



## **Focus**

### **Lesson Plan**

In this Focus unit, your students will discover what competes for their attention in their external and internal environment so that they are empowered to make good decisions that support their focus and well-being. This unit includes:

- An introductory Focus unit video that explains what the unit is about and introduces core vocabulary
- A front-loading activity to learn and understand the vocabulary in the unit
- Five five-minute audio-guided mindfulness practices
- Five two-minute audio-guided mindfulness practices
- Five ten-minute audio-guided mindfulness practices
- An activity booklet for children to become more aware of distractions in their internal and external environment
- An easy-to-follow, step-by-step lesson plan. See the next page to read it!
- Posters
- A bonus reflection activity to do at the end of the unit where students think about how they can use what they learned about themselves in their regular lives

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## Practice 1: Counting Breaths

Outcome: Noticing how focusing on our breath makes us feel helps us get to know ourselves better and empowers us to make decisions that support our wellbeing.

1. Explain to your students what external distractions and internal distractions are. You can do this by watching the video in the Focus unit or by explaining it on your own. For younger grades, you could also do the Frontloading activity where students categorize what's an external distraction and what's an internal distraction.
  - **External distraction:** Our external environment is the space we're in, like the classroom or our home. An external distraction is something competing for our attention in our external environment, like noises in the room, someone moving around, or an unusual smell in the air.
  - **Internal distraction:** Our internal environment is our body and what's inside our body, like our mind or our body. An internal distraction is something competing for our attention in our internal environment, like thoughts, emotions or sensations.
2. Ask your students why they think it's important to practice noticing external and internal distractions. Discuss with your students about the power of understanding what competes for our attention. Here are some ideas to support your discussion:
  - Knowing what distracts us can help to set us up for success in our daily tasks
  - Knowing what distracts us gives us clues as to how to adapt our physical space to avoid too many distractions
  - Knowing what distracts us empowers us to be able to redirect ourselves when we are distracted
3. Invite students to participate in the mindfulness practice without pressuring them. Decide how they will sit during the practice or let them choose what's comfortable for them.
4. Play audio #1. Join in on the mindfulness practice. The students will respond better to the exercise if you participate! Set behaviour expectations ahead of time such as – allowing everyone in the room to experience this practice undisturbed. Then, resist the urge to control your students' behaviour during the practice. Everyone experiences mindfulness differently. Even if on the outside it doesn't look like they are benefiting from the practice, they are learning and over time they will participate in their way.
5. Option to have an open discussion guided by the following questions. We find that having an open discussion after the practice is the best way to create positive engagement in future practices and improve participation over time.
  - How did you feel during the practice?

- What did you notice?
  - What did you learn?
  - How can you use what you learned for the rest of your day?
  - How did it feel to focus on your breath?
  - Did you notice any distractions that took you away from counting your breaths? What were they? Were they external or internal distractions?
6. Option for students to have a personal reflection using page 1 of the Focus booklet (choose which of the three versions you will use, for older grades or younger grades). Follow the instructions given on the page. This can also be done at another quiet moment of the day, such as after lunch or during a journaling period.
7. Option to discuss in a small or large group sharing answers from page 1.





## **Practice 2: Noticing External Distractions**

**Outcome:** Becoming more aware of the types of distractions in our external environment that influence us and how they make us feel helps us get to know ourselves better and empowers us to make decisions that support our focus and wellbeing.

1. Revisit yesterday's lesson. What did we learn yesterday? Why is it so important to notice how focusing on the breath makes us feel?
2. Explain that today, students will be practicing noticing external distractions.
3. Invite students to participate in the mindfulness practice. Decide how they will sit during the practice or let them choose what's comfortable for them.
4. Play audio #2. Join in on the mindfulness practice.
5. Option to have an open discussion guided by the following questions:
  1. How did you feel during the practice?
  2. What did you notice?
  3. What did you learn?
  4. How can you use what you learned for the rest of your day?
  5. What external distractions came up for you during today's practice?
  6. How can knowing what distracts you be useful in your regular life?
  7. How can you adapt your physical space and organize yourself when you need to avoid external distractions?
6. Option for students to have a personal reflection using page 2 of the Focus booklet. Follow the instructions given on the page. This can also be done at another quiet moment of the day, such as after lunch or during a journaling period.
7. Option to discuss in a small or large group sharing answers from page 2.



### **Practice 3: Noticing Internal Distractions**

Outcome: Becoming more aware of when thoughts and emotions are competing for our attention helps us get to know ourselves better and empowers us to make decisions that support our focus and wellbeing.

1. Revisit yesterday's lesson. What did we learn yesterday? Why is taking the time to notice what types of distractions there are in our external environment so helpful?
2. Explain that today, students will practice noticing internal distractions.
3. Invite students to participate in the mindfulness practice. Decide how they will sit during the practice or let them choose what's comfortable for them.
4. Play audio #3. Join in on the mindfulness practice.
5. Option to have an open discussion guided by the following questions:
  1. How did you feel during the practice?
  2. What did you notice?
  3. What did you learn?
  4. How can you use what you learned for the rest of your day?
  5. What internal distractions came up for you during today's practice?
  6. What external distractions came up for you during today's practice?
  7. How can knowing what distracts you be useful in your regular life?
  8. How can you adapt your physical space and organize yourself when you need to avoid internal distractions?
6. Option for students to have a personal reflection using page 3 of the Focus booklet. Follow the instructions given on the page. This can also be done at another quiet moment of the day, such as after lunch or during a journaling period.
7. Option to discuss in a small or large group sharing answers from page 3.



#### **Practice 4: Noticing Physical Distractions**

Outcome: Becoming aware of when sensations are competing for our attention helps us get to know ourselves better and empowers us to make decisions that support our focus and wellbeing.

1. Revisit yesterday's lesson. What did we learn yesterday? Why is taking the time to notice what types of distractions there are in our internal environment so helpful?
2. Explain that today, students will practice noticing physical distractions.
3. Invite students to participate in the mindfulness practice. Decide how they will sit during the practice or let them choose what's comfortable for them.
4. Play audio #4. Join in on the mindfulness practice.
5. Option to have an open discussion guided by the following questions:
  1. How did you feel during the practice?
  2. What did you notice?
  3. What did you learn?
  4. How can you use what you learned for the rest of your day?
  5. What physical distractions came up for you during today's practice?
  6. What internal distractions came up for you?
  7. What external distractions came up for you?
  8. How can knowing what distracts you be useful in your regular life?
  9. How can you adapt your physical space and organize yourself when you need to avoid physical distractions?
6. Option for students to have a personal reflection using page 4 of the Focus booklet. Follow the instructions given on the page. This can also be done at another quiet moment of the day, such as after lunch or during a journaling period.
7. Option to discuss in a small or large group sharing answers from page 4.



## **Practice 5: Returning to the Breath When Faced with Distractions**

Outcome: Becoming more aware of when things are competing for our attention helps us get to know ourselves better and empowers us to make decisions that support our focus and wellbeing. When we are faced with distractions, we have the power to return to our breath to help us to focus once again.

1. Revisit yesterday's lesson. What did we learn yesterday? Why is taking the time to notice what types of physical distractions come up so helpful? Why should we take the time to become aware of physical distractions?
2. Explain that today, students will practice returning to the breath when faced with distractions.
3. Invite students to participate in the mindfulness practice.
4. Play audio #5. Join in on the mindfulness practice.
5. Option to have an open discussion guided by the following questions:
  1. How did you feel during the practice?
  2. What did you notice?
  3. What did you learn?
  4. How can you use what you learned for the rest of your day?
  5. What was competing for your attention during today's practice?
  6. What external and internal distractions came up for you during today's practice?
  7. How can becoming aware of external and internal distractions help you to support your focus and your well-being?
  8. Why is it useful to get into the habit of returning to the breath when faced with a distraction?
6. Option for students to have a personal reflection using page 5 of the Focus booklet. Follow the instructions given on the page. This can also be done at another quiet moment of the day, such as after lunch or during a journaling period.
7. Option to discuss in a small or large group sharing answers from page 5.