Big Ideas For This Lesson

While mindful body provides a necessary foundation for accessing mindfulness, mindful listening provides an immediate and tangible entry into the world of mindful awareness. When one stops to listen, truly listen, the sensory world comes alive in a way previously unknown.

Suddenly the small sounds that are normally filtered out of our conscious awareness become a visceral part of our experience—the sound of the air moving through the vents, the wind through the trees, the padding of footsteps in the hallway, the clock ticking on the wall, or birds chirping outside the window. When we slow down enough to notice these sounds we also open ourselves to a whole range of subtle experience: the motes of dust dancing in a beam of sunlight, the feeling of our chair beneath our body, or the smell of lunch wafting down the hallway.

Mindful listening shows us how to be mindful in the simplest way possible by expanding our awareness to include everything that is already present in our immediate environment. It is important, however, to keep mindful listening distinct from active listening. Mindful listening refers to a conscious awareness of the various sounds all around us, while active listening includes a specific set of skills and techniques for engaging with others through conversation. See lesson on active listening.

The easiest way to make this distinction is to reserve the chime you use for mindfulness only for mindfulness. Teachers are often tempted to use the mindfulness chime as an attention grabber or to mark classroom transitions. Doing so will result in an attenuation effect and students will quickly lose interest in the chime. Keep it “special” and students will love to hear the chime!
**Teaching Script**

**BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE & CONCEPT MODELING (I DO)**

Now that we have learned mindful body, let’s try mindful listening too. Mindful body means paying attention to our body, so mindful listening means paying attention to what we hear. We are going to practice focusing all of our attention on just what we hear.

First, find your mindful body.

Pause to allow students to transition to mindful body. Remind them to move away from their desks so that this time is distinct and cue them through mindful body as needed.

Remember, feet are flat on the floor, hands on your lap, back straight and shoulders relaxed.

Good. Now I am going to ring this chime/bell.

Show students the chime/bell.

Your job is to focus 100% of your attention on the sound of the chime. See how long you can listen to the chime without having any other thoughts. When you can no longer hear the bell, just raise your hand. That’s it! Let’s practice.
GUIDED PRACTICE (WE DO)

In your mindful body, take a deep breath and close your eyes. If you are not comfortable closing your eyes just look down at the floor in front of you with a soft gaze. Remember to let go of all other thoughts and just listen to the sound of the chime. Raise your hand when you can no longer hear the chime. Ready? Here we go.

Ring chime/bell and let it resonate as long as possible.

**Teaching Note:** While it is tempting to want to keep your eyes open or move around the room to help students, if you can model mindful listening by closing your own eyes students will typically follow suit. There will inevitably be a few students in your class who are being distracting or not fully participating. Responding to these students in harsh and controlling tones will counteract any of your efforts to model mindfulness, so make a conscious decision about how to respond to distractions during mindfulness lessons. We have found that a certain amount of letting go is required and that the best way to foster calmness in students is to embody it as a teacher.

Wow! Did you notice how quiet and calm it got in here? Let’s try that again.

Repeat by ringing the chime/bell one more time until the sound diminishes completely. Take some time here for students to share-out about their experience with mindful listening.

a. What did you notice about mindful listening?
b. How did you feel? How did your emotions change when listening mindfully?
c. Were you able to focus all of your attention on the chime/bell or did other thoughts distract you?
Mindful listening is a great way to calm ourselves down when we are upset and you don't even need a chime to do it! Let’s try again, but this time we are going to focus on the sounds around us rather than the sound of the chime. Your job is to try to notice at least 5 new sounds that you didn't notice before.

For example, how many people could hear the sound of the fan/Air Conditioner before I just pointed it out? There are a lot of sounds all around us. We just need to pay attention.

Find your mindful body again and close your eyes. I will ring the chime/bell again to help us focus, but this time you do not need to raise your hand. Just keep listening to the sounds around you. I will set a timer for 2 minutes and ring the chime again when the time has ended. Ready?

Ring chime/bell.

**Teaching Note:** Adjust timer according to the success of your class with mindfulness. Some classes may need to start with a 30 second or 1 minute timer, while others will do just fine with 2 minutes. You can also generate excitement by setting it up as a competition by adding more time each time you practice and seeing how long you can practice mindful listening as a class without making any noise.

Ring chime/bell again after 2 minutes.

Great job everyone! What were some new sounds you noticed?

Take a moment here for students to share what sounds they noticed and to point out that these sounds were always present; we just needed to be mindful to notice them.

Now that you know how to listen mindfully, your challenge is to practice it every day on your own. You can practice mindful listening anywhere – in class when you are having a hard time paying attention, at home, at recess, or even riding the bus. No one even has to know you are doing it. Just close your eyes for a few seconds and pay attention to the sounds around you and see how it changes your mood. We will practice it as a class too.
EVIDENCE OF CONCEPT ATTAINMENT

Reflect on it

- What did you notice? Did anything surprise you?
- Was it easy or hard to focus your attention on listening and let go of other thoughts?
- When could you use mindful listening in your own life?
- In what ways does the sound of the chime/bell help you to practice mindful listening?
- How can you practice mindful listening without a chime/bell?

Journal it

Keep a daily record of new sounds that you hear when you practice mindful listening. Note how your emotions changed while practicing mindful listening.

EXTENSIONS

Classroom

- Practice mindful listening each day this week as a class.
- The best way to learn something is to teach it. Allow students to take turns in leading the mindfulness practice session by ringing the mindfulness chime/bell.

School-wide

- Avoid associating a mindfulness practice with disciplinary interventions. Mindfulness ought to be viewed as a practice of unconditional acceptance and not as something punitive.
- Practice mindful listening and other mindfulness techniques as a whole school during assemblies.
- Walk the walk; try starting teacher and administrative meetings with a few minutes of mindfulness practice.
REFERENCES


