BECOMING A STOP, BREATHE & THINK CLASSROOM

High School Edition
We often hear from teachers and students about how their classrooms are impacted by big emotions, self-criticism, social tension and distraction. In this introductory packet, we offer mindfulness-based strategies from the Stop, Breathe & Think app to work directly with these challenges.

The Stop, Breathe & Think app begins with an emotion word check-in to identify how you are feeling. Then, the app will recommend guided activities tailored to those emotions. These activities support the development of both mindfulness and emotional literacy in adolescents, and complement Social Emotional Learning competencies like self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. There are a variety of techniques ranging from movement and sensory awareness to calm breathing exercises and reframing activities.

These guided activities can be easily integrated into your classroom. Don’t worry—you don’t need to be a tech genius or mindfulness expert. That’s where we come in. We’ve created a FAQ Guide to answer any tech questions you may have and walk you through the setup of the app.

The Stop, Breathe & Think All Ages app is available on the web at stopbreathethink.com, through iOS and Android platforms, and is compatible with computers, smart boards, laptops and tablets, and Amazon Alexa. So, let’s dive in!
1. INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

“Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”.
- Jon Kabat-Zinn, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what is happening right now, by observing what’s going on inside (your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations) and outside (your interactions and surroundings) with openness and curiosity.

Practicing mindfulness cultivates a teen’s understanding that strong thoughts and emotions do not need to overpower them even when their feelings are overwhelming or feel out of control. When teens (and adults) turn their attention towards their present moment experiences, their racing minds tend to slow, and they develop a sense of self-awareness. This self-awareness allows teens to label their emotions, understand that those emotions are impermanent, and use strategies to regulate those emotions.

HOW DOES MINDFULNESS WORK?

Your brain grows and changes based on how it is used. Every time you have a thought, neurons connect like little impulses across the map of your brain. When these neurons connect, your brain grows thicker and stronger in certain places based on the thoughts you think. You can actually change the circuitry
of the brain to help you become more peaceful, calm and focused simply by directing your thoughts and attention.

**SETTLED NOT STIRRED**

Imagine a bottle filled with sand and water. When you shake the bottle, the sand and water get stirred up, making the water cloudy. When the bottle is left undisturbed, the sand settles, and the water becomes clear again. Like the sand in water, when we get caught up in our thoughts and emotions, it can be difficult to see clearly, which impacts our perceptions and decision making. If left unchecked, our thoughts, stress and strong emotions have a tendency to build momentum. The skills of mindfulness and meditation will help us become aware of this process, create some space between our thoughts, emotions and reactions, and allow ourselves the opportunity to settle. Try the *Settled Or Stirred Meditation Snow Globe* Activity on pg. 25.

**STRESS AND THE BRAIN**

Our response to stress and strong emotions begin in the brain. When we are faced with a dangerous or stressful situation, our senses send information to the amygdala, an almond-shaped group of neurons in the middle of our brain, which is an integral part of our emotional processing. The amygdala interprets the sensory input, and if danger is perceived, a stress signal is sent to the hypothalamus. Like a control center, the hypothalamus relays messages to the rest of the body through the nervous system preparing it to fight, flee or freeze.

Reflective

When we are feeling calm and settled, the amygdala filters information openly to the prefrontal cortex where executive functions like focusing, learning, reasoning, problem solving and decision making takes place. This allows us to be more reflective and think before we act.

Reactive

When we are feeling stressed, threatened or stirred up, our amygdala does not pass information to the prefrontal cortex and instead triggers the “fight, flight or freeze” response, which has evolved as a survival mechanism,
Many of the body’s functions work automatically, like breathing, blood pressure and digestion. These functions are controlled by the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS).

The ANS is divided into two branches: the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)—the “fight, flight or freeze” response during stress, intense activity and emergencies, and the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS)—the “rest and digest,” or calming response.

allowing us to react immediately to life-threatening situations. Our bodies can have similar reactions to daily situations that are non-life-threatening, like school-related stress, emotional conflict or social pressure.
1. INTRODUCTION

SYMPATHETIC

The SNS or “fight, flight or freeze” is responsible for what happens to your body in response to a stressful situation. Adrenaline circulates through the blood affecting every organ. Your heart pumps faster; blood pressure rises; breathing becomes faster and more shallow; pupils expand; and your muscles tighten. The SNS is your body’s natural response during emergencies, but often it is triggered during everyday stress, and when this happens, it can make us feel unhealthy.

PARASYMPATHETIC

When we practice mindfulness focusing on deep relaxed breaths, we can turn off the SNS and turn on our Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS), also known as “rest and digest,” which calms us down and helps us to relax. When the PNS is activated, your heart rate drops; blood pressure falls; breathing slows and deepens; pupils shrink; and muscles relax. This promotes good digestion, supports your immune system and just makes you feel good all over.
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

2. BEST PRACTICES FOR LEADING MINDFULNESS WITH YOUTH

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS FOR THE CLASSROOM

• Creates a positive, safe environment where students feel it is OK to investigate their thoughts and emotions, and they’ll feel less alone.
• Helps students exercise their focus muscles.
• Creates more compassionate and kind interactions among peers.
• Supports students in the process of labeling their emotions.
• Brings a sense of calm to the classroom.

CREATE A SPACE

• Make practicing mindfulness a special time from the first session.
• Decide how you want to set up the room and eliminate distractions. Try sitting in a circle and closing the door to limit outside sounds.
• Ask students to take off their backpacks and put away anything that might be distracting.
2. BEST PRACTICES FOR LEADING MINDFULNESS WITH YOUTH

continued

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

• Set expectations from the get-go.
• Clearly explain what they are about to do, for example, “We are going to be sitting with our eyes closed, and we will be focusing on our breath.”
• Ask if anyone has ever tried mindfulness or meditation before. Let them know that it may feel uncomfortable or strange at first, but that will pass.
• Start with a short amount of time and only increase when you are confident the students can handle it.
• Students will be looking to you to model what to do, so your presence is important. Practice along with them, and model being focused and not easily stirred by distractions like an announcement on the loudspeaker or the door opening and closing.

INTEGRATING STOP, BREATHE & THINK INTO YOUR CLASSROOM ROUTINE

From Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of Mindful Games:

Favor consistency over length of practice
Your students do not need to practice mindfulness for long periods of time, but it does help to be consistent in order to see results.

There is no right or wrong way to feel
Let your students know there is no right or wrong way to feel during or after these activities. The goal is for them just to notice how they are feeling in that moment without actually trying to change something or judge it. And keep in mind, sometimes your students may feel calmer after doing one of these activities, and sometimes they won’t. But both are okay.

Skip an activity if it makes your students feel uncomfortable
Each child may respond differently to the activities, so let them know if something makes them uncomfortable, that they can just move on and try something else.
Encourage your students to develop a kind inner voice
Developing a kind inner voice can lessen judgmental and self-critical thoughts. Developing a kind inner voice in relationship to these activities will help students carry that voice with them into other aspects of their lives.

Avoid using Stop, Breathe & Think as a form of discipline
Developing mindfulness is a journey that we want to support and keep in a positive framework for students. By using mindful games as discipline, we can end up fostering a negative relationship with these techniques and ideas.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Can’t sit still
When you have a bunch of wiggle worms, or there is a lot of antsy energy in the room, try mindful games that are movement and body oriented like Shake It Up, Tic-Toc, One Minute Squeeze and Let Go, Starfish Stretch, or Sunflower Stretch. These activities use movement and physical sensations to help students gather their attention and calm their bodies and minds.

First-time giggles
Students will often break into giggles the first time you try a quiet mindfulness game like Mindful Breathing with the class. This is normal and is an expression of feeling awkward and a little uncomfortable. For many of them, sitting quietly with eyes closed, focusing their attention inward, is a new experience. We often celebrate the giggles and join in, until it naturally subsides. You may tell a class before the first time practicing mindful breathing that it might be a little weird for them, and that a lot of times people start laughing or looking around the room.

A student does not want to participate
Practicing mindfulness in the classroom should always be “opt-in.” If a student does not want to participate, give them another activity, or ask them to sit quietly without distracting classmates who choose to participate.
We often hear from teachers and students about how they are impacted by stress inside and outside of the classroom. We’ve compiled a selection of exercises from the Stop, Breathe & Think curriculum to give both teachers and students tools to deal with stress in a healthy and productive way. These exercises can be easily integrated into an academic setting. Audio recordings of many of the scripted exercises provided here can be accessed via the Stop, Breathe & Think App, available for free at http://stopbreathethink.org on the web and through iOS and Android.
ACTIVITY #1: DEFINING MINDFULNESS

Materials
Chalkboard, whiteboard, or poster paper for creating circle charts.

Instructions
1. Draw a circle chart with the word “Mindfulness” in the center. Ask students to define mindfulness, and record their answers on the circle chart.
2. Once students have defined mindfulness, explore the definition of mindfulness provided below.
3. Then, introduce the four qualities of mindfulness, also provided below.
4. Divide students into four groups, and assign each group one quality of mindfulness to define in their own circle chart. If there is time, students can list activities where that quality of mindfulness is naturally part of their experience, for example, “When I play basketball, I am present, paying attention to what is happening in the moment.”
5. Each group presents their work.
Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what is happening right now, by observing what’s going on inside (your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations) and outside (your interactions and surroundings) with curiosity, openness and acceptance.

Four Qualities of Mindfulness

1. **Presence**: Where we are keenly present in the current moment. With presence, we are right here in our bodies, exactly now, paying attention with interest and enthusiasm. With mindfulness, we stay connected to whatever is happening.

2. **Concentration**: Where we don’t allow our minds to wander from the present moment. We are not thinking about what we are going to have for lunch or about the movie we are going to see. We are aware of the thoughts in our heads, and we keep them focused on what’s going on right here and now. We are able to stay aware of whatever is happening.

3. **Non-judgment**: Mindfulness has a gentle quality that is neutral. We develop a moment-to-moment awareness of our bodies, thoughts, environment and relationships without judging or evaluating.

4. **Careful Consideration**: Where we think before we act because we care about the impact our words and actions have on ourselves and other people.
When students and teachers walk into the classroom, backpacks and textbooks aren’t the only baggage they bring with them. Everyone enters the room in a different mental, emotional and physical state, which often affects their readiness to learn.

Check in mentally, physically and emotionally to gauge how your students are feeling, so you can meet them where they are. By checking in daily, students will build both emotional vocabulary and self-awareness. You can use the Stop, Breathe & Think app or worksheets available on our website to facilitate check-in. These check-in activities can be used at the beginning of class or as a way to transition from one activity to another.

**ACTIVITY #2: CHECK-IN**

- Think about how you are feeling: Pick 3-5 words from the SBT posters or worksheets describing how you are feeling mentally (how your mind feels), physically (how your body feels) and emotionally (strong feelings.)
- Teacher can model the activity by picking their own words.
- Students write down 3-5 words.
- Opportunity for a pair share or classroom sharing circle.
While you are going about your day, or periodically during a class, try to remember to pause occasionally to stop, breathe and think. If you are using the Quick Stop, Breathe & Think Practice with your class, try using audio or visual cues to encourage students to take a moment to stop, breathe and think.

**Sample Audio Cues:**
Chimes, a bell, a wood block, a musical instrument like a xylophone.

**Sample Visual Cues:**
A raised hand, a sign, a color card.

After using an audio or video cue to gather students’ attention, try playing the Stop, Breathe & Think activity in the app, or use the abbreviated script below to lead it yourself.
3.

ACTIVITY #3: STOP, BREATHE & THINK PRACTICE

Stop
Just pause for a moment—you can stop what you are doing, or you can just pause for a moment in your mind.

Breathe
Take a few deep breaths, paying attention to your breath as it goes in and out.

Think
With openness, curiosity and without judgment, just notice the thoughts that are running through your mind, and become aware of any emotions or physical sensations you may be feeling. If you notice any tension in your face, shoulders, hands or body, just take a moment to breathe and relax your muscles.

Then, just go back to whatever you were doing. This simple practice can be done as much as you like and whenever you remember.
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

MINDFUL BREATHING

With a simple focus on the breath, mindful breathing is one of the most effective and easy-to-implement practices. For a guided mindful breathing activity, start off with 3 Minute Mindful Breathing, and then slowly move on to longer activities like Breathe & Chill, or Lion Mind in the SBT all ages app. Try Mindful Breathing at the beginning of class or whenever students need a break. Students can practice Mindful Breathing while sitting at their desks or while sitting cross-legged on a cushion on the floor.

FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION

• What was it like to sit and be with your breath?
• Were you able to stay present and concentrate on your breathing?
• Did you feel any discomfort?
• What thoughts came up for you?
• What feelings came up for you?
• When your mind wandered, were you able to bring your attention back to your breath?
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

3. BODY SCAN

Body Scan can be used to help students rest and recharge, especially in the mid-afternoon, or when you notice they are feeling tired or restless. Students may sit at their desks, sit with their legs crossed, or lie down on their backs. In all cases, students can close their eyes.

For a guided body scan activity, try Body Scan or Chill Pill One in the SBT app.

FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION

• What was body scan like?
• What did you notice?
• What were you thinking or feeling during this activity?
• Were you able to just notice without judging how you were feeling or without wanting to change anything?
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

3. ACTIVITY #6

RELAX, GROUND & CLEAR

This mindfulness activity focuses on positive visualization to help students feel relaxed and grounded and to clear their minds. It is helpful when you want to calm the chatter in your mind, or soothe your nerves before a test, performances or competition.

There are three guided Relax, Ground & Clear activities in the SBT app. Try Relax, Ground & Clear at School before a test, Relax, Ground & Clear at the Game before a competition, or Relax, Ground & Clear at a Performance before a performance or presentation.

FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION

What was it like to imagine each step of the meditation:

1. Feeling a sense of peace and calm?
2. Feeling grounded and stable?
3. Imagining the vastness of the sky?
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

3.

ACTIVITY #7

GRATITUDE

“The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.”
- Henry Miller

What is gratitude?
Gratitude is the feeling of being thankful and appreciative. Thinking of things we are grateful for helps us to see our own strengths, the strengths of other people, and the support we have all around us. Gratitude supports our ability to handle whatever comes our way, and can enhance our happiness and enjoyment of everyday life.

Life can bring us many challenges—we can experience a greater sense of well-being if we purposefully look for and appreciate the positive aspects of our lives. Whatever kind of experience we have—joyful or painful, healthy or unwell—try to see the positive sparks. Even when 99% of our experience is negative, if we could see and rejoice in the 1%, then that small spark could become 5%. Then slowly, our whole way of thinking and perceiving could change or improve, causing 5% to become 10%, and so on.

For a guided gratitude activity, try Feeling Grateful in the SBT app, or use the Gratitude Journal prompts in Activity #8.

For more information on the benefits of gratitude, check out this article from the Greater Good Science Center on the work of the world’s leading scientific expert on gratitude, Robert Emmons. [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition].
3. \section*{Activity #8: Gratitude Journal Guidelines}

1. What material things are you grateful for?
   - To start, think about things you use everyday, such as running water or your bed.
   - Try to explain why they are important to you and how they make you feel.

2. How are you grateful for yourself?
   - Start with the basics, like simply being alive or appreciating the body you have, even if it’s not perfect!
   - Or you can think about your basic abilities, like your ability to see, hear, feel, think and touch.
   - You can also think about your unique skills and talents, like your ability to teach, write or practice yoga.
   - Also, think about other personal qualities, such as being a good listener or caring friend.
   - When thinking about how you are grateful for yourself, try not to compare yourself to other people.

continued
3. How are you grateful for the people in your life?
   - Choose one person or multiple people in your life, and describe why you are grateful for them and how they make you feel.
   - Though it might be challenging, trying to find something you are grateful for in a person that you might find difficult to be around.

4. How are you grateful for certain experiences or situations?
   - Think about things in your past, even your recent past, that you are grateful for.
   - Consider vacations you have taken, delicious foods you have eaten or positive conversations you have had.

**TIP!**

Not enough time for a gratitude journal exercise? Circle up with your students, and do a quick go-around where everyone shares one thing they are grateful for at the end of the day.

**FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION**

- What are you grateful for?
- What relationships are you grateful for?
- What freedoms are you grateful for?
- What opportunities are you grateful for?
MINDFULNESS CLASSROOM INTEGRATION

3. KINDNESS

ACTIVITY #9

What is Kindness?
Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate. When students develop the attitude of kindness towards themselves and others, they can strengthen their ability to work with challenging feelings like anger, impatience and frustration.

For guided kindness activities try Just Like Me Too, Feeling Kind and Be Your Inner Ally, in the SBT app, or use the Kindness Cards activity in Activity #10.
3. KINDNESS CARDS

The Kindness Cards activity support the well-being of the students, teachers and the class as a whole.

**ACTIVITY #10: KINDNESS CARDS**

**Materials**
- Index cards
- Sticker cards
- Prizes

**Instructions**
1. Give each student 10 index cards. Students write one act of kindness that someone could do at home or at school on each index card.
2. Cards are placed in a box.
3. Students may randomly choose 2 cards at a time from the box.
4. Student completes the act of kindness on the card and writes a brief journal entry about their act of kindness on the back of the card.
5. Students turn the cards in at the end of the week and receive prizes for their participation.

This activity lends itself to a reflection exercise to discuss the experience and feelings that arose throughout the week.
In this project, you’ll be creating a snow globe featuring a personalized meditator in the center. This “Settled or Stirred” Meditating Snow Globe craft is a visual representation of how practicing mindfulness affects our emotions and thoughts.

When we get caught up in our thoughts and feelings, our perspective becomes cloudy, and we have more difficulty making decisions. Mindfulness and meditation allows our mind and emotions to settle, making it easier to see the bigger picture. The quality of the water when the snow globe is shaken is opaque, with the sand or glitter representing stirred-up thoughts and emotions. When we set the snow globe down, the sand or glitter settles, revealing a personal meditator. The quality of this water signifies the quality of the mindful mind... clear, settled and peaceful.

Creating the snow globe will take approximately an ½-1 hour and is suitable for ages 5-18.
ACTIVITY #11: MEDITATING SNOW GLOBE

Materials
- Blank meditator template (Appendix pg. 32)
- Colored pencils
- 16 oz. Mason jar
- Scissors
- Laminating machine or clear packing tape
- Hot glue gun (Please use adult supervision.)
- Spoon
- Glitter and/or colored sand
- Glycerin (optional)
- Water

Instructions
1. On page 41 of the Appendix, you’ll find the meditator template. Copy the template as needed.

2. With colored pencils, decorate and personalize a blank meditator.

3. Use scissors to cut out the meditator from the template.
Mindfulness helps us stay focused and present when we practice the two kinds of meditation introduced in SBT: Active Thinking, where we intentionally direct our thoughts and imagination to think positive thoughts and feel positive feelings (like kindness and compassion) - and - Resting the Mind, where we let it all go.

You can rewire your brain just by meditating because our brains grow and change based on how they are used. Every time you have a thought, neurons connect like little impulses across the map of your brain. When these neurons connect, your brain grows thicker and stronger in certain places based on the thoughts you think. We can actually change the circuitry of the brain to help us be more peaceful and compassionate, simply by directing our thoughts and imaginations. Just like a bodybuilder lifting weights to build muscle, the more you think positive thoughts, the stronger the part of your brain that allows you to experience positive feelings will become.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION?

HOW DOES MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION WORK?

3. #11: SETTLED OR STIRRED MEDITATING SNOW GLOBE

4. Laminate the meditator, or cover it with packing tape on both sides. Be sure to leave a ½-inch border around the meditator. This will prevent water from leaking into the drawing.

5. Leave a 1-inch base of lamination underneath the meditator. If you are using tape, add extra tape to make the base stiff.

6. Flip over the Mason jar lid so that the inside of the lid is facing up. Using a hot glue gun, place a line of glue in the middle of the inside lid. Attach the meditator by its base (which you created by adding the extra tape in the step above) to the lid.
3.

#11: SETTLED OR STIRRED MEDITATING SNOW GLOBE

7. Measure five spoonfuls of colored sand or glitter, and add it to the jar. If you use colored sand, test the sand to see if the color runs. If it does, rinse the sand until the water is clear. If you decide to fill your jar with glitter, try adding a dash of glycerin to keep the glitter from falling too quickly.

8. Fill the jar with water, and then screw on the lid with the meditating figure attached.
3.

#11: SETTLED OR STIRRED MEDITATING SNOW GLOBE

continued

1. Flip the jar upside down so that the meditator is sitting upright, and voilà!

Your snow globe is complete!
We often hear from teachers and students about how they are impacted by stress inside and outside of the classroom. We've compiled a selection of exercises from the Stop, Breathe & Think curriculum to give both teachers and students tools to deal with stress in a healthy and productive way. These exercises can be easily integrated into an academic setting. Audio recordings of many of the scripted exercises provided here can be accessed via the Stop, Breathe & Think App, available for free at http://stopbreathethink.org on the web and through iOS and Android.

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

APPENDIX
## STOP, BREATHE & THINK

### Daily Practice Log

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FAQ GUIDE

GENERAL CONCERNS

What is the Stop, Breathe & Think app?
SBT is an award-winning app that helps you find peace of mind anywhere. It allows you to check-in with how you are feeling and recommends short activities and guided meditations tuned to those emotions.

Is the app for teens or adults?
Both. All the activities are appropriate for teens and adults. We have launched a Kids app as well (ages 4-10) available on iOS, iPads and tablets.

Is there a Stop, Breathe & Think app for Android or other non Apple smartphones?
The All Ages app is available on Android devices. The Kids app is not yet available on Android but we are working on it.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS

How can I download the Stop, Breathe & Think app or Kids app?
Stop, Breathe & Think All Ages: The app can be downloaded on the App Store or on Google Play.
Stop, Breathe & Think Kids: The app can be downloaded on the App Store.

Can I access the Stop, Breathe & Think All Ages app and Kids app online?
Yes! SBT All Ages: https://app.stopbreathethink.org
SBT Kids: https://kidsapp.stopbreathethink.com

How do I add multiple accounts on the Kids app?
1. Log in to your account.
2. On the “Who’s In” page, tap “Edit Accounts” in the upper-right corner of the app.
3. Tap the plus icon to add another account.
4. In the box, add a name. You can also change the icon color by tapping a color.
5. Tap “Done” on your keypad. The account is added.
6. If you have reached the maximum of 5 accounts but need access to more, tap “Need more than 5?” and an automated email will be sent to our support team.

How do I stream Stop, Breathe & Think content on a smartboard?
Easy! Since a smartboard is in essence a larger version of a computer, you would access Stop, Breathe & Think through our website at https://app.stopbreathethink.org, log in and begin exploring!

Still have questions?
We’re here to help! Email us: support@stopbreathethink.com
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STOP, BREATHE & THINK

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Becoming a Stop, Breathe & Think Classroom: Middle School Edition (v.1 Aug 2018)

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