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**M2 Lesson 4: Being Mindful About Mindfulness**

Core Competencies:

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| * Communication
 | * Thinking
 | * Personal & Social
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Big Ideas:

* Finding balance between personal and work life promotes well-being

Curricular Competencies:

* Practice effective strategies for healthy school / work / life balance
* Communicate with the intent to highlight personal strengths, talents, accomplishments and abilities
* Explore and reflect on career-life roles, personal growth and initial planning for preferred career life pathways

In this assignment, students will start to consider the act of meditation as a strategy to maintain mindfulness and relieve stress.

For students:

**What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness has been a concept that Dr. Dzung Vo, a pediatrician specializing in adolescent medicine at B.C. Children’s Hospital, and clinical associate professor at the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, has spent years researching. His medical practice, teaching, and research emphasize promoting resilience in young people to help them thrive in the face of stress and adversity and mindfulness is a core component of his practice.

Watch this short video from Kelty Mental Health on mindfulness and youth:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk7IBwuhXWM>

Discuss as a class if any students have ever used meditation as a strategy for mindfulness. Brainstorm on other ways that students can ensure they take time to be mindul.

According to Kelty Mental Health (<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>) , mindfulness is all about encouraging awareness of oneself in the present moment, without judgment. Practicing mindfulness can help to improve our social and emotional well-being and contribute to the ability to manage difficult or stressful situations. Examples of mindfulness practices include[body scans, guided breathing meditations and other simple exercises](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/5665a87c-e2c6-437f-b1f8-54bb7f75efd0)(https://keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/5665a87c-e2c6-437f-b1f8-54bb7f75efd0) which can help us to refocus on the present and calm our minds.

Dr. Vo states that asking someone to define mindfulness is kind of like asking, “What does chocolate taste like?” Or “What does your favorite song sound like?” Definitions can only give you a small  idea of what the real experience is like. Just reading about mindfulness without experiencing it yourself is like going to a restaurant to read the menu, without tasting any of the food. Just as the point of going to a restaurant is to taste the food, the point of mindfulness is to experience it for yourself.

**Why is mindfulness important?**

Much of our stress and pain comes from being pulled away from the present moment. We are distracted with regrets about the past, worries about the future and judgments about the present. Living life more mindfully can help you to handle stress when it arises, and also experience life more fully, with more joy and gratitude. Mindfulness is all about paying attention to the present moment. Mindfulness is about shifting out of autopilot and awakening to the here and now. Mindfulness can be beneficial for anyone - adults, youth, or children. The beauty of mindfulness is that it is flexible and accessible.

**What are some ways to become more mindful?**

**Breathing: The Heart of Mindfulness**

You breathe in and out about twenty thousand times a day. How many of those breaths are you consciously aware of? How many of those breaths do you really enjoy? If you’re like most people, the answer is “not many.” The foundation of all mindfulness practices is to bring your awareness to your breath. This is also known as “coming back to your breath.” Your breath is a wonderful gift that brings your mind and body together in the here and now. You can start to bring yourself back to the present moment, and begin to free yourself from stress, with as few as three mindful breaths. Right here. Right now. Give it a try!

Try one of the following mindfulness activities as a class:

http://mindfulnessforteens.com/what-is-mindfulness-anyway/mindful-breathing/

**Informal Mindfulness: Don’t Wait—Meditate!**

Informal mindfulness involves bringing mindful awareness into everyday, routine activities that you already do. Being mindful as you simply go about your day can be a source of joy as well as stress relief. Any time you are sitting, you can follow your breath, smile, and come home to the present moment. You can practice doing this while sitting on the bus, sitting in a car, or sitting in the classroom. You can also bring this same mindful awareness to any other activity of daily life. You can touch the present moment deeply as you brush your teeth in the morning. You can let go of stress by being mindful as you put on your clothes, tie your shoes, or walk to class. Try [informal mindfulness](http://mindfulnessforteens.com/what-is-mindfulness-anyway/informal-mindfulness)(http://mindfulnessforteens.com/what-is-mindfulness-anyway/informal-mindfulness/) for yourself. What are you waiting for?

**Guided Meditations**

You can try more ways to practice mindfulness with these free [guided meditation](http://mindfulnessforteens.com/guided-meditations)recordings from Dr. Vo's website (http://mindfulnessforteens.com/guided-meditations).

Excerpted and adapted from [The Mindful Teen](file://NID-SC/NID%20Teachers%24/Sherrie.Martens/Documents/CLE%2010%20Resources/SD71%20Activities%20Module%202/The%20Mindful%20Teen%C2%A0)by Dzung Vo, MD, [http://mindfulnessforteens.com/](http://mindfulnessforteens.com/%C2%A0%C2%A0)and [https://keltymentalhealth.ca/mindfulness.](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/mindfulness.%C2%A0)

Assignment:

In this assignment, you will take some time to practice mindfulness on your own. By doing so, hopefully making mindfulness a habit in your own life.

For your mindfulness exercise, you can choose between a mindful app called "[Breathr](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/breathr%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)" or use mindfulness exercises from Kelty Mental Health. The Health Literacy team at BC Children's Hospital, along with a number of different experts and youth, developed this new app Breathr to help introduce the concept of mindfulness and create an easy access point for those who are new to this practice.

The app provides opportunities for users to try out a variety of mindfulness practices, while also teaching them interesting facts about the brain science behind those practices. For example, did you know that regularly practicing mindfulness can improve your relationships with others? Or that it has been shown to change parts of the brain that affect memory, empathy and stress?

Instructions (if using the Breathr app)

1. Download the [Breathr app](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/breathr%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) through the apple store or Google Play to your phone, tablet or computer.

2. Take some time to explore under the heading "learn". This will give you an opportunity to learn how mindfulness can benefit your mind, body and relationships.

3. Now move on to explore the heading "practice". Take some time to do the "3 breaths" exercise and at least one of the guided meditations.

4. When you are finished, complete the reflection exercise (below).

Instructions (if using the Kelty Mental Health website)

1. Open the [Kelty Mental Health Guided Meditations](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/5665a87c-e2c6-437f-b1f8-54bb7f75efd0%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)page (https://keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/5665a87c-e2c6-437f-b1f8-54bb7f75efd0)

2. Take some time to explore the different guided meditations that are available on the website.

3. Open and complete the "Mindful Breathing" exercise, and at least one additional exercise of your choice.

4. When you are finished, complete the reflection exercise below.

Reflection

When you are finished your two mindfulness exercises, write a short reflection of approximately 300-400 words about your experience. Use the following guiding questions in your reflection:

* What were your thoughts on mindfulness prior to completing the exercise? Had you ever practiced mindfulness before? If so, how?
* What two mindfulness exercises did you complete? How did you feel during the exercise? Was it difficult to stay focused, or mindful, or did you find your mind wandering on to other things? If you found it difficult to focus, how do you think you could work on remaining focused during guided mindfulness?
* Explain how your mind and body felt after the exercise.
* Could you see yourself incorporating guided mindfulness into your daily or weekly routine? Why or why not?

See if you can make mindfulness a regular part of your classroom routine!

Assessment: