

**mindfulness
ambassador
Council
student guidebook**

global edition
sampler

mindfulness without borders

mindfulness ambassador council 12-week program

cultivating mindfulness and social-emotional competence

student guidebook

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Revised July 2013

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Mindfulness Without Borders is a non-profit organization that brings best practices in mindfulness and social-emotional competencies to youth and their communities. We offer educational programs that explore key strategies and tools to empower individuals with vital life skills they need to tackle the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

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www.mindfulnesswithoutborders.org

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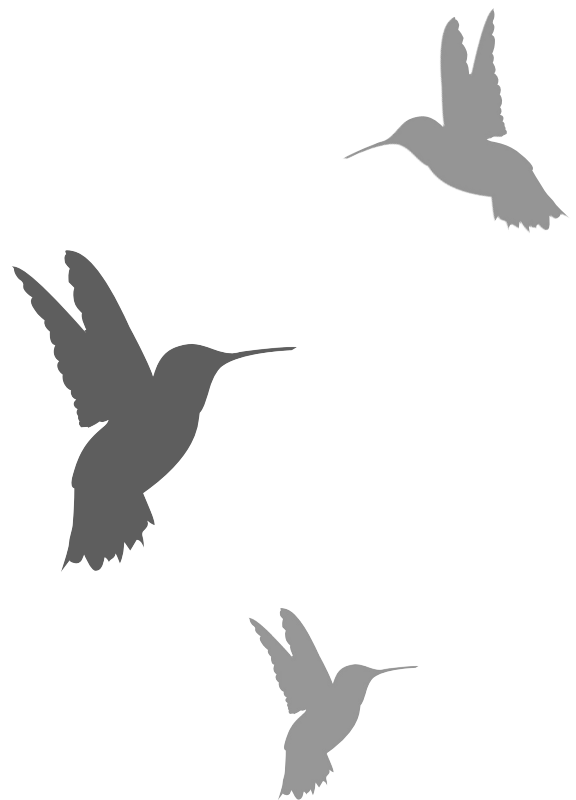
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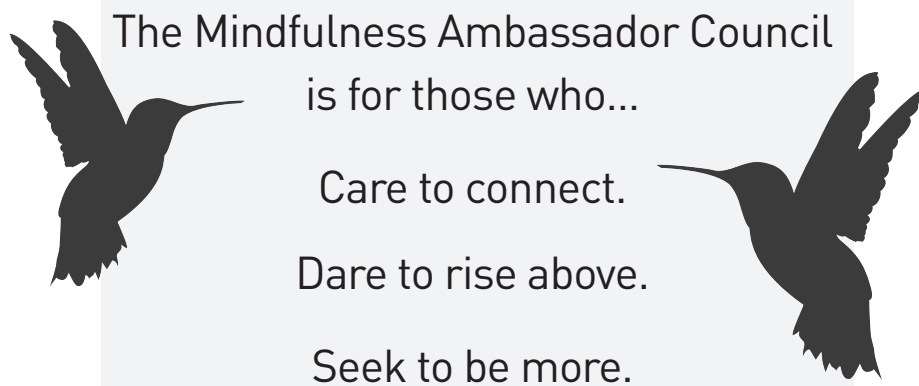


“When schools implement high quality SEL programs and approaches effectively, academic achievement of children increases, incidence of problem behaviors decreases, the relationships that surround the student are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools change for the better.”

—Maurice Elias, director of the Social- Emotional Learning Lab at Rutgers University

T*he Mindfulness Ambassador Council (MAC)* program offers youth a forum to meet face to face and learn about constructive ways for addressing personal, social and community challenges. Essentially, it establishes a common language based on sharing, modeling and practicing 12 essential principles that provide members with tools to strengthen their well-being, think critically and act with thoughtfulness and compassion.

At the heart of the MAC program are basic mindfulness practices that help young people access the wisdom within themselves and within the group. Participants are encouraged to speak from the heart, ask questions to discover their fullest potential, and explore possibilities that lead to a culture of mutual respect, collaboration and ethical concern for each other and the world.



The Mindfulness Ambassador Council
is for those who...

Care to connect.
Dare to rise above.
Seek to be more.



notes



Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically. By strengthening essential skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution, responsible decision-making, relationship building, goal setting, and self discipline, individuals can become effective communicators, collaborators and leaders that shape a safe, just and sustainable world.

Mindfulness Without Borders' educational content integrates the key findings of CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), and elements of their five social and emotional learning domains, including:

self-awareness – accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.

self-management – regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately.

social awareness – being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.

relationship skills – establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed.

responsible decision-making – making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community.



notes





Living *mindfully* is like being an artist: you need the right tools to practice your craft, and you need to constantly refine your technique to achieve your creative potential. In the same way, using the present moment tools below will help you to hone a consistent mindfulness practice that will in time lead to a more aware, compassionate and fulfilling way of life.

tool 1: breathe mindfully

Use your breath as an anchor to still your mind and bring yourself back to the present moment.

tool 2: listen deeply

Listen deeply to improve your understanding of how others think and feel.

tool 3: cultivate insight

See life as it is, allowing each experience to be an opportunity for learning.

tool 4: practice compassion

Consider the thoughts and feelings of others and let kindness and empathy be your guides.

tool 5: limit reactivity

Pause, reflect, and choose a skillful response based on ethical standards.

tool 6: express gratitude

Carry a spirit of appreciation into your everyday activities.

tool 7: nurture mutual respect

Appreciate our common humanity and value different perspectives as well as your own.

tool 8: build integrity

Bring forth your positive values and apply them consistently.

tool 9: steward leadership

Make use of your unique talents and generosity to contribute to the well-being of the whole community.

tool 10: be peace

Cultivate your own inner peace, becoming an agent for compassionate action.

notes



open the council

council check-in

Participants sit in a circle, introduce themselves by name and share one character trait or quality that they bring to the council. For example: My name is Sam and I bring 'curiosity' into the circle."

council guidelines

Council members are asked to review, agree on and stick to the following guidelines:

- Listen respectfully with an openness to multiple perspectives
- Speak from the heart and use "I" statements
- Speak only when you have the talking piece
- Say just enough
- What is said in the council stays in the council
- Do your best to attend all meetings



Mindfulness is the capacity to be alert and open to life experience as it occurs in a non-reactive, resilient and compassionate way.

—Susan Kaiser Greenland, author and mindfulness educator



theme: mindfulness basics

Mindfulness is a way of being and thinking. When we are mindful, we focus our attention on what is happening in our body, our mind and in our environment in the moment. With mindfulness, we live in the present, focused on what is happening right now. The intention is to see things as they are, rather than as they used to be or as we wish they could be. We notice when the mind is judging experiences as ‘black’ or ‘white,’ ‘positive’ or ‘negative,’ ‘fair’ or ‘unfair.’ Sometimes when we judge, we are resisting what is true in the moment; we may cloud our experience and create worry, stress and suffering. With mindfulness, we learn to notice these judgments, let them go, and observe the experience for what it is - clearly and accurately. With this quality of attention, we learn how to be present to anything—every gift and every struggle that life offers us.

Mindfulness is not something we need to create; mindfulness exists inside every one of us and we can access it at any time. The idea is to deliberately slow down and to bring more awareness to the mind and body experience. It’s about observing our thoughts, feelings and sensations that we are already experiencing, and acting on them with discernment, kindness and compassion. The objective is to view the experience with more focus and to reflect and respond with greater clarity and less reactivity.

On the other hand, *mind-lessness* tends to take over when our minds are scattered and we are not paying attention to our words and actions. With mindlessness, we may react thoughtlessly to a given situation without concern and compassion for ourselves, others and the environment. We may let our old stories and habitual actions govern our experiences, rather than choosing to see each situation with curiosity.

Mindfulness is like the ocean. Even when there are big swells crashing on the surface, down at the bottom it is relatively still. With a mindfulness practice, we can learn to find this same stillness deep within ourselves, while the waves of emotion, thought and external experiences wash over us. With mindfulness, we are not trying to get rid of our thoughts and feelings. Rather, we are learning to look at the experience as it is unfolding moment by moment with more awareness and acceptance.



teaching quote

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”

— Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, scientist and author

council dialogue

- What does this quote mean to you?
- Tell a story of a time when you acted carelessly. What would you do differently to be more mindful?

mindfulness practice: TUZA

One way to be mindful is to bring our attention to the experience of breathing. With a breathing practice, we notice how paying attention to the breath moment-to-moment helps quiet the mind and calm the heart. The intent of TUZA is to pay attention to the in-breath and the out-breath as a basic skill to bring us back to the present moment. It is a useful tool to help us pause before reacting in emotionally intense situations. What is fun about TUZA is that this breathing practice can be done at any time throughout the day.

TUZA

here's how:

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop.
- Gently close your eyes or look for a reference point somewhere on the floor where you can return your eyes when they get distracted and begin to wander around the room.
- Let your spine grow tall and noble like the trunk of a tall tree.
- Take a moment to notice how your body feels.
- Now, bring your attention to the flow of your breath.
- You don't need to breathe in a special way. Your body knows how to breathe.
- Simply notice each breath coming into the body with an in-breath, and leaving the body with an out-breath.
- If you notice your mind is caught up in thoughts, concerns, emotions or body sensations, know that this is normal.
- Notice what is distracting you and as kindly as you can, turn your attention back to breathing for another few moments.
- Breathe in following the whole length of the breath. Breathe out, following the whole length of the breath.
- Allow each in-breath to be a new beginning and each out-breath a letting go.
- When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to the room.

reflecting on the practice

Describe your experience practicing TUZA with one word or image.

home assignment

Join the mindfulness ambassador blog and share your favourite song, pastime, and/or favourite fictional hero or heroine in the *Get Acquainted* section, www.mindfulnesswithoutborders.org (see appendix for login instructions).

Explore ways to bring mindfulness into your daily life. As part of this discovery process, take time each day to experience being mindful during one routine activity, such as taking a walk, brushing your teeth or waiting for a bus.

Practice TUZA 3 minutes, twice a day, to bring your awareness back to your breath and help stay in the present moment.

close the council

Members stand in a circle to close the meeting with a *Circle of Gratitude*. One person in the circle turns to the right and says to the person standing beside them, "Thank you for being here." A genuine message of thanks is passed from person to person, until everyone in the circle has said and received thanks.





open the council

Start off with a 3-minute practice of TUZA (p. 9)

council check-in

Share one thing that surprised you in the last week.

review home assignment

theme: open-mindedness

When we live with an open mind, we approach life with a sense of curiosity and discovery. We encounter differences from a place of humbleness and empathy for how others think and feel. We recognize that we have biases, fears, assumptions and prejudices of our own. Yet we don't let them keep us from entertaining multiple perspectives. We notice if we dislike or are resistant to something, but we do not get stuck in negative thinking. We look for the potential in each situation, knowing that while we cannot always control external events, we can explore new information, experiences and responses. To learn to think is to learn to question.

Everyone sees the world through their own lens. Often, we get set in a certain way of thinking and being. When life doesn't go exactly according to plan, we push back with resistance. When we live with fixed perceptions, we approach new situations believing that we have nothing to learn. By contrast, when we accept that our perspective is not the only valid one, we can learn to explore our everyday experiences more fully. We can evaluate them objectively and cope more skillfully with the complex challenges that face us and our communities.

teaching story

A traveler came upon an elderly woman seated on a bench outside the entrance to a city. The traveler asked her, "What is this town ahead like?"

The elderly woman replied, "First, tell me about the last town you visited."

"Oh, it was awful," replied the traveler. "The people were unfriendly, the food was horrible, and the weather was bad."

"Well," said the woman, "this next town will probably be about the same." The traveler then went gloomily on his way.

The next day another traveler walked by the same old woman seated on the bench and asked about the village ahead. The elderly woman again replied by asking him about the last town he visited.

This time the traveler responded, "Oh, it was lovely. The sunsets were beautiful, the people were fascinating, and there were so many interesting things to do."

The elderly woman then replied, "The town ahead will most likely be the same as your last." The traveler went happily on his way.

council dialogue

In this council dialogue members are asked to sit in pairs and share and respond to the following questions:

- What circumstances cause you to get stuck in a rigid perspective?
- Share a time when you were open to a new experience and you benefited from it.

mindfulness mindful listening

Mindful listening is important to establishing and maintaining an open mind. When we listen mindfully, we realize that there is nothing we need to do in order for our ears to hear. We don't need to go out and get the sounds; they simply arrive at the doorstep of our senses without any effort. The intent of this practice is to keep your listening ears open and to stay attuned to the sounds that surround you.

mindful listening

here's how:

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop.
- Gently close your eyes or look for a reference point somewhere on the floor where you can return your eyes when they get distracted and begin to wander around the room.
- Let your spine grow tall and noble like the trunk of a tall tree.
- Take a moment to notice how your body feels.
- Is it tense? Relaxed? Hot? Cold? Tired?
- No sensation is right or wrong; the intention is to simply notice how the body feels right here, right now.
- Now, bring your attention to the flow of your breath.
- You don't need to breathe in a special way. Your body knows how to breathe.
- Simply notice each breath coming into the body with an inhale, and leaving the body with an exhale.
- If you notice your mind is caught up in thoughts, concerns, emotions or body sensations, know that this is normal.
- Notice what is distracting you and gently let it go by redirecting your attention back to the breath.
- Now, direct your attention to the experience of hearing. Allow sounds to come and go, just like the breath comes and goes.
- Stretch your listening out to the farthest sounds you can hear.
- Notice the sounds as they appear, linger and vanish.
- Now, gradually begin to focus on more immediate sounds.
- Notice the sounds around you and just listen and experience them as they appear, linger and vanish.
- Let the sounds you hear be the anchor to the present moment.
- When you get distracted, notice what distracted you and as kindly as you can, turn your attention back to the experience of listening.
- Now, bring your attention to the sound of your own breath.
- Continue to breathe for a few moments, letting the breath come and go as it will.
- Notice each breath coming into the body with an inhale and leaving the body with an exhale.
- Let each in-breath be a new beginning and each out-breath be a letting-go.
- When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to the room.

reflecting on the practice

Name a word or phrase to describe your experience right now.

home assignment

Continue your volunteer community service project.

Post an entry about one assumption someone has had about who you are or what you can do and how it affected you in the *My Life & Challenges* section on the mindfulness ambassador blog.

Practice TUZA for 3 minutes, twice a day, to bring your awareness back to your breath and help stay in the present moment.

close the council

Council members are asked to stand *shoulder to shoulder* in a circle and share one thing that they have integrated into their daily life as a result of these council meetings.



The first step toward peace-building is looking inward, cultivating your own inner peace, and then looking outward to bring peace to the world. As Mindfulness Ambassadors you are joining hundreds of council members from around the world who stand for kindness and compassion – driving positive impact in your community.

The Mindfulness Without Borders team would like to extend its deep appreciation to all student and teacher ambassadors who are dedicated to bringing mindful living and peace to the world.

mindfulness without borders

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