



AMERICAN
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

Lesson Plan: 8-week small group: Keep Calm and Reduce Stress

School Counselor: Ashley Dunn

Date: February 2016

Grade(s): 10th grade

ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors:

Self-Management Skills 6: Demonstrate ability to overcome barriers to learning

Learning Strategies 7: Identify long- and short-term academic, career and social/emotional goals

Learning Objective(s) after completion of 8-week group:

1: Students' perceived stress level will decrease by 15% after the 8-week intervention group (measured by Perceived Stress Scale)

2: After the 8-week intervention group, 75% of the students increased their grades by 10% by the end of quarter four (measured through PowerSchool)

3: Students will demonstrate a 20% increase, based on pre- and posttest data, in the ability to use mindfulness strategies and cognitive restructuring when they are stressed outside of the group setting (measured with pre- and posttest)

Materials:

Session 1: Pre-test, Perceived Stress Scale

Session 2: Mindful Breathing worksheet

Session 3: Mindfulness Practice worksheet, Check Out Sheet 1

Session 4: Role Play worksheet

Session 5: Check Out Sheet 2

Session 6: Check Out Sheet 3

Session 7: Check Out Sheet 4

Session 8: Post-test, Perceived Stress Scale

Procedure:**1st session (35 minutes):**

1. Introduce yourself and the group topic: **Keep Calm and Reduce Stress**
2. Explain that this group is meant to help students have techniques that they can use especially when they are feeling overwhelmed and stressed in the academic setting.
3. Explain that this group will last for **8 weeks** (including this one) and that we will discuss multiple topics:
 - a. **Mindfulness Techniques:** sitting and breathing, mindfulness movement
 - b. **Cognitive Restructuring/Role Playing/Perspective Taking**
 - c. **Short and Long-term Goals**
 - d. **Recognizing one's strengths**
4. Allow students to introduce themselves
5. Explain that there are **two main rules:** Confidentiality and not interrupting when people are talking
6. Give students the **Pre-Test** (page 11) and **Perceived Stress Scale** (page 13)
7. Provide students with a journal and explain that it will be used so they can document their thoughts and observations throughout the group process (Ruini et al., 2009). Explain that the journaling would occur at the end of each session, and the facilitator would encourage the students to journal during the week between the sessions as well.

2nd session - Mindfulness (35 minutes):

Objective for lessons 2 and 3:

Students will be able to identify 2 mindfulness techniques to help manage their emotions when they are feeling stressed (assessed by check-out sheet at end of lesson 3)

Overview/Goal:

This session will help students explore the importance of mindfulness, especially when they are feeling stressed out with school. The goal will be for students to learn how to use mindfulness techniques in everyday life to help manage their stress level (Metz et al., 2013).

Session Outline:

1. Engage in discussion with students about the situations that make them feel the most stressed at school and write student responses on a white board (5 minutes)
 - a. Possible examples: having too much school work, conflicts with teachers/peers/parents, feeling overwhelmed, feeling pressure to do well, etc.
2. Engage in discussion about the physical reactions that occur when students are stressed out in the above situations (5 minutes)
 - a. Possible examples: having a rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, rapid thought patterns, etc.
3. Explain that mindfulness is the ability to have an “in-the moment” awareness of one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions and how mindfulness has been shown to reduce stress levels. (1 minutes)
4. We will discuss two mindfulness techniques over the next two weeks: session: sitting and breathing and mindfulness movement (Metz et al.). Today we will discuss Sitting and Breathing.
5. Demonstrate how to do Sitting and Breathing:
 - a. **Sitting and breathing** (15 minutes)
 - i. Use **Mindful Breathing worksheet** (page 14). Provide opportunity for students to engage in Mindful Breathing. Should only take a few minutes. Read first exercise for mindful breathing. There are four additional short exercises that students could engage in. If time, you can walk students through each exercise. If no time allows, allow students the opportunity to read over the worksheet.
 - ii. Provide students with a copy of the worksheet and challenge them to practice at home at least once over the next week when they feel stressed out with school work.
6. Give students 5 minutes at the end of the session to journal what they learned and how they plan to apply what they learned throughout the next week. Encourage students to keep track of when they do it and how it made them feel in their journal.

3rd session - Mindfulness (30 minutes):

Objective for lessons 2 and 3:

Students will be able to identify 2 mindfulness techniques to help manage their emotions when they are feeling stressed (assessed by check-out sheet at end of lesson 3).

Overview/Goal:

This session will help students explore the importance of mindfulness, especially when they are feeling stressed out with school. The goal will be for students to learn how to use mindfulness techniques in everyday life to help manage their stress level (Metz et al., 2013).

Session Outline:

1. Review with students: what did we talk about last week? (3 minutes)
2. Ask students to share if they used the mindfulness technique outside of the school setting (2 minutes)
3. Explain that we will discuss the second mindfulness technique today: Mindfulness Movement
4. Demonstrate how to do Mindfulness Movement (20 minutes)
 - a. **Mindfulness movement**
 - i. Use A Mindfulness Practice worksheet (page 17). Make sure you are familiar with the yoga poses before beginning this lesson. Go through each movement during this lesson. You do not have to follow the script exactly.
 - ii. Provide students with a copy of the worksheet and challenge them to practice at home at least once over the next week when they feel stressed out with school work.
5. The last 7 minutes of session should include:
 - a. 5 minutes: Journal writing (allowing students to write what they have learned and how they plan to apply what they learned throughout the next week)
 - b. 2 minutes: Completing a check-out sheet to determine if students are able to identify the 3 mindfulness techniques (Use **Check-Out Sheet 1**- page 22)

4th session – Cognitive Restructuring (30 minutes):

Objective:

Students will be able to recognize one negative thought and correct that thought with a positive one as demonstrated through role playing.

Overview/Goal:

Cognitive restructuring has been shown to increase one's wellbeing (Ruini et al., 2009). Therefore, this session will focus on identifying negative thoughts and changing those thoughts into positive ones.

Session Outline:

1. Ask students what negative thoughts they have about completing work at school (Ruini et al., 2009) (3-5 minutes)
 - a. Examples: "I can't do this." "I'm not smart enough", "This is too hard", "I give up".
2. Using the examples that the students come up with (or the examples listed above if they do not come up with any), engage in discussion about how to change those negative thoughts into positive ones (10 minutes)
 - a. Examples:
 - i. I'm not good at this → what am I missing?
 - ii. I give up → I'll use a different strategy
 - iii. I can't make this any better → I can always improve
 - iv. This is too hard → This may take some time, but I can get there
 - v. I made a mistake → Mistakes help me learn
 - vi. I can't do this → I'm going to train my brain to do this
 - vii. I'll never be that smart → I will learn how to do this
 - viii. Plan A didn't work → well, there's always a plan B
3. Introduce the concept of **role playing**. Split up the group into pairs (If 8 students, have 4 groups of 2). Explain that you will give each pair a different scenario to work through. The idea is that one student will be thinking negative thoughts about school, and the other student tries to help them come up with a way to think more positively. Give students time to come up with a skit on how they would resolve the problem. Explain that these skits should be only 2-3 minutes each. Encourage students to take notes about their progress since they will perform these "skits" during session 5 (15 minutes)
 - a. Role plays are listed on **Role Play worksheet** (page 23)
4. Give students 2-3 minutes at the end of the session to journal what they learned and how they plan to apply what they learned throughout the next week. Encourage students to be aware of their negative thoughts during the next week and to keep track of how they change their negative thoughts to positive ones in their journal.

5th session – Role Playing (30 minutes):

Objective:

Students will be able to recognize one negative thought and correct that thought with a positive one as demonstrated through role playing.

Overview/Goal:

Cognitive restructuring has been shown to increase one's wellbeing (Ruini et al., 2009). Therefore, this session will focus on identifying negative thoughts and changing those thoughts into positive ones.

Session Outline:

1. Give students 3-5 minutes at the beginning to get with their partners and review their role play scenario from last week.
2. Allow each pair to perform their scenario in front of the group (10 minutes-15 minutes)
3. After all the scenarios are performed, spend time discussing thoughts, feelings, and emotions related to the scenarios (7-10 minutes)
 - a. Discussion questions:
 - i. Put yourself in the position of one of the distressed students in the scenarios we just watched. How does it make you feel to have that stressed or overwhelmed feeling? Does it help to change that negative thought into a positive one?
 - ii. Do you think you will be able to change those negative thoughts moving forward?
 - iii. How can you help your friends who may be having those same feelings?
 - iv. **This exercise is to help you come up with ways to change those negative thoughts that you may have while you are in school, but this activity is also meant to help you recognize when other people are struggling – now you have some tools to be able to help them see the importance of changing those negative thoughts into positive ones as well!**
4. Give students 2 minutes to journal what they learned. Encourage them to continue using these strategies throughout the next week.
5. During last 2 minutes, have students fill out **Check Out Sheet 2** (page 24).

6th session – Short and Long-term goals (30 minutes):

Objective:

Students will be able to identify one academic short term goal, one academic long term goal, and one way to effectively reduce stress when it gets in the way of one of their goals.

Overview/Goal:

During this session, we will discuss academic goal setting, how stress can serve as an obstacle to achieving those goals, and how to effectively deal with that obstacle (adapted from Berger, 2013).

Session Outline:

1. Discuss the difference between short and long-term goals (3-5 minutes)
 - a. **Short-term goal:** A short-term goal is something you want to do in the near future. The near future can mean today, this week, or within the next few months.
 - b. **A long-term goal** is something you want to do further in the future. Long-term goals require time and planning. In this case, longer term goals would be something you want to accomplish by the end of a school year or by the end of your high school career
2. Ask students to write two academic short term goals (i.e., get a B on next English test) and one academic long term goal (i.e., graduate with a 3.7 GPA) – (5 minutes)
3. Encourage group members to share some of their goals and how stress could affect achieving those goals (10 minutes)
 - a. Some questions to ask students:
 - i. Could having too much stress decrease one's opportunity to achieve goals?
 - ii. What are some ways to overcome stress when it comes to achieving your goals (think about mindfulness, reconstructing negative thoughts, the things you do well, etc.)?
4. Give students 3-5 minutes at the end of the session to journal what they learned and how they plan to apply what they learned throughout the next week.
5. During the last few minutes, ask students to fill out **Check Out Sheet 3** (page 25).

7th session – Recognizing One’s Strengths (30 minutes):

Objective:

Students will be able to identify 3 positive qualities about themselves and demonstrate how to give another peer a compliment.

Overview/Goal:

Having positive relationships with others and being able to accept oneself is particularly important for adolescents in terms of their wellbeing (Ruini et al., 2009). This session will allow students to explore what self-acceptance looks like and how to appropriately provide their peers with compliments.

Session Outline:

1. Give students 5 minutes at the beginning of the session to write down as many positive characteristics about themselves in their journals.
2. Provide each student with a colored sheet of paper and ask them to write their name on the top of the page. Explain that the group has been getting to know each other for the last six weeks and how you wanted to provide an opportunity for the students to write positive messages on their peers’ papers.
3. Ask students to pass their papers to the right and then write a positive compliment or what they like about their peers on the paper. Continue this process until everyone has had a chance to write on everyone’s paper.
4. Once students have their personal sheets of paper, ask them to look at it and take in all the positive messages.
5. Ask students how it makes them feel to receive these positive messages.
6. For 3-4 minutes, have students journal some of their positive characteristics and how this session made them feel today. Challenge the students to provide a compliment to a peer at least once a day and write about the experience in their journals. The facilitator will also encourage students to take out their journals when they are feeling stressed or down on themselves to instead focus on all the positive things they wrote and their peers said about them.
7. During last 2 minutes, ask students to complete **Check Out Sheet 4** (page 26).

8th session – Wrap-Up (30 minutes):

Overview/Goal:

The purpose of this final session is to review everything that was discussed for the last seven weeks while focusing more on conversation between students and how they plan to use strategies they learned to help them during stressful situations in the future.

Session Outline:

1. Write all the topics discussed over the last 7 weeks on the board
 - a. Mindfulness Techniques: sitting and breathing, mindfulness movement
 - b. Cognitive Restructuring/Role Playing/Perspective Taking
 - c. Short and Long-term Goals
 - d. Recognizing one's strengths
2. Give students **Posttest** (page 12) and **Perceived Stress Scale** (page 13)
3. Open it up for discussion (as much as time allows):
 - a. What did students enjoy the most?
 - b. What did they take away from this stress reduction group?
 - c. Do they find themselves using the techniques outside of the group?
 - d. What has been difficult for them?
 - e. Did they find the journals helpful?
 - f. How will this group help you moving forward in high school?
 - g. Would you be comfortable encouraging your peers by providing them with these techniques if they are feeling stressed?
4. Thank the students for participating in the group and let them know that you will be available for the rest of the year if they are ever feeling overwhelmed or stressed out.

Plan for Evaluation:**Process Data:**

This lesson plan serves students in their sophomore year of high school. Eight students who stated that they have high levels of stress on the 10th Grade Needs Assessment will have the opportunity to participate in this group.

Perception Data:

- 1:** Students will be able to identify 2 mindfulness techniques to help manage their emotions when they are feeling stressed (assessed by check-out sheet at end of lesson)
- 2:** Students will be able to recognize one negative thought and correct that thought with a positive one as demonstrated through role playing.
- 3:** Students will be able to identify one academic short term goal, one academic long term goal, and one way to effectively reduce stress when it gets in the way of one of their goal (assessed by check-out sheet at end of lesson)
- 4:** Students will be able to identify 3 positive qualities about themselves and demonstrate how to give another peer a compliment (assessed by check out sheet)

Outcome Data:

- 1:** Students' perceived stress level will decrease by 15% after the 8-week intervention group (measured by Perceived Stress Scale)
- 2:** After the 8-week intervention group, 75% of the students increased their grades by 10% by the end of quarter four (measured through PowerSchool)
- 3:** Students will demonstrate a 20% increase, based on pre- and posttest data, in the ability to use mindfulness strategies and cognitive restructuring when they are stressed outside of the group setting (measured with self-made pre- and posttest)

Follow Up:

At the end of the school year, school counselor will give students another posttest to determine if they are still utilizing the stress reduction techniques throughout the group. During this one-on-one meeting, school counselor will talk with student informally about how they feel they have progressed since having the group.

Pretest (given during 1st session)

1. What does Mindfulness mean?

2. Name two different mindfulness techniques.

3. Change two of the following statements to be more positive:

a. I made a mistake →

b. I can't do this →

a. I give up →

4. What is a short-term goal?

5. What is a long-term goal?

6. Name 2 positive characteristics of yourself.

a. _____

b. _____

7. What can you do to reduce stress when it stress gets in the way of one of your goals?

8. What are some strategies you currently use to reduce stress?

Posttest (given during 8th session and at end of school year)

1. What does Mindfulness mean?

2. Name two different mindfulness techniques.

3. Change two of the following statements to be more positive:

a. I made a mistake →

b. I can't do this →

b. I give up →

4. What is a short-term goal?

5. What is a long-term goal?

6. Name 2 positive characteristics of yourself.

- a. _____
b. _____

7. What can you do to reduce stress when it stress gets in the way of one of your goals?

8. What are some strategies you currently use to reduce stress?

Mindful Breathing

1) Mindfulness Exercise: Breathing

Tell students to relax in their chair and close their eyes.

Explain that this exercise is very simple, but the result can be very great. The exercise is simply to identify the in-breath as in-breath and the out-breath as out-breath. When you breathe in, you know that this is your in-breath. When you breathe out, you are mindful that this is your out-breath.

The object of your mindfulness is your breath, and you just focus your attention on it. Breathing in, this is my in-breath. Breathing out, this is my out-breath. When you do that, the mental discourse will stop. You don't think anymore. You don't have to make an effort to stop your thinking; you bring your attention to your in-breath and the mental discourse just stops. That is the miracle of the practice. You don't think of the past anymore. You don't think of the future. You don't think of your projects, because you are focusing your attention, your mindfulness, on your breath.

You are breathing in, and while breathing in, you know that you are alive. The in-breath can be a celebration of the fact that you are alive, so it can be very joyful. When you are joyful and happy, you don't feel that you have to make any effort at all. I am alive; I am breathing in. To be still alive is a miracle. The greatest of all miracles is to be alive, and when you breathe in, you touch that miracle. Therefore, your breathing can be a celebration of life.

An in-breath may take three, four, five seconds, it depends. That's time to be alive, time to enjoy your breath. You don't have to interfere with your breathing. If your in-breath is short, allow it to be short. If your out-breath is long, let it be long. Don't try to force it. The practice is simple recognition of the in-breath and the out-breath. That is good enough. It will have a powerful effect.

2) Second Mindfulness Exercise: Concentration

The second exercise is that while you breathe in, you follow your in-breath from the beginning to the end. If your in-breath lasts three or four seconds, then your mindfulness also lasts three or four seconds. Breathing in, I follow my in-breath all the way through. Breathing out, I follow my out-breath all the way through. From the beginning of my out-breath to the end of my out-breath, my mind is always with it. Therefore, mindfulness becomes uninterrupted, and the quality of your concentration is improved.

So the second exercise is to follow your in-breath and your out-breath all the way through. Whether they are short or long, it doesn't matter. What is important is that you follow your in-breath from the beginning to the end. Your awareness is sustained. There is no interruption. Suppose you are breathing in, and then you think, "Oh, I forgot to turn off the light in my room." There is an interruption. Just stick to your in-breath all the way

through. Then you cultivate your mindfulness and your concentration. You become your in-breath. You become your out-breath. If you continue like that, your breathing will naturally become deeper and slower, more harmonious and peaceful. You don't have to make any effort—it happens naturally.

3) Third Mindfulness Exercise: Awareness of Your Body

The third exercise is to become aware of your body as you are breathing. “Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body.” This takes it one step further.

In the first exercise, you became aware of your in-breath and your out-breath. Because you have now generated the energy of mindfulness through mindful breathing, you can use that energy to recognize your body.

“Breathing in, I am aware of my body. Breathing out, I am aware of my body.” I know my body is there. This brings the mind wholly back to the body. Mind and body become one reality. When your mind is with your body, you are well-established in the here and the now. You are fully alive. You can be in touch with the wonders of life that are available in yourself and around you.

When your mind is with your body, you are well-established in the here and the now. You are fully alive.

This exercise is simple, but the effect of the oneness of body and mind is very great. In our daily lives, we are seldom in that situation. Our body is there but our mind is elsewhere. Our mind may be caught in the past or in the future, in regrets, sorrow, fear, or uncertainty, and so our mind is not there. Someone may be present in the house, but he's not really there, his mind is not there. His mind is with the future, with his projects, and he's not there for his children or his spouse. Maybe you could say to him, “Anybody home?” and help him bring his mind back to his body.

So the third exercise is to become aware of your body. “Breathing in, I'm aware of my body.” When you practice mindful breathing, the quality of your in-breath and out-breath will be improved. There is more peace and harmony in your breathing, and if you continue to practice like that, the peace and the harmony will penetrate into the body, and the body will profit.

4) Fourth Mindfulness Exercise: Releasing Tension

The next exercise is to release the tension in the body. When you are truly aware of your body, you notice there is some tension and pain in your body, some stress. The tension and pain have been accumulating for a long time and our bodies suffer, but our mind is not there to help release it. Therefore, it is very important to learn how to release the tension in the body.

The tension and pain have been accumulating for a long time and our bodies suffer, but our mind is not there to help release it.

In a sitting, lying, or standing position, it's always possible to release the tension. You can practice total relaxation, deep relaxation, in a sitting or lying position. While you are driving your car, you might notice the tension in your body. You are eager to arrive and you don't enjoy the time you spend driving. When you come to a red light, you are eager for the red light to become a green light so that you can continue. But the red light can be a signal. It can be a reminder that there is tension in you, the stress of wanting to arrive as quickly as possible. If you recognize that, you can make use of the red light. You can sit back and relax—take the ten seconds the light is red to practice mindful breathing and release the tension in the body.

So next time you're stopped at a red light, you might like to sit back and practice the fourth exercise: "Breathing in, I'm aware of my body. Breathing out, I release the tension in my body." Peace is possible at that moment, and it can be practiced many times a day—in the workplace, while you are driving, while you are cooking, while you are doing the dishes, while you are watering the vegetable garden. It is always possible to practice releasing the tension in yourself.

5) Walking Meditation

When you practice mindful breathing you simply allow your in breath to take place. You become aware of it and enjoy it. Effortlessness. The same thing is true with mindful walking. Every step is enjoyable. Every step helps you touch the wonders of life. Every step is joy. That is possible.

A Mindfulness Practice

1. Savasana (Corpse Pose)

[Savasana](#) is one of the four main meditation postures taught by the Buddha; do it to start and end your practice. Lie on your back with your feet 12 to 18 inches apart, arms at your sides a few inches away from the torso with the palms up. Surrender the full weight of your body to gravity.



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Rest your awareness on your breath, wherever you feel it in the body. Let go of any tendency to manipulate it; simply know an inbreath as an inbreath, an outbreath as an outbreath. Open to the breath and its various qualities: deep or shallow, fast or slow, rough or smooth, even or uneven. Scan the body. Is it fully released or still holding tension? When the mind wanders, note any irritation and judgment, and bring it back to the breath and the body.

2. Eye-of-the-Needle Pose

From Corpse, bring both feet to the floor near the buttocks, hip-width apart. Place your outer right shin on your left thigh. Draw your left knee toward your chest, reach between your legs with your right arm and around the outside of your left leg with your left arm, and clasp your hands. Notice whether you held or restricted your breath as you moved into this stretch, and continue to let the breath flow naturally.



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Depending on the openness in your body, you may feel stretching sensations in your right hip. You may also feel some resistance to the sensations, which causes you to tense the surrounding muscles. See if you can release this tension, and observe how the sensations change as you maintain the stretch. You've just established mindfulness of the body, sensations, and mental formations. Continue this work as you release and repeat on the other side. Since we are not perfectly symmetrical beings, you may find that one hip provokes stronger sensations and reactivity than the other. Can you stay with the bare sensation, maybe even see the difference between one side and the other, without getting caught in judging or picking and choosing?

3. Cat-Cow Pose

Come onto your hands and knees, positioning your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. As you exhale, round your back and scoop the tailbone between your legs. Let the head tilt so you are gazing back toward your thighs. On the inhalation, tilt the pelvis forward, opening your belly toward the floor and letting your spine move into the torso, creating a gentle backbend. Reach the crown of your head and your tailbone up toward the ceiling. Be careful not to reach upward with your chin, which compresses the back of the neck. Flow back and forth for a few breaths.



As you continue to coordinate the movement with your breath, let the timing of the breath determine your pace. After going back and forth several times, notice the mind's natural tendency to wander. This is a common reaction to repetition. The mind seems to assume that having done something well, it doesn't have to know anything more and needn't pay attention. This "knowing mind" is often the biggest obstacle to intimacy with oneself and with others. When we think we know, we stop listening and seeing. Try to maintain the "don't-know mind," and you will grow in understanding and intimacy. Come back to the breath again and again; it's the thread that keeps body and mind connected.

4. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose)

From Cat-Cow, tuck your toes under, lift your hips, and straighten your legs into [Down Dog](#). Playfully explore the pose by bringing the heels to the floor one at a time. Coordinate with the breath and notice if your mind wanders in the face of repetition. Once you straighten both legs, remain in the pose for anywhere from 8 to 15 breaths, staying alert to sensations, mental formations, and the way the experience continuously changes. Teachers often talk about "holding" the postures, but notice how there is no fixed thing to hold on to. Moment by moment, breath by breath, the posture re-creates itself. The Dog of the first breath is not the same as the Dog of the sixth breath.



You will begin to see that this is true not only for this asana, and all the other asanas, but also for all life experiences. You will come to see that you are not the same “person” when you come out of the posture that you were when you went into it.

5. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)

[Mountain Pose](#) is too often perceived as just something to do between the more important asanas, when in fact it is foundational for all the standing postures.

Stand with your arms at your sides. Press the four corners of your feet into the ground, distributing your body weight evenly between both feet and centering it just in front of your heels. Imagine your pelvis as a bowl with its rim level, both front to back and side to side. Let the spine rise up, keep the lower ribs from jutting out, gently lift the chest, and open the heart. Relax the shoulders, with your shoulder blades moving into and supporting your upper back. Keep the chin parallel with the floor and your ears centered over your shoulders.

See what happens as you simply stand there. Be awake to all the sensations that arise: the subtle swaying of the body, the movement of the breath. Does boredom, impatience, or anticipation arise? Can you just be here? When you feel you’ve been here long enough, take another 6 to 8 breaths and see what happens.



6. Virabhadrasana II (Warrior Pose II)

Reach out to the sides with your arms parallel to the floor and step your feet apart so that they are directly under your fingertips. Turn your left foot in about 15 degrees and your right foot out 90. Without leaning forward, bend the right knee toward a 90-degree angle so that the knee is directly over the ankle. Keep your arms parallel to the ground and gaze out over your right hand. As you breathe, stay alert to changes in the quality of the breath, its depth and rate.

As sensations begin to arise in your front thigh or your shoulders, notice how the mind reacts. Do you feel aversion to the tension accompanying the sensations? See what happens to the quality of your experience if you stay with the breath while releasing this tension. Notice the story lines that arise about what is happening and choose to just listen without grasping at any of them. Rather than



solidifying the sensations into entities with which to do battle, embrace them with awareness. Notice—if you can—their habitual, nonpersonal nature. After doing both sides, come back to Mountain and scan through the body, being open to all that arises.

7. Ardha Matsyendrasana (Half Lord of the Fishes Pose)

Sit in a cross-legged position, sliding your left foot under your right thigh so that your left heel comes to rest at the outside of your right hip. Cross your right foot over your left thigh so that the sole of your right foot is planted firmly on the ground. Hug your right leg with your left arm just below the knee and use your right hand to press into the ground behind you. Extend your spine up. Twist to the right, using your left hand to aid the left side of your body in coming around to the right. You can take your left arm to the outside of your right leg and press into the leg for added leverage, but let the twist rise naturally from the base of the spine upward. Turn your head to the right at the end of the torso's movement and keep the neck relaxed. Stay present with your breath, allowing it to guide you in an exploration of release as you exhale and gently untwist. Repeat to the other side.



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8. Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend)

Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Press the backs of your thighs, calves, and heels into the ground. Reach through your heels and flex your toes toward your head. Press your hands into the ground beside your hips and lift your chest. If your lower back rounds and your weight is on your tailbone, sit up on a blanket for support. Grasp your feet or your shins, soften your groins, and slightly rotate your thighs inward. Lengthen your torso out over your legs, keeping the lower back from rounding. Let go of “grasping mind” and be where you are. Feel the breath move within the body. Surrender into the posture, and keep letting go of any clinging or aversion to the everchanging phenomena. Notice how the attempt to prolong or create pleasant feelings is itself a form of tension.



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When you're ready, rest in Corpse Pose for a few minutes, letting the experience of the practice penetrate the body-mind. After Corpse, consider meditating. Sitting after asana practice is a nourishing and satisfying endeavor. Why not try it now?

Check-Out Sheet 1

Name: _____

1. Name 2 mindfulness techniques that you learned about over the last two weeks.

2. How often did you use the mindfulness techniques outside of the group space?

- a. 5+ times
- b. 3 or 4 times
- c. 1 or 2 times
- d. 0 times

3. Do you plan to use these techniques in the future?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

Role Plays

1. You feel overwhelmed with the amount of homework you need to complete each night for all of your classes. You are always saying to yourself: "I can never get all this done. Maybe I shouldn't even put in effort to do it." You tell your friend how you are feeling.
2. You receive your quarter 3 report card and see that you didn't get the grade you wanted in English class. You tell yourself: "I am such a failure. I will never be as smart as some of my classmates." You tell your best friend how you are feeling.
3. Your science teacher just assigned a challenging, yet fun project for you to complete and turn in in two weeks. You are excited about this project because you feel like you have exactly the right plan about how to complete it. So, you go home, try out your plan, and realize that it doesn't work the way you thought it would. You become really discouraged and tell yourself, "I can't do this anymore. My first plan didn't work, so I know that nothing else will work either." You let your friend know how you are feeling.
4. You receive a 60 on your history test that you studied really hard for. You tell yourself, "I made so many mistakes. I'm never going to be able to bring this grade up. I'm so stressed out about this." You talk with your friend about how you are feeling.
5. You are feeling so stressed about balancing your time with extracurricular activities, schoolwork, and hanging out with friends. You feel like you have so much going on and you just can't keep up with it. You don't know what to do about it, so you talk with your friend to see what advice he/she has to give.

Check-Out Sheet 2

Name: _____

2. Select **two** of the negative statements below and change them into positive statements:

a. I'm not good at this →

b. I give up →

c. I can't make this any better →

d. This is too hard →

e. I made a mistake →

f. I can't do this →

g. I'll never be that smart →

h. Plan A didn't work →

3. Did you find the role-playing activity helpful?

a. Yes

b. No

Check-Out Sheet 3

Name: _____

- a. What is one of your short-term academic goals?

- b. What is one of your long-term academic goals?

- c. What can you do to reduce stress when it stress gets in the way of one of your goals?

Check-Out Sheet 4

Name: _____

1. Name 3 positive qualities that you have:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____