

Paying Attention with Animal Breaths

Preschool, Kindergarten, First Grade

In this lesson, students will have fun, calm themselves down, and settle into the present moment through a fun activity called "animal breaths." This lesson also explores what it means to pay attention and be present.

Learning Objectives

Students will have fun, calm themselves down, and settle into the present moment through a fun activity called "animal breaths."

Materials and preparation

- Talking piece
- [Animal Breaths worksheet](#)

Key terms

- mindfulness
- breathing

Attachments

- Animal Breaths (PDF)
- Animal Breaths (PDF)

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Gather students into a circle either seated in chairs or on the floor.
- Remind students of the raised attention signal and the talking piece from previous lessons (Raised attention signal: Explain to students that when they see you raise your hand it's a signal to stop whatever they are doing, raise their hand in the air and quietly look and listen to you. Talking Piece: Explain that when they gather in a circle to learn and discuss important things, they will use a talking piece. Whoever has the talking piece can speak, and they do this to make sure they don't talk over anyone and listen to the person who is sharing).
- Welcoming: Circle time always begins with everyone being welcomed into the circle. Model welcoming a student and then have each student welcome the student sitting next to them. Be sure to rotate who sits where so students introduce different classmates. Example: "Hello Jasmine, welcome to our circle!"
- Optional: Create a new greeting every week. For example, using a small ball or bean bag, have students toss the object to each other once they greet another student, then the student with the object greets the next student, etc.
- Once every student has been welcomed retrieve the talking piece.
- Share that today they will be learning about a fun way to calm themselves and get present using something called "animal breaths."

Explicit Instruction/Teacher modeling (15 minutes)

- Share that mindfulness is a way for us to create peace inside of ourselves and get present. There are lots of ways we will learn and practice mindfulness this year and today we will learn a fun way of doing mindfulness called "animal breaths."
- Ask students why it's important to create peace inside of themselves. After taking some answers from students share that breathing with awareness slowly and deeply can help us create calm and peace inside.
- Now ask why it is important to be present. Offer some examples of how our bodies might be one place, but our minds may be wandering. When this happens, we are actually not fully where we are and are not

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present. Example: When our bodies are in class but our minds are thinking about snack time.

- A great resource to help illustrate this idea is the children's book, *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Lauren Alderfer. If it's helpful, you can also share that we are often told to pay attention, but lots of times we don't know how. When we breathe with awareness that we are breathing, we connect our bodies and our minds and instantly come into the present moment. We can't breathe in the past or the future.
- Have students stand up in their circle but be an arm's length from each other.
- Tell students that we will first pretend we are spiders shooting webs.
- Have students breathe in with their hands close to their bodies, then, while breathing out, let their arms shoot out like a spider spinning a web. Lead them in five breaths with their arms pulling in, and then a few breaths out with their arms shooting out.
- Now have students try the crocodile breath: On their in breath, open their arms like the jaws of a crocodile, and on their out breath clap their arms together.
- Have students do five crocodile breaths and remind them the most important part is to inhale when they get big and exhale when they get small. Be sure to do this with students and model all of the breaths.
- Now have students engage in bird breathing, where on the inhale they spread their arms out to the side like wings, and on the exhale bring their hands together in front.
- Practice bird breathing five times.
- Now have students scrunch their shoulders up on the inhale and let them fall and totally relax on the exhale. Do this a few times and ask them what they notice.
- Now have students practice being totally still for 30 seconds without moving a muscle. Ask them what they notice.
- Ask students how "playing attention" like this helped them be present.

Guided Practice (10 minutes)

- Pair students off and have them come up with a new animal breath. For example: elephant breaths, monkey breaths, etc.
- Emphasize that these breaths should be slow and deep and you should do them three times each (3 inhales/3 exhales = 3 full breaths).
- Share that anything that goes well with an inhale and exhale where the breathing is coordinated with movement works.
- Remind them what they learned in previous lessons about mindful listening and being a good friend as they work together to share their ideas and create their breath.
- Have each pair share their breath with the rest of the class and have the class practice their breath.
- (Optional: Start the next circle time together having students introduce themselves using the animal breath they created with their partner and have the whole class practice that animal breath when they greet that student.)

Independent working time (10 minutes)

- Have students remain in the circle, but independently reflect on their experience "playing mindfulness" with animal breaths using the Animal Breaths worksheet.

Differentiation

- Enrichment: Advanced students may want to create more breaths or read books related to mindfulness for children like *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Lauren Alderfer or *Puppy Mind* by Andrew Jordon Nance.
- Support: Struggling students may need to be paired with the teacher or teacher's aide initially during independent work time to complete their reflections on the worksheet.

Assessment (5 minutes)

- During independent work time, circle around the room and make sure students who need support receive your help. Collect each Animal Breaths worksheet and see if students need extra support.

Review and closing (5 minutes)

- As a class brainstorm when you will all use animal breaths. Example: "When we come back from recess

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and need to calm down and focus."

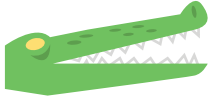
- Have each student share in circle what they learned and how they plan to use their animal breaths in their lives.

ANIMAL BREATHS

Try the animal breaths below by following the instructions and the pictures.
Then, draw or write your answer to the reflection questions:



Spider breath: Breathe in with your hands close to your body; then, while breathing out, let your arms shoot out like a spider spinning a web



Crocodile breath: Breathe in while opening your arms like the jaws of a crocodile; then breathe out while clapping your arms together.



Bird breath: Inhale while spreading your arms out to the side like wings, then exhale by bringing your hands together in front

Create your own animal breath!

Draw and describe the animal breath you and your partner created.

Draw a picture OR write your answer. You can also draw AND write.

How do animal breaths help me stay calm?

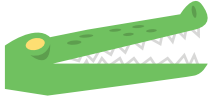
When will I practice animal breaths?

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How do animal breaths help me stay calm?

When will I practice animal breaths?