Lesson 1 - Shhh, What Can I Hear?

‘The quieter you become the more you can hear.’

Ram Dass

Skill: 🔴

Overview
The skill of attention is fundamental to children’s ability to learn and so our mindfulness journey begins with the development of learners’ ‘attention muscle’. In this lesson we explore mindful listening. By encouraging learners to concentrate on a specific sound their sensory awareness can be heightened. With practice, mindful listening can help learners nurture their ability to focus attention where they choose for longer periods of time.

Learning Intentions
- I can listen carefully to the sound of a tone or the sounds around me.
- I can understand that when I pay attention and listen carefully it makes it easier for me to learn.

Preparation and What You Will Need:
- Singing bowl / vibratone 🎧
- Shhh, What Can I Hear? slides
- Internet
- Do-BeMindful Explorers workbook for each learner
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Breathe and Begin

Begin by explaining to the class that we will be learning something new over the next eight weeks. Ask learners if they have ever heard the word ‘mindfulness’? What do they think it means?

Explain to learners that Mindfulness is about paying attention to what we are doing moment-by-moment, while we are doing it. So practising Mindfulness can help us to pay attention and to concentrate better. If we can learn to do this it can really help us to learn well in school.

Lots of people practise mindfulness - singers (Katy Perry), actresses (Gwyneth Paltrow and Jennifer Aniston) and sportsmen/women (NBA - Lebron James, tennis star - Novak Djokovic) and lots of football players - (the English team during the last world cup).

- Ask the class why they think people might practise mindfulness?
  People practise mindfulness for lots of different reasons. Sometimes it’s to help calm them down so that they feel more relaxed. Sometimes it’s to help them focus better and do well in whatever they enjoy doing. Sometimes it’s to help them feel better if they suffer from strong emotions like feeling really nervous or sad or angry.

- Ask learners to think about the following questions for a moment:
  Have you ever said something in anger that you really didn’t mean and were sorry about afterwards?
  Have you ever lashed out because you were really upset and then instantly wished that you hadn’t?

Explain to learners that when we experience strong emotions like anger, sadness or fear we can react in ways that we really don’t want or mean to. Mindfulness can help us with this but we need to practise it lots so that we can learn to stop reacting and then being sorry about it afterwards. So that’s why for the next 8 weeks we are going to practise mindfulness every day in class (tell them what they will be doing and when - we encourage you to start and end your day with a short mindfulness practice). Tell the class that they’ll do two mindfulness lessons together every week and that you’d like them to practise what they learn as often as they can - maybe in the playground or at home or before they go to sleep at night - just whenever they can. Ask if they think they can do that?

Explain to learners that the first thing they are going to learn is how they’ll sit when practising mindfulness. Ask the class to push their chairs away from their desks and turn them to face you.
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Tell them that it is really important that we have a mindful body when we are practising mindfulness. You may wish to show them the ‘Shhh, What Can I Hear slides?’ as you explain how to sit in a mindful body.

• Sit up straight with your hands in your lap and feet on the floor - tall and still like a mountain.
• Relax your jaw, shoulders, tummy, legs, hands and feet.
• Try to become aware of what your body feels like sitting in your chair.
• Take a few deep breaths.

Ask learners how did it feel to sit in your mindful body? Did you notice what happened in the room when we did this?

Pause and Practise

Explain to the class that they are now going to practise mindful listening and that you have something to help them learn how to do this (show them the singing bowl / vibratone). Ask them if they know what this is and what it does? Tell them this is a singing bowl/vibratone and it can help them to listen carefully and feel good too!

Tell learners that you are now going to tap the singing bowl/vibratone. It’s going to make a sound and all you want them to do is to listen to the sound that it makes. Ask learners to get into their mindful bodies and take a few deep breaths.

Congratulations - wow, you all listened so carefully! Ask them - did you find that easy or hard? How did you feel when you listened to the tone?

Now continue by explaining that we’re going to do that again but this time let’s try closing our eyes to see what happens to the sound.

If some children don’t want to close their eyes that’s ok - just encourage them to lower their gaze.

Ask the class how was it this time? Did closing your eyes help you to hear the sound more or less?

Explain to learners that we’re going to do this one more time but this time you’d like them to put up their hands when they can’t hear the sound any more.

Congratulations again - well done guys for listening so carefully!

Continue by explaining to learners that now we’ve become such good listeners we’re going to try listening to something other than the tone. This time let’s see if we can listen to the sounds around us for a full minute. You might hear sounds outside or from another classroom or inside our classroom (it might be useful to give them some examples of things that they might actually hear). Let’s get into our mindful bodies, take a deep breath and listen to the sounds around us for one minute after the tone stops.
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Ask learners the following questions:-
- What sounds did you hear?
- Did you hear anything that you didn’t expect to hear?
- Did anyone hear someone else in the room breathing or moving?
- Did anyone hear something from inside your own body?
- Did you find it hard or easy to keep listening to the sounds in the room?

**Reconnect and Reflect**

Ask the class to put their hands up if anyone forgot to keep listening to the sounds sometimes? Explain to learners that it’s completely normal to forget to keep listening and to start thinking about something else - this is our mind wandering. By practising mindfulness we can actually train our minds to focus better - just like we can train our bodies to get fitter. By focusing on one thing like a sound we are developing a very important life skill - attention. If we can listen carefully and pay attention it is much easier for us to learn well. Explain that they’ve completed the first mindfulness lesson and that they’re now officially Do-BeMindful Explorers!

Ask learners to draw a picture of themselves sitting in a mindful body on page 1 of their Do-BeMindful Explorers Workbooks.

….. and to take you further …. 

- Why not teach this lovely song to your class? Animals listen quietly to learn about the world around them - can you?

  **Shh Can You Hear?** By Johnathan Peale
Shh, Can You Hear? By Jonathan Peale

Verse 1:
Can you listen like a mouse
in your tiny little house?
Can you hear a piece of cheese?
Can you hear somebody sneeze?
You can hear somebody sigh.
You can hear a buzzing fly.
You can hear a cat go by,
if you listen like a mouse!

Chorus

Verse 2:
Can you listen like a cat?
Can your paws go pitter-pat?
Can your ears move fast and quick?
Can you hear the clock go 'tick'?
You can hear the smallest sound,
something tiny on the ground.
Something tiny can be found,
if you listen like a cat!

Chorus

Verse 3:
Can you listen like a bear?
Can you hear things everywhere?
Put your paw to your ear.
It will help you hear.
You can hear outside the wall,
people talking in the hall,
if you make no sound at all,
If you listen like a bear!

Chorus

Verse 4:
Hey, now will you look at that?
You can listen like a cat,
like a mouse, and like a bear.
You can listen anywhere!
You can listen when you play.
You can hear a song today.
You can hear what others say
if you listen just like you!

Chorus

Why not play 'Silly Sentences' with your class? Can you listen carefully to each other whispering a silly sentence around the group? The last person announces the sentence that they've heard and everyone can have a good giggle at how the message has invariably changed as it's been passed along!

Home Learning Activity

• Try to practise mindful listening for about 1 minute every day for the next few days. Record when you practised and what you heard in your Do-BeMindful Diary, which is in the back of the Do-BeMindful workbook. Try to do one mindful listening practice with your parents/carers if possible.
• On page 1 of your Do-BeMindful Explorers Workbook please write down some of the different sounds that you heard when you were listening mindfully.