

# Trauma-Sensitive Mindful Education 3-Hour Professional Development Resources



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# Self-Compassion Reflection Questions

(Created by Kristen Neff, 2003)

*Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:*

ALMOST NEVER

ALMOST ALWAYS

1

2

3

4

5

\_\_\_ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.

\_\_\_ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.

\_\_\_ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.

\_\_\_ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.

\_\_\_ 5. I try to be loving toward myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.

\_\_\_ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.

\_\_\_ 7. When I'm down and out I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.

\_\_\_ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.

\_\_\_ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.

\_\_\_ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

\_\_\_ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.

\_\_\_ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.



ALMOST NEVER

ALMOST ALWAYS

1

2

3

4

5

\_\_\_ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.

\_\_\_ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

\_\_\_ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

\_\_\_ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.

\_\_\_ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.

\_\_\_ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.

\_\_\_ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

\_\_\_ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

\_\_\_ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.

\_\_\_ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.

\_\_\_ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

\_\_\_ 26. I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.



# Sensation Words

(adapted from Hamilton & Vinbury, 2015)

*To practice embodiment, try describing your emotions by how they feel in your body (the felt sensations you notice).*

Ache/y	Edge	Ripply
Airy	Effervescent	Rocky
Alert	Expanding	Rough
Alive	Fast	Round
Bark	Feathered	Sandy
Bloated	fluid/Flowing	Scratchy
Blocked	Flushed	Sharp
Brushed	Flutter	Spherical
Bubbled	Fuzzy	Serrated
Bubbly	Goopy	Stretched
Bulbous	Hard	Silky
Bumpy	Heavy	Slimy
Burning	Hollow	Smooth
Buzzy	Hot	Soft
Chills	Huge	Splash
Clogged	Itchy	Spherical
Cold/Cool	Light	Sticky
Congested	Magnetized	Strong
Constricted	Moist	Sweeping
Corduroy	Moving	Aught
Cozy	Nauseous	Tiny
Cube	Pins & Needles	Undulating
Crinkled	Pointed	Variegated
Crunched	Pressure	Watery
Crunchy	Prickly	Warm
Damp	Puffy	Wavy
Dense	Pulsing	Windy
Droplets	Quaking	
Dull	Rhythmic	



# Trauma-Sensitive Language Worksheet

How would you rewrite these scripts to make it sensitive to students with any kind of trauma? (Consider the 5 Domains of Trauma-Sensitive Teaching.)

For Mindful Breathing Practice:

*“Let’s practice mindful breathing. Put your hand on your belly. Breathe in and feel your belly push into your hand.”*

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For Sending Kind Wishes:

*“Close your eyes. Relax. Think about your family and how much you love them and how much they love you. Repeat after me: I wish for you to be happy....”*

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For Mindful Movement:

*“Let’s practice being mindful while we’re moving. Sit still and straight. Breathe in...and breathe out... Notice your arms. Reach your arms up as high as you can. Feel that stretching! Now put your hands on your legs.”*

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For Body Scan:

*“I want you to close your eyes and just relax. Good. Notice your shoulders and just relax. Now pay attention to your belly, notice how round it is, and now your thighs. Notice your bottom in your chair. Pay attention to sensations in your knees, ankles, feet, and toes.”*

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# Conversations on Secularity: Recommendations for how to address concerns of parents, administrators or others about the secularity of your mindfulness teaching.

As mindfulness gains an increasingly prominent place within society, occasional concerns have been raised about its secularity.

Yet even when adhering to all of our Secularity Guidelines, you still may encounter parents, administrators or others who are concerned about the secularity of your mindfulness teaching. We'd like to offer some thoughts on how to address these concerns.

First, it is important to understand the nature of the objection. There are two common types of objections to mindfulness in relation to secularity. The first objection holds that education should be rigorously aligned with science and opposes anything appearing remotely religious within schools. While we fully agree that public education must not be entangled with religion, we disagree that mindfulness is inherently religious.

The second type of objection asserts that mindfulness infringes on people's rights to practice their own religion. We find no aspect of mindfulness that attempts to interfere with personal religious beliefs and practices. In fact, the training of the attention involved in mindfulness practice can even be beneficial for people whose religious tradition includes, for example, prayer.

These two types of concerns may require different approaches to resolving the differences. If the individual is willing to meet, and you feel comfortable doing so, it may be productive to have a direct conversation. In having the conversation, remember that listening with a genuine intention to understand the other person, with openness and respect will help to create the best conditions for a meaningful conversation.





Your ability to identify the specific nature of their concern(s) will inform how you respond and what, if any, information you offer to try to address the issue. Here are three points that may be helpful in your conversations with parents or colleagues.

1. Share your intention behind teaching mindfulness practice: you truly wish to benefit children. It may be helpful to emphasize the simplicity of this intention. You are not attempting to instill a comprehensive belief system or 'convert' anyone to anything. Instead, you are teaching practices that develop children's capacities for focusing attention, regulating emotions and kindness, for the purposes of well-being and success in school and life. You might describe specific aspects of the practice and explain how they benefit students. For example, you can note that mindfulness is considered an attentional training. As they practice, the students are developing the skill of sustaining attention even in the face of distractions. Attentional skills are vital in the academic environment.
2. It is also helpful to document the responses of the students. You might share anecdotal feedback from the children. The response from youth is typically very positive, and their feedback can dispel concerns that they feel religious pressure.
3. Sharing research may also be useful. A substantial body of scientific research has documented the value of mindfulness. This research has been published in scientific journals that adhere carefully to empirical standards. We have provided a [research overview](#) that makes a clear scientific case for mindfulness.

In the event that the individual remains uncomfortable with mindfulness instruction, we encourage you to offer the possibility of having their child opt out of mindfulness sessions.

We hope that these suggestions support you to navigate the terrain of secularity and deliver mindfulness in a way that is effective and inclusive.

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\*Adapted from Mindful Schools





# Secularity Guidelines

As educators sharing mindfulness, it is first important to clarify and affirm our intentions. When we share mindfulness, we are not attempting to impose a comprehensive belief system. Nor are we attempting to advance or inhibit any religious commitments that students or educators may hold. **Our objective is simple: to support the well-being of students and educators by sharing simple practices, and to develop an attitude of inquiry around how the mind works.**

In light of this, we wanted to offer some recommendations to support secular teaching:

1. Mindfulness practices should be articulated in the primary instructional language or languages (in the case of bilingual education).
2. No classroom can be conducted in a completely value-neutral manner and it is reasonable to affirm humanistic values such as kindness, cooperation, empathy or concentration. However, mindfulness is not an attempt to teach a comprehensive ethical system.
3. Teach the practices in a direct, experiential manner whereby practitioners can examine the validity of the claims within their own subjective experience (e.g. when doing seated mindfulness practice, students can directly perceive the attention wandering away from the mindfulness anchor). The spirit is one of encouraging curiosity as if conducting an experiment with one's own mind and body.
4. Do not assert or intimate claims about metaphysics (e.g. 'the nature of the universe is love'). If such questions or comments arise from students, support their curiosity while clarifying the scope of mindfulness practice and redirect the conversation to the subjective or empirical realm.
5. Frame mindfulness as a practice about subjective experiences rather than about overarching truths of the universe.
6. Do not include symbols or artifacts closely linked to a particular religious tradition (e.g. making particular gestures with one's hands, bowing, using religious props, etc.).
7. Do not substantiate the practices on the basis of religious figures or texts. At the same time, take care not to denigrate religious practices or texts.
8. Teach in a manner consistent with current scientific understandings of human biology and behavior.

We hope these guidelines support you in your teaching. We are sincerely grateful for all the work you do and trust that your efforts will bring benefits to many.

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\*Adapted from Mindful Schools



# Just Three Things

This is a centering and grounding practice. When feeling overwhelmed, fidgety, prickly, or restless, find these three things:

- 1 thing you can see
- 1 thing you can hear
- 1 thing you can touch/feel

Try to take three slow, deep breaths while you're looking, three breaths while you're listening, and three breaths while you're feeling that sensation/texture/temperature.

{Remember that you can feel/touch with more than just your hands. Maybe your feet feel your socks, or your elbows feel the cool hardness of your desktop, or your skin feels the breeze, etc.}



## Suggested Sources for Further Study

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma  
Bessel Van der Kolk

Waking the Tiger: Healing from Trauma  
Peter A. Levine

David Treleavan, Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness  
<https://davidtreleaven.com/>

Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy: An International Journal of Theory & Practice, 2006, 13, 353-379

The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook  
Christopher Germer & Kristen Neff

Center For Mindful Self-Compassion  
<https://centerformsc.org/>

The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.  
C. Carson (2001) London: Hachette UK

Kingian Principles of Non-violence:  
<https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/>

The Practice of Walking  
O.J. Sofer (Mindful Schools Blog)  
<https://www.mindfulschools.org/personal-practice/walking/>

