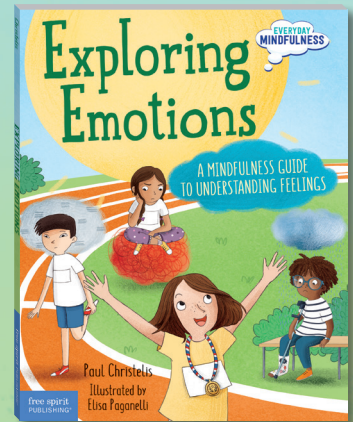
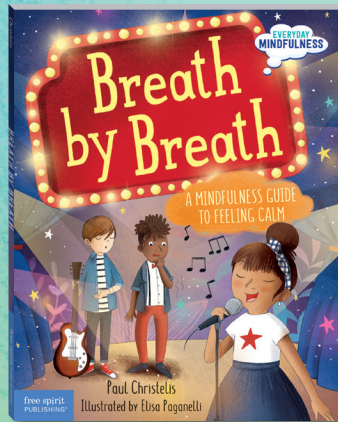


A Leader's Guide to the **EVERYDAY** **MINDFULNESS** Series



EVERYDAY
MINDFULNESS

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Contents

A Note to Teachers, Parents, Leaders, and Other Adults 3

Lesson 1 5

Breath by Breath: A Mindfulness Guide to Feeling Calm

This lesson introduces the strategy of using our breath—specifically the technique of belly breathing—to calm our minds and deal with stress and other challenges more effectively.

Lesson 2 8

Exploring Emotions: A Mindfulness Guide to Understanding Feelings

This lesson compares our rapidly changing emotions to weather. Students will compare their own emotional experiences to the weather by making “Inner Weather Picture Books” and will understand the benefits of being able to name their feelings.

Lesson 3 15

Get Outdoors: A Mindfulness Guide to Noticing Nature

This lesson introduces how mindfulness can help us notice details in nature that we might easily overlook. Students will take a mindful walk or do a mindful station activity using items from nature to guide them.

Lesson 4 18

Sleep Easy: A Mindfulness Guide to Getting a Good Night’s Sleep

This lesson introduces the ways mindfulness can be used to help us fall asleep. Students will create their own “Bedtime Mindfulness Booklets,” with mindfulness strategies to be used before bedtime. They can turn to these booklets as an easy-to-use resource when falling asleep feels difficult.

A Note to Teachers, Parents, Leaders, and Other Adults

Mindfulness is an excellent strategy for dealing with the challenging moments in our lives—whether we feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed by emotions, or are facing some other difficult circumstance. This is just as true for children as it is for adults. In fact, teaching mindfulness practices early can have extraordinary benefits, in part because children are able to absorb new concepts easily. Knowing how to slow down, become aware of our feelings, notice the world around us, get a good night's sleep, and use our breath as a calming tool are all skills we need our whole lives.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to our present-moment experience with an attitude of kindness and curiosity. By gently moving our focus from our busy minds into the present moment (for example, by noticing sensations and emotions, without judging them or wishing they were different), we begin to let go of distraction and learn to tap into a supply of well-being and ease. Mindfulness can also help us improve concentration, calm difficult emotions, and even boost our immune systems.

This leader's guide to the Everyday Mindfulness series from Free Spirit Publishing will help you use the four books in the series (*Breath by Breath*, *Exploring Emotions*, *Get Outdoors*, and *Sleep Easy*) to instill and practice mindfulness skills. For each book, you'll find a lesson plan. These lessons offer activities and discussion questions to teach children ways to better understand themselves, their feelings, their environment, and their bodies. Each book also suggests related strategies and activities, which can be used in addition to or separate from the lessons in this guide. Feel free to adapt any of these activities depending on the ages of your students. You don't need to do these lessons in any order, but whichever one you use first, be sure to define mindfulness for your students.

Thank you for taking the time to integrate mindfulness into your curriculum. It makes a huge difference to the children you work with.

INTEGRATING THESE LESSONS INTO YOUR DAY

There are several ways to readily incorporate mindfulness lessons and practices into a standards-based curriculum or an already busy day. Here are a few ideas for incorporating these lessons:

- Combine the lessons and books with an existing character education or emotional health unit.
- Introduce the stories at the beginning of the school year to establish skills and create a calm classroom environment from the get-go.
- Use all or part of a lesson once a week during circle time.
- Use the books and topics during a literacy unit and as part of reading lessons.
- Refer to the messages of the books and lessons when teachable moments arise, such as when a student is feeling worried, distracted, or distressed.



Lesson 1

Breath by Breath: A Mindfulness Guide to Feeling Calm

Objectives

- ★ Students will understand how stress can affect their bodies.
- ★ Students will understand how breathing exercises can calm down their bodies when they feel scared or worried.
- ★ Students will be able to use breathing techniques to help them cope with difficult emotions or situations.

Vocabulary from the Story

Discuss the following terms with students and define as needed.

- ★ Confident
- ★ Nervous
- ★ Mindfulness
- ★ Relax
- ★ Worry

Suggested Materials

- ★ Story card text (page 7)
- ★ Index cards
- ★ Glue or tape (optional)
- ★ Projector to display information from KidsHealth.org (optional)



Discussion and Activities

1. Define *stress* for your students. For example, you might say, “Stress is your body’s response to worry, fear, or other uncomfortable feelings.” (You can also see kidshealth.org/en/kids/stress.html for more information that can help students understand the concept of stress.) Have students brainstorm things that feel stressful for them or that often spark worry in them. Depending on the age of your students, topics might include going to a sleepover, parents leaving for a trip, going to a new school, having new teachers or coaches, or preparing for an upcoming game or performance.

2. Have students share how stress feels in their bodies. Answers might include sensations such as having butterflies in their tummies, feeling tightness in their chests, or breathing heavily.
3. Talk with students about the idea that most of the time we don't have control over what causes us fear and stress, but we always have control over how we choose to cope.
4. Read the story aloud to the group, or ask for volunteers to read part or all of the story.
5. For older students, provide them two minutes to write responses to this question: "How did focusing on their breath help Lenny and Rosa in the story?" For younger students, pose the question aloud and ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.
6. Depending on the age of your students, pass out the story cards or read them aloud to the group. As a whole group or in small groups, ask for volunteers to talk about how each situation could cause stress and what difficult emotions may arise. With older students, you might alternatively ask them to write down their responses on the cards and turn them in at the end of the lesson. Or, with students of any age, you could invite kids to role-play these situations (themselves or using puppets or other figures) and act out how they would feel and what they would do in each scenario.
7. Connect the story card activity back to the book's story by asking for volunteers to share how breathing exercises could help them cope with some of the difficult emotions or situations from the story cards.
8. Tell students they will now practice a mindful breathing technique called *belly breathing*. Have students place their hands on their bellies and feel their bodies moving up and down as they breathe. Guide them to think about the up and down motion of their bellies as similar to air moving in and out of a balloon. Have them breathe in for a count of five seconds and out for a count of five seconds. Do this as a group for two minutes (or longer, depending on the age of your students). If you want to do additional breathing exercises, see the suggestions at the end of the book.
9. Ask for volunteers to share any differences they may feel in their bodies after focusing on their breathing.

Assessment

1. Place students in pairs to discuss this question: How can focusing on our breathing help us cope when we feel fear or worry?
2. If desired, ask kids to practice belly breathing in pairs, and have them observe their partners' breathing and offer supportive and constructive feedback.

Story Cards

Cut out the scenarios and glue or tape them to index cards, or copy the text onto index cards.



It is your first day in a brand-new classroom or school.



Your friends went outside and didn't invite you to play.



Someone has borrowed something of yours and won't give it back.



Your teacher asks you a question and you don't know the answer.



Your friend made it all the way across the monkey bars and you keep falling off.



You have a new babysitter for the evening and your parents or guardians will be out late.



Lesson 2

Exploring Emotions:

A Mindfulness Guide to Understanding Feelings

Objectives

- ★ Students will be able to identify common difficult emotions.
- ★ Students will be able to compare difficult emotions to changes in the weather.
- ★ Students will be able to apply the practice of mindfulness to name, accept, and understand emotions.

Vocabulary from the Story

Discuss the following terms with students and define as needed.

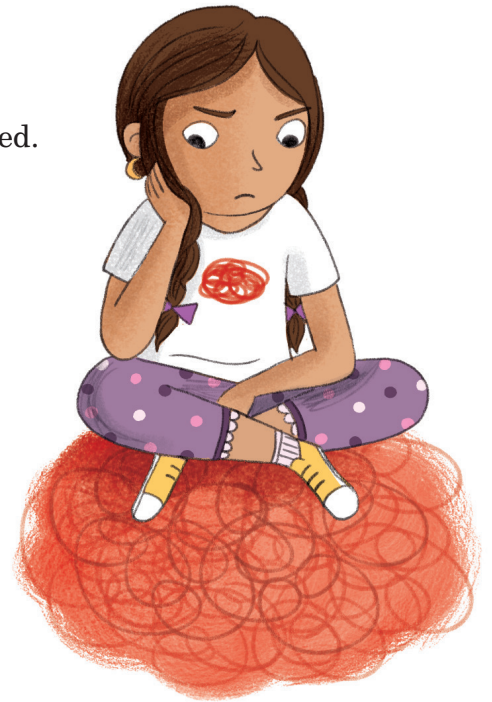
- ★ Boredom
- ★ Emotions
- ★ Mindfulness
- ★ Relief

Suggested Materials

- ★ “Inner Weather Picture Book Pages” (pages 10–14)
- ★ Additional drawing paper (optional)
- ★ Markers, colored pencils, or crayons
- ★ Stapler

Discussion and Activities

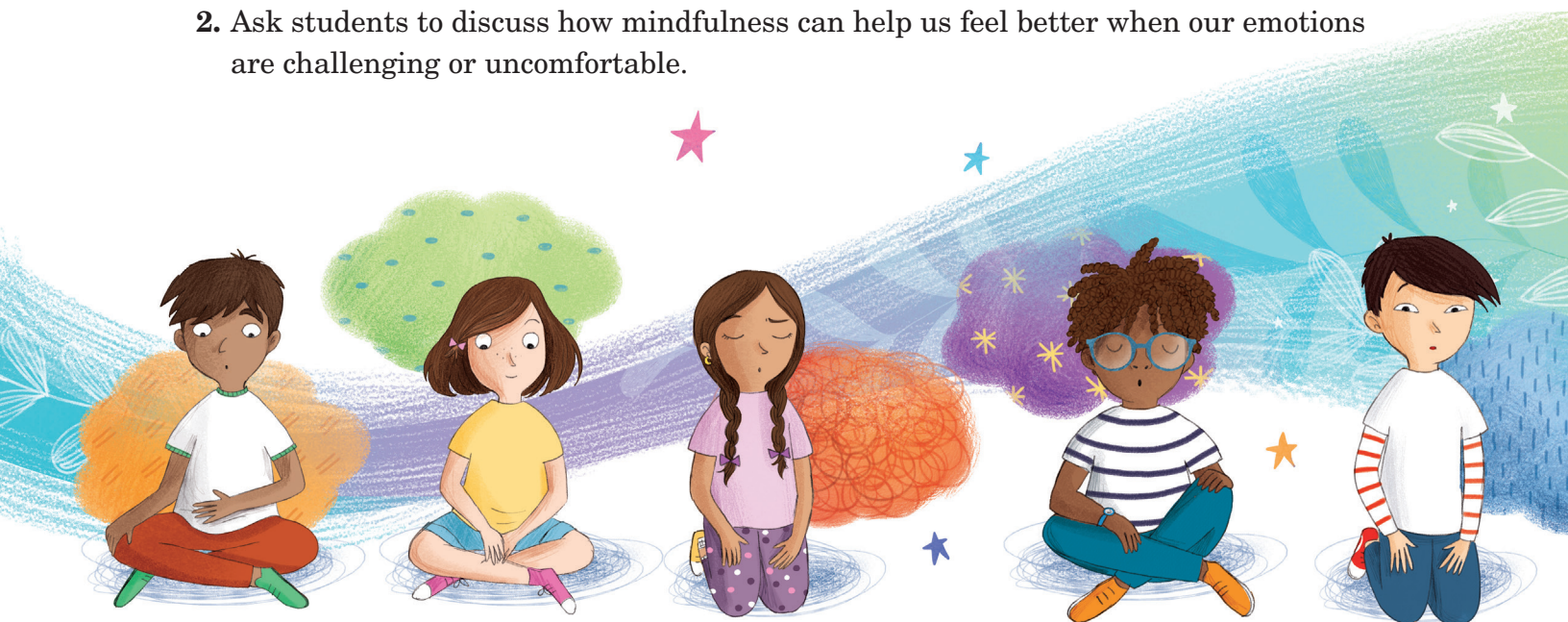
1. Discuss what mindfulness means and use examples to help students grasp the idea. You might also want to help visual learners by drawing pictures on the board of what it means to pay attention to the present moment and to notice what’s going on around us and also inside our minds.
2. Read the story aloud to the group, or ask for volunteers to read part or all of the story.
3. On the board, write the emotions experienced by the characters in the book: *nervous*, *excited*, *angry*, *sad*, *relieved*, *proud*, and *bored*.
4. Ask for a volunteer to share what the author means by “inner weather.” Check for understanding of the metaphor.



5. Ask for volunteers to share a time when they felt each of the emotions from the book. You could prompt students by asking questions such as, “Can you tell us about a time when you felt excited? What happened? How long did the feeling last?”
6. Talk with students about the idea from the story that, just as the weather is always changing, our emotions can change quickly. Knowing this can help us cope with strong or difficult feelings, by reminding us that they won’t last forever—we won’t always feel this way.
7. Discuss how it can also help us to take a moment to recognize, name, and accept the feeling we’re having—to check our inner weather report.
8. Tell students that they are going to create an inner weather picture book. Hand out copies of the “Inner Weather Picture Book Pages.” Three of these pages have prompts naming specific emotions, and one is blank so students can fill in whatever emotions they’d like to explore. Make as many copies available as desired based on the needs and interests of your group, along with extra drawing paper if you’d like.
9. Have students think back to the experiences they shared with the group, as well as others they might think of now, and ask them to draw pictures comparing these feelings and experiences to the weather. Older students can accompany their illustrations with descriptions written on the lines beneath the drawing space.
10. Help students staple their pages together to form a picture book. If they wish, students can use blank pages to make covers for their books.

Assessment

1. Have students share their picture books with a partner, with a table group, or with the large group. Also invite them to share their creations with family adults at home.
2. Ask students to discuss how mindfulness can help us feel better when our emotions are challenging or uncomfortable.

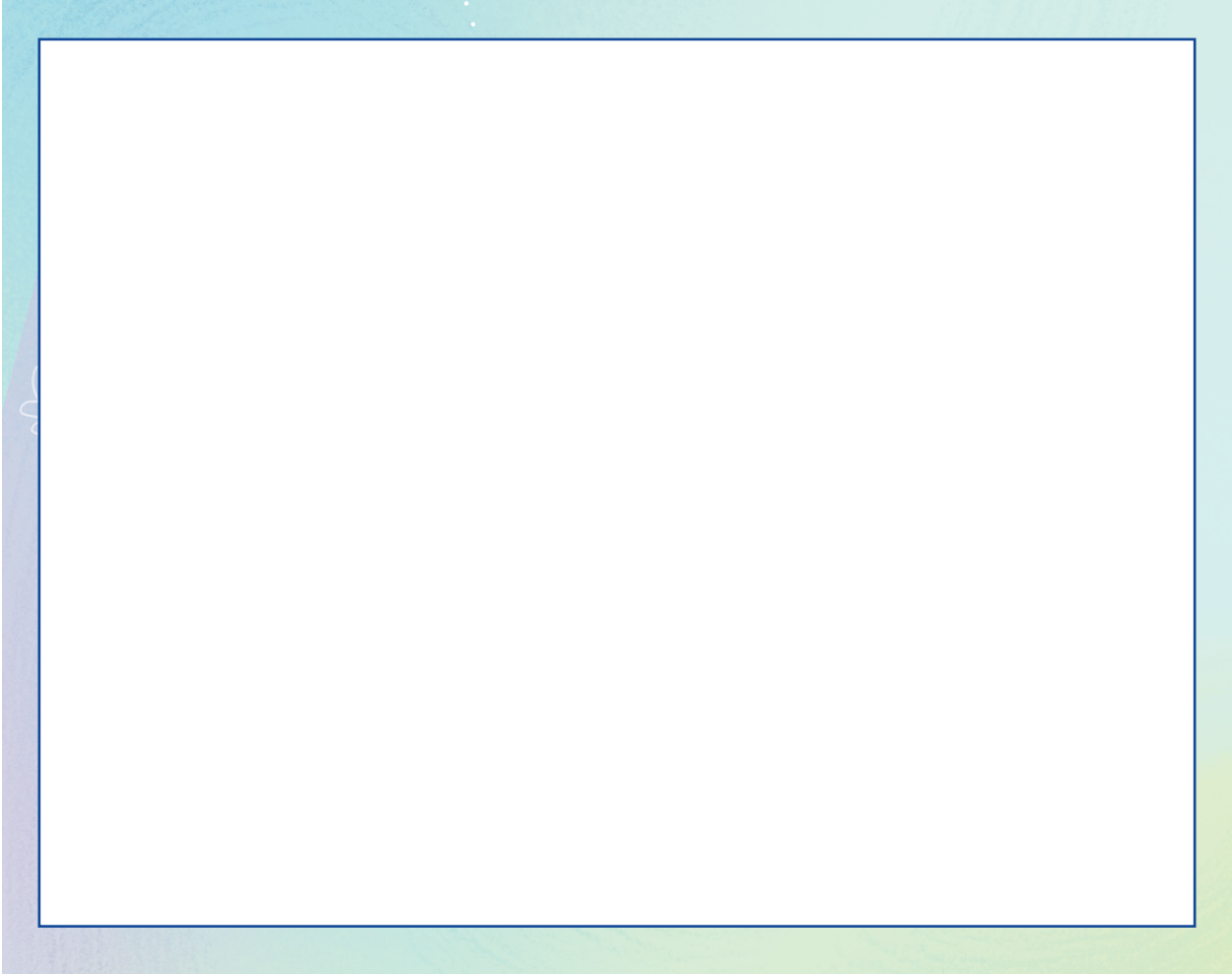


The background features a sunburst pattern of yellow rays radiating from the center. Scattered throughout are small white dots and larger colorful stars in red, blue, green, purple, and orange.

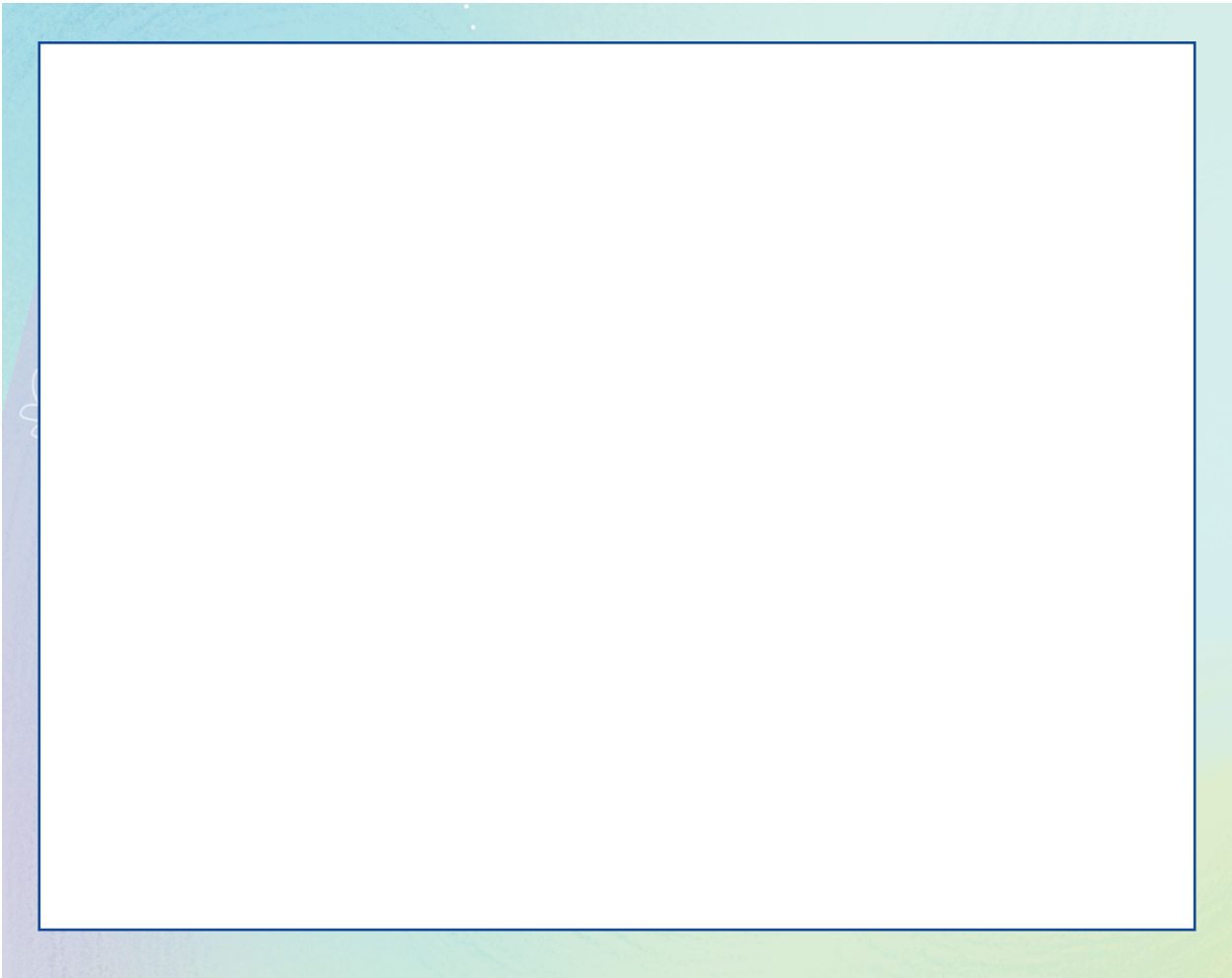
Inner Weather Picture Book Pages



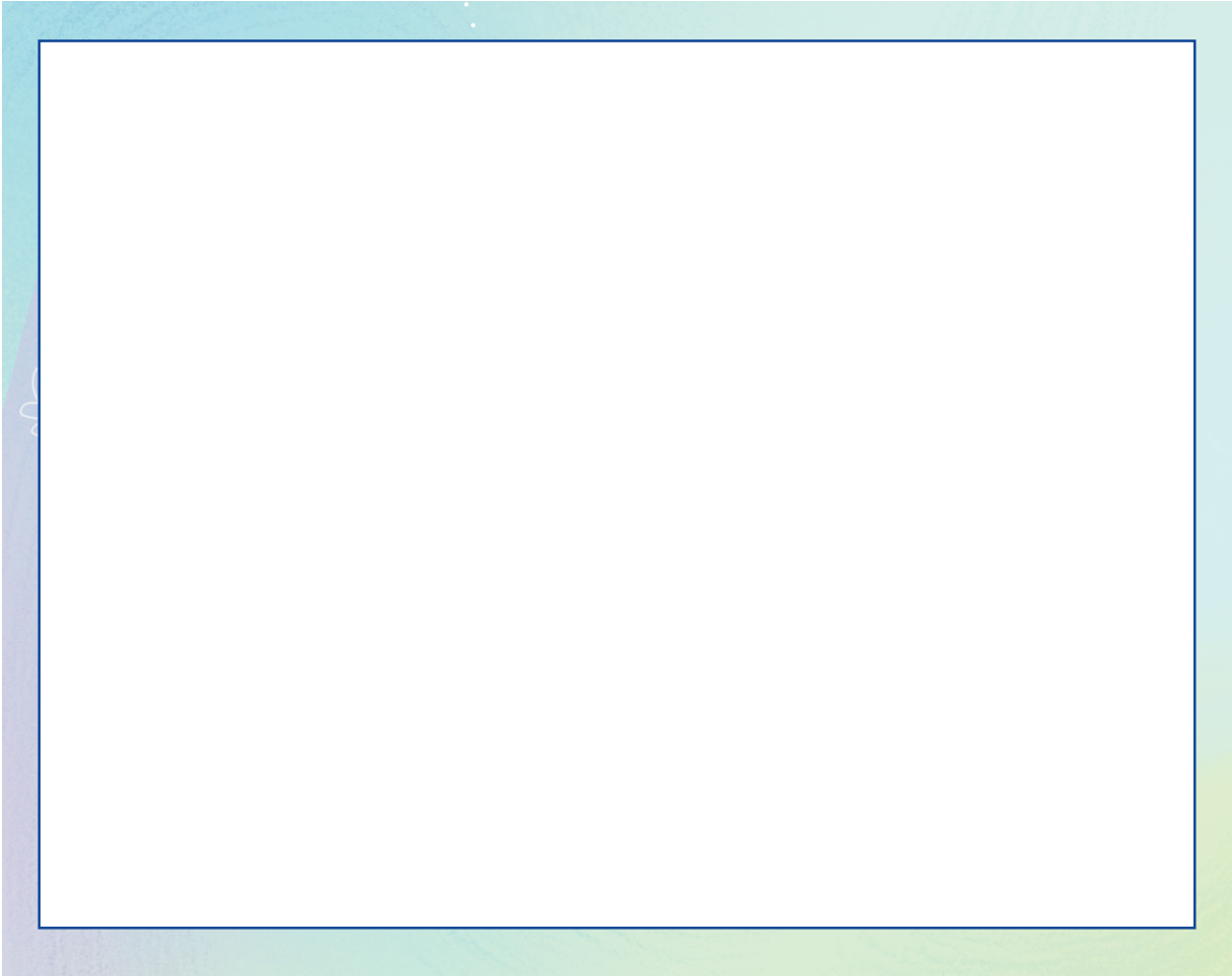
Today I woke up feeling HAPPY, but then I started to feel SCARED and WORRIED, like a storm was coming.



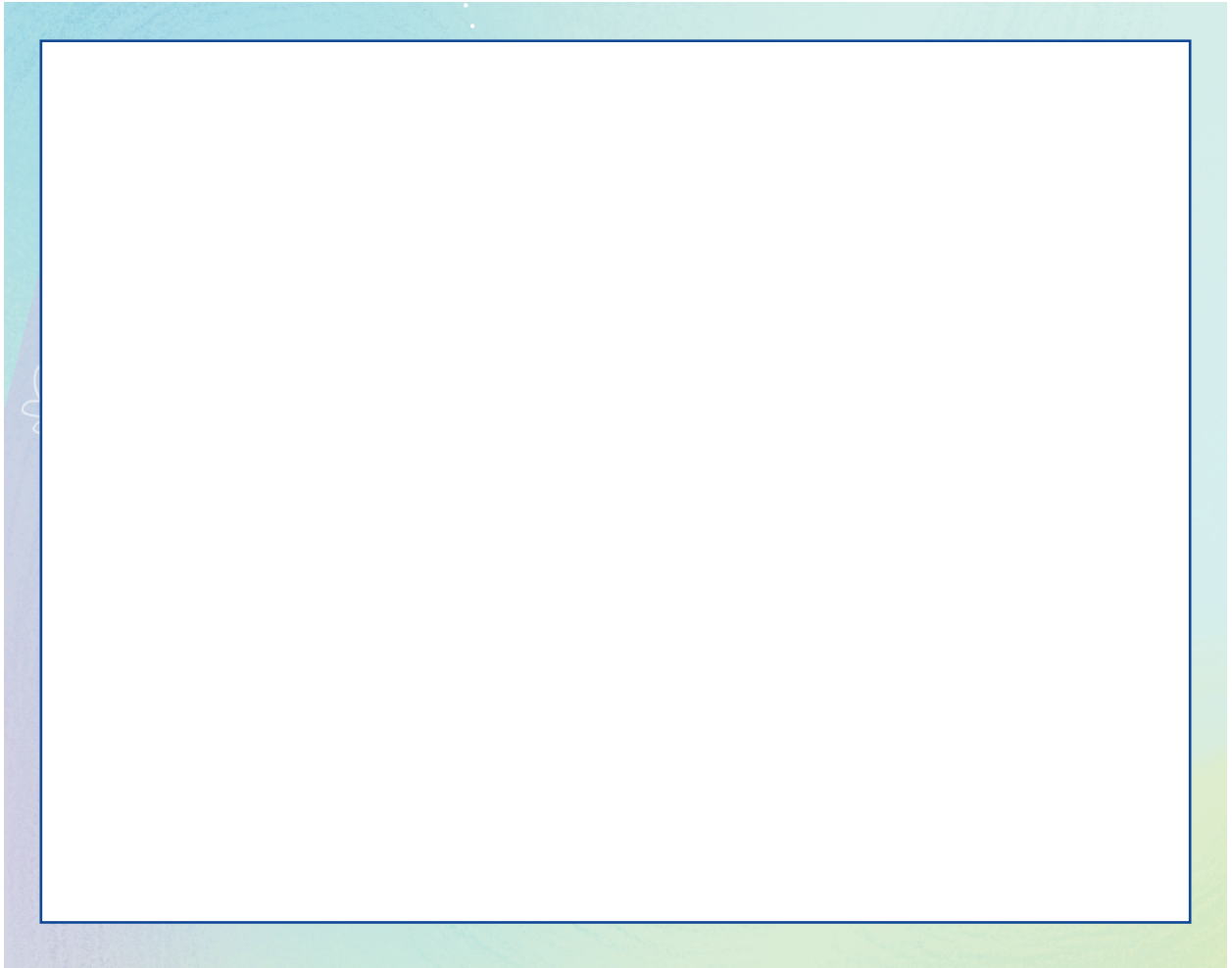
Today I felt ANGRY. My face felt like it was burning, like on a very hot day.



Today I felt EXCITED, like birds on a bright sunny morning.



Today I felt _____



Lesson 3

Get Outdoors: A Mindfulness Guide to Noticing Nature

Objectives

- ★ Students will understand how the practice of mindfulness can help them appreciate their surroundings.
- ★ Students will be better able to recognize details in nature by slowing down and using their senses.
- ★ Students will understand how to observe the natural world through a mindful walk or similar activity.

Vocabulary from the Story

Discuss the following terms with students and define as needed.

- ★ Curiosity
- ★ Magnifying glass
- ★ Mindfulness
- ★ Five senses
- ★ Savor
- ★ Textures



Suggested Materials

- ★ Small notebook for each student
- ★ Writing utensils
- ★ Magnifying glass for each student (optional)

Discussion and Activities

1. Ask students to share what they think can happen if we spend a lot of time inside. Also discuss the idea of “screen time”—watching TV, playing video games, looking at tablets or smartphones, and so on. What do students think about how those activities might affect people? In contrast, how can time spent outdoors affect us? (As appropriate, you might discuss some of the negative effects of large amounts of screen time, such as eye strain, lack of exercise, lower-quality sleep, attention difficulties, and so on.)
2. Discuss what mindfulness means, especially related to nature, using examples to help students grasp the idea. You could help visual learners by drawing pictures on the board of what it means to take time to notice the world around us and observe the present moment.
3. Read the story aloud to the group, or ask for volunteers to read part or all of the story.
4. Discuss the five senses and how we can use each sense to explore the outdoors in a different way. If you like, you can list the senses on the board and ask for examples of things we might notice with each sense. If you wish, you can guide students to focus on nature with these examples, but you don’t need to limit your discussion to this area.
5. Tell students that as a group you will be doing something similar to what Jada and Michael did in the story. Together, go for a “mindful walk” or play the garden game. Get outdoors and have students investigate and notice nature. Give each student a small pad of paper and a writing utensil to bring along. If desired, you can also give each student a magnifying glass. Explore the outdoors looking for details in leaves, tree bark, insects, clouds, different smells, sounds, and so on. Have students list or draw what they notice. To provide more guidance for the walk, prior to heading outdoors you could create a checklist with specific items to look for. You could then point out these items to help get kids started.
6. As an alternative or additional activity—especially for use during inclement weather—you could gather items from the outdoors to explore inside, or students could gather these items themselves and bring them back to the classroom or other space. Create stations using leaves, sticks, flowers, rocks, bark, and so on. Divide the class into small groups and have them travel from station to station recording their observations of these items from nature.

7. Depending on food allergies that may exist in your group, you could also provide opportunities for mindful eating, echoing what Jada and Michael do at the end of the story. Guide students to use their sense of taste to explore flavors in food, while also considering textures and aromas. Ask how this experience differed from the way they usually eat.

Assessment

1. Check for students' understanding of key concepts by ending the lesson with what can we notice about articles in the classroom if we practice mindfulness. For example, ask kids about their chairs and desks: How do their chairs feel while they sit and move on them? What do they notice about their desks that they didn't notice before?



Lesson 4

Sleep Easy:

A Mindfulness Guide to Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Objectives

- ★ Students will learn that certain practices before bed can contribute to a good night's sleep.
- ★ Students will understand the practice of mindfulness.
- ★ Students will be able to apply mindfulness practices to real-life situations.

Vocabulary from the Story

Discuss the following terms with students and define as needed.

- ★ Curious
- ★ Mindfulness
- ★ Posture
- ★ Relax



Suggested Materials

- ★ 8½" x 11" white drawing paper or card stock
- ★ Scissors
- ★ Stapler
- ★ Markers, colored pencils, and crayons

Discussion and Activities

1. Talk with students about why sleep is important to our health. Why do we need it? How does it help kids grow and learn? (For more information on sleep, see kidshealth.org/en/kids/not-tired.html.)
2. Ask students to share what can interfere with their sleep. Their answers might include things such as a storm, a barking dog, or worrying about something. List responses on the board.
3. Have students share with a partner or a small group a time when they had a hard time falling asleep. What eventually helped them fall asleep?
4. Read the story aloud to the group, or ask for volunteers to read part or all of the story.
5. Discuss what mindfulness means, especially related to sleep, using examples to help students grasp the idea. You could help visual learners by drawing pictures on the board of what it means to quiet their minds.
6. Ask students to name each mindfulness practice that was used by the kids in the book, and list the practices on the board. Mindfulness strategies from the story include feeling our skin against the sheets, noticing the temperature of our fingers and toes, watching thoughts pass like clouds in the sky, and feeling our breath moving in our bodies. Talk about how many of these strategies involve noticing our bodies. Brainstorm other things we can notice in our bodies if we pay attention.
7. Next, talk about the last strategy in the story: remembering three nice things from the day. What nice things did Billy and Betty think of? Discuss the idea of gratitude, defining it for students. (For example, you could say, “Gratitude means taking time to notice and appreciate the good things in your life.”) Ask students how they think the daily practice of gratitude can help them feel good and settle their minds before sleep.

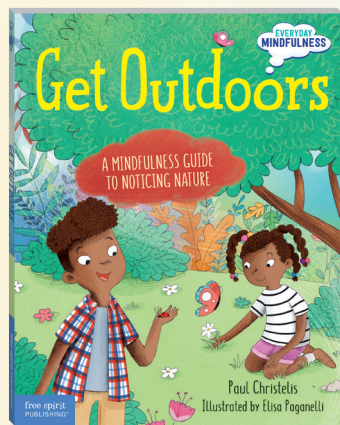
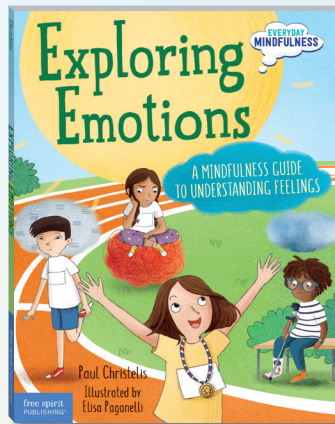
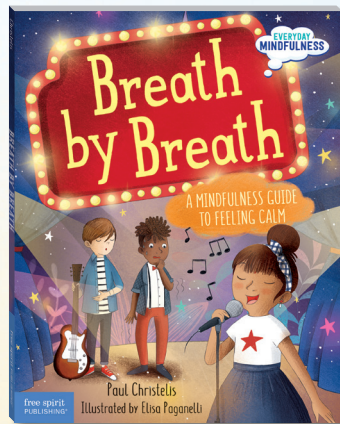
8. For each student, cut two pieces of the drawing paper in half lengthwise (resulting in four rectangular strips of paper that are long enough to fold in half and wide enough to draw pictures on). Have students stack the strips on top of one another and fold all four in half the long way. Then staple the pages at the crease to create a small booklet. (You can make these booklets ahead of time and distribute them, or have students make them.) Tell students they'll each create a "Bedtime Mindfulness Booklet." These booklets will be filled with mindfulness practices that students can use to slow their thoughts, calm their minds, ease anxiety, and cope with before-bed jitters whenever falling asleep feels hard or stressful.
9. Have students use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to draw or write a bedtime mindfulness exercise on each page of their booklet. These may include the strategies in the book as well as others that students think of (such as drinking a glass of water, reading, or stretching). Let students know they can keep their booklets next to their beds to help them fall asleep. Whenever they need or want to, students can flip to one of their strategies and put it into action.

Assessment

1. Have students share their booklets in pairs or small groups, or ask for volunteers to share with the whole group. Also encourage them to share their booklets with family adults at home.
2. Follow up in a few days and ask volunteers to share any sleep mindfulness strategies that they've used before bed. How did the exercises help?



EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS Series



The Everyday Mindfulness series explores how a mindful attitude can enhance enjoyment, promote a sense of calm and confidence, and provide young people with skills they can use every day. Mindfulness can help us improve concentration, deal with difficult emotions, sleep better, and even boost our immune systems. Mindfulness practices and exercises are integrated into each story and expanded on in the section for adults at the end of each book. Readers are also invited to “press the pause button” at various points in each story to mindfully reflect on their own present-moment experiences.

Each book: 32 pp., color illust., HC, 7½" x 9".

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