

the
**mindfulness
ambassador**
program

▶ *interactive*

Participant
Workbook

The Mindfulness Ambassador Program - Interactive

Participant Workbook

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Mindfulness Without Borders is a non-profit organization that brings best practices in mindfulness and social-emotional competencies to youth and their communities. We offer educational programs that explore key strategies and tools to empower individuals with vital life skills they need to tackle the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

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Contents

preface

About the Mindfulness Ambassador Program - Interactive	1
About Social and Emotional Learning	3

program lessons

Session One: Discovering Mindfulness	5
<i>Mindfulness Practice: TAKE FIVE</i>	
Session Two: Mindfulness Basics	11
<i>Mindfulness Practice: TAKE FIVE</i>	
Session Three: Paying Attention	15
<i>Mindfulness Practice: TUZA</i>	
Session Four: Discovering Inside	19
<i>Mindfulness Practice: TUZA</i>	
Session Five: Practicing Gratitude	23
<i>Mindfulness Practice: mindful eating</i>	
Session Six: Noticing Emotional Triggers	27
<i>Mindfulness Practice: TUZA</i>	
Session Seven: Exploring Open-Mindedness	31
Mindfulness Practice: body scan	
Session Eight: Being the Change	35
<i>Mindfulness Practice: pledge for mindful living</i>	

appendix

TUZA Tracker	39
Discover Inside: Questionnaire	41
Pledge for Mindful Living	43
Present Moment tools	44

preface

About the Mindfulness Ambassador Program - Interactive

The Mindfulness Ambassador Program - Interactive offers participants a forum to meet face to face and learn about constructive ways for addressing personal, social and community challenges. Essentially, the program establishes a common language based on sharing, modeling and practicing 8 principles that provide members with tools to strengthen their well-being, think critically and act with thoughtfulness and compassion. As well, program members pledge to develop the skills, knowledge and attitude to engage constructively in an increasingly interdependent world and to become messengers of mindful living within their families, schools, work places, and communities, hence *mindfulness ambassadors*.

At the heart of the program are basic mindfulness practices that help individuals access the wisdom within themselves and within the group. Participants are encouraged to speak from the heart, ask questions to discover their fullest potential, and explore possibilities that lead to a culture of mutual respect, collaboration and ethical concern for each other and the world.

The Mindfulness Ambassador Program is for those who...

Care to connect.
Dare to rise above.
Seek to be more.



About Social and Emotional Learning


Social and emotional competencies are skillsets that can be cultivated to help us prepare for personal, academic and professional success. The mastery of these essential skills promotes character and ethical development, self-discipline, prosocial behaviour and increases emotional balance. By strengthening these essential skills, individuals can experience better academic performance, improved attitudes and behaviours, greater motivation to learn and reduced emotional distress. (2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition)

Mindfulness Without Borders' educational content integrates the key elements of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. CASEL is dedicated to advancing the science and practice of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL). It has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies. Self-awareness and self-management are consistent with the *intrapersonal domain* whereas social awareness and relationship skills represent dimensions within the *interpersonal domain*. Responsible decision-making is both an individual and social process and therefore represents both domains.

The definitions of the five competency clusters for participants include:

self-awareness: The ability to accurately *recognize* one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

self-management: The ability to *regulate* one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.



social awareness: The ability to *take* the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

relationship skills: The ability to *establish* and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

responsible decision-making: The ability to *make* constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Resource: 2015 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Middle and High School Edition

program lessons

Session One: Discovering Mindfulness

Setting the Stage

Participants sit in a circle and the facilitator introduces the Mindfulness Ambassador Program as an 8-week program that addresses strategies to strengthen the ability to think critically, act thoughtfully and practice mindfulness. The program is a place where one sits in a circle to learn from the insights of others. It can be referred to as a ‘summit of minds’ and a place for sharing stories and insights.

Program Guidelines

- ☑ Speak only when you have the talking piece
- ☑ Listen respectfully with an openness to multiple perspectives
- ☑ Speak from the heart and use “I” statements
- ☑ Say just enough
- ☑ What is said in the program, stays in the program
- ☑ Do your best to attend all meetings

Program Check-In

Participants introduce themselves by name and share one character trait they each bring to the program. For example, “My name is Sam and I bring curiosity.”



Play Video: Why Mindfulness?

This video clip demonstrates how mindfulness is used by athletes, musicians and professionals. To view the video, visit the URL below and click on Lesson 1: Why Mindfulness. <https://vimeo.com/118072857>



Dialogue Prompts

After viewing the video, participants pass the talking piece around the circle and answer the following questions:

- What surprised you about what you saw or heard in the video?
- How does meditation/mindfulness support the people in the video?
- After hearing what makes artists and athletes feel present in their lives, such as listening to a good song, taking a deep breath, or coloring with their kids, share what makes you feel present.

“Mindfulness is a way of being that grows out of paying attention, on purpose and without judgment, to what is happening in the present moment. “

— **Jon Kabat-Zinn**, Founder Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, scientist and author



Theme: discovering mindfulness

Mindfulness is our ability to pay attention to what is happening in the moment. It is present-moment awareness. Mindfulness brings us in touch with our breath, our feelings, our thinking, our bodies, our impulses and actions and their effects on others and our environment. When we learn to manage what is happening inside ourselves, we are better equipped to manage what is happening to and around us. No matter what we are doing, we can choose to do it with our full presence – with all our attention to what we are doing. This level of attention increases our ability to see things as they really are, focused on the present, rather than on the past or future. What makes mindfulness so unique is that we can all do it.

Reflecting on the Theme

Share one sentence or word that stood out to you.



Mindfulness Practice: TAKE FIVE

The TAKE FIVE practice directs our attention to the flow of our breath during five complete breath cycles. In this practice, a breath cycle consists of a deep, long and gentle in-breath ending in a momentary pause, followed by a deep, long and gentle out-breath that also ends in a momentary pause. Then the cycle repeats.

In this breathing practice, we use the five fingers of one hand to count each breath cycle, hence the name TAKE FIVE. We notice the body expanding with each in-breath and contracting with each out-breath. In so doing, we withdraw our attention from distracting thoughts that can cause restlessness or anxiety. Over time and with practice, our mind becomes calmer and our emotional states more balanced. (see next page for instructions).

TAKE FIVE

Here's how:

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor and rest your hands on your lap.
- Gently close your eyes or look for a point somewhere on the floor where you can return your eyes when you get distracted.
- Turn one hand palm up to the ceiling. This will be your counting hand. At the end of each breath cycle, you will fold one finger on this hand into your palm until all five fingers are folded.
- Gently take a breath in to fill your lungs. Notice the pause that happens naturally once the in-breath is complete.
- Gently breathe one long breath out until you notice the natural pause again. Fold your first finger. This is TAKE ONE.
- Gently take another in-breath to fill your lungs. Notice the pause that happens naturally once the in-breath is complete.
- Gently breathe out until your breath comes to a pause. Fold your second finger. This is TAKE TWO.
- Breathe in again, filling up your lungs until you feel the pause.
- Breathe out to empty the lungs until you feel the pause. Fold your third finger. This is TAKE THREE.
- Breathe in; notice the pause. Breathe out; notice the pause. Fold your fourth finger. This is TAKE FOUR.
- Now, breathe in following the whole length of the breath. Breathe out, following the whole length of the breath. This time, turn your counting hand palm down. This is TAKE FIVE.
- Continue to breathe in and out.
- You don't need to breathe in a special way. Your body knows how to breathe.
- When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to the 1, and take a moment to notice how you feel.



Reflecting on the practice

Use one word to describe how you feel after the breathing practice.



Home assignment: be.Mindful

Pause and practice TAKE FIVE twice a day. Slowing down is not an easy task. To do this, we can choose to take each breath as a way to pause and notice what is happening around us and within us. In turn, each breath when taken on purpose can bring a sense of ease and ground us in the present moment.

Close the Program

Participants close the program with the *I Witness Circle*. Members stand shoulder to shoulder and share a phrase, word or theme they heard or observed during the program meeting.

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