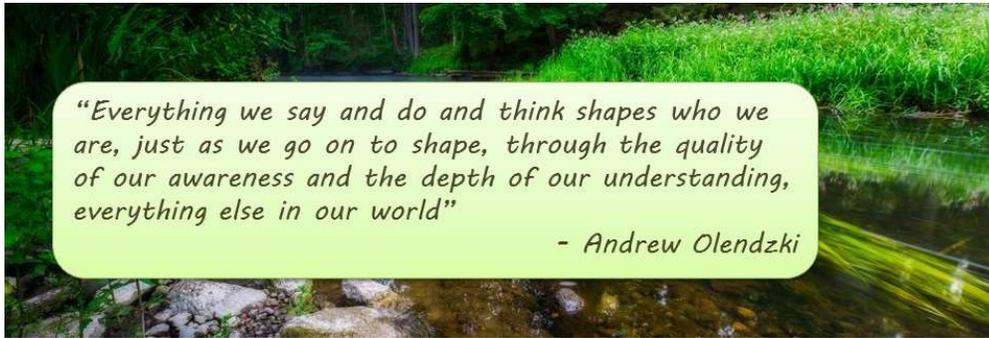


Self-Calming Strategies for Students and Teachers

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Schools are often looked at as places that help students succeed academically. Now more than ever, schools also need to become safe havens where students learn important self-regulatory skills that help them process and regulate challenging emotions. It is not only students who need strategies to help navigate long and demanding school days, educators (and our families) also benefit from developing self-calming practices.

At [Infinite Horizons](#), we know that good teaching practices include helping our students learn how to emotionally regulate themselves and also remembering to take the time to take care of ourselves so. That's why we include mindfulness as Learning Foundation Six in our newest book, [Transformative Teaching](#).

According to Rick Hanson, Ph.D., psychologist and Senior Fellow of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, "even fleeting thoughts and feelings can leave lasting marks on your brain, much like a spring shower can leave little trails on a hillside." Mindfulness can help us see more clearly by giving us the ability to observe with clarity so we can choose to focus on the good instead of the bad. By doing this, we are literally rewiring our brains so our minds can feel happier!

The [research](#) on the benefits of using mindfulness practices in the classroom is overwhelmingly positive. Some of the benefits of continued practice include improvement in executive functioning skills and academic performance, strengthened attention and concentration, reduced anxiety before testing, and the ability to be more self-aware and reflective. Mindfulness also enhances social and emotional learning, improves student's self-control and self-regulation skills, and increases empathy and understanding.

When you take the time to teach students about tools they can use to deal with difficult emotions in and out of the classroom, you are giving them invaluable resources that will be helpful no matter what life brings. When teachers build self-calming practices into their daily lives, the positive effects can be felt not only at school, but also at home.

Learn about the brain. Learn about the three key parts of the brain involved in thinking and learning—the amygdala, the prefrontal cortex, and the hippocampus. This will help you understand how your feelings arise and that you have the ability to change what you do in response. For extra help, checkout [Mindup](#): an awesome curriculum with four core pillars: neuroscience, positive psychology, mindful awareness and social emotional learning.

Use deep belly breaths. Find a comfortable seated position. Close your eyes or look down at one point on the floor. Rest your hands gently on your stomach. Go through a few minutes of deep belly breaths. Ask yourself: Can you feel your stomach rising and falling with every inhalation and exhalation? What happens when you focus on your breath? How does your body feel before deep belly breaths? After?

Begin a gratitude practice. Every day, focus for one minute on three things for which you are grateful. Try to select new and different things each day. You may be worried that you will run out of things for which to be grateful. However, it is a common experience that the more you look for experiences to be grateful for, the more you find.

Set intentions. Set a weekly or daily intention in a journal. Examples include: joy, creativity, empathy, gratitude, well-being, happiness, peace, and connection. By focusing your thoughts on a desired outcome, you can constantly come back to your intention throughout the day!

Encourage growth mindsets. Take the time to teach our [Growth Mindset 8 Day Lesson Plan](#). Then, start each week with some growth mindset inspiration-Mindset Mondays! Read stories or show movies or read excerpts about real or fictional people who exemplify growth mindsets.

Pause for peace. When you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or just need a moment to catch your breath, stop what you are doing, and pause. Take a deep breath and focus on your physical sensations. Remember that you are surrounded by other beings who are alive and breathing just like you. Incorporate pauses when you are walking in the hallway, before class, on your way to the bathroom, or before a meeting.

Take in the good. Negative self-talk playing in your head? It happens to the best of us. There are good things happening around us all the time, we just may not notice. Actively look for good news throughout the day and begin a positivity journal. Jot down small moments that were positive in your life throughout the day!

Try guided meditations. Dr. James E. Stahl and a team of Harvard researchers studied the effects of a mind-body relaxation program offered by the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. They found that people in the program used 43% fewer medical services than they did the previous year. Your mental health is important. You must be present and well!