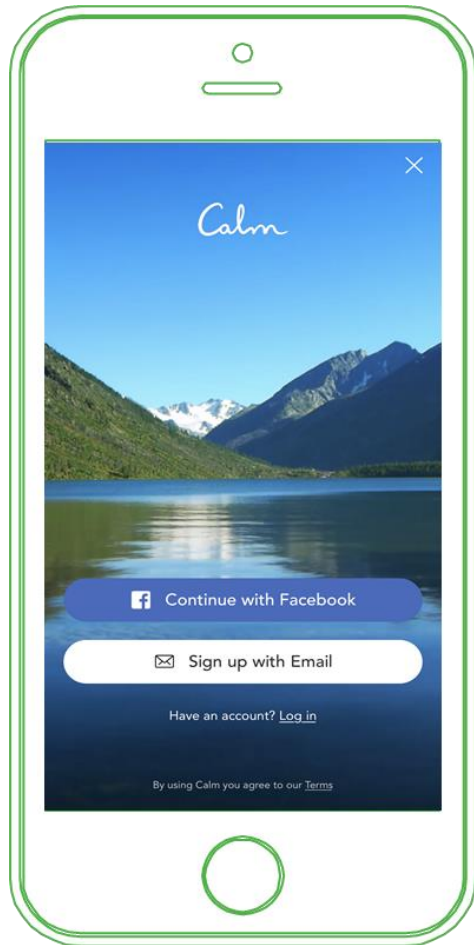
HEADSPACE

- » animations to teach new skills
- » 2-3 minute mini meditations
- » “SOS” sessions for moments of panic, anxiety, and stress
- » basic course to introduce you into the fundamental techniques.



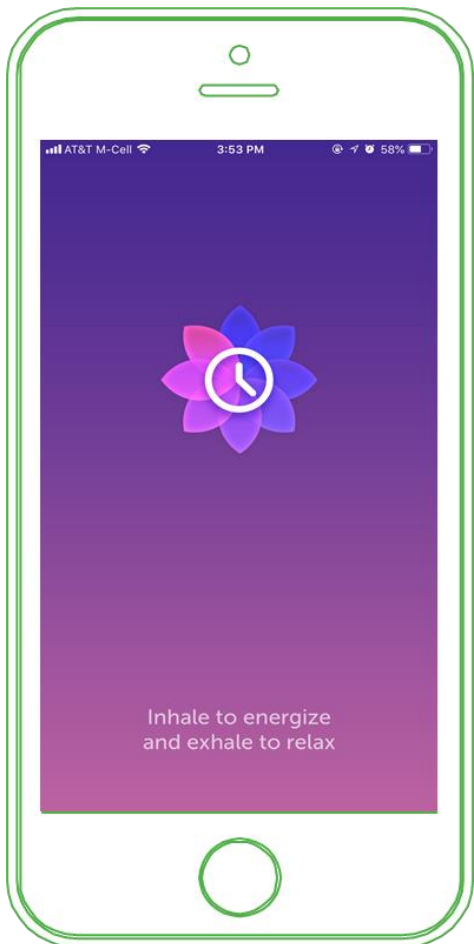
STOP, BREATHE & THINK

- » has features to help manage depression
- » soundscapes for sleeping
- » mindful breathing
- » reduce stress
- » recommends short, guided meditations based on how you check in with your emotion's.



CALM

- » features to calm anxiety
- » manage stress
- » increase deep sleep
- » increase focus and concentration
- » help break habits and create relationships
- » Increase happiness
- » self-esteem
- » sleep stories



SATTVA

- » features unguided mediation tracker
- » meditation timer
- » guided meditations on a social media platform to update friends on your mindfulness for the day



INSIGHT TIMER

- » provides a timer for your mindfulness
- » on-the-go meditations
- » helps create a daily habit
- » meditation around the world is available to see who is meditating with you