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K-5 Classroom Teacher  
**MBAwareness** Handbook

A Social-Emotional Learning Program



## K-5 Classroom Teacher: MBAwareness SEL Program Handbook

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### 1. A Shared Partnership

Some of the best work is the result of many people coming together to achieve a common goal. The MBAwareness Educational Program is a collaboration of classroom teachers, students, and mindful awareness instructors. Social-emotional learning and mindful awareness help students develop skills needed to succeed in school and in all areas of their lives, both now and in the future.

Research suggests that these skills can be taught, learned, practiced, and cultivated to help children and adolescents increase focused attention and self-regulation. Not only can this self-awareness lead to improved participation in academics and extracurricular activities, but it can also allow for positive mind states like empathy, kindness, and compassion. These, along with other pro-social mindsets like generosity and gratitude can contribute to an enhanced sense of community and belonging within classrooms, individual school buildings, and throughout entire school districts.



This program is a partnership between you, your students, and your social-emotional instructor. Your instructor is an expert in teaching social-emotional skills to students; however, your support and encouragement is what will make this program a success. Our goal is to provide you and your students with enough tools and understanding of social-emotional education that you can continue to integrate mindful awareness into your daily curriculum if you choose.

### **Your Role as the Classroom Teacher**

Because students mirror the behaviors and subtle cues of the adults around them, you have a great amount of influence over the success of the program. You are the most important role model for your students, and your interaction with the practices will be the guide they follow. When you show enthusiasm and support for the mindful awareness tools, your students will follow your lead. If you appear doubtful or indifferent, you can expect them to reflect similar attitudes.

It might seem like a great idea to use the 15 minute lessons to get things crossed off your to-do list, like returning emails or grading papers. **Our top request is that you join us during social-emotional learning, and participate in each lesson along with the students.** This sets a positive example for your class, and you'll also begin to experience the benefits of the training yourself. This is an opportunity for you to reduce stress, improve focus and enjoy your job more.

- At the scheduled time, please have your students ready for social-emotional learning.
- Set a positive example by joining us and participating in the lesson.

Thank you for following the above two requests. This will ensure that your class has the full fifteen minutes and it will model to the students the value of social emotional education.

### **Dealing with Discipline and Behavior**

As skilled instructors, you can count on us to address challenging student behaviors during our lesson times. When you allow us to compassionately intervene and redirect students who are having trouble settling down, your class will see that you trust us to lead and firmly hold the space with kindness. However, if you see that any students are not responding to us and are having difficulty following directions, controlling their behavior, or understanding the negative impact they are having on the class, we welcome your support. In these instances, if you see our attempts having no effect, please feel free to gently redirect the student, sit near them for support, or ask them to sit near you in order to encourage them.

Challenging moments can make for excellent teaching opportunities. Because of this, we will try to use any difficult situations as a way to practice our social-emotional skills in real time. If you know of particularly effective interventions with specific students, you are welcome to offer them or act in a way that will benefit the student and the class. Because of our partnership, we will do our best work when we support each other.



## **We Value Your Observations**

Please offer feedback at any time during the program. We are here to support both you and your students. If you notice things not going well with your students, or see a way to improve the experience for your classroom, let us know right away. This way we can make adjustments sooner rather than later, which will benefit everyone.

You are welcome to ask questions and offer your observations at any time. This is a great way to deepen understanding and create space for encouragement. This is just the beginning! When the program ends, stay in touch. We offer additional workshops, lesson plans, and other supportive resources; we are also committed to assisting you in continued practice of social emotional learning and mindful awareness, both in the classroom and in daily life.

## **2. Being Mindful Every Day**

In order to see the most benefits of social emotional learning practices, it's important to find a little bit of time each day to practice paying attention, focus and emotion regulation. There are many quick and engaging ways to work the training into your classroom routine each day without taking time away from other academic subjects. We hope that you will start using the techniques as soon as you feel confident and comfortable, and we would like to offer some tips and guidelines that might help you do this.

### **Using the Bell in Your Classroom**

When you receive your classroom bell, start using it right away and with consistency. Each time you ring the bell, it should mean the same few things. Here are some examples:

- “When you hear the sound of the bell, stop everything you are doing and take three slow deep breaths. This helps us to focus and pay attention to what is happening right now in the present moment.”
- “When you hear the sound of the bell, it is time to clean up, move back to your seats and take slow deep breaths until it's time to begin the next lesson.”
- “When you hear the sound of the bell, stop what you are doing and notice how you are feeling.” You don't always need to take the time to share answers, but just get them in the habit of noticing.
- “Wow! We are really excited (tired, angry, frustrated, scared) right now. Let's practice some of our mindful techniques to see if that helps us calm down.”

### **Noticing Practice**

Reminding students to notice how they feel at several times during the day will also help them develop the habit of recognizing emotions and then thoughtfully and skillfully deciding how to act on them. Here are some examples of when you can use this suggestion throughout the day:

- “It's time to take our test so stop to notice how you feel right now.”



- “The test is all done. How does it feel?”
- “We just returned from a fun (gym, art, recess, music) class. Notice how that feels in your body.”
- “Something happened to upset you. Notice how that feels in your body.”

### Daily Practice

Practicing these skills on the days that we are not there, and after the program has ended, will gain the most benefits for yourself and for your students. We invite you to use the following tips and suggestions on how to do this in your classroom each day.

- **Practice every day!** Start right away. Add it into your daily lesson plans and spend time each day practicing the techniques they have learned. This will ensure that you do the practice even on busy days. It only needs to be 30 seconds to one minute. Every little bit will work towards those benefits and rewards.
- **Set aside time every day for practice.** Practice at the same time (first thing in the morning, during transitions, before/after recess) each day. This will ensure that it becomes a habit and the students will begin to do it on their own without much direction from you.
- **Involve your students.** Your students will help you remember to practice each day and they will engage more deeply with the techniques if they are able to initiate, create, and make decisions regarding the practice. Use the bell schedule included in this Teacher Handbook. Allow your students to create fun breaths or choose which breath they want to use each break.
- **Make it simple.** We have included some short scripts for you to use daily in the classroom and as you grow more comfortable with the practice, you might want to add your own voice to the scripts. It’s okay to use the same scripts over and over again, but we have offered you a variety of additional ways to add it to your day. If you practice often enough, it will become very easy for you to spontaneously add short practice moments to the day without needing a script.
- **Allow time for sharing.** Students will enjoy sharing what they learn and how they are using the mindful techniques outside of the classroom. It’s also helpful to share your own personal experiences with the students because it gives them additional ideas and motivation to apply it to their own lives.

### 3. Complementary Practices, Activities, and Resources

Below you’ll find a variety of resources, additional activities, and supportive practices to help you integrate social-emotional learning into your classroom. Please feel free to get in touch with your instructor if you have any questions.

## **Journals**

Reflecting on new experiences through writing and drawing helps solidify understanding and discover new insights. Have your students use their journals as soon as possible after your lessons. You can use the prompts your instructor provides, make up your own, or let the students offer their ideas. Journaling after mindful awareness practice on days your instructor is not in your classroom will increase the benefits. Here are some extra ideas:

### **Kindergarten-1st Grade**

Younger students will most likely feel more comfortable drawing in their journals. Encourage a self-focus by suggesting they draw pictures of themselves practicing the lesson of the day. They can also draw a picture of how they *feel* when they practice. For instance: *Draw a picture of yourself listening mindfully.* Or: *Draw a picture of how you feel when you practice mindful breathing.*

### **Extra Journal Prompts and Questions**

- Does social-emotional practice always feel the same? How was practice today?
- What practice was most enjoyable for you? What was least enjoyable?
- Do you feel different after you practice mindful skills? How do you feel?
- Do you think your mind is always full of thoughts? Do you think your mind is quiet most of the time? Or, does your mind change from day to day, or hour to hour?
- What does it feel like to send kind thoughts? To whom did you send kind thoughts?
- Have you ever used breathing to help you feel better? When?
- When do you like to practice mindful breathing?
- Have you ever used mindful practices at home? What was it like?
- Have you ever wondered what it would be like to teach someone your favorite breathing practice? Who would you teach?
- If you have taught someone mindful listening or mindful breathing, what did it feel like to be the teacher and to share your favorite practices?
- Have you noticed yourself using social-emotional practices more often?
- Does your anchor spot stay the same, or does it change from day to day?
- Think of a time when you felt happy or excited. Do you think social-emotional skills could help you remember and enjoy that feeling?



- Have you ever tried noticing your breath outside of your classroom, like on the bus, or walking outside, playing video games, or watching tv?
- Does mindful listening ever feel difficult?
- What does being present feel like to you? Does it feel like being calm, being kind, or paying attention? Or, does it feel like something else?
- Have you ever used social-emotional practices to feel better?
- Can you describe a time when mindful practices helped you calm down when you felt a strong emotion?
- When you notice a lot of thoughts in your mind, how do you feel? When you notice your mind focusing on just one thing, how do you feel?
- When is it easy for you to pay close attention? When is it difficult?
- Is being able to pay attention important? If so, why?
- Does resting your hand on your anchor spot help you to focus?
- How does social-emotional learning affect the way you think about yourself? About others?
- Have you ever felt a mix of emotions all at once? If so, do you think social-emotional practices could help you name your emotions and notice what you're feeling?
- Think of a time in your life when you felt angry or sad. Could social-emotional skills help you in that situation? How?
- Could practicing social-emotional techniques help you with your friends, family, or other people in your life? If so, how?
- Does practicing social-emotional learning techniques in class help you at home or in other areas of your life? How?
- Do you think that social-emotional practice is helpful for students? How?
- Do you think that social-emotional practice is helpful for adults? How?
- Do you have any ideas for mindful breathing practices? Mindful listening? Mindful Moving?

### **Student Leader Schedule**

Attached is a sample Student Leader Schedule. Encouraging students to lead social-emotional learning practice can help them feel confident and find value in the lesson. Use the schedule to help keep track of whose turn it is to ring the bell and guide the first three breaths or the opening mindful moment.

### **Bonus Social-Emotional Practices**

On days when your social-emotional instructor is not in your classroom, you can use these scripts and extra practices to lead your lessons or reinforce previous lessons by adding variety. Two general mindful moment scripts are included for you to use as guides for your student leaders.

### **Simple Mind-Body Awareness Practice**

1. Begin practice by asking your students to settle into their body: *“Please find your mindful body.”* Or *“Please put on your mindful body.”*
2. Invite students to close their eyes or look downward: *“Closing your eyes, or looking downward...”*
3. Guide students to notice how their body feels sitting on the chair or the floor: *“Notice where your body touches the chair or the floor...”*
4. Direct your students’ awareness to sounds in the room or to the sound of a bell: *“Listen to sounds in the room for a few moments. Notice what you hear...”* Or, *“Listen to the sound of the bell for as long as you can hear it.”*
5. Suggest that the students notice their breathing wherever it is most obvious to them: *“Notice that your body is breathing. Let your attention rest wherever you notice your breath the most: at your belly, or your chest.”*
6. Invite students to place a hand on their belly or chest to focus on the breath: *“Slowly bring your hand to rest at your belly, or chest as you notice your breath.”*
7. After a few moments (or as long as is suitable for your students) ring the bell to end practice: *“Listen to the sound of the bell until you can’t hear it anymore. When you can’t hear it any longer, slowly let your hands rest in your lap and blink open your eyes.”*
8. Invite your students to notice how they feel: *“Notice how you feel.”*

### **Mindful Listening**

Listening can be done with a bell, with sounds naturally occurring in the room or outside, or with musical instruments or instrumental songs (without lyrics).

1. Find your mindful body and close your eyes if you like
2. Allow your ear to open.
3. Allow the sounds to come to your ears.
4. Notice what sounds are close.
5. Notice what sounds are far.
6. Listen actively for sounds that are very far away.

7. Bring your listening ears back in toward your body.
8. Do you notice any sounds of your breathing?
9. Do you notice any sounds when you cup your hands softly over your ears?
10. Practice for as long as it is comfortable

#### **Bonus ideas:**

1. Have students bring in items from home that can be used to make sounds
2. Have students bring in homemade instruments
3. Have students lead the practice with the items they bring to share
4. Partner with musical groups in your school or community and set up a time for mindful listening to the band, choir, or other ensemble
5. Invite students to notice if they find certain sounds pleasant or unpleasant. There's nothing to do when we notice liking or disliking any sound - just return to listening.

#### **Heartfulness, Generosity, and Gratitude**

Follow-up suggestions for heartfulness, generosity and gratitude lessons include:

1. Make a list (or draw pictures) of some generous things that you can do in school today.
2. Make a list (or draw pictures) of generous things that you see others doing today.
3. Make a list (or draw pictures) of 10 kind things that you wish for others.
4. Make a list (or draw pictures) of 10 kind things that you wish for yourself.
5. How does it make you feel when you do something nice for someone else? Why do you think that happens?
6. How does it feel when someone does something nice for you? Why do you think that happens?
7. Write (or draw) about things that you are thankful for.
8. Think about all of the people in your life that you love and write (or draw) about them. How does it feel to spend time with them?
9. What does gratitude mean and how can it help you in your life?
10. Make a list of (or draw) things that made you smile today.
11. Write about some things that make you feel loved. Why do you think they make you feel that way?
12. If you had \$100 to give away, what would you do with it?
13. If you needed help with something, who would you ask for help and why?
14. Think of some people in your life who are very generous with their time. Why do you think they share their time with you and others?
15. What is the best or nicest thing someone has done for you? What is the best or nicest thing that someone has given you?

#### **Spreading Kindness**

Extra ideas for kindness and difficult emotions:

1. Encourage acceptance of the fact that no emotion is wrong. It's okay to feel anger or sadness. These emotions are part of being human and help us to notice what we care about. Direct students to notice that these emotions are important and can help express

our values. Even though no emotion is wrong, some actions can be. Remind students that acting in kindness is important.

2. Share ideas as a class about what to do when you are having a difficult emotion like sadness, bitterness, regret, or anger. Come up with healthy, skillful, and kind ways you can act, speak, or think.
3. Acknowledge that it's normal to have angry thoughts, but that they don't need to act on them. Instead, they can talk to a trusted adult.
4. Discuss how emotions can be felt in the body. As a class, use a large poster with the outline of a body and have the students draw or color where they feel different emotions.
5. If you know a student struggles with the loss of a loved one, and they express a need to talk about it, make time to listen and offer encouragement.
6. When talking with a student or group of students about a difficult situation, keep the focus on them and where they feel emotion in their body.
7. As a class, share ideas about spreading kindness in your hallway or school building and put them into action.

### **Movement/Walking**

Try these suggestions to add variety to your mindful movement practice:

1. Encourage mindful walking when hanging up coats and bookbags.
2. For online learning, have students stand away from their computer camera and walk mindfully from one side of their video box to the other, or try walking backwards to the other side.
3. Set up markers on the floor (perhaps with removable tape) that indicate different physical activities, such as standing twist, knee to opposite elbow, stretching tall, squatting low. Check in with the students to see what ideas they have.

### **Mindful Test-Taking Practice**

To help relieve tension and sustain focused attention, use this script before tests. You can use a bell to begin and end if you like. Allow for a bit of silence where appropriate.

*Are you ready to do your best on this test? Let's use our mindful superpower to calm our nervous system and access our prefrontal cortex.*

*Begin with a deep breath in through your nose and out through your nose.*

*Now breathe in through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth.*

*Once more: breathe in through your nose and out through your nose.*

*Squeeze your shoulders up to your ears and breathe in. Then let your shoulders drop back down as you breathe out with a sigh - Ahhhh.*

*Now, letting your eyes close or just looking down, rest your hands in your lap.*

*Notice how you feel. However you feel is okay.*

*Imagine yourself answering the questions calmly and confidently.*



*Allow your neck and shoulders to relax.  
Imagine yourself pausing to take a deep breath between questions.  
Allow yourself to feel peaceful.  
Imagine yourself doing your best.  
When you're ready, open your eyes and look around the room for one of your favorite colors.  
Now you're ready to do your best.*

### **Simple Mindful Moment Practice Script for Student Leaders #1**

Please get into your mindful bodies.

Place your hands on your lap, and let your eyes close.

Let your whole body get still and quiet as you listen to the sound of the bell. (Ring Bell)

Place one hand slowly on your anchor spot.

Please feel your mindful breathing. (Ring bell again after 1-3 minutes).

### **A Simple Mindful Moment Practice Script for Student Leaders #2**

1. Please put on your mindful bodies.
2. Please let your eyes close. (Ring Bell)
3. Please bring your hand mindfully to your anchor.
4. Please . . .
  - take three mindful breaths, or
  - feel your mindful breathing for one minute. (Ring bell again)

