



## Use Multiple Modalities

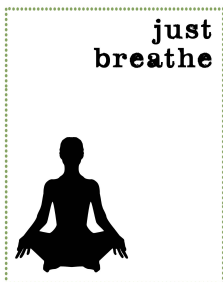
Mindfulness is a growing practice that involves being present in the current moment. In order to arrive at this state of awareness, research suggests several activities. Most of these practices involve the key term “mind-body medicine,” which refers to all activities that connect the mind to the body (mental to physical). Included in this document are several suggestions for ways to incorporate mindfulness practice into the classroom.



### Gratitude

One popular mindfulness practice requires people to reflect on what they have to be grateful for. In the day to day hustle, it can be easy to become bogged down in the negative and forget to be thankful for all the good in our lives. Here are some suggestions of ways to include gratitude practice in the classroom:

- **Gratitude Jar or Journal:** Have students record at least one thing they are thankful for as they come in the class each day. These thoughts can go on slips of paper or in journals. When students (or educators) are having a particularly bad day, they can review some of the gratitude statements to remind them of more positive times. Educators report that they enjoy reading through a gratitude jar over the summer.
- **Gratitude Wall:** The same concept applies to a gratitude wall. With this idea, students post statements about what they are grateful for. The wall serves as a constant and prominent reminder of all the good in our lives.



### Breath

Deep breathing is a powerful stress relief tool. It sends signals to the brain to calm down, particularly the amygdala, which is the emotion center of the brain. Three calming breaths can be all it takes to reset this emotion center. When a student is feeling particularly stressed or needs a moment or two to transition from an activity or a class, consider:

- **DeStress Monday:** Project a shape from the website [Destress Monday](#) (as seen to the right) to help guide students’ as they breathe deeply. The shape gives their breath a structure to follow and a focus for attention.
- **Anchor:** Including a physical anchor, such as a hand on the stomach, can help guide students to experience the specific physical elements associated with deep breathing.
- **Nostril:** Popular yoga practice includes using fingers to block nostrils on a rotating breathing schedule. This, again, helps to guide focus and attention to the specifics of the breath. This intentional breath practice is what helps to calm the brain and body.





## Yoga

This ever-growing practice includes many different schools of thought and implementation, but the underlying principles always involve the mind-body connection. While the option of a full yoga class is not always available, educators could consider introducing [a few yoga poses](#) as a warm-up or transition activity.

- **Tadasana (Mountain Pose):** This pose asks that the arms come to the sides while the feet come hip-width apart. Ground down through the feet, lengthen and straighten the spine, and lift and open the heart.



## Meditation

Meditation is one mindfulness practice involved in training the brain. Research suggests that students are better able to transition from one activity or task to the next when given the time for meditation where they “let go” of the day so far and prepare for what lies ahead. While most people tend to think of meditation as silent reflection and contemplation, there are other ways to incorporate meditation into the classroom:

- **Guided thoughts:** Educators have found success with leading students in a 1-2 minute guided meditation where they focus on something specific (visual or auditory) and work on clearing their minds and readying themselves for the next class or activity.
- **Support with sound:** When silence becomes difficult, consider following along with [meditative sounds](#). This can help to anchor thoughts and focus.
- **HeadSpace:** Some school systems even implement specific programs that instruct and support meditation. Headspace is one option.

## HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO USING MULTIPLE MODALITIES?

Mindfulness as mind-body medicine includes the physical body and the mental process. As educators, we know that it is best to incorporate practices that rely on more than one modality in order to get the full benefit of an educational experience. The suggested mindfulness strategies include auditory, visual, and kinesthetic activities. These activities can even be altered or adjusted to fit each student’s individual needs and styles. The benefits of mindfulness are being studied in even greater detail, but preliminary reports suggest that it can and should become a piece of daily classroom routines.