

Stress Management Series (2 of 3)

Body Scan

The first step to stress management for kids is to help them understand what stress, worry, and anxiety are. They can think of it as their built-in alarm system that scans the environment for potential threats. Remind children that experiencing stress is a part of being human, it is normal, and that handling worry takes practice. Today you will introduce them to stress and some techniques to help them manage it and relax. This lesson is a series. It explores body scan, journaling, and deep breathing. You may do one or multiples in the series. Our goal is not to eliminate stress, we can't, but to teach children way to handle the stress.

Social Emotional Learning

Competency:

- Self Management
- Self-Awareness

Purpose:

- Develop basic understanding of stress
- Realize there are things to do that can help manage stress.
- Experience the body scan technique for stress management
- Stress management

Materials

- A place for participants to lay down
- Soft music
- Can play body scan or read it

Background and Introduction

- This lesson is on body scanning.
- The body scan is an in-depth investigation into what the body is feeling in the present moment. It's a great stress relief technique that helps youth get into their bodies and remind them that they are in the driver's seat.
- Participants realize that nothing is permanent. Help them connect with the sensations in their body and learn to trust that it won't last forever. This is a powerful tool to help youth with stress management.
- The body scan helps reduce stress and anxiety. We spend much of our time living outside of the body. We get preoccupied with thoughts of the future or the past.
- The body scan invites the observer into the inside world to notice sensations, thoughts, and emotions as they happen. By becoming aware of how stress feels in their bodies, kids can learn when they might need to use other stress relief techniques, too.
- From *Balancing Elephants & Stress Management Activities for Kids* by Stephine at balancingelephants.com

<https://balancingelephants.com/8-stress-management-activities-for-kids/>

Adapted by Angie Holmes , 4-H Educator, January 2023 from balancingelephants.com and mindful.org

Success Indicators

- Participants try the scan.
- Participants appear to relax.
- Participants share their experiences during processing.

Recommended Group Size:

- Any

Est. Time

- Approximately 15 minutes depending on intro and script used. (the recorded one is 11:39)

Preparations

- For body scan visit
 - <https://www.mindful.org/body-scan-kids/>
- Visit the website for a pre-recorded scan that lasts 11 minutes and 39 seconds or you may read the one below adapted from the website.
- If the one below is a little long for your time frame or age group, you may eliminate some of the talking points like numbers 6, 9, and so on.

Activity

- Body scan from <https://www.mindful.org/body-scan-kids/>
- 1) Lie down on your back. Let your legs and your arms relax and fall to the sides. Settle yourself in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- 2) Start by taking two or three gentle, large breaths. Pay attention to how that feels. Your belly rises and falls. Air moves in and out of your body. If you like, place a hand on your belly and feel it move with each breath.
- 3) Now we're going to pay attention to the other parts of the body. Start with your feet. They might feel warm or cold, wet or dry, relaxed or restless. It's also okay if you feel nothing at all. If you can, relax your feet now. If that's hard to do, that's fine. Take a moment and notice how that feels too.
- 4) For these few minutes, let yourself be still. There's nothing to do. Pay attention as best you can. You might feel a blanket or socks on your feet, or you might feel them pressing against the bed or the floor. When your mind gets busy, gently bring your attention back to your feet again.
- 5) Now move your attention to your lower legs, noticing whatever is there. Do they feel heavy, light, warm, cold, or something else? Let go of frustration and trying to do anything. Just do your best and give yourself a few moments of rest. Next, move your attention next to your knees and relax them. Feel the front, back, and sides of your knees.
- 6) After a few more breaths, move your attention to your upper legs. Whatever you feel, or don't feel, is fine. Notice your legs and let them relax. If you feel restless or wiggly, that's okay too. That happens.
- 7) Now move your attention to your belly. It always moves when you breathe, rising and falling, like waves on the sea. You might feel something on the inside, like full or hungry. You might notice the touch of your clothing or a blanket. You might even feel emotions in your belly, like happy or sad or upset.
- 8) Next, bring your attention to your chest. Notice it rising and falling as you breathe. If you feel that it's hard to focus, that's normal. Gently practice coming back again and again to how your chest feels when you breathe.

Stress Management Series (1 of 3)

Body Scan continued

Activity Continued

If you feel that it's hard to focus, that's normal. Gently practice coming back again and again to how your chest feels when you breathe.

- 9) Now turn your attention to your hands. There is no need to move them or do anything with them. They may be touching the bed, or the floor, or somewhere on your body. Relax them if you can, and if not, simply paying attention to your hands for another moment.
- 10) Move your attention up into your arms. Maybe notice if you can find a moment of stillness inside you, like the pause at the end of each breath.
- 11) Next, move your attention around to your back. How does it feel against the bed or the floor? Notice how it rocks with each breath. When your mind gets busy or angry or scared, you can always come back to how your body feels in this way for a moment.
- 12) Now move attention to your neck and shoulders, letting go and relaxing them. If your mind wanders, that's fine. No one can pay attention all the time. Just keep returning to noticing your body whenever you find yourself thinking of something else.
- 13) And now feel your face and head. What expression do you have right now? What would it feel like to smile? What else do you notice in your face, your head, and in your min
- 14) Finally, spend a few moments, paying attention to your whole body. If it is easier, continue to pay attention to your breath. If it's time for sleep, let that happen, remaining still and continuing to pay attention to your breath or feelings in your body. And if it's time to wake up, open your eyes and sit for a few moments before deciding when to move again.

- Once the participants have returned to a sitting or standing position and are ready to engage, do some processing. Ask
 - Did you enjoy this activity? What did you like?
 - When or where could you do this to help yourself relax?
 - What things will you need to do this activity?
(a quiet place to lay; a guide meditation – can be found on internet or through smart phone apps; Free apps: Insight Timer, Smiling Mind, Mylife Meditation, UCLA Mind, Healthy Minds Program, Plum Village)

- Challenge them to go home and share what they have learned with those on their house and ask for help finding ways to do body scans if they enjoyed this activity.

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