

GETTING STARTED

Mindfulness & Movement

For Students in Activities



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Student Services information*

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What is Stress?

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's normal reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But when stress lasts for a long time, it may harm your health.

What is Anxiety?

It can be described as uneasiness, nervousness, worry, fear, or dread of what's happened or what might happen. Anxiety can negatively affect friendships. If you're social and suddenly avoid your favorite activities or stop making plans with friends, this may be a sign. Anxiety affects the mind and body.

What is Depression?

A mental health problem that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities. Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at school, work, and at home.



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How To Use These Cards

Mindfulness means paying full attention to your life, in each moment. The best way to live a mindful life fully is to keep your mind and body connected in each minute. This is harder than it sounds. With all the distractions around us, it takes constant attention to bring our minds back to where our bodies are.

To live mindfully, focus on your hands or your feet. What are they doing? What do you feel? Continue noticing the connection between your mind and body by using all your senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Don't worry; everyone struggles with this but it's worth it. You'll feel more awake and aware. Your memories will be more vivid.

A mindfulness practice keeps you in the present moment, preventing you from dwelling on the past, or feeling anxious about the future. You'll learn to train your mind to stay in the present moment, enjoying it fully.

Being mindful helps you slow down; it helps you do your best work. When you focus your whole mind on just one thing, you have a better chance of clear thinking.

Mindfulness is the opposite of rushing and multitasking. It's not just something you do for a little while, but a practice you'll work on your whole life. The rewards for such a practice are great. You'll find you have less stress, and your performance will improve. You'll feel happier more of the time.

The activities on these cards will help you develop a mindful practice. Here are some especially good times to practice. You may think of additional times to use the activities.

- When you wake up
- Before a big test
- During a pause in a game or performance
- Before bed
- Before you give a presentation or a speech
- When you feel overwhelmed or stressed
- Any time you feel your thoughts, emotions or feelings might be getting out of control

Remember, your worth does not depend on your successes in performance or athletics. You are a human **BEING**, not a human doing. Activities, music, and sports are meant to enrich our lives, not become our sole focus. Just like other things that take time to become good at, we have to practice mindfulness to become better at it. You are enough just as you are.

Picture Your Performance

Use your senses to train your mind
and improve performance



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Picture Your Performance

Use your senses to train your mind and improve performance

- 1 Take yourself to a quiet place in your mind.**
- 2 Imagine yourself at the completion of your performance,** doing better than you ever have before.
- 3 Now back up and imagine yourself taking each step.** For example, to make a free throw, picture yourself stepping up to the line. How does the ball feel as you dribble it twice? Visualize the basket as you prepare to shoot; feel the ball leave your hand. How does your hand feel after a perfect follow through? Listen in your mind as the ball swishes through the net.
- 4 Slowly breathe** in and out with gratitude for this accomplishment.
- 5 Repeat** this visualization with any goal you want to achieve.



Focal Point Reset

Whenever you step into the circle,
focus to prepare



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Focal Point Reset

Whenever you step into the circle, focus to prepare

- 1** On the field, court, or stage, **mentally draw a circle** around your performance space. Whenever you step into that circle, use these simple steps to mentally prepare for game play or performance.
- 2 Choose a focal point**, a consistent place to look and focus, that you can see from your imaginary circle. Perhaps the focal point is a mural on the wall, a spot on the wall, or your shoe.
- 3** When you see the focal point, breathe in and out. As you breathe, let go of distracting thoughts, and say to yourself, **'I know where I am. I know what I need to do.'**
- 4** Then turn and **get ready for your next move.**
- 5 Repeat** anytime you have a break in the action or need to refocus.



Find Your Feet, Your Length, and Your Breath

Use your feet, your length and your breath to ease up

- 1 Find your feet.** Feel the ground beneath them. Feel your feet connect you to the earth.
- 2 Find your length.** Stand or sit tall and extend your spine down toward the ground and up toward the sky. Use your length to feel the space you occupy in the world.
- 3 Find your breath.** Notice the rhythm of your breath. Don't control it; just feel it as it moves in and out of your body and moves your body. Let it remind you that you are human.
- 4 End with a cleansing breath.** Bring air in through your nose, let it fill your chest and belly. Pause for a beat or two at the top of your inhale, and then let it all out with a long, slow whoosh.



Tapping

Release tension, increase energy, and focus

- 1 Sit up tall.** Check in with **how you feel**. Where do you feel **tense? Relaxed? Breathe** comfortably, **close your eyes** or gaze straight ahead.
- 2** Cup your fingers a bit and begin **tapping just below your eyes along your cheekbones** with a light but quick steady beat. **Tap, tap, tap.** Move your hands gently to tap slow circles around your eyes for about 30 seconds.
- 3** **As you tap, move your hands to your temples and along your jaw.** Continue tapping with the same beat.
- 4** Continue **tapping** for another minute **along the top and back of your head. Tap down your neck** and along your collarbone.
- 5 Sit still,** stop tapping, close your eyes, and check in.



Focus on the Five Senses

Heighten awareness to your present surroundings



Focus on the Five Senses

Heighten awareness to your present surroundings

- 1 Pause.** Close your eyes. Breathe slowly, in through your nose, out through your mouth.
- 2** Open your eyes, and silently, **name the first thing you see.** Let your eyes rest on it for a moment.
- 3 Use your sense of touch to notice a texture or pressure,** such as the feel of your shirt or the ground beneath your feet.
- 4** Bring your awareness to the **quietest sound you hear.** Is it near or far?
- 5** Breathe slow and deep. **How would you describe what you smell?**
- 6** Turn your attention to your mouth and tongue. **Can you taste anything?** Or perhaps your mouth tastes neutral; take a moment to define this sense.
- 7** Check in with your thoughts. **Repeat** the process to increase awareness and focus.



Diaphragmatic Deep Breathing

Focus on your diaphragm to find calm

- 1** Your diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle at the base of your lungs that expands and contracts to pull air into and push air out of your lungs.
- 2** Find a comfortable position. Place one hand on your stomach just below the ribcage and the other on your chest.
- 3** Take a **slow, deep inhale** through your nose. Feel the hand on your stomach rise as your lungs fill with air. The hand on your chest should remain still if you're breathing with your diaphragm.
- 4** **Pause for a moment** at the top of your inhale.
- 5** **Tighten** your stomach muscles to squeeze your breath out through your nose. **Exhale completely, not leaving any air in your lungs.** The hand on your belly will release down to its original position. If you're using your diaphragm to breathe, the hand on your chest stays still.
- 6** Pause for just a moment at the bottom of your exhale before **you repeat the process** at least three times.
- 7** Check in. Does your body feel calmer? Are you able to think more clearly?

Yoga Flow

Poses to help you stretch and strengthen

- 1 Make a comfortable seat for yourself.** Place your hands on top of your thighs. Close your eyes or gaze softly at the ground.
- 2 Hold** each pose for three full inhales and exhales. Repeat each pose at least three times.
- 3 Neck rolls:** Bring your left ear close to your left shoulder while you keep your shoulder relaxed toward the ground; turn your chin toward your chest, and roll your head to center, then to the right. Repeat on the right side.
- 4 Cow & Cat:** If you're on a chair, sit on the edge of the seat, inhale and lift your chest upward. Squeeze your elbows and shoulder blades towards your spine. As you exhale, pull your belly button towards the back of your body, and round your back like a scared cat. Bring your chin to your chest.
- 5 Seated side stretch:** Clasp your hands and reach them over your head. Sit up tall and reach to the right. Breathe. Repeat on the other side. Move with your breath.
- 6 Seated Figure 4 + ankle circles:** Cross your right ankle over your left thigh just above your left knee. Make circles with your foot and ankle. Bend forward from your hips to deepen the stretch.
- 7 Savasana:** Close your eyes or hold a soft gaze at the ground. Let your body be still as long as you can.

Body Scan

Learn to find and release tension anywhere in your body

- 1** Find a comfortable position. Slow down and deepen your breath. Close your eyes, or soften the focus of your gaze.
- 2** **Picture a scanner** starting at the top of your head. As you run the scan down your body, do you notice any tight muscles? Go back to the top of your head, and scan your body again, but take some time to focus on different parts of your body. **Scrunch your face muscles** and slowly relax. **Wiggle and loosen** the muscles of your **jaw**. **Lift your shoulders** to your ears and let them drop away.
- 3** Continue the imaginary scan of your body. Tense your **arm** and **leg** muscles, then feel them relax.
- 4** Stay still for several breaths. **Where did you notice tension in your body?** Scan your body often and see if your tension points stay the same or change.



Zentangle

Doodles are not just for the margins

- 1** On a piece of paper, **trace your hand**. Draw lines to divide your traced hand into 8-12 sections.
- 2** In each section, **add abstract patterns** using dots, lines, squiggles, triangles, paisleys, squares and other shapes. There is no right or wrong way to make a Zentangle; it is yours.
- 3** **Focus all your attention** on the marks you make while you let your mind and muscles relax.
- 4** **Experiment** with patterns and designs in your Zentangles. Try using all one color, all black, and lots of colors. Try different tools—markers, crayons, pencils, pens.



Sending Kind Thoughts

Be grateful and kind; make sure your compassion includes you



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Be grateful and kind; make sure your compassion includes you

- 1** Think about **people who have supported you**. Choose one supportive person and imagine their face. Silently thank them for their encouragement.
- 2** Next, think about your **fellow classmates or teammates**. Picture one of them in your mind and silently thank them for their contribution to the team.
- 3** Now, think about **someone who annoys you** and perhaps makes your life more challenging. Silently send them kind thoughts.
- 4** Finally, imagine **yourself in front of a mirror**. Pretend you're looking at your own face. Send yourself kind thoughts. Practice appreciating your body, mind, energy and soul. Encourage yourself to do your best and have fun.
- 5** Open your eyes. Take a moment to check in with how you feel.



Resources for Mental Health & Crisis Services

Iowa Department of Public Health – Your Life Iowa

If you need someone to talk or if you need help accessing mental health resources, Your Life Iowa is available 24/7 to talk.

<https://yourlifeiowa.org/>

<https://yourlifeiowa.org/resources>

Call: 855-581-8111 or Text: 855-895-8398 or Chat: YourLifeIowa.org

National 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support.

Call or Text 988 to contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

NAMI National Alliance on Mental Illness

<https://namiiowa.org/>

National Federation of State High School Associations Learning Center - <https://nfhslearn.com/>

Online free courses for students, educators and parents covering topics such as Bullying, Hazing & Inappropriate Behavior; Student Mental Health & Suicide Prevention; Implicit Bias; and other topics.

Work2BeWell

Focused on providing mental health resources.

<https://work2bewell.org/>



*Creative work assisted by Next Step Adventure. Increasing mindfulness and justice in classrooms, schools & families by blending curriculum development, teaching, and fun. **That's just what we do.***



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SUICIDE & CRISIS
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You Are Not Alone

Real help from real
people, who care.

Call or text 988 for
24/7 free help.