

Activity: Mindfulness for Primary School Children

Resilience Focus Area: **Health**

Session 1: Curious Mindfulness

Learning Outcomes: To help the children learn more about what mindfulness is and how it can help them.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and Welcome	All children say their name and what they had for breakfast this morning.	
5mins	What is mindfulness?	Discussion with the children about what they think mindfulness is – maybe just one or two words. <i>'Mindfulness means living fully in the present without judgement. It's about focusing on your breathing, being aware of what's happening in the moment, accepting what you are experiencing whether it is easy or difficult, and letting go'.</i>	
5mins	Benefits of mindfulness	Improves achievement, improves attention and focus, better emotional regulation-responding rather than reacting, greater compassion and empathy for others, reduces stress and anxiety, changes to the brain structure to break negative thinking and habits, improves behaviour, improves social skills, creates improved wellbeing, contentment and happiness.	
2mins	The Brain	Video/hand demonstration of the brain and where our emotions are. How mindfulness helps.	Laptop if using video
5mins	Practice	<u>'STOP, PAY ATTENTION, BE CURIOUS, ENJOY' practice. Read aloud:</u> <i>"Sit up straight, feet flat on floor, hands on lap. Take a few conscious deep breaths. Look around the room and notice the space you are filling, be aware of your body against the chair, feet on the ground, be aware of the people around you, the light /shade in the room, the colours and textures of the walls and furniture, the temperature, the sounds, the smells. Pay attention to how your mind wanders and when you notice it, bring it back to concentrating on the exercise. Be aware of your space and be in the moment in your space."</i> How was that for you? What was your experience?	
3mins	'SPACE' cards	Give handouts with 'STOP, PAY ATTENTION, BE CURIOUS, ENJOY' written on them. Ask the children to use these words to be more mindful for the next week.	Colour card SPACE handouts

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Session 2: Power of Breath

Learning Outcomes: To show the children the importance of breathing and how we can use it to slow us down.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and Welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	Take a deep breath	Ask the children to take some deep breaths and notice where they can feel their breath. Feed back on what its like to pay attention to their breathing.	
5mins	Benefits of breathing	Can the children think of and name some benefits of breathing? Use 'science of breathing' sheet.	Science of breathing sheet
2mins	Conscious breathing	Discuss how and when we do conscious, controlled breathing and the effect it has on us. Get the children to give some examples.	
3mins	3min breathing hourglass	<u>The 3-minute hourglass breathing exercise– Read aloud:</u> Sit up straight, feet on floor, hands on lap, eyes closed or focused. Be aware of what's going on in your mind and notice it. Then slowly become aware of the breath, notice how it feels in your body, rise and fall, in and out. Now re-focus on the space around you, the sounds, the smells, the people and when you're ready open your eyes. Remind the class that this is an easily accessible exercise which they can use anywhere, anytime to de-stress, calm and focus.	
5mins	Hand breathing	Explain to the children how they can use drawing around their hand with their fingers as a way of breathing in and out slowly to control breath.	

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Session 3: Body Scan

Learning Outcomes: To help the children to stop, focus and pay attention to their physical bodies, but in a mindful way.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	Body Scan – Head to Toes (standing)	Complete a short body scan standing with children going from head to toes, standing upright.	
10mins	How do you feel?	Have a discussion with the children about how they feel about the body scan and the position they were in. Ask them whether they noticed anything about their bodies that they hadn't realised before. Did they notice anything new, or did anything stand out?	
5mins	Body Scan – Toes to Head (lying down)	Complete a short body scan standing with children going from toes to head, lying down or in a different position.	
5mins	How do you feel?	Discuss whether they felt this was any different? Which one did they prefer? When could they use this mindfulness technique?	

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Session 4: Autopilot

Learning Outcomes: To teach the children about increased awareness and being present—not doing things automatically, but choosing activities they can focus on.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	Body Scan	Start the session with a body scan, to remind the children of last week's activities reflect on whether they have been able to use it.	
5mins	Autopilot quiz	In pairs complete the autopilot quiz and discuss some things they do without thinking every day.	Autopilot Quiz
2mins	What is Autopilot?	<p>Explain what autopilot is: 'Autopilot in brief terms is 'becoming zoned out'. You don't have any recollection of an event that you experienced a few moments ago.'</p> <p>Ask the children to come up with their own ideas of other things they often do without thinking.</p>	
5mins	Mindful eating exercise	<p>Use grape/raisin to practice mindful eating with the children to explain how they eat on autopilot, and how they can pay more attention to their food.</p> <p>Pay attention and notice the colour, shape, texture, and size. Is there anything else that you notice, sense or feel? Now place the item between your fingers and feel the texture, temperature and ridges. You may notice smoothness or stickiness. Take the piece of food and bring it toward your nose and smell with your full awareness. Notice if you have any memories, sensations or reactions in your body. Place the object into your mouth without chewing or swallowing it. Just allow it to be in your mouth, roll it around to different parts of your mouth and tongue. Notice the flavour and texture. Notice the physical sensations within your body, especially your mouth and your gut. Next take just one bite and notice the flavour, notice the change of texture. Then slowly begin to chew this piece of food and notice the parts of your mouth that are involved in chewing. Notice the sound and movement of chewing, as you continue to notice the sensations and flavour. When you are ready, swallow this item and notice the path that it follows from your mouth and throat into your stomach.</p>	
3mins	Body Scan	End the session with a body scan.	

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Session 5: Kindfulness

Learning Outcomes: To provide children with an understanding of what being kind is, why we do it, and how does it make us feel to be kind.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	What is Kindfulness?	Explain what being kind is. Can children give some examples of acts of kindness. Why do we do it?	
5mins	How does it make us feel? Kind vs unkind?	Why does it make us, and others feel good? What is the impact on us? How does being unkind make us and others feel?	
5mins	Kindfulness practice script	<p><u>Script Self-Kindness Practice – read aloud:</u></p> <p>Sit in your chair in an upright comfortable position with your feet on the floor, your hands on your lap and your eyes closed or focused just ahead of you. Rest your awareness on the breath, feeling your chest and your tummy rise and fall as you inhale and exhale. Now move your awareness to your heart area and just check in on your feelings.</p> <p>Say in your head – I'd like to be happy – and see what happens. Notice any thoughts or feelings that are evoked by stating this in your head including the negative. If you like, try again with a more specific statement or request and each time just notice what thoughts come into your head and how you are feeling.</p> <p>Now imagine an outdoor space that you love. Imagine it is sunny and warm and you are putting your face into the warmth of the sunshine and how good that feels. Imagine the colour of the sun against the landscape as it sets, the warm glow of red, gold, pink, orange. Now imagine the sun can touch your heart, imagine the radiation of soft, warm rays of light. Imagine that this warmth is kindness, filling your whole body, moving its way round every limb, every organ, transporting through every vein and every inch of skin.</p>	
5mins	Kindness take away activity	Give the children a list of examples of kindness acts—ask them to complete 3 things by next week.	List of acts of kindness

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Session 6: Mindful Movement

Learning Outcomes: To demonstrate that there are lots of ways to be mindful, that don't all mean sitting or lying still!



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
3mins	Different ways to be mindful	Explain to children that if you are someone who doesn't like to sit still, there are many more practical ways to be Mindful. For example, mindful movement exercises and stretches can be used.	
2mins	What is mindful movement?	When we think about mindfulness practice or meditation, we often think of a person sitting still in a cross-legged position. While that's a great way to practise mindfulness, it isn't the only way! Our lives can be so 'go-go-go' and lots of people are simply not used to being still. Sometimes it is the sitting still in itself that can be one of the hardest parts of mindfulness practice. But Mindful movement can be used to describe any movement activity that is practised mindfully, by giving attention, presence and intention to whatever the form of movement may be.	
5mins	Mindful moving activity	<p>1) Breath of Fire: This breathing exercise involves 20-40 short powerful exhales. Try it seated or standing. Take a full breath in and pause. Start with your arms up, making fists with your hands, and as you exhale pull your elbows down to your waist. Every time you exhale you pull your belly back to your spine.</p> <p>2) Toes up/Heels up: If possible, take off your shoes. As you inhale, lift your heels up. As you exhale, release heels and lift your toes up. Rock up and down for 5 breaths.</p> <p>3) Squats: Separate your feet wider than your hips. Inhale reach your arms overhead. Exhale out of your mouth, bend your knees and pull your elbows down towards your knees. Straighten your arms and legs as you inhale. Repeat for 5 breaths.</p>	
10mins	Mindful Walking	Some people prefer being out in nature. And maybe don't even realise that a walk in the countryside, or at the beach, just noticing the smells, sights, sounds etc is being mindful. Paying attention to the things around you is being mindful. Take the children outside and ask them to walk around for 10mins noticing; 5 things they can see, 4 things they can hear, 3 things they can touch, 2 things they can smell and 1 thing they can taste.	

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Session 7: Negativity Bias

Learning Outcomes: To help children to understand what negativity bias is, that it is normal and happens to us all, and how we can try to focus more on positives.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	What is negativity bias?	Use video of our caveman brains! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv6HkipQcfA	Laptop if using video
5mins	Awareness	When we feel a negative event coming or a negative thought pushing its way in...tell yourself "I AM NOT A CAVEMAN!" and "THIS THOUGHT IS NOT A TIGER." You are smarter than your brain thinks 😊	
2mins	Velcro the Positives	We must actively put effort into noticing about 10 positive things for every one negative thing. We are programmed to pick up on the negatives. We cannot totally remove negatives. It isn't realistic, and we do need negatives for us to do better and improve, but we can try to have more balance; to be more positive. Give each person a bit of Velcro, to remind them to focus more on letting the positives stick!	Velcro
5mins	Gratitude Journal/ Praise folder	It is important that we pay attention to things that are positive, and that we are grateful for. Hand out sheet 'Being Kind and Grateful'. Ask children to fill out the first page – 3 kind things about themselves, and 3 things they are grateful for.	Being Kind and grateful sheet
3mins	Drop of ink in water	Get a bowl of water and a bottle of ink or food colouring. Drop some ink into the bowl of water. Explain how initially it is strong, but after a while it mixes in with the rest of the water and is gone – you can't see it anymore. Think of a negative thing that has happened – you failed a test, or were insulted by someone – after a few hours, will that still matter, or will it be like the drop of ink – it will wash away, disappear and not matter anymore? This helps us to visualise our negative thoughts and give them some perspective in our lives.	Bowl, water, ink/food colouring

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Session 8: Working with Thoughts

Learning Outcomes: To give children the opportunity to think of thoughts in a different way, and some techniques to distract from difficult thoughts.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	Thought train	<p>Apparently, we have around 70,000 thoughts a day! Some are just passing through, but some stick and can affect our emotions. We may even try to avoid some thoughts. But Mindfulness can help unpleasant thoughts go away, by just observing and noticing. Like dropping a pebble into a pond, our thought, if we let it, can become bigger and bigger- until we aren't then just having a thought – we are experiencing some real negative emotions!</p> <p>If we can imagine our thoughts as being a train. They come fast and often, but they also pass by and are gone just as quickly...if we let them! When a train is held up, often it is because there has been a tree fall on the line, or a broken connection. When considering our thoughts, those hold ups are us clinging on to the negatives. If we let them go, the train will be on time! Ask children to think of an example and picture the train.</p>	
5mins	The poisoned parrot	<p>Explain; you are given a parrot. However, this parrot is a poisonous parrot. It's been trained to be unhelpful to you, it constantly puts you down, criticising you. For example, it tells you 'You're rubbish, you're not good enough'. How long would you put up with this abuse before throwing a towel over the cage, or getting rid of the parrot? Yet we can often put up with our own thoughts for far too long.</p> <p>That then affects the way we live our lives – the way we behave towards others, how we are, what we think about others, what we think about the world, and how we think and feel about ourselves. But there is an antidote - just notice, but put your focus of attention on something other than that parrot. This parrot is poison though, and it won't give up easily, so you'll need to be persistent in your practice! Eventually it will get tired of you not responding. You'll notice it less and less. It might just give up and fly off to wherever poisoned parrots go!</p>	Use toy or image of a parrot.
10mins	Thought Distractions	Use 'thought distractions hand out' and 'distraction posters' to talk about some ideas of how we can distract ourselves from our thoughts – and let them be just that...thoughts!	Thought distractions/posters

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Session 9: Getting on with Others

Learning Outcomes: To help children think more about listening skills, how they can try to be kinder to others who they find difficult and some easy ways to try this.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	Being kind to someone you like	<u>Practice</u> —read aloud: Choose someone alive who you like, care for or love and who you know well. Visualise the face of the person, don't worry if you find it difficult to conjure up the exact image and instead just be aware of the essence of them, maybe the colour of their eyes, hair, the way they hold themselves, their smell, their voice. Because you like them, you'll probably already have good feelings about them and so dwell on those feelings and allow them to grow. Like dropping a pebble in water and allowing the ripples to expand outwards. Send them a message like "may you be well" or "may you be happy". And chant it a few times in your head. What did the young people notice? Often it is easy to be kind to someone we like.	
5mins	Active Listening	But when we are stressed, we are less likely to have time for others or to listen to them. We need to practice mindful listening. In pairs, tell the other person about your last holiday or day out— where you went, what you did, how you travelled, who you went with and how you felt about it. Say 5 things back to the person about what they told you – how many did you get right? Focus, don't do anything else whilst listening!	
5mins	Being kind to someone you find difficult	<u>Practice</u> —read aloud: Choose someone alive who you find difficult to be with and who has an impact on your life and perhaps on your own wellbeing. Visualise the face of the person, don't worry if you find it difficult to conjure up the exact image. Because you have difficulty with them, negative feelings may come to mind but let them pass and try not to judge them. Instead look for something good in that person. You may have seen them be kind to someone else or say something you agreed with or they may have a physical feature which you like. Send them a message like "may you be well" or "may you be happy". And chant it a few times in your head.	
5mins	Pledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Be patient with someone's failings rather than critical. b) Be kind to someone when you don't need to be. c) Say something complimentary to someone you find difficult. 	

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Session 10: Pursuit of Happiness

Learning Outcomes: To explore concept of happiness, what it means, and some ways to build on this individually.



Time	Activity	Method	Resources
5mins	Hello and welcome	Children give feedback on what mindfulness they have done since last week.	
5mins	What is happiness?	Ask the children what they think happiness is? What makes them happy? Happiness is a choice. Less about the external factors such as a big house, big car, best phone, more money – More about experiencing in the moment, power to be happy is internal. Focus on being in the present.	
5mins	Explore happiness	Giving – we feel happy when we give to others Connect – relating to people and animals means we are never alone Body care – supports our mental health, energises and keeps our bodies healthier for longer Awareness – noticing, paying attention and appreciating being in the moment Learning – life is more exciting and enriched when we learn and try new things Acceptance – We are all different. Enjoy and accept the differences in others and yourself and learn from them Goals – take planned steps to make things happen Be positive Bounce back – We can't change everything in our lives, but we can develop resilience to change how we think about it	
5mins	Individuals	What do each of these elements mean to you? Ask young people to explore some of the ideas above and what it means for them and what mindfulness activities they might use. Give out 10 tips for Happiness sheet.	10 tips for happiness sheet
2mins		Life is not about how fast you run, or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.” Care, join in and be part of the bigger world.	

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Resources Page

This page is for you to place printable resources on—handouts etc.



www.KentResilienceHub.org.uk

www.MoodSpark.org.uk





Acts of Kindness



care for the planet

FEED THE BIRDS
PICK UP LITTER
RECYCLE CRISP PACKETS AT SCHOOL
PLANT SOMETHING AND NURTURE IT
CREATE AN INSECT HOTEL FOR THE GARDEN
TURN OFF THE TAP WHILE BRUSHING YOUR TEETH
CREATE YOUR OWN COMPOST AND PUT IN THE GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

take notice

HELP MAKE DINNER
CARRY SHOPPING FOR AN ELDERLY NEIGHBOUR
TELL YOUR PARENT/CARER WHY THEY ARE SPECIAL
LEAVE A THANK YOU NOTE FOR THE POSTMAN/WOMAN
CLEAN YOUR ROOM WITHOUT BEING ASKED
SEND A LETTER TO A FRIEND YOU'VE NOT SPOKEN TO IN A WHILE
GIVE SOMEONE A HUG

connect with people

CALL YOUR GRANDPARENTS AND ASK HOW THEY ARE
SAY HELLO TO EVERYONE TO SEE
TALK TO SOMEONE NEW AT SCHOOL
COMPLIMENT A FRIEND
SAY THANK YOU WHEN SOMEONE HELPS YOU
SING SONGS AT A RESIDENTIAL HOME
MAKE A GET WELL CARD FOR SOMEONE
SMILE AT OTHERS -IT'S CONTAGIOUS!

give to others

DO A CHORE FOR SOMEONE WITHOUT THEM KNOWING
HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR SOMEONE
LET SOMEONE GO AHEAD OF YOU IN A QUEUE
DONATE SOME UNUSED TOYS/CLOTHES TO A CHARITY SHOP
TAKE CARE OF SOMEONE'S PET WHILE THEY ARE AWAY
DONATE FOOD TO A FOOD BANK
MAKE A HOMEMADE GIFT FOR A NEIGHBOUR

keep learning

READ A BOOK TO A GRANDPARENT
LEARN HOW TO SAY HELLO IN FIVE OTHER LANGUAGES
WRITE A POEM TO YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER
MAKE PLAYDOUGH FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS
RESEARCH ABOUT A LOCAL CHARITY THEN DO SOME FUNDRAISING FOR THEM
ADOPT AN ANIMAL ONLINE

be active

WALK A NEIGHBOUR'S DOG FOR THEM
DO SOME WEEDING FOR AN OLDER RELATIVE
WATER THE PLANTS
LEARN A DANCE ROUTINE WITH A FRIEND/SIBLING
GO FOR A BIKE RIDE, AND LEAVE HAPPY NOTES ALONG THE WAY
WASH SOMEONE'S CAR



Body Scan Technique



Start at the top of your body

Focus on each different part of your body and your muscles to make yourself aware of them. If they feel tight or uncomfortable try to consciously relax them.

Face – are you frowning? is your jaw locked?

Shoulders and back – are they tight or tense?

Arms- Are they crossed or locked?

Hands – Are they open or closed?

Continue doing this down your body to your feet then go back the other direction from your feet to your head to check everything is still as relaxed as possible.

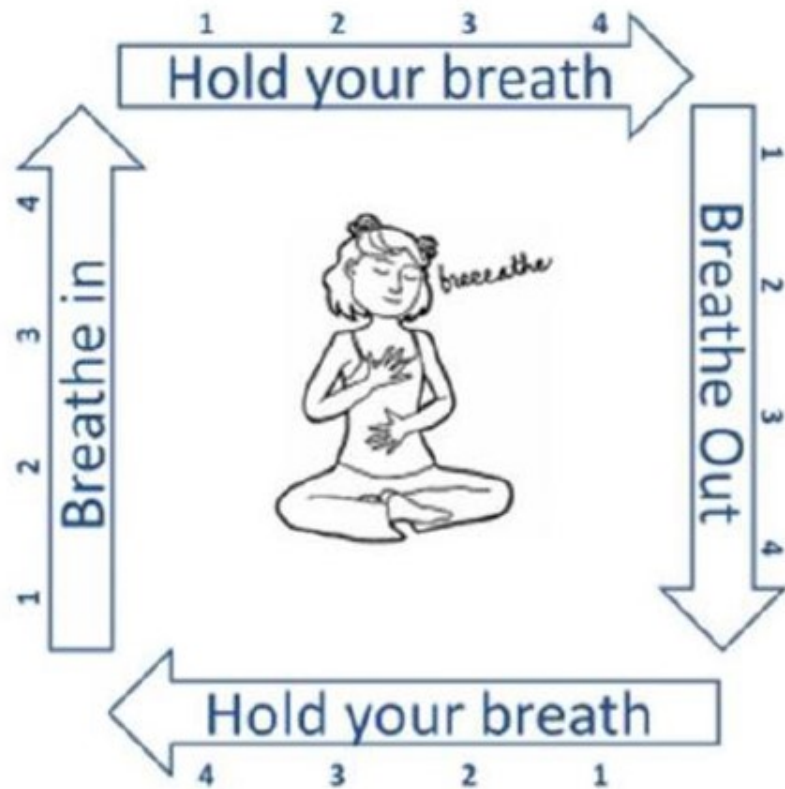
Breathing exercises: 4-7 Technique



Breath in
through your
nose for 4
counts

Breath out
through your
mouth for 7
counts

Square Breathing



- Find an object around you that is square (rectangular shapes work too).
- Look at the top left corner of the object, and as your eyes travel along the to the top right of the object breathe in for 4 counts.
- Follow the right side of the square with your eyes, breathing out for 4 counts.
- Follow the bottom of the square with your eyes, holding your breath for 4 counts.
- Follow the left side of square with your eyes, breath in for 4 counts.

Mindfulness Autopilot Quiz

- **Have you ever arrived at school and wondered how you got there?**
- **Have you paid attention to how long it takes to toast your bread in the morning?**
- **Have you ever been frustrated when someone doesn't thank you when you have been kind, and then been in a bad mood all day?**
- **Have you ever lost your temper and not known why?**
- **Have you ever been answering a call or text, and forget what you were saying mid-sentence?**
- **What did you have for breakfast this morning? What did it taste like?**
- **How many sets of traffic lights did you pass on your way to school this morning?**
- **How many people have you said 'Hello' to today?**
- **When was the last time you went for a walk?**
- **What did your bath or shower gel smell like this morning?**
- **What did your toothpaste taste like?**
- **Have you heard any birds singing this morning?**
- **Did you notice what the weather was like today?**

Practising Mindfulness

5.4.3.2.1 Technique:

A simple way to practise being mindful of our senses and what is going on around us is the 5.4.3.2.1 technique. This activity can also work as a means of distracting us if our thoughts are becoming unhelpful. You can either list the things or say them out loud if doing the activity.

At this moment in time, name...

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste.





THE SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF BREATHING

*For Greater Health &
Happiness*



Breathing is the single most important act that we do every day.



We cannot go even 3 minutes without breathing.



However, we do not pay much attention to breathing since it happens automatically.



There is a lot more to the breath than we know. In particular, it is a powerful way to control the mind.



We intuitively know this: it is why we commonly use expressions like “take a deep breath” when people are anxious or angry is common.



Scientific research is showing that breathing may just be the secret to better health and a more peaceful and productive mind.

HOW THE BREATH HELPS YOU CONTROL YOUR MIND



Neither in school, at work or at home have we been taught how to deal with strong emotions like anger, anxiety or fear.



We can try to “talk ourselves” out of these states but think about how successful you are at talking yourself out of a state of rage or nervousness. It’s hard!

STOP

PAY

ATTENTION

be CURIOUS

ENJOY

(SPACE)

(SPACE)