Seaweed Practice

Ages: 5–11

Objective: The students will experience the feeling of grounding and mindful awareness. Students will use the awareness of breathing to slow things down in everyday life.

Materials: None

Background Information: If the students in the group are getting wiggly, try this brief movement practice. This practice simultaneously honors the students’ natural need for movement and continues to develop their capacity to pay attention. In this exercise, the focus of attention is on the experience of moving.

Procedure

1. Say the following to the students:

   • Each of us is a strand of seaweed anchored to the floor.
   • Initially, we are in a strong current, which gives us big, rapid movements.
   • Gradually, the current decreases, and our movements become smaller and smaller until there is very gentle swaying and then stillness.

2. Throughout the Seaweed Practice, gently remind students to be aware of their physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings.

Evaluation

The students will be able to direct their attention to their breathing and experience gradually slowing movements until they reach stillness.

Tai Chi Grounding Exercise

Ages: 5 and above

Objective: In order to connect with themselves physically, the students will relax and slow down.

Materials: None

Background Information: Tai Chi originated in China thousands of years ago. It is a system of slow, meditative physical movement. The following simple exercise can help students. Interestingly, this exercise can also be used with students who need to feel more energized.

Procedure

1. Using language that matches the students’ developmental levels: Introduce the exercise with the name Tai Chi if you feel it will raise the students’ interests. Depending on your goal for the exercise, describe the exercise as grounding and/or energizing. Suggest that it can be used any time the students feel it would be helpful to them.

2. Ask the students to stand with their feet at a distance of about shoulder width apart, so that the sides of their feet are approximately even with the ends of their shoulders. Their arms should be at their sides with an open space under their arms as if they have a Ping-Pong ball under there. Their palms should be turned toward the back.

3. Ask the students to bend their knees slightly and to notice their feet’s connection to the ground as they take a slow inhale and exhale. Ask them to slowly bend their knees just a little more. Sometimes, the direction, “soft knees” can be helpful.

4. Now, ask the students to simultaneously and slowly (1) take an inhale breath, (2) raise their arms up in front of them until they are about mid-chest height, and (3) straighten their legs slightly. Suggest “soft arms, hands, or knees.”

5. Next, ask the students to simultaneously and slowly (1) exhale, (2) return their knees to the less slightly bent position, and (3) return their arms back to their sides.

6. Repeat Steps 4 and 5, two more times.

7. After the third set of movements, have the students place their hands on their stomachs to experience the feelings of relaxation and connection.

8. If you are working with students who need to experience more energy in their bodies, after the third set of movements, ask them to notice any feelings in their stomach area. Identify sensations as energy for them and ask them to let it spread throughout their bodies.

9. All students may need some practice with this exercise to experience its benefits. It might be one you will choose to start each session.
Finding a Still, Quiet Place

Ages: 5–11

Objective: Young students will be introduced to grounding and mindful awareness and how it feels in their minds and bodies.

Materials: None

Background Information: Children will experience their own Still, Quiet Place and feel it in their body/minds. With older children, the language can be more body focused with less emphasis on the Still, Quiet Place as a location. Children ages 5 to 9 can begin to remember to visit their Still, Quiet Place when they are upset, and some may be able to use the practice to allow them to respond to upsetting circumstances. A general rule of thumb is that children can practice 1 minute for each year of their age.

Procedure

Say the following to the students:

- I would like to share one of my favorite places with you. I call it my “Still, Quiet Place.” It’s not a place you travel to in a car, a train, or a plane. It’s a place inside you that you can find just by closing your eyes. Let’s find it now.
- Close your eyes and take some slow, deep breaths. See if you can feel a kind of warm, happy smile in your body. Do you feel it? This is your Still, Quiet Place.
- Take some more deep breaths and really snuggle in.
- The best thing about your Still, Quiet Place is that it’s always inside you. And you can visit it whenever you like. It is nice to visit your Still, Quiet Place and feel the love that is there. It is especially helpful to visit your Still, Quiet Place if you are feeling angry, sad, or afraid. Your Still, Quiet Place is a good place to talk with these feelings and to make friends with them. When you rest in your Still, Quiet Place and talk to your feelings, you may find that your feelings are not as big and powerful as they seem. Remember, you can come here whenever you want and stay as long as you like.
- When you are ready, take another slow, deep breath and open your eyes.

Evaluation

The students will be able to direct their attention to their breathing and experience the image of their Still, Quiet Place.

Please circle the number that matches your skill.

1. I tell others what I feel.
2. I know the difference between a feeling in my body and my emotions, and I can tell someone. (Example: I have a pain in my stomach, and I feel sad.)
3. I calm myself if I get upset, and I think before I act.
4. If I need help, I ask for help.
5. If I get upset, I calm myself without help.
6. If I get upset, I let others help me calm down.
7. I have lots of ways to help me calm down if I get too upset.
8. I know everyone is different, and I can stay calm when others do not do what I want them to do.
9. When I talk to others, they understand what I am saying.
10. I know the things I do well.
11. I make friends, and I am a good friend.
12. When I am upset with someone, I talk to them so we can solve the problem together.

Never  Sometimes  Always
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2
0      1      2