

GUIDED MEDITATIONS: PEACE AND MINDFULNESS

USING THE BREATH, BODY, AND VOICE TO CREATE PEACE AND STABILITY DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

We all need a break and time to reset, cleanse, and pace ourselves in this time of anxiety and stress. Educators are having to be even more resourceful, resilient, creative and flexible due to the upheaval caused by COVID 19. This year's chaos, pressure, and intensity has the potential to wreak havoc on a mind, body, and emotional state. Using the tools of mindfulness can help release stress in the mind, restore calm to the body, and bring stability to emotions.

UMOCA and Lyra Zabriskie created video meditations and lesson plans in support of the educators of Utah. The lesson plans included here, as well as the meditation videos and reference materials, are intended to support both educators and their students during the stressful times of 2020. Our intention is to not add another to-do to your list, but rather to introduce free, accessible, and easy to use meditation tools to support your mind, body and emotions.

You are so worthy of support and we send these exercises and videos to you wrapped in love and gratitude.

About UMOCA

The Utah Museum of Contemporary Art has been an award-winning aesthetic force and community leader since it was established in 1931. Located in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City, UMOCA's rich past has resulted in the creation of a cornerstone for contemporary culture in Utah, providing for artistic experimentation, community enrichment, and connection to the world as it occurs through our related experiences. The Museum strives to be a place where all points of view, experiences, and ages feel welcome to explore the pressing issues of our time through socially relevant art exhibitions and educational programming.

About Lyra

Lyra is a Voice Empowerment Coach based in SLC, UT who loves to help people feel more confident in their singing, speaking and personal self expression.

INTRODUCTION

USING MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION TO CREATE MORE PEACE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

Why mindfulness and meditation?

Our world is being rocked by immense events this year and as a result it is easy to feel more anxious, depressed, fearful, reactive, frustrated, out of control, confused, fatigued, etc. These feelings and reactions are natural and understandable given the extreme elements that we are all dealing with in our personal and professional lives. Thankfully there are tools that every human has access to which allow the body, mind, and emotions to find stability, peace, comfort and strength.

Why guided meditations?

The accompanying recorded guided meditations will help deepen these lesson plans and written explanations. It is by feeling the results of guided meditation that often make it meaningful. And by hearing the words of another guiding you into your own peacefulness, we hope that you will be inspired to guide your students into their own sense of peace, calm, and stability.

RESOURCES TO TAKE IT DEEPER:

- The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation By Thich Nhat Hanh (<https://books.google.com/books?id=0RMJU5e-4YcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:k86p2DIABRAC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwimzOa2wqPgAhUB5awKHVODCZ0Q6AEINjAC#v=onepage&q&f=false>)
- Waking Up by Sam Harris (<https://www.wakingup.com>)
- Making Time for Mindfulness by Grace Tatter (<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/01/making-time-mindfulness>)

LESSON 1

USING BREATH, BODY, AND VOICE: K-12 & Adults

INTENTION

In difficult times, and especially as we are physically more distant than ever, it is more important than ever that we learn how to self-soothe using the breath, body, and voice. We start with the breath to bring awareness to the current state of our thoughts, to the quality of our emotions, and to the sensations of the body. We build off of the breath's foundation by adding comforting self-touch which is proven to helping create a calm state in the body. And finally we use the instrument of our voice to stimulate the vagus nerve which activates the parasympathetic "rest and digest" nervous system. Try this meditation yourself and pass it on in pieces or as a whole to your students. Take a look at the reference links to understand more deeply how breath, touch, and voice assist in creating a sense of calm in the mind and body.

EXERCISE

Step 1: Find a comfortable sitting or lying down position. Begin to notice your breath without manipulating or changing it. Simply become aware of your current breath. Gently begin to slow down your breath. Inhale for 4, hold your breath for 4, exhale for 6, and hold for 2. Repeat this cycle. 4-4-6-2. We want your upper chest to not have to do all the work so be sure to expand your belly and imagine drawing your breath down low into your body.

Step 2: Wrap your arms around yourself in an embrace. Your hug can be as goofy or as tender as you like. Bring awareness to the sensations of being touched. You want to really feel it so amplify your sensations by moving your hands, squeezing your arms, or even lightly scratching your skin. Notice the texture of your clothes, the temperature of your skin under your hand, the heat of your hand on your arm. Add movement either by rocking side to side or rubbing your hands up and down your arms.

Step 3: This next step can be done in one of two ways. Firstly you can simply use your voice to make noise like a hum or an audible sigh. The other way you can do this step is to add emotion to your voicing. Allow whatever emotion you have in your body to surface and then express that emotion using your voice. You can make a noise (growl, laugh, cry, moan, yell, whimper) or you can articulate your emotions with words ("I feel so angry!" "This is hard." "I can't do this anymore." "I'm so grateful!" ect). Try not to judge your honest emotions or the sound of your voice.

Step 4: Begin to speak kind words to yourself. Pretend you are a small and sweet child who could really use a pep talk. Speak these words out loud. If leading a group, have them repeat after you. Here are some examples of kind sentences to say.

- "You are doing such a good job!"
- "I see you and I'm so proud of you."
- "You are loved and you are safe."

ADDITIONAL CUES

- Hugging is a great way to receive the stabilizing touch that we are lacking this year due to pandemic restrictions. To calm hyper energy have them squeeze tightly while hugging. To stimulate sluggish energy have them jump up and down while they hug and yell a sentence after you like, "I'm so ____! (smart, kind, brave, clever, generous, helpful) "
- Another form of soothing self touch is to place your hands somewhere on your body that could use kind love. As you breathe send kind words or thoughts to that part of your body.
- To create more privacy when voicing louder sounds, hold a pillow, sweatshirt, or blanket over your mouth to muffle the noise.

RESOURCES

- YOUTUBE VID: How to Breathe by Belisa Vranich (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sgb2cUqFiY&t=11s>)
- How to Stimulate Your Vagus Nerve for Better Mental Health by Jordan Fallis (https://sass.uottawa.ca/sites/sass.uottawa.ca/files/how_to_stimulate_your_vagus_nerve_for_better_mental_health_1.pdf)
- Five Exercises To Calm Our Body's Stress Response and Restore Resilience by Linda Graham (<https://kripalu.org/resources/five-exercises-calm-our-bodys-stress-response-and-restore-resilience>)
- Hands On Research: The Science of Touch by Dacher Keltner (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/hands_on_research)