

## GAMES AND MINDFULNESS IDEAS FOR HAUORA

New Zealand needs better health among all its citizens. Negative trends from inadequate diet and physical activity, overweight and obesity (with increased cases of diabetes in children as well as adults) have led to over 11,000 preventable deaths each year. Over 30% of our children are already overweight or obese. The trend is worsening, and if ignored, the costs of health services will become unmanageable. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated (in August 2008) that treating the costs of type 2 diabetes would increase from 3% of the NZ health vote to a horrifying 12-15% by 2022 unless people radically improved their health habits meantime. The human costs would be immeasurable. We cannot stand aside and let this happen.

Urgent change is needed. The Healthy Heroes Programme will help people of all ages attain better health for the rest of their lives. We all know that with good health we can do almost anything we want: Play sport, travel anywhere, spend valuable time with friends or family, or put in a sound day's work. All it takes is a few well-chosen disciplines that become new HABITS of our daily life. Many children, families and other communities will also benefit from the health habit of helping others everyday, a Healthy Heroes innovation.

Good health is not something that can be taken for granted. We all need to understand what good health is, and how to build it through the daily habits of life.

HEALTHY HEROES (all information off of the HH website)

### The Physical Challenges

1. I had thirty minutes of physical activity e.g. walking, swimming, cycling, skateboarding, cultural dance, sport.
2. I ate at least 3 vegetables and 2 pieces of fruit.
3. I was in bed by my set bedtime and got 9-11 hours' sleep.

### The Mental Challenge

4. I stretched my mind for at least 20 minutes e.g. reading a book, playing mind games  
art, pottery.

## The Social/Emotional Challenge

5. I was a real help to someone else e.g. At home (helping to prepare a meal, gardening, making my bed). At school (helping others to read or to join my playgroup, tidying the classroom, removing litter). In the community (doing a paper round, shopping for a neighbour, cultural group activity, litter removal).

## Games

### **Excuse Me, What Are You Doing?**

Sent in by: Kaley of Glenside, PA

A game where you say one thing but do another.

This game is for 4 or more people.

To play, you pretend to do an action like washing your hair or drinking tea.

The person next to you then asks, "Excuse me, what are you doing?"

You have to say something other than what you are really doing.

So if you were pretending to brush your teeth, you could say "I'm eating pizza."

Then that person has to pretend that he's eating pizza and say something different when the next person asks him, "Excuse me, what are you doing?"

If a player makes a mistake, he's out. Try to keep it going around the circle and see how fast you can go!

### **One Frog**

Sent in by: Emilee of IL

Careful not to skip a beat!

Players sit in a circle.

The first person says, "One Frog."

The next person says, "In the water."

And the next person says, "Kerplunk."

Now, increase everything by one.

So, the next person in the circle says, "Two Frogs."

And the next person says, "Two Frogs."

The person after that says, "In the water."

And the next person says, "In the water."

The person after that says, "Kerplunk."

And the next person says, "Kerplunk."

Keep going around the circle increasing everything by one.

But there's one catch -- all players have to slap their knees and clap, keeping the rhythm while the game goes around the circle.

If a player is off the beat, hesitates, or says the wrong thing, she's out. The game continues until there is only one person left.

### **On, Off**

Sent in by: Diana of TN

Slap, slap, clap, clap, ZOOMers, ZOOMers!

Players sit in a circle and set a rhythm by slapping their knees twice and clapping their hands twice.

The first player says his name twice on the knee slaps and another player's name twice on the hand claps.

The player who is named must continue the game in the same way.

If a player is off beat, or messes up, he's out!

Keep playing until there's only one person left.

### **Ship, Shore, Deck**

Sent in by: Justin of MI

Ahoy Mateys! Welcome aboard the good ship ZOOM!

This game is for 4 or more players and should be played in an open area.

One player is the captain of the ship, and the rest of the players have to follow her orders.

The captain gives four commands. When she says "ship," players have to run to the right.

When she says "deck," players have to run to the middle.

When she says "shore," players have to run to the left.

And when she says "hit the deck," players have to run to the middle and lie down on their stomachs.

If a player makes a mistake, he's out.

The last player left at the end is the winner.

Ready, set... bon voyage!

### **Stare Detective**

Sent in by: Jessica of Omaha, NE

Here's a clue: to your memory be true.

To play this game you'll need a tray full of lots of different objects, a towel, a watch to time the game, and a good memory.

Everyone who's playing gets 15 seconds to stare at the tray with all the objects. Use a watch to keep time.

Then cover all the objects on the tray with a towel.

Each player has 20 seconds to write down every object she can remember.

All the players compare their lists. If anyone has the same objects on their lists, those objects get crossed off.

Whoever has the most objects remaining on her list wins.

## Body Scan: Awareness of the Body

This body-awareness mindfulness practice is excerpted from a longer version in *The Mindful Teen* by Dr. Dzung Vo, and is provided here with permission from [New Harbinger Publications](#).

Lie flat on your back. Place your feet slightly apart, letting your toes fall to the sides. Place your arms by your sides, palms up.

Bring your awareness into your left foot. Breathe in, imagining that you are breathing in through your left foot, all the way up your body. Breathe out, imagining that you are breathing out all the way through your body, through your left leg and out through your left foot. What sensations (if any) are you feeling in your left foot right now?

With your next breath out, shift your awareness to your left ankle, noticing any sensations there. Continue to breathe mindfully, bringing your awareness up your leg to your calf, your shin, and your knee.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to do this practice, but here is the order I like to use:

- Left foot
- Left leg
- Right foot
- Right leg
- Abdomen & belly
- Upper body, chest, & shoulders
- Back
- Hands & arms
- Head & face

Then bring your awareness to your body as a whole:

- Does it feel the same or different than when you started the body scan?
- Are there any parts of your body that still feel tense or that need extra care?

## Mindful or Mindless? Analyzing Characters in Books and Movies

In interview last year, Meena Srinivasan gave suggestions for [the best children's books about mindfulness](#), but added that:

"I think it's also incredibly important to help your children/students see how characters in other books use mindfulness (even though they may not call it that) or how the characters are in need of mindfulness... Engaging with young people through a social emotional lens on books they are already interested in reading can be very effective."

It seems to me that we could all benefit from doing this. Every time we read a book or watch a film or TV show, we could take a moment to think about how the characters did or didn't show mindfulness, gratitude, compassion, and so on.

So here are some questions to consider as you watch and read your favorite stories. (Teachers can use them as a worksheet and/or a springboard for class discussion.)

### Present-Moment Awareness

1. Is there a time when a character fully realizes and appreciates what's happening in the present moment? What happens? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
2. Is there a time when a character is not aware of the present moment? What happens? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
3. If you were in this story, what (if anything) would you do differently? Why?

### Mindful Speech

1. Is there a time when a character says something true, helpful, and kind? What does he or she say? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
2. Is there a time when a character says something untrue, unhelpful, and/or unkind? What does he or she say? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
3. If you were in this story, what (if anything) would you do differently? Why?

## Compassion

1. Is there a time when a character shows compassion toward another person or animal? What does he or she do? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
2. Is there a time when a character does not show compassion toward another person or animal? What does he or she do? Does it affect the rest of the story? How?
3. If you were in this story, what (if anything) would you do differently? Why?

Here's an example of what this might look like for adolescents or adults: it's from one of my favorite French films, *Paris*, starring Juliette Binoche and Romain Duris (contains spoilers):

### Appreciating the Present Moment

Pierre is on his way to the hospital for an operation that may or may not save his life. He gazes longingly out the taxi window at the city and at the people strolling by.

While this doesn't change the plot of the movie, it's an important moment because it makes the audience realize the things other characters (and we ourselves) are taking for granted.

### Mindful Speech

Pierre's sister Elise tells her colleagues she'll be reducing her hours because she needs "more time for myself." She doesn't explain that it's because she has to take care of her seriously-ill brother, and responds coldly to their complaints that they're already overworked and also need time for themselves.

What she says is true, but she says it in a way that's unhelpful. Her colleagues respond in an unkind way, assuming that she's being selfish.

If I were Elise, I'd explain that I had a family emergency, and I'd apologize for burdening them with extra work. If I were one of her colleagues, I'd talk to her quietly after the meeting to find out why she suddenly needed to reduce her work hours.

### Compassion

When she stops at a street market to buy food for dinner, Elise watches one of the vendors offer to make a free delivery for an elderly woman who's having trouble carrying her purchases.

This small compassionate action has a big impact on the story: Social worker Elise teases the vendor about being in the same line of work; this begins a flirtation that leads to a romantic relationship.

And here's an example of what this activity might look like with younger children, using quotes from *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A.A. Milne.

### Appreciating the Moment

"'Well,' said Pooh, 'what I like best,' and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called."

### Mindful Speech

"Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That's the problem."

### Compassion

"I don't feel very much like Pooh today," said Pooh.

"There there," said Piglet. "I'll bring you tea and honey until you do."

Come to think of it, those are all good messages for adults, too...

### **Time to Breathe: Awareness of the Present Moment**

"Time to Breathe" is a mindfulness practice that was developed by [Mindfulness Without Borders](#) and is reproduced here with their permission.

A first step to developing more mindfulness in your daily life is learning new ways to pay attention and connect to experiences in the moment. One easy way to bring your awareness to the present moment is developing a consistent breathing practice. We call this core mindfulness practice "time to breathe."

To get started, schedule specific times in the day that you can stop, take time to breathe and observe how that works for you. Ideally, practice breathing mindfully for 3-5 minutes a day.

- Sit in a comfortable position. Allow both soles of your feet to connect to the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop.
- Gently close your eyes or look for a reference point somewhere on the floor where you can return your eyes when they get distracted.
- Let your spine grow tall and noble like the trunk of a tall tree.
- Take a moment to notice how your body feels as you bring your attention to the flow of your breath. You don't need to breathe in a special way. Your body knows how to breathe.
- Simply notice each breath coming into the body with an in-breath, and leaving the body with an out-breath.
- If you notice your mind is caught up in thoughts, concerns, emotions or body sensations, know that this is normal.



- Notice what is distracting you and gently let it go without judgment, by redirecting your attention back to the breath.
- Keep escorting your attention back to the experience of breathing.
- When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to your surroundings and let how you feel now guide you.

Time to Breathe is sometimes called Tuza, which means "to slow down and chill" in one of the local dialects in Rwanda, where Mindfulness Without Borders first developed some of their mindfulness activities.

### **Trying on Different Shapes: Mindfulness of Mood and Posture**

"Trying on Different Shapes" is a sample activity from the book *A Path with Heart: The Inner Journey to Teaching Mastery* by Pete Reilly and is reproduced here with the author's permission.

Can the shape of our body affect our mood, emotions, and ability to act? Let's experiment with assuming a few body shapes to find out.

Start by standing with your feet apart, arms at your sides, with your palms facing in toward your thighs. Take as long as you need to center yourself. When you feel fully present, bring your attention to your hands. Keep your awareness on them as you slowly raise them in front of you, and as you do turn your palms upward. What subtle changes to your mood or emotions do you notice?

Go back to your original position. Settle yourself again. Now, round your shoulders forward. Drop your head so your chin is on your chest. How does this shape make you feel? After a few moments, pull your shoulders back while you raise your head to its normal position. Notice the difference in your mood and outlook?

Let's try another shape: While standing, lift your chin so that your head is thrown back. A whole new feeling is present. Return your chin to its familiar position. Feel that?

There are many ways to illustrate the power—sometimes quite subtle—that our body shape has on our mood. Try hardening your eyes by tightening the muscles around them, and

staring hard. After a few moments let your eyes soften. A very subtle change in your mood takes place.

It's also like that with your chin and lips. Tighten them as much as you can. Now, let them soften. Feel it?

As you've experienced in these simple exercises, changing our shape, in its many parts, can change our mood, our awareness, and what actions we're able to take.

From *A Path with Heart: The Inner Journey to Teaching Mastery*, by Pete Reilly. © Irimi Horizons Publishing, 2015. [www.apathwithheart.net](http://www.apathwithheart.net)