



# MINDFUL FLINT

*Healthy, Mindful Kids*

# MINI-MINDFUL NUTRITION TOOLKIT:

*For Educators, Pre-School and Kindergarten*

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## a look inside ...

- 2 Objective
- 3 What Is Mindfulness?
- 4 Why Mindfulness?
- 5 Why Include Mindfulness In Nutrition Education?
- 5 How Does Mindfulness Work?
- 6 What Is Trauma Informed Care?
- 7 How To Use This Toolkit
- 8 Explaining Mindfulness To Children
- 9 Mindful Moment To Start Each Lesson
- 10 Mindful Breaths
- 13 Mindful Tasting To Close Each Lesson
- 15 Additional Resources



## OBJECTIVE:

This toolkit is intended to support pre-school nutrition educators to share trauma-informed mindfulness based strategies as a teaching tool to assist all children especially those facing Adverse Childhood Experiences(ACES), to fully participate and have positive outcomes.

This toolkit is best suited for children between 3 and 5 years old. The exercises are written towards the age of five and can be simplified or shortened for the younger ages.

This toolkit provides background information about what mindfulness is and its value when added to existing lessons in evidence-based curricula.

## GRATITUDE:

This toolkit is made possible with funding support from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and was created in partnership with the Crim Fitness Foundation, the Michigan Fitness Foundation, Michigan State University, educators at Cummings Great Expectations Preschool, Educare Flint, and the Flint Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCast) grant funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

A special thanks to Crim Mindfulness Advisory Board Member, Daniel Rechtschaffen, for his helpful feedback on this toolkit.

# WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

**Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally - with a spirit of kindness and compassion.**

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

It is going from autopilot to aware.

Students are often told to pay attention, but it is rare that anyone shows them how to do this. Mindfulness practices can help improve focus, self-regulation and compassion.



1st-grade student at Durant-Turner Mott Elementary Flint, MI

# WHAT MINDFULNESS IS NOT

*Mindfulness is*

- Not about having a blank mind - this would be impossible to do! Mindfulness is about recognizing our thoughts and bringing them back over and over again to a focal point of awareness.
- Not about being happy (although it can lead to more happiness) – we can be mindful and sad, or mindful and angry. Mindfulness creates space between a stimulus and a response so that we can choose a response, rather than reacting immediately based on an emotion.
- Not about being complacent - we take action to change situations when appropriate - for our well-being and the wellbeing of others - but we do so out of compassion and understanding versus reaction and frustration. (Mindful Schools, Bonnie Mioduchoski)
- Not a religion: Mindfulness practices are useful for all people, regardless of their spiritual or religious beliefs. It's a human experience that utilizes awareness and compassion that is within us all.
- Not a "Solve all." In addition to mindfulness, proper nutrition, adequate sleep, physical activity, good health care, and healthy relationships all contribute to cultivating wellness. (Burke Harris, The Deepest Well, 2018)

# Why Mindfulness?

- 1) Improved self-regulation
- 2) Compassionate attitudes
- 3) Better focus and concentration
- 4) Decreased stress, anxiety, and depression



## Local Evaluation Data - Flint, MI

A pilot study conducted in 2015 by Dr. Karin Pfeiffer of Michigan State University found that elementary school students who participated in a 12-week series of 20-minute mindfulness lessons provided by the Crim Fitness Foundation educators in Flint, MI experienced a positive impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social health.

- 73% of students felt mindfulness helped them focus and make better decisions
- 73% of students felt mindfulness helped them "calm down" when upset
- 61% of students shared that mindfulness helped them avoid fights

Another survey completed in fall 2017 by 112 educators of the 21 Crim-supported schools found that 96.6% of teachers reported mindfulness to be a valuable intervention to support their students.

## National Research

Mindfulness-based approaches have become increasingly widespread in clinical and community contexts. Research supports their utility across a variety of populations, including with young children. Emerging evidence also suggests these techniques may be particularly effective in increasing adaptive eating behaviors, including reducing bingeing and consumption of highly caloric foods.



*Mindful tasting with Crim Mindfulness, Flint Community Schools*

# WHY INCLUDE MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES IN NUTRITION EDUCATION?

When being mindful about what we eat, we are more likely to eat only what our body needs and what makes our bodies feel good. Paying attention to where our food comes from, how it is made, what it does for our body, and how we perceive it in different forms, invites us to cultivate gratitude.

# HOW DOES MINDFULNESS WORK?

“There is being mindful, and then there are mindfulness exercises. Mindfulness exercises are what we use to strengthen our attention and compassion. We use our breath as a home base of attention that we turn to again and again, limiting our distractibility... The qualities that everyone wants to see their children develop, such as kindness, attention, and emotional balance, can be exercised like muscles. We can isolate a particular quality, such as attention, and use a focusing practice repeatedly so that mindful attention becomes a habitual attitude.

The practice of mindfulness helps us build up the percentage of moments in which we are present rather than lost in thought.” (Rechtschaffen, D; The Mindful Education Workbook p. 4)



*Mindful tasting with Grim Mindfulness, Flint Community Schools*

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “TRAUMA INFORMED”?

*Providing care that is informed by the knowledge that traumatic experiences and traumatic stress may impact the actions, behaviors, or thinking of individuals we serve will help us create safe, and therefore more successful, learning environments for all.*

## TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES

- *Communicate with compassion*
- *Offer choices*
- *Promote safety*
- *Understand the prevalence and impact of trauma*
- *Pursue individual strengths, choice, and autonomy*
- *Earn trust*
- *Embrace human rights and diversity*  
(SAMHSA and [Acesconnection.com](https://www.acesconnection.com))



Mindful tasting with Crim Mindfulness, Flint Community Schools

# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

- Consider beginning each nutrition lesson with a mindful moment.
- Start slow, this will be new to your students. Maybe your first mindful moment might just be taking one deep breath in together.
- Like any new teaching strategy, this can feel different, maybe even slightly uncomfortable the first few times. Once a level of comfort is developed, work your way up to three mindful breaths, and maybe a short period of time sitting and following the breath in and out.
- The next couple of pages have sample scripts for you to describe mindfulness to your students and examples of mindful moments.
- You can also go to [crim.org](https://www.crim.org) to hear examples of guided mindful moments.
- Mindful moments can be added into any transitional part of your lesson, as well.
- Finally, use the *Mindful Tasting* part of this toolkit to help guide your group in mindful tasting lessons that will support nutritious and healthy eating behaviors.

## **Recommended Supplies:**

*Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by MacLean & Alderfer  
Healthy Snack

## **Optional Supplies:**

Chime  
Breathing ball (Hoberman Sphere)

# EXPLAINING MINDFULNESS TO CHILDREN

A good way to introduce mindfulness to children is with the use of a story:  
*Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by MacLean & Alderfer

## Sample Script:

“Has anyone ever heard of mindfulness? What part of your body is in charge of being mindful? (allow for answers...) That’s right! Your MIND, or brain, is in charge of being mindful, but being mindful also involves the rest of your body. “

Mindfulness means paying attention or concentrating in a special way. What does it mean to ‘pay attention’? (allow for answers...) Why is paying attention important? (allow for answers) How can we tell someone is paying attention? (allow for answers...)

“We can learn to be better at paying attention inside and outside of our bodies by exercising our minds.”

“I have a story about two friends, a monkey and a panda, that will help us understand what it means to be mindful.”

Read *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda*

“What did Monkey learn from Panda?” (allow for answers...)

# HOW TO LEAD A MINDFUL MOMENT

Guide to utilizing breathing techniques as a “Mindful Moment”:

- Educators can use mindful breaths at any point during the day. Mindful breaths are great to help during transition times, or in order to help the class calm or even energize!
- Sample Mindful Breaths are outlined in the middle section of this tool kit on pages 10,11, & 12.
- To lead a mindful moment, the educator invites students to stand or sit mindfully. Modeling this each time will be important for younger learners. Invitational language is always encouraged as a trauma informed approach. Invite children to close their eyes, but give them the option to leave their eyes open as well.
  - Sitting Mindfully - sit with your spine/back straight, but not rigid. Your feet or your sit bones are planted against the floor or chair. Your hands are resting comfortably in your lap or on your knees. Eyes may be closed or just a soft gaze looking down at your hands.
  - Standing Mindfully - Feet are planted flat on the floor about hip width apart. Knees are soft, not locked. Spine is tall, but not rigid. Arms hang down to your sides. Eyes may be closed or just a “soft gaze” looking down.

## Sample Script:

*“Let’s take a mindful breath together. First, let’s sit criss cross applesauce and let our hands rest in our lap. We are going to sit up tall, making our back straight. I am going to keep my eyes open so that I know everyone is safe, but if you would like to close your eyes, go ahead. Or you can just look down at your hands in your lap. (allow a moment for everyone to settle). Now that we are sitting mindfully, let’s take a deep breath in through our nose, filling up our chest. Then open your mouth and let all the air out nice and slow.” Insert specific breaths here, or just continue on with inhales and exhales 3-4 times. “When you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes if they were closed.”*

# MINDFUL BREATHS

Here are examples of different mindful breathing techniques you can use with children.

Some are calming, some are energizing, and many are playful.

Guide to utilizing breathing techniques as a “Mindful Moment”:

- Educators can use mindful breaths at any point during the day. Mindful breaths are great to help during transition times, or in order to help the class calm or even energize!
- Consider explaining the terms “inhale” and “exhale” to younger children.

## ENERGIZING BREATHS

### Peace Breath

- **How to:** In a standing position, arms are at your side. Inhale arms all the way up, exhale, arms halfway out in front of you. Inhale arms open to the side, exhale arms back together in the middle. Inhale arms all the way up to the sky, and exhale arms to the floor as you bend at the hips.
- **Mix it up:** See how fast can you go, or how slow can you go doing this breath.

### Buzzing Bee Breath

- **How to:** Breath in through your nose, exhale through your nose while creating a buzzing noise.
- **Mix it up:** To create different sounds, have students place their hands over their ears like ear muffs to see how this changes the sound.
  - Use with caution for any child that has sensory challenges.

### Lions Breath

- **How to:** This may be done seated or on hands and knees. Placing hands on the floor or on your knees, inhale deeply. As you exhale, open your mouth wide, lean forward, and exhale loudly while sticking your tongue out.

# CALMING BREATHS

In any calming breathing exercise, it is important to always offer the opportunity to close eyes, but never require it. Students are invited to close their eyes or take a soft gaze at an object in the room if they are not comfortable closing their eyes.

## Feeling Breath

- **How to:** Place hands on your ribs, belly or chest and notice the rise and fall that occurs as you breath in and out.

## Hot Chocolate Breath (*Breathe Like a Bear* by Kira Willey)

- **How to:** Create an imaginary cup with your hands.  
Close your eyes or relax your gaze  
Inhale the “rich warm scent of your hot chocolate”  
Pause Exhale slowly saying “Mmmmmmmmm”

## Fogging the Window Breath

- **How to:** Place one palm a few inches in front of the mouth  
Inhale in through the nose  
Exhale out through the mouth like you’re fogging up a mirror
- **Discussion:** How does this breath feel on your palm?
- **Mix it up:** Compare how breathing out like you’re fogging a mirror feels different than breathing out as if you’re whistling

## Horse Breath

- **How to:** Inhale and futter lips on exhale, while shaking the body out.

## Candle Breath (*Breathe Like a Bear* by Kira Willey)

- **How to:** Use your index finger as an imaginary candle  
Holding it up and instruct the students to softly make the flame flicker without blowing out the candle.  
Breathing in and then soft long exhale  
Modification: There’s a 100 candles on a cake that you have to blow out



*Mindful tasting with Crim Mindfulness, Flint Community Schools*

# MINDFUL BREATHS CONTINUED

## Counting Breath

- **How to:** Inhale in through nose for 3 counts  
Exhale out through for 5 counts  
Hint: Count the breaths down (ie: 3, 2, 1)

## Seated Frog Breath

- **How to:** Seated in a chair  
Inhale, lift heels up off the floor (only toes touching the ground)  
Exhale, lower the heels back down to the floor (feet flat on the floor)  
Repeat 5 times

## Hand On Your Heart

- **How to:** Place one hand on your heart center  
Feel your heartbeat  
Begin to take sleep breaths while feeling your heart beat.

# MINDFUL TASTING

**Title:** Mindful Tasting

**Time:** 15-25 minutes

**Objective:** To help students implement mindful eating into their daily routines

**Suggested Use:**

- Use prior to tasting the healthy snack

**Materials:**

- "I Stop and Feel My Breathing" by S.K. Greenland
- Healthy Snack (per Nutrition Lesson)

**Modifications/Additions**

- Help students and teacher implement mindful hand washing. If time allows, show staff and students how we can be mindful with even daily activities like hand washing.

Examples:

- Taking time to notice the water coming out of the faucet.
- Feeling gratitude for running water.
- As you place your hands in the water, noticing the temperature of the water and the feeling as it flows over your hands.
- Noticing the smell of the soap and how it looks (gel, bubbly, foamy, etc).
- Being aware of the feeling of the soap on your hand and the feeling of the soap and water as it is rinsed.
- Noticing the color/texture of the paper towels and how it feels against your hands as they dry.
- Review 5 senses with students if needed.

## Lesson:

- Begin by having students and educators gather together in a circle.
  - Sing “I stop and feel my breathing.... (take a deep breath with hands on chest, belly, or ribs) Peaceful and calm, I’m ready to taste.”
- Script - Give students the following instructions:
  - “Today I have brought a healthy snack with me to try. Rather than just eating it right away, we are going to be mindful about our snack. This means we will pay attention and take time to notice many different things about the snack. We will use all of our five senses. Once everyone has their snack, we will start with our mindful tasting.”
  - Hand out snacks
  - “Now that everyone has their snack in front of them, I want you to notice how excited you feel to pick it up and try it! Do you notice a feeling that you are having?”
  - “I would like you to use your eyes to look at / to examine our snack. What do you notice about how it looks? (colors, textures, shapes, etc.)”
  - “Now let’s use our nose. Watch me carefully lean towards my snack and take a deep breath in through my nose and breath out with an “mmmmmmmm”. (Demonstrate). “Now you try. What do you smell?”
  - (Depending on type of snack, use sense of touch if appropriate) “Next we will use our finger. Let me see your pointer finger on one hand. We are going to carefully use our pointer finger to feel the texture/temperature of our snack. What do you notice?” (warm, cool, smooth, wet, rough, etc)
  - “Now let’s use our ears to hear if our snack will make any sounds as we begin to taste it.” (If applicable, point out sounds of the utensils, or containers opening, or if the snack is crunchy, the sound of the bite.”
  - “We are going to slowly take our first bite together. Just a little one, and notice how it feels and tastes on your tongue.” (Pause for a moment so students can see you taking time to notice) “Now slowly chew your bite. Maybe you notice that the taste changes a little bit..... When you are ready, go ahead and swallow.”
  - “Let’s do that again. This time when you swallow your little bite, try to see if you can notice your food going down your throat and into your belly. Maybe use your finger to trace it down (demonstrate using your finger at your throat, and slowly tracing it down to your chest and belly.)
  - “How far down could you feel your food?”
  - “Slowly and quietly, let’s finish our snack.” (Allow time for this)
  - “What did you notice about your snack?” (Allow time for sharing)

# RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TRAUMA-INFORMED MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION:

The Crim Fitness Foundation Mindfulness Initiative aims to develop resilience, improve self-regulation, and increase compassion through the practice of mindfulness. We adhere to the core values of being informed by research and evidence based practices; delivering secular programming that is accessible to all; and approaching our work in a trauma sensitive manner.

Below are resources that the Crim Mindfulness Initiative calls upon to inform our work. We encourage interested schools and educators to make the investment and utilize the resources below to strengthen and expand the impact of this toolkit.

**Full Toolkit is available** - The full version of the Healthy, Mindful Kids Toolkit supports you to implement more extensive mindfulness based nutrition lessons into your preschool or kindergarten classrooms. Please inquire at [mindfulness@crim.org](mailto:mindfulness@crim.org)

## Healthy, Mindful Education Websites:

- The Crim Fitness Foundation - [crim.org](http://crim.org)
- Mindful Education - [mindfuleducation.com](http://mindfuleducation.com)
- Mindful Schools - [mindfulschools.org](http://mindfulschools.org)
- Yoga Ed. - [yogaed.com](http://yogaed.com)

## Healthy, Mindful Books for Educators:

- *The Mindful Child* - Susan Kaiser Greenland
- *The Mindful Education Workbook* - Daniel Rechtschaffen
- *Mindful Games* - Susan Kaiser Greenland
- *Mindful Kids* - Whitney Stuart and Mina Braun

# TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES RESOURCES:

## Websites:

- [Aceinterface.com](http://Aceinterface.com)
- [Acesconnection.com](http://Acesconnection.com)
- [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

## Books:

- The Body Keeps Score by Bessel van der Kolk
- *The Deepest Well* by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris
- *The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom: Building Resilience with Compassionate Teaching* by Jennings

## Recommended Resources For Continued Education and Training:

### Michigan:

- Crim Fitness Foundation - [crim.org/mindfulness](http://crim.org/mindfulness)
- MC4ME - Michigan Collaboration for Mindful Education [mc4me.org](http://mc4me.org)

### National:

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) - [umassmed.edu/cfm](http://umassmed.edu/cfm)
- Mindful Education - [mindfuleducation.com](http://mindfuleducation.com)
- Mindful Schools - [mindfulschools.org](http://mindfulschools.org)
- Yoga Ed. - [yogaed.com](http://yogaed.com)

For questions, please contact The Crim Mindfulness Initiative  
[mindfulness@crim.org](mailto:mindfulness@crim.org)