Lesson 3 - The Hare and the Tortoise

‘When you listen to your body when it whispers, you will never have to listen to it scream.’

Unknown

Skill: 🌟

Overview
This lesson focuses on the skill of awareness. In Week 1, we began by helping learners to nurture their ‘attention muscle’ and, as noted, attention is a skill that is fundamental to children’s learning. The ability to pay attention - and sustain that attention - enables children to concentrate and remain receptive during the learning process.

At first glance, paying attention to something and being aware of it may seem like the same thing - but mindful awareness has specific qualities that distinguish it from attentiveness. While attention refers to the ability to concentrate on something specific, awareness encompasses the ability to understand the whole experience - physical, mental and emotional - relating to that specific object of attention.

A good analogy that helps to explain this is to think of an athlete on a running track. Their attention is focused on the running track in front of them - but they’ll be aware of the excited crowd in the stadium cheering them on.

This lesson is designed to encourage learners to develop awareness in their daily lives and begins with mindful awareness of movement.

Learning Intentions
• I understand that sometimes I’m so busy I don’t notice my thoughts or feelings.
• I am learning that when I pay attention to moving slowly I can be aware of my thoughts and how my body feels.
• I am beginning to understand that when I’m aware of my thoughts and feelings / sensations in my body that these can change depending on what I am doing and what is happening around me.

Preparation and What You Will Need:
• Singing bowl/vibratone
• The Hare and the Tortoise slides
• Do-BeMindful Explorers workbook for each learner
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Breathe and Begin

Begin the lesson by asking the class:

• Can anyone tell me what we practised last week? Mindful listening and mindful breathing.
• Has anyone managed to practise either mindful breathing or listening at home?
• Does anyone want to tell me how they feel when they are practising Mindfulness?

Continue by explaining to learners that from today onwards we’re going to begin every Mindfulness lesson with mindful breathing. We’ll start with 1 minute and then go on for a little longer each time until we reach 5 minutes.

Ask the class to get into their mindful bodies. Take a few deep breaths and gently close your eyes or lower your gaze.

1 minute.

Well done everyone - how are you feeling now?

Explain to the class that so far when we’ve practised Mindfulness we’ve either been sitting up or lying down but today we are going to do something different! We’re going to practise how to be mindful while we are moving. We are going to learn to become aware of our bodies and the sensations or feelings in our bodies while we’re moving. Most of the time we’re so busy doing things that we’re not even aware of all the sensations and feelings in our bodies - we just don’t notice them!

Ask the class:

• Have you ever heard someone saying that they were on ‘automatic pilot’? Do you know what this means? It means that they weren’t aware of what they were doing.
• Have you ever tripped up or bumped into something by mistake when you were walking or running? Why do you think this happened?
• Have you ever got to school or got home from school and you can’t even remember the journey? This might be because you were on automatic pilot!

Continue by explaining that today we’re going to see if we can step out of being on automatic pilot and become aware of how our body moves and how it feels. So, we’re going to try moving very slowly - just like the tortoise in the Hare and the Tortoise story! Do you think you can do that?

It can take quite a bit of effort to slow down - so it means that we’ll need to be really mindful of our bodies. You’ll notice too that just like when we practise mindful listening or mindful breathing, sometimes our mind might wander off and we can forget to pay attention to our body and how it’s feeling. This is normal and it’s ok. When you realise that your mind has wandered - just like that puppy again! - all you have to do is notice it and try to bring your awareness back once again to your body and how it feels.

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Pause and Practise
Begin by explaining to the class that we’re now going to see what it feels like to move very, very slowly like a tortoise. Tell learners - pretend that you’re a tortoise coming out of his shell and stand up from your chair really slowly. Keep your gaze low as this will help you to concentrate better.

Continue by telling learners to put both their feet on the floor and as they being to do this ask them:

- Become aware of your feet on the floor - the ball of your foot, your heels and your toes.
- As slowly as you can, start to stand up.
- Can you feel the muscles in your legs as you start to stand up?
- Can you feel any sensations right now? Is there any tightness or shakiness or any other feelings in your legs?
- Can you become aware of the weight of your body as you start to stand?
- How does your back feel? Are there any sensations in your shoulders or neck? What about your arms or hands?

Once they are fully standing say to learners:
- Take a few breaths here and just feel what it’s like to stand right now.

Pause

- If your mind wanders off that’s ok just gently bring it back to how your body feels right now.
- Now slowly lift an arm up to the sky. What can you feel as you are lifting your arm up? What is happening in your arm, your hand and your fingers?

Pause

- Now I want you to raise your other arm slowly but this time I want you to close your eyes.
- What is happening in your arm when you lift it slowly? What sensations do you feel? Notice if your hands / arms are hot or cold and if the temperature changes.

After a few moments:

- Now gently lower your arms and open your eyes.

Congratulate the class - well done, you were really focused there!

Ask learners:
- How did it feel when you slowed down your movements?
- Did you find it easy or difficult to move slowly?
- Did any of you become aware of thinking about what you were about to do before you did it….for example, did you catch yourself thinking ‘I’m going to put my hand up now’?
- When you were holding your arms up did you become aware of thinking my arms are getting tired now / hot / cold / tingly?
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Reconnect and Reflect
Ask the class why do you think that we’re practising moving very slowly when we are learning to be mindful? Once again, explain to learners that most of the time during the day we’re so busy doing things that we’re not even aware of all the sensations and feelings in our bodies so we just don’t notice them at all. That’s us being on ‘autopilot’!

Explain to the class that moving mindfully and learning to be aware is a bit like learning how to crawl, then walk, then run. We are practising being aware and mindful of our bodies just now when we are moving slowly but when we get better at it we can be mindful even when we are moving normally!

We can miss so much and take so many things for granted if we’re on autopilot and we’re just not aware of what we’re doing or what’s going on around us. So, if we really try to be aware of what we’re doing in simple things like the way we move then life can be much more interesting and fun!

…. and to take you further …. 

• Why not try ‘Slow and Silent Walking’ with your learners? This can be done in the classroom, assembly hall, playground or outdoors. See ‘Slow and Silent Walking’ in the Mindful Games Activity Cards by Susan Kaiser Greenland.

Home Learning Activity
• Ask learners to try walking mindfuly at home and to be aware of any sensations / feelings in their body with every step that they take. Ask them to complete page 3 of the Do-BeMindful Explorers workbook at home and remind them to record when they practised in their Do-BeMindful Diary.