

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

BREATHE— MOVE— LEARN With YOUNG CHILDREN

A blue circular graphic with a white border. At the top is a cartoon cat's head. Below it is the number '70' in a stylized font. Underneath the number is the text: 'Activities in Mindfulness, Brain-Friendly Movement, and Social-Emotional Learning'.

70
Activities
in Mindfulness,
Brain-Friendly
Movement, and
Social-Emotional
Learning

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2

Breathe in the Flower— Blow Out the Candle

Huele la flor—sopla la vela

STANDING OR SITTING



Breathe in the Flower—Blow Out the Candle helps kids easily and comfortably regulate their breathing and calm themselves through visualization. This exercise also gives kids an opportunity to breathe gently and rhythmically.

1. In one hand make believe you are holding your favorite flower in front of your face. Is it a rose or a carnation with a sweet smell? In the other hand make believe you are holding a lit candle.
2. Gently breathe in the fragrance of the flower through your nose.
3. Raise the hand holding your candle. Gently blow out the flame on your candle.
4. Repeat these steps two more times. Breathe in gently. Blow out gently.
5. Take time to notice how you feel with each in and out breath. Do you feel more relaxed now or more comfortable inside your body?

16 Rest Your Eyes

Descansa tus ojos

SITTING



Continual focus can be tiring for the eyes and for the mind. We can balance focus with relaxation for a healthy brain and body. This exercise helps us rest and appreciate our eyes. Notice the feeling of relaxation and calmness that happens throughout your entire body when your eyes close and relax even briefly.

This exercise also brings more blood circulation to the eyes and can improve your vision. Notice how clear and sharp your vision is after this exercise. If possible, turn off the lights when doing this exercise for even more relaxation.

1. Our eyes are a great gift and they work hard for us. Let's thank them for the great job they do by giving them a little rest. Rub your hands together to warm them up. Let your shoulders relax. Rest your elbows on the table.
2. Gently close your eyes. Breathe gently and relax your belly. Lightly cup your hands over your eyes. Do not press on your eyes. Just try to keep out as much light as you can. Can you see little flashes of light or different colors even when your eyes are closed? That's your eyes settling down. Let your eyes relax even more.
3. Say "thank you" to your eyes for doing such a great job! Keep your eyelids closed while you remove your hands from your eyes as you sit quietly for a moment.
4. Now blink, blink, blink and open your eyes. If your eyes water, that's good too. Our eyes like moisture.
5. Let your eyes travel gently around the room. Then look out the window or out to the furthest point in the room up on the ceiling. Is your vision clearer, brighter, or sharper now?

1 Cross Lifts

Los elevadores cruzados

STANDING



Cross Lifts are **cross-lateral movements** that encourage coordination, brain integration, and balance. These movements are designed to cross the midline of the body which appears to wake up the midline of the brain. For young children, crossing the midline is an advanced skill.

If a child is struggling to cross the midline, I ask for permission to touch or tap the correct knee and hand at the same time until the child can successfully cross over and touch. Or you can stand side by side so that the child can mirror your movements.

1. Lift your right knee. **SLOWLY** touch your right knee with your right hand. Lift your left knee. **SLOWLY** touch your left knee with your left hand. Repeat two more times. Focus on keeping your balance as you move **SLOWLY**.
2. Here comes the challenge. Raise your right arm. Cross your right arm over the middle of your body as you gently and **SLOWLY** lift and touch the left knee. Move **SLOWLY** like a turtle. Move your hips and shoulders as you cross your arm over.
3. After you touch your left knee, place the foot **FLAT** on the ground and **PAUSE** before moving to the other side.
4. Raise your left arm. Cross your left arm over the middle of your body as you gently and **SLOWLY** lift and touch the right knee. Move **SLOWLY** like a turtle. Move your hips and shoulders as you cross your arm over.
5. After you touch your right knee, place the foot **FLAT** on the ground and **PAUSE** before moving to the other side.
6. Count out loud and do five more slow lifts and touches on each side.
7. Were you able to balance when you moved slowly? Practice and notice how much steadier and stronger you feel each time.

1 Three Good Things

Tres cosas buenas



Idea

Thinking about three good things (good thoughts) helps lift us up and chase away a heavy thought. The choice for how we think and feel is inside each of us all the time.

SEL Skills

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Emotional Regulation
- Imagination
- Inspiration
- Mindfulness

Script

1. Sit up tall in your chair so that you can breathe easier. Take three slow, relaxing breaths.
2. We have lots of feelings. Some feelings like happiness feel light; some feelings like anger feel heavy. All feelings are welcome. Even heavy feelings have information we can use to take care of ourselves.
3. Sometimes our feelings weigh heavy on us. We can change our feelings by changing our thoughts if we choose to.
4. How do you switch from a heavy thought to a good thought when you want to? Think of 3 good things in your life, 3 good things you are thankful for. For example, hugging your mom or dad, playing with your dog, running in the park, jumping on a trampoline, eating an ice cream cone, etc.
5. Draw a picture of 3 good things that make you feel light and happy. Give yourself a pat on the back for doing a great job!

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8

Fish Pond of Feelings

El estanque de peces de sentimientos



Idea

Sometimes our minds can feel like they are stuffed with feelings and thoughts like a fish pond filled with lots of crazy fish racing all around. Calming the crazy fish swimming in our minds is a way of taking care of ourselves with kindness.

SEL Skills

- Self-Care
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Emotional Regulation
- Self-Empowerment
- Mindfulness

Script

1. Sit up tall in your chair so that you can breathe easier. Take three slow, relaxing breaths.
2. Do you ever feel like your mind is stuffed full of thoughts and feelings just swimming around and around? I do. Our minds can be full of lots of thoughts and feelings like fish racing around in a big pond—happy fish, sad fish, sleepy fish, excited fish, angry fish, worried fish, playful fish, calm fish, scary fish.
3. Close your eyes if you are comfortable with that or just look down at your feet.
4. Breathe and relax in your chair. Simply watch all of your fishy thoughts and feelings swimming through your mind.

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5. Can you feel them swimming around and around? All these thoughts and feelings are okay. Just watch them swim around. Try not to get stuck thinking about one of the fish. We're just watching them swim by.
6. While you are watching the fish swim by, breathe and relax in your chair even more. Put your hand on your heart and say quietly to yourself:
 - May I be kind to my thoughts and my feelings.
 - May I accept myself just the way I am right now.
 - May I give myself all the love I need right now.
7. Open your eyes. How do you feel now? Is your fishy mind quieter and calmer?
8. Draw a picture of some of the crazy fishy thoughts and feelings that were floating around in your mind. You did a great job of watching them and letting them swim on by.
9. Remember: It's important to say hello to our thoughts and feelings. It's also important to be kind to ourselves and let our thoughts and feelings swim on by when we're ready to let them go.

Slide Suggestions

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- Title Slide "Fish Pond of Feelings/*El estanque de peces de sentimientos*"
- Photos or cartoons of different colored fish swimming in a large pond

Discussion Questions

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- Do you have lots of thoughts and feelings swimming around in your mind sometimes? How do you feel when these fishy thoughts are racing around in your mind?
- What happens to your thoughts and feelings when you just watch them swim by? Do they become lighter or quieter?
- If you could change the fishy thoughts in your mind, what kind of good thoughts and feelings would you add? Happy ones? Joyful ones?
- How do you feel when you are thinking kind thoughts and feelings? Do you feel more relaxed, safer?

Fish Pond of Feelings/*El estanque de peces de sentimientos*

21 Plant a New Thought

Planta un nuevo pensamiento



Idea

Our minds are like gardens full of life. Our thoughts are the seeds we plant each day. You can choose to plant “Happy Seeds” that bring you joy.

SEL Skills

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Imagination
- Inspiration
- Self-Empowerment

Script

1. Sit up tall in your chair so that you can breathe easier. Take three slow, relaxing breaths.
2. Your mind is like a garden full of life. Each thought you think is like a seed you plant in the garden of your mind. Some thoughts feel like flowers that bring us joy. Other thoughts are prickly and they feel like weeds. We can decide to pull the weeds and plant a new thought. Each moment we decide, we choose, and we grow.
3. Do you ever feel yucky, grumpy, scared, or angry? Everyone does sometimes. I do. When thoughts feel like weeds in my garden, I get curious. What are these feelings telling me I need to do for myself right now to feel better? Am I hungry, tired or lonely? Do I need to take a deep breath, talk with someone I trust or ask for help to feel better? All of these things are helpful.
4. I can also be kind to myself and choose to plant a Happy Seed. Let’s do this together.
5. Do you have some prickly thoughts you’d like to let go of? Pick one thought and blow it away like blowing away the puff of a dandelion.
6. Now let’s plant some Happy Seeds. Think of people, animals or something in nature that fills you with feelings of joy, love, safety, kindness, and fun.

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7. Here's some of my Happy Seed thoughts: dancing, eating pizza with my family, talking to a friend, hugging my cat, seeing a rainbow, and watching butterflies. These Happy Seed thoughts make me smile and feel really good inside.
8. Draw some Happy Seed thoughts that lift you up and make you smile, that warm your heart and give you joy. Be sure to include people, animals, and nature. While you draw, take a minute to notice how you feel inside your body. Are you lighting up inside? Happy thoughts can do that.
9. Remember: Every moment you choose the thoughts you plant in your mind. Your thoughts can lift you up and help the people around you feel really good inside too.

Slide Suggestions

- Title Slide “Plant a New Thought/*Planta un nuevo pensamiento*”
- Photos of kids:
 - Hugging and laughing with friends or family
 - Playing with an animal or pet
 - Planting seeds or small plants in a garden
 - Picking up trash in a park
 - Reading a book or doing a puzzle with a friend
 - Dancing at a party or celebrating a birthday
 - Playing sports or having fun in a playground

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the ways you help yourself feel better when prickly thoughts are bothering you?
- What are your favorite Happy Seed thoughts in your mind right now? How do you feel inside when you think these thoughts?
- What weeds or prickly thoughts in your mind are you ready to pull up and blow away?
- What Happy Seed thoughts would you like to share with your family or friends?
- Do you have a Happy Seed thought that could help someone?
- If your Happy Seed thought looked like an animal, which animal would you choose?