

## MINDFULNESS PRACTICE EXERCISE



### Mind States Music

Bring a song/ piece of music that illustrates one of the states of mind for you (wise, emotional or reasonable mind). Play this to the group. (If you cannot play it you can describe it or recite the lyrics)

Explain why you feel your song demonstrates that mind state.

Did you notice any judgments about doing this exercise? How did you manage these judgments?

NOTE: Songs need to be short- less than 4 minutes or so and need to be in line with group rules – SO: no offensive profanities, no graphic violence to self or others in lyrics.

#### Snap, Crackle and Pop:

- a. Snap: Cross arm over chest either left or right.
- b. Crackle: Cross arm over head either left or right.
- c. Pop: Point to someone in circle in any direction.

Person pointed at is “It” next. Keep sequence going by speaking and gesturing S, C, P, S, C, P. If someone misspeaks or misgestures, have the individual step outside the circle and become a “distractor”.

#### Buzz:

Choose a number, e.g. #3, and use derivations of 3 (i.e., 3, 6, 9, 12) as the “buzz” word instead of saying actual number. Go around circle: Start with 1, 2, Buzz, 4, 5, Buzz, 7, 8, Buzz, etc. If someone miscounts or misbuzzes, step outside the circle and distract.

#### Rhythm Game:

Go around in a circle. Start with a rhythm sound/gesture, each person repeats previous one(s) and adds a sound/gesture. If miss, step outside and become distractor.

#### The Name Game:

Go around in a circle. Say the name of a famous person – e.g. Abe Lincoln – the next person says a name that starts with the first letter of the previous last name – e.g. Larry King. If both the first and last names start with the same letter – e.g. Sharon Stone – then you reverse direction in the circle.

#### Making Rain:

Pick a leader and divide everyone else into several groups. Everyone follows the instructions of the leader and otherwise keeps silent. The actions/sounds in order are:

1. Rub hands together
2. Snap fingers
3. Rap on table (or stamp feet)
4. Snap fingers
5. Rub hands together

The leader goes from group to group, rubbing hands together and adding each group one at a time, until all are doing the same action/noise. The leader continues going around the room, switching the groups one at a time to the second action—snapping fingers—until all the groups have switched to that sound, then continues around the room switching one at a time to the third sound—rapping on table or stamping feet—then back to snapping fingers, then back to rubbing hands together, then back to silence. It ends up sounding like a rainstorm. . (This one can also be done without breaking

into groups if leader walks around the group in a circle and people change actions as the leader passes them, sort of like a wave.)

#### Telephone Wire:

Line up the group. Pass a message or phrase down the line. The final person says it aloud. Is it the same as it started out? Then try it again, having participants try to be really mindful to repeat exactly.

#### Ways to Use Music:

Listen and observe your emotional response to the music. Draw to it. Learn rounds. Change the type of music played every few minutes and observe and describe responses to each type. Observe one instrument throughout the piece/song.

#### Teddy Bear:

Bring in a variety of stuffed animals. Choose one from the bag to hold. Either close your eyes or (if that's uncomfortable) fixate gaze in front of you. Feel the stuffed animal and try to describe what you feel.

#### Grapes:

Breathe twice. Put a grape in your mouth. Keep it there as long as possible. Then bite into it. Focus on being the grape.

#### Dance:

Teach dance steps in a circle.

#### Two Truths and a Lie:

Each person tells three things about themselves, one of which is a lie. Others try to figure out which is the lie.

#### Finger-painting:

Use finger-paints and see what you experience – be mindful: see, feel, smell... and notice any thoughts that go through your head about feelings it brings up etc.

#### Scent:

Get a bunch of cotton balls with different smells on each (perhaps using essential oils?). Take one and smell it. Write down the thoughts you have while smelling it.

#### Other Mindfulness Suggestions

I'm not sure how many of you have a colleague that sends via email every little joke or cutesy holiday thing that's circling the internet. Well I actually used one of these ideas for a mindfulness practice today with 2 DBT adolescent skills groups & they had a blast with it (and practiced OBSERVE, DESCRIBE, PARTICIPATE). So, here it is. .

While sitting, lift your right foot off the floor and make clockwise circles. Now, while doing this, draw the number "6" in the air with your right hand.

I didn't tell them this part - Your foot typically changes direction. I let them discover it.] Each kid had a laugh when they couldn't do it, especially because it sounds SO EASY. They kept trying and several "solved" the task typically in about 1 of 4 ways. The ways they solved it typically mirrored beautifully with where they were at in their recovery process (DBT-S groups for substance abusing teens who also self mutilate/are suicidal). So, I thought I'd pass it on. Lori

- Optical Illusions; Find the hidden objects in drawings or pictures (As in Dr. Seuss's Wacky Wednesday, and on the back cover of each Highlights for Children magazine);
- Make snowflakes out of paper and scissors; (This has turned out to be a good exercise in being non-judgemental as well) (I didn't do it right" "Mine turned out ugly/wrong," were some comments from participants in one group, which led to a great discussion!)
- Pick a short phrase, like "Valentine's Day, Merry Christmas, Happy Birthday, etc., and have them make as many words as they can using those letters;
- Hand out pennies or marbles (or the like)-- have them study the one they have, put it back in a bag/bowl/pile, and have them each find the one they had, then tell how they knew it was theirs.
- Have you heard of "Snap, Crackle, Pop?"
- Hand out paper and crayons, and have them draw the emotion they experience (there are probably many varieties of this one.)
- I haven't thought of this before, but I wonder if doing something like the "grapevine" exercise would be appropriate?

A few ball exercises:

Have dyads pass a ball back & forth across the group. Individuals need to be one-minded and focus completely on their ball--attending to distractions of the other balls causes them to miss! I'd recommend using soft balls for this!

Have a group start passing one ball across the group and to new group members until everyone has received the ball. At this point, pass the ball back to the beginner and keep the cycle going. If the ball drops, start over. After there's a flow, introduce a 2nd and lastly a 3rd ball. I use tennis balls or soft balls for this one.

Another one we've done that is probably from a 2-day or some sort of training somewhere is to throw noises. One person makes a sound and "shoots" the sound to someone else. This person receives the sound by mimicking it then shoots a new sound to someone else. This can be a bit uncomfortable at first so reminding about non-judgemental and doing when the group is a bit more advanced and comfortable with each other.

Breathing exercises they've liked include ones with a bit of movement like tapping fingers/hands with each breath. They also seemed to like ones that incorporate counting.

Adolescents like to share their music. I had them get so into it that I had to put a limit on music sharing to ensure other mindfulnesses occurred! There was a variety of music and they instructed the group to focus on the words, pick a certain instrument, etc. Some had them incorporate an imagery with it.

Imagery exercises they seemed to enjoy is imagining themselves where ever they'd like to be (ie. a warm beach in the winter, etc), imagining a positive aspect of something (ie. winter season, school etc.). We tend to emphasize imagery through the 5 senses. They can get creative with their imageries. I've had more creative adolescents walk the group through an imagery--they can be quite descriptive and real.

They like drawing ones too. I've had them draw their soothing places.

A cool one an intern did once was to have colour something with the opposite hand. This takes a lot more concentration and focus as well as attention to their hand movements. It can be a simple picture or something more elaborate (but they won't be able to finish it if it is very detailed). Instructions include focusing on staying in the lines and filling areas with colour.

In a group that has been together for a bit, bop it has been a fun mindfulness exercise. It's a bit tougher when the group has new members b/c of some performance anxiety and the laughter which is inevitable when someone misses an instruction.

Jenga is another popular mindfulness exercise here.

Bubble gum mindfulness asks that group members each take a piece of gum (I bring both sugared and sugar free) and chew it until the gum is "bubble worthy", then blow a bubble. Lots of observe and describe comes out of this.

We've had teens lead mindfulness. A couple of weeks ago, one of the girls in group brought in a pencil drawing, gave a copy to each group member, and then had them look at it mindfully for a couple of minutes. The kids were then asked to put away the drawing and try to replicate it on their own blank sheet of paper.

Balancing a long peacock feather in the palm of the hand, being mindful of only their feather, rather than what others are doing.

Food mindfulness is always popular. I've brought in different kinds of bite sized candy, chocolates, etc and have the kids close their eyes (or cover them if closing is uncomfortable) and then place the food in the palm of their hands. They're asked to observe the object, then offer single descriptive words--they usually come up with words about weight, texture, shape. Then they're asked to put the object on their tongues--no chewing yet--and do some more observe and describe. A couple of chews to observe and describe any features (crunchy, sticky, etc)--and then full on eating!

I brought in the Cha Cha Slide (you can download on itunes). I had the group follow the instructions and be mindful while dancing. The response was overwhelming!!! All reported that they were able to focus on the present moment without intrusive or wondering thoughts!

We have used the movie "The Karate Kid" to teach mindfulness. When Daniel does "the crane" at the end of the movie, he is in wise mind. Also, Mr. Miagi is the ideal multisensory skills trainer. Another technique we have found useful is looking at basketball tapes. The fans are often in emotion mind, the coach is hopefully in logic mind, and the players are in wise mind. It has been particularly useful to focus on how players center themselves before free throws. Often, they use some type of deep breathing. Both the Karate Kid and basketball have been effective with adolescent boys!

They may not like me at Home Depot or Lowes, but after finding out people's favorite colors, I collected the sample strips paint companies have - a lot of them. The group looked at and found it amusing to see thirty shades of pink, forty shades of yellow etc. And distinguishing the differences and expressing preferences created intense focus and absorption on this one thing.

Materials needed:

- 1) box of crayons
- 2) blank, unlined sheets of paper (copy or printer paper)

Directions:

- 1) pick a crayon of any color and take a piece of paper.
- 2) without speaking, holding the crayon in your non-dominant hand and the piece of paper in any orientation, write the sentence "Everything is perfect as it is" repeatedly for 2 minutes.
- 3) notice the thoughts and feelings that arise. Just notice them and continue to write.
- 4) notice any reactions you hear from others doing the exercise and continue to write.
- 4) After two minutes, consider briefly sharing what you noticed with others who did the exercise. Notice your thoughts and feelings as you share, then let them go. Consider talking about this experience with your therapist if you noticed particularly strong feelings.

Some adolescents whom I have worked with in the past and have been slow to warm up to breathing exercises or other traditional mindfulness activities were more engaged in experiential activities like project adventure. I found a lot of the parents enjoy them too! I've done something called whiz-bang-vroom, most likely from a PA book called Quicksilver by Rohnke & Butler (although the cover is purple and not silver). It sort of depends on if these less engaged adolescents are hams or now. If they are they might get really into the PA activities. Most can easily be connected to mindfulness skills.

How about doing a music mindfulness and playing something more mainstream (many therapists stick to soothing, classical or jazz...shake it up). Give specific instructions like identify the instruments or just focus on one instrument.

Drawing mindfulnesses...we just did this one in team: create some sort of simple abstract shape like a line, squigly, circle, etc. Then have the group pass their papers to the next person. Add something to received drawing and pass. Keep going until everyone's paper is back to the starter. Also, make sure everyone has a different colored marker. It is interesting to see how people build on each other's drawings!

Another thought.....

this is what I did when I had a lot of mindfulness rejectors in group. I turned opening mindfulness over to them. Everyone had to do one and they signed up in advance. If you do this, be prepared to give guidelines on music and other necessary parameters. Explain they should notify group leaders of plan in advance in case of the need to alter....occasionally we had to reject a song/album/singer. Another adolescent had one that involved staring at the light, which I suspected wouldn't be healthy for our eyes. We've gotten many creative ideas from these adolescents! Most of them I still use today!

I most recently ran group in a group home so it was easy to get staff to assist with song approval, etc. Here's irony to increasing their responsibility in group. We had female adolescent who was having a very rough day but stayed through group since they had mindfulness. She ran the opening mindfulness, was very quiet in group (more than usual) and I learned the next day that she had "ran" from the program within the hour after group concluded. She eventually came back, etc. But this incident really struck me with how serious group members can take such responsibility!

In an adult male prisoners group we have used a variety of activities that I am guessing would be interesting for adolescents.

1. pennies - one for each person - in a basket. everyone selects one and studies it. all are then placed back in the basket or plate. then each person has to select theirs out of all of them and explain how they know it is theirs. and how positive they are. we have used raw eggs and done the same exercise

2. today we played pictionary

3. hand out a bunch of picture postcards. everyone takes a turn to describe things that are facts about their postcard. the group can challenge if they believe it is an opinion rather than a fact

4. chair yoga - moving body parts ie legs lift off the floor and move feet like a windshield wiper or towards each other.

and as always paying attention to what is modelled by the group leader and what each movement is experienced as

5 once we played simon says