

Mindfulness in the Music Room: Intentional Practices

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Mindfulness is “The awareness that arises from paying attention on purpose in the present moment nonjudgmentally.” ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness is “keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Research on implementing mindfulness with students in schools suggests benefits for students’

- Cognitive growth
- Social-emotional skills
- Overall well-being

(Baijal et al., 2011; Barnes et al., 2013; Biegel et al., 2009; Kirp, 2014; Mendelson et al., 2010; Metz et al., 2013; Napoli et al., 2005; Raes et al., 2014; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Semple et al., 2010; Sibinga et al., 2016; Suttie, 2007; Warner, 2005; Waters, 2015; Zenner et al., 2014)

Mindful Music Activities that are naturally mindful

- Audiation
- Vocal Exploration
- Part-work

Sample intentional mindful practices:

Regular Practice

A sample script for a class meditation:

“Find a comfortable seated position.” (Students may also choose to lie down as long as they are on their back; a position which allows them to breathe naturally.)

“Begin with the eyes open and breathe in through the nose and then out through the mouth.”

(wait)

“With the next breath close your eyes and turn your focus to your body, paying attention to the rise and fall of your body as you breathe.”

(wait...wait...)

“If you notice your mind wandering away with thoughts just refocus on the feeling of your breath. Where does it feel most natural to focus your attention as your body breathes? Is it under your nose, or at your chest, or at your belly? If it helps, you can place a hand on that area of focus. We will call this your “breathing anchor.” Take a few breathes here as you follow the movement of your breathing anchor. See if you can follow your breath all the way in and all the way out.”

(wait...wait...)

“Now take a few seconds to let your mind do whatever it wants; if it’s been wanting to think, let it think.” *(wait)*

“Return your awareness to the space around you and notice any sounds. When you are ready, you can open your eyes.”

Follow the Fading Sound

Materials: a hand chime

“Please sit comfortably and close your eyes. I am going to play a sound for you. Raise your hand when the sound had completely faded away.”

(play hand chime.)

Repeat (Optional: repeat and play 2 chimes at once)

What did you hear?

Materials:

- **various small percussion instruments (3-5 different instruments. Example: a wood block, a shaker, a drum, a tambourine),**
- **A large curtain or screen to play instruments out of sight.**

“Sit with your back straight and your body relaxed. I am going to play some different instruments for you. All you have to do is wait and then listen. Can you identify the instruments I play? If you know what I’m playing, remember what you think it is. Don’t give it away; we’ll talk about what you heard when we open our eyes.”

(play instruments.)

“Open your eyes and raise a hand if you want to identify any of the instruments”

Additional discussion questions:

“What was it like to listen with your eyes closed?”

“Were you surprised by what you heard?”

Reset Buttons to share with children (and adults)

Take Five

Put one hand in front of you, fingers facing up. With a finger from the other hand, trace your first hand. As you trace up a finger, breathe in. As you trace down, breathe out.

Smell the Flower

Hold one finger about 6 inches in front of your lips. Breathe in to “Smell the flower.” Breathe out to either “Blow the dandelion,” “Blow out the candle,” or “Fog the mirror.”

Triangle Breathing

Trace an equilateral triangle in front of you. As you trace upwards, breathe in. Breathe out as you trace downwards, and hold you breathe as you trace across.

Some sources for more information:

Sites

Center for Mindfulness

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>

(including free, downloadable guided meditations in English and Spanish)

Greater Good Magazine

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Healthy Minds

<http://centerhealthyminds.org/>

Headspace

<https://www.headspace.com/>

(first 10 meditations free, then choose custom modules)

10% Happier

<http://www.10percenthappier.com/>

Calm

https://www.calm.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw_vfcBRDJARIsAJafEnFAYXLxfC7AmPSzyW7RbHvJ8lOdkYCNUxWLKMwQ532SP-2MnmbpmUUaAghnEALw_wcB

(free subscriptions for teachers)

Mindful Schools

https://www.mindfulschools.org/training/mindfulness-fundamentals/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw_vfcBRDJARIsAJafEnFgcTZiZm28m2MbC68POWbQyr29vjYcq_BJshFnnjDHau-PXAMRnfkaAtGeEALw_wcB

Mindful Bottles DIY

<https://www.thespruce.com/diy-calming-glitter-jars-4137363>

Books

Mindful Games

<https://www.susankaisergreenland.com/mindful-games/>

Sitting Still Like a Frog

<https://www.amazon.com/Sitting-Still-Like-Frog-Mindfulness/dp/1611800587>

Living With Intent: My Somewhat Messy Journey to Purpose, Peace, and Joy by Mallika Chopra

<https://www.amazon.com/Living-Intent-Somewhat-Journey-Purpose/dp/0804139873>

Just Breathe: Meditation, Mindfulness, and More by Mallika Chopra
(for adolescents and pre-teens)

https://www.amazon.com/Just-Breathe-Meditation-Mindfulness-Movement/dp/0762491582/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_0?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=0NQDJM8936YNM9F01E5G

Consider local classes and centers, make practicing mindfulness part of your routine.