



Let's *Move More!* Virginia!



An Instructor's Guide to Mindful Movement for Kids and Teens

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Some Questions About Mindful Movement

Is Being Active Safe?

Physical activity is generally safe for everyone. The health benefits you gain from being active are far greater than the chances of getting hurt. Here are some things you can do to stay safe while you are active:
















- If you haven't been active in a while, start slowly and build up.
- Learn about the types and amounts of activity that are right for you.
- Choose activities that are appropriate for your fitness level.
- Use the right safety gear and sports equipment.
- Choose a safe place to do your activity.
- See a health care provider if you have a health problem.

Why Should We Try Mindful Movement?

Mindful movement with kids helps cultivate compassion, nonjudgment, connection between breath and postures, and a knowledge base for sustaining lifelong physical activity. Benefits of mindful movement include improved symptoms of anxiety, enhanced relaxation, reduced stress, and improved cardiovascular status, physical function, and behavior (table 1).



Table 1. Benefits of mindful movement.

Physical Benefits	Mental Benefits	School-based Benefits
 • Teaches awareness of breathing	 • Cuts down on anxiety and depression	 • Helps hone focus and concentration
 • Increases posture and strength	 • Increases self-esteem	 • Shows them that discipline pays off
 • Improves balance and coordination	 • Fights hyperactivity	 • Helps kinesthetic learners
 • Burns excess calories and wards off disease	 • It's great stress management	 • Encourages self-expression and creativity
 • Helps your child sleep better	 • Shows them how to live in the moment	
 • Promotes healthy exercise habits		

What is “Mindful Movement” Anyway?

Mindful movement is any physical activity done with awareness or intention. This mindful movement program is in three parts:

- **Breathing exercises:** This is the foundation of your mindful movement practice. It is the formal practice of controlling your breath in a mindful and intentional way.
- **Physical postures:** Physical postures involve placing the body in positions that also create awareness, relaxation, and concentration. Stretching and toning of the body provides a number of benefits, including stress reduction, increased focus, and increased physical mobility.
- **Guided relaxation:** This phase usually occurs after the breathing exercises and physical postures and may include laying on the floor with eyes shut or sitting in a comfortable position. Children may be encouraged to visualize an image or thought that brings their attention to a singular pointed focus. Concentration on breathing is reiterated throughout the process. After the relaxation, there should be a slow reawakening where, depending on the activity, they are encouraged to bring small movements and stretching back into their bodies.



How Long Should Kids Do Mindful Movement Activities?

The recommended duration varies by age group (table 2). We recognize that you may not have the full recommended duration of time to assist youth in moving more. We provide example exercises that can take from 2 to 15 minutes. Do what you can and leave the rest. Moving more is the goal.

Table 2. Recommended duration of mindful movement for different age groups.

PRESCHOOL (AGES 3-6) Total duration: 15-20 minutes		
Breathing: 2-3 minutes	Physical postures: 10-15 minutes	Guided relaxation: 2-3 minutes
CHILDREN (AGES 7-12) Total duration: 30-45 minutes		
Breathing: 3-5 minutes	Physical postures: 15-30 minutes	Guided relaxation: 5-10 minutes
ADOLESCENTS (AGES 13<18) Total duration: 45-90 minutes		
Breathing: 5-15 minutes	Physical postures: 30-60 minutes	Guided relaxation: 5-15 minutes

How Do We Encourage Mindfulness?

Throughout your session, you can cue the kids to check in with their mind, body, and emotions:

- **Mental Listen-in:** After three breaths, choose one word to describe your mental landscape. (Examples: chaotic, peaceful, distracted)
- **Physical Listen-in:** Where do I feel sensation in my body? (Examples: tingling in toes, pain in shoulder, stretch in legs, release in hands)
- **Emotional Listen-in:** How do I relate to that sensation? (It is good or bad to me because ...)

Kids' Mindful Movement

Instructors: Keeping the VCE and FNP slogan of “*Move More!*” in mind, do what you can, when you can! Pick one or two options from each section. Remind the kids to not compare their bodies to others, and to just have fun!

The following categories and sequences are age-appropriate for kids 3-12 years old.

Breathing Exercises

Preschool ages 3-6 Breathing: 2-3 minutes

Children ages 7-12 Breathing: 3-5 minutes

PICK ONE:

Bumblebee Breath (relax and soothe)

Sit comfortably. Breathe in fully through your nose. As you breathe out, hum like a bee. Demonstrate once for the kids, then ask them to join in.

Bunny Breath (cleanse and clear)

Sit comfortably on your shins with your back straight, stacking your shoulders over your hips. Breathe in three big breaths, one right after the other. Exhale with one long release through nostrils.

Bear Breath (rest and balance)

Sit comfortably or lie on your back. Breathe in through your nose for a count of five, hold in for a count of three, exhale for a count of five, then hold breath for a count of three. Repeat.

Elephant Breath (cooling)

Inhale through your nose, raising your arms overhead and look up and back. Exhale through your mouth, swinging your arms through your legs. Repeat three to four times.



Physical Posture Sequences

PICK ONE SEQUENCE:

GARDEN VARIETY

Hold each pose for the same amount of time. Have 5 minutes? 1 minute each pose, 30 seconds for any poses that require repeating on two sides of the body.

- **Tree:** Stand on one leg. Bend at your knee to bring foot to your opposite leg. Avoid putting the sole of your foot on your knee; anywhere else will do: on the ground or below or above your knee. Hands can be together at chest, together overhead, or stretched out overhead. Switch sides and repeat.
- **Frog:** Stand with your feet wider than hip distance apart. Bend your knees, come all the way down to the ground, then bring your elbows to the inside of your knees. Jump like a frog.
- **Seed:** Sit on your shins. Bring your forehead down to rest on the floor. Pretend to be a seed planted in the garden. Think a happy thought that you want to grow.
- **Butterfly:** With a tall spine, sit on your bottom with your legs out in front of you. Bend your legs, bringing the soles of your feet together. *Slowly* flap your legs like a butterfly.
- **Flower:** From butterfly, lift your bent legs and balance on your sitting bones. Weave your arms under your legs with your palms up. You are a flower in bloom!

NOCTURNAL ANIMALS, OH MY!

Hold each pose for the same amount of time. Have 5 minutes? Do 1 minute for each pose, with 30 seconds for any poses that require repeating on two sides of the body.

- **Bat:** Stand with your feet hip distance apart, flap your arms out to side, and lean forward / hinge from your hips. Bring your arms toward the ground. Bend your knees as much as you want. Relax. Flap your arms back out to side and fly up to standing.
- **Toad:** Stand with your feet wider than hip distance apart. Bend your knees, come all the way down to the ground, then bring your elbows to the inside of your knees. *Slowly* jump like a frog.
- **Cougar Stretch:** From Toad, come to all fours, with your hands under your shoulders and knees under hips. Inhale, let your belly button drop down, arch your back, then look up. Exhale, with the belly button going up toward sky and the back rounding. Look down at the floor.
- **Coyote:** From Cougar, curl your toes under and push your hips back and up. Straighten your legs, with your heels pressing toward the ground and your arms straight. Howl if you like!
- **Owl:** From Coyote, bring your knees to the ground and sit on your shins. Place your hands on your thighs. Keep your spine tall and your eyes wide. Breathe.

LET'S TRAVEL

- **Airplane:** Balance on one leg, extend opposite leg behind lifting slowly off floor, then hinge at hips, bringing chest and belly toward the floor. Extend your arms out and parallel to floor. Soar! Slowly release the lifted leg back down until your feet are together. Repeat with the opposite side.
- **Road:** From Airplane, bring your knees to the mat. Stack your shoulders over your wrists and your knees under your hips. Curl your toes under, straighten your legs, and lift your entire body up, keeping your belly and chest up in a straight line, like a strong, solid



road. If this is too much, come back down to your knees and hold.

- **Boat:** From Road, bring your knees to the mat. Slowing come on to your seat, with feet on the ground, hug your knees into your belly. Place arms behind your back and point your toes. Lift your legs off ground, stretch your arms out in front, and balance. Hold, then release your feet to the mat.

- **Bridge:** From resting Boat, bring your back onto the mat. Bring your hands down by your side, pressing into floor. Lift your hips up off the ground. Root your heels into the mat, then press your chest toward the back of the room. Slowly release your upper back, middle back, then lower back.

I AM AND I CAN!

- **I AM STRONG. Warrior 1:** With your feet hip distance apart, slightly bend both knees, step your right leg back and your right toes out to the right. Lunge forward with your left leg, keeping your belly and chest up. Look at your knee, making sure you can still see your toes. If not, bring your knee back, closer to your hip. Your hands can be on your thigh or reaching up overhead. Hold for five breaths. Switch sides and repeat.
- **I AM BRAVE. Chair** (also called Ski Down the Slopes): From standing, shift your weight into your heels, bend your knees, trying to get your thighs parallel to the floor. Extend your arms out in front or over your head.
- **I CAN CONQUER THE WORLD: Forward fold.** With your feet wide apart, hinge from the hips and fold down to the ground, then place your hands on the floor under your shoulders.
- **I AM UNIQUE. Cobra:** Lie on your belly, placing your hands under your shoulders. Keep your legs pressing into the ground. Lift your head, neck, and shoulders. Do not lift your legs. Bring your chest closer to the mat if you feel ANY discomfort in lower back.
- **I CAN COOK! Knot Your Bread:** Sit crossed legged on floor, cross your right leg over the left, hook your left elbow outside of your right knee, and twist your torso to the right. Repeat on the other side.



Guided Relaxation

PICK ONE:

Four Squares

Sit comfortably. With your pointer finger, draw a line up, right, down, and left to create a square. Now, match your breath with your drawing. Inhale as you bring your finger up on a count of one, right on two, down on three, left on four. Exhale and bring your right finger up and repeat two, three, four. Inhale, down two, three, four. Exhale, left two, three, four. Keep going.



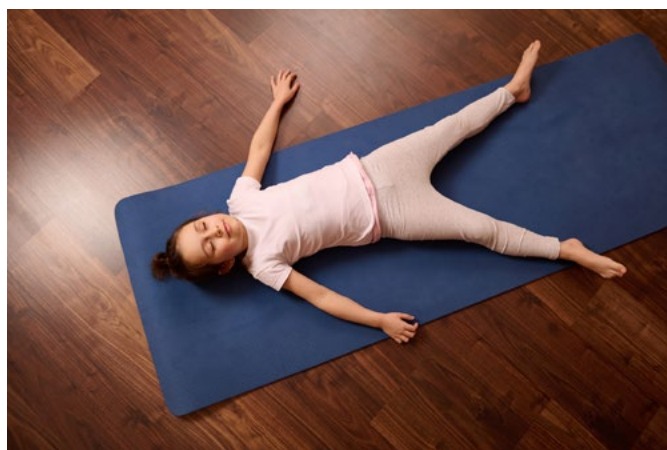
Tummy Travel

Choose a pillow, stuffed animal, or anything that can sit on your stomach. Lie on your back and place your item on your belly. Let your arms rest by your side. Watch your belly rise and fall with your breath. Imagine it's a wave slowly rising from your chest and moving into your belly, then exhale and let the wave move back out through your belly, ending by pushing all the air out of your chest. Begin again, filling your body with your breath as you make a wave-like motion.

Letting It Go

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths as you begin to relax. Bring all your attention to your feet, noticing how it feels. Squeeze both your feet, making fists with your toes and holding the fists as tight as you can. Hold this tension for one or two breaths. Release all the tension in your feet and let them relax completely, noticing how it feels to let that tension go. Try to be as still and relaxed as you can as you take two deep breaths. Move your attention slowly up your body, repeating this process of holding tension, releasing this sensation, and ending with deep cleansing breaths. Here is an example of the progression up the body you can take.

- Both feet
- Ankle and calf
- Thighs and knees
- Entire lower body
- Hips
- Butt
- Tummy
- Right arm and hand
- Left arm and hand
- Shoulders
- Neck
- Face
- Whole body all at once



Teens' Mindful Movement

Instructors: Keeping the VCE and FNP slogan of “*Move More!*” in mind, do what you can, when you can! Pick one or two options from each section. Remind the kids to not compare their bodies to others and to just have fun!

The following categories and sequences are age-appropriate for kids 13≤18 years old. The categories are breathing exercises, posture sequences, and guided meditation.

Breathing Exercises

PICK ONE:

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Start in a comfortable seated position, with your left hand resting on your left knee. With the right hand, bend the pointer and middle fingers down. Bring your right thumb up and gently press it to your right nostril. Inhale in through left nostril, and then use your ring finger to close off the left nostril. Pause. Remove your right thumb, exhale out through right nostril, and then inhale. Use the right thumb to close off right nostril, then pause. Remove the ring finger and exhale out of left nostril. Repeat cycle. Do at least three rounds, matching the length of your inhale and exhale.

Four Squares

Sit comfortably. With your pointer finger, draw a line up, right, down, and left to create a square. Now, match your breath with your drawing. Inhale as you bring your finger up on a count of one, right on two, down on three, left on four. Exhale and bring your right finger up and repeat two, three, four. Inhale, down two, three, four. Exhale, left two, three, four. Keep going.

Cooling Breath

Sit comfortably, with your spine tall and your arms straight. Inhale naturally. Exhale, pushing air out of an opened mouth. Allow the inhale to happen naturally. Exhale, making a “shh” sound. You should feel your diaphragm in your belly, “snapping” each time. It should sound like “Shh, shh, shh.” Try to keep the same tempo for 30 seconds.



Physical Posture Sequence

PICK ONE:

Sequence 1: No floor/mat work

- **Mountain Pose:** Root your feet into the mat, feeling your big toe, small toe, and heel press into the earth. Lift your kneecaps to engage your thighs. Bring your shoulders toward your ears, then release them back down. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Stand tall.
- **Forward Fold:** From Mountain, hinge from the hips, with your head and arms reaching toward the floor. Bend your knees as much as you want or need. Bring your arms out to a T and hinge your back up to Mountain.
- **Warrior 2 (side 1):** From Mountain, step back with your right leg. Angle your right foot at 45 to 90 degrees, whatever feels stable, with your front foot facing forward. Bend the front knee, being careful to not let the front knee extend over ankle. Bring your arms out to a T, keeping them at equal height. Look over your front hand.
- **Extended Side Angle (side 1):** From Warrior 2, reach your front hand down toward your front foot and reach your back hand toward the ceiling. Look up. Inhale as you return to Warrior.
- **Warrior 2 (side 1, with twist):** Bring your right arm to the front of the room and your left arm to the back. Twist, starting at the base of the spine. Continue to breathe. Untwist, returning your left arm to the front of the room. Step to the front of the mat and stand in Mountain.
- **Warrior 2 (side 2):** From Mountain, step back with your left leg. Angle your left foot at 45 and 90 degrees, with the front foot facing forward. Bend your front knee, being careful not to let the front knee extend over the ankle. Raise your arms out to a T, keeping them at equal height. Look over your front hand.
- **Extended Side Angle (side 2):** From Warrior 2, reach your front hand down toward your front foot as your back hand reaches toward the ceiling. Look up. Inhale, returning to Warrior 2. Step to the front of the mat in Mountain.
- **Warrior 2 (side 2, with twist):** Bring your left arm to the front of room and your right arm to the back. Twist, starting at the base of the spine. Continue to breathe. Untwist, returning the right arm to the front of the room. Step to the front of the mat into Mountain.
- **Warrior 3:** From Mountain, step one leg back, then lean forward until your torso is parallel with the floor. Bring your arms out to a T position. Return to Mountain. Repeat with the other leg.
- **Backbend:** From Mountain, bring your hands to your lower back, with your fingertips up and elbows toward each other. Lift your collarbone toward the ceiling or sky. Without crunching into your back, continue to open your chest. Exhale and return to standing. Return to Mountain.

Sequence 2: Floor/Mat Work

- **Cat/Cow:** Start on your hands and knees, with your hands facing downward on the mat and over the wrists and your hips over your knees. As you inhale, drop your belly and look up; this is “cat.” Exhale as you press your hands into the mat and arch your spine. Press your shoulder blades toward the sky or ceiling. This is “cow.” Repeat.
- **Downward Dog** (also called Downward-Facing Dog or Down Dog): From Cow, curl your toes under and push your hips back and up. Straighten your legs, pressing your heels toward the ground and keeping your arms straight. Create space between each finger and grip the ground, with no space under your palm.



- **Low Lunge:** From Down Dog, bring your right foot to front of mat. Stack your right knee over your right ankle, keeping both hips in line. Rest your fingertips on the floor and shine your collarbone to the front of the room. Step your right foot back. Lift your hips, returning to Downward-Facing Dog. Bring your left foot to front of mat. Stack your left knee over your left ankle, keeping both hips in line. Gently rest your fingertips on the floor, shine collarbone to the front of the room. Step your right leg back. Lift your hips to resume Downward-Facing Dog.
- **Side Plank:** From Downward Dog, shift onto the knife (or pinky-toe) side of your right foot. When you have your balance, lift your left hand toward the sky. Keep lifting your left hip up. Place your left hand back on the mat. Lift your hips to resume Downward-Facing Dog. Shift onto the knife (or pinky toe) side of your left foot. When you have your balance, lift your right hand toward the sky. Keep lifting your right hip up. Place your right hand back to mat. Lift your hips to resume Downward-Facing Dog.
- **Low Lunge With Twist.** From Down Dog, bring your right foot to the front of the mat. Stack your right knee over your right ankle, keeping both hips in line. Press your left hand into the mat. Twist from the base of spine, lifting your right hand, stacking both shoulders, and opening your chest toward your bent front knee. Bring your right hand back down. Step your right foot back. Lift your hips to return to Downward-Facing Dog. Bring your left foot to the front of the mat. Stack your left knee over your left ankle, keeping both hips in line. Press your right hand into the mat, twist from the base of your spine, lift your left hand, stacking both shoulders, opening the chest toward your bent front knee. Step your left leg back. Lift hips to return to Downward-Facing Dog.
- **Forward Fold:** From Downward-Facing Dog, walk your feet to the top of the mat. Let go of any tension in the knee and bend your knees as much as needed to rest your belly on your thighs.
- **Squat.** From Forward Fold, bend your knees, then lift your torso up. Keep your heels on the ground. Put your hands together, with your elbows gently pressing into the inner thighs.
- **Seated Forward Fold** (also called Staff Pose): From Squat, bring your bottom to the floor. From a seated position, straighten your legs out in front of you and hold your spine tall. Reach your collarbone toward your toes, hinging at the hips. Do not round your back.
- **Easy Pose:** Sit up into a comfortable seated position for meditation.

Sequence 3: Chair/Seated Exercises

- **Seated Cat/Cow:** With your hands on your knees, inhale, arching your back, pushing your chest forward, and looking up. On your exhale, tuck your chin to your chest, look toward your navel, roll your shoulders forward and down, and round your back.
- **Seated Arm Raises:** Sitting with your back straight, inhale, moving your right arm out to the side and then up over your head. Reach as far as you can over to your left, opening up the right side of your body. Exhale, bringing your arm back down. Inhale, bringing your left arm out to the side and then up over your head. Reach as far as you can over to your right, opening up the left side of your body. Exhale, bringing your arm back down.
- **Head Roll:** Inhale as you bring your right ear to your right shoulder. Exhale as you bring your chin to chest, rolling your head to the left side and reaching your left ear toward your left shoulder. Repeat.
- **Seated Twist:** On an inhale, place both hands on the outside of your right knee. Exhale as you look over your right shoulder and twist your upper body to the right. Come back to center, then take a full inhale and exhale. On your next inhale, place both hands on the outside of your left knee, exhale as you look over your left shoulder, and twist your upper body to the left. Come back to center, taking a full inhale and exhale.
- **Seated Leg Stretches:** Stack your shoulders over your hips, taking any curve out of lower back and rooting into the chair. Inhale as you place your left ankle over top of your right thigh. Be mindful to keep your left foot flexed to protect your knee. Depending on how this feels, try this variation: Place a little resistance on your left thigh and/or extend your torso forward and down. Remember to take full and slow breaths here. Repeat on the other side.

Guided Relaxation

PICK ONE:

Fist Squeeze

From a seated position, take three slow, mindful breaths. Pay attention to what you are thinking and how you are feeling. Think of those thoughts as red-hot energy in your hands as you breathe in and squeeze your fists as tight as you can. As you breathe out, open your hands, let everything soften and imagine that red-hot energy flowing out and away. Repeat as many times as you'd like.

Rays of Light

From a seated position, take three slow, mindful breaths. Close your eyes and imagine a ball of light just between your eyes. Keeping your eyes closed, exhale while following that ball of light down your body. On your inhale, bring the ball of light all the way back up to just between your eyes. Repeat as many times as you'd like.

Out to Sea

Lie on the floor, maybe on a mat or blanket. Close your eyes and imagine you are on a boat, drifting in the water. What do you see? Imagine the water gently rocking the boat as rays of sun warm your body. You are simply floating. If your mind wanders to other thoughts, simply come back to your breath and back to the boat. Try to remain here for as long as you can. Set a timer so you can settle into the meditation and not worry about time.

Before you go, here are some practical tips from the field:

- Consider location: It may be too hot outside or bugs may distract them, inside might be best, depending on your purpose. Outside with a sense of curiosity and embracing the distractions may work as well.
- Seek potential funding for yoga mats versus use of towels. Mats are easier to clean.
- Consider audibility: It may be hard to hear over other nearby activities.
- Slowing down may increase bodily awareness and kids may need to use the bathroom, so consider location and distance to bathroom.
- Complement kids on their poses
- Consider an after-practice plan of fruit and sugar-free Gatorade to help them rehydrate.
- Share/repeat the benefits of yoga. Like sharing that Marines use the 4-part breathing to help them overcome obstacles. Crossfit Gyms/Parkour use Yoga to help them stay away from injury. Yoga helps ADD and concentration. You can use it to get out of angry/sad/frustrated emotions and calm your world down. It is great for getting out of fight or flight/PTSD times when a memory or situation won't let your mind relax and is eating at you or pushing you. Something about the breathing and focusing while learning new movements or sequences of movements disconnects the brain from fight or flight (monkey brain) and moves you to your thinking brain.

Youth Evaluation

MONTH:						
		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<i>Activity</i>		<i>Duration</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Duration</i>
WEEK 1	Breathing					
	Poses					
	Guided Meditation					
WEEK 2	Breathing					
	Poses					
	Guided Meditation					
WEEK 3	Breathing					
	Poses					
	Guided Meditation					
WEEK 4	Breathing					
	Poses					
	Guided Meditation					

How often did you complete these activities multiple times in a day? (circle one):

Never Seldom Usually Often Always

During the last month, what time of day did you *usually* do these activities?

(examples: after lunch, when bored):

Please provide any other comments:



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