

Yoga Mindfulness Moment

Activity

Resource:

Beyond the Walls: Activities for the Outdoors

Grade(s): 9 10 11 12

Division(s): Senior

Setting: Intramurals

Season: Spring

Activity Goal

This grounding activity provides participants with an opportunity to slow down, breathe deeply, and focus on finding some quiet time during their day to reduce stress, relax, and refocus.

For participant safety, please review the contents of the [Beyond the Walls: Safety Considerations](#) page for information on Safety Standards, Spring Safety Considerations, and Outdoor Playing Areas and Surfaces.

Equipment

Recommended: 1 small foam square, towel or pillow suitable for outdoors per participant

Preparation

Plan ahead by generating ideas through planning sessions with intramural student leaders to identify easy-to-execute yoga poses that all participants can perform and can be incorporated into an outdoor spring mindfulness activity such as Yoga Mindfulness Moment. Have intramural leaders consider:

- Available outdoor spaces to run the activity.
- Safety standards for the activity.
- Select and teach identified yoga poses before beginning the activity.

How to Play

- Review the safety rules and activity instructions with participants prior to the activity.
- Establish the boundaries for the designated playing area and share them with participants.
- Plan for at least 20 minutes to complete this activity. Like physical fitness, mindfulness is a habit that takes time to develop. If necessary, start with a shorter duration and build up to a longer session as participants adapt to this type of mindfulness.
- Explain to participants that this activity uses an outdoor space and incorporates yoga poses to increase their awareness of inner focus and breathing to destress. Participants may require an extra layer of clothing to stay warm in the spring air.
- Explain to participants that mindfulness is the state of being conscious, or aware. When they take a mindful moment in nature, they are able to focus their senses, to notice what is going on around them without distraction.
- Explain that being mindful allows them to focus their senses on what is going on around them calmly, and with intention. They can still hear, see, smell, think and feel, but they are able to be present, in the moment, and allow the sensation of what is around them to stay with them a moment, and then pass.
- Direct participants to find a quiet 'sit spot' away from their peers, within earshot, so they can hear the instructions throughout the activity. Encourage them to find a comfortable position on the ground and ensure that they can perform the yoga poses they have been taught throughout this mindful sequence.
- Once participants have found their spots, sat down, and are still, read the following script:
 - Sit quietly in your spot, first with your eyes closed, or with a soft gaze. Together, take five deep breaths slowly in through our nose, and exhale through our mouth. Do this silently and notice how you feel when the air fills your chest and lungs. Do it again, and feel it push your diaphragm down, and slowly exhale. (pause) Let's do it again. In through the nose, (pause) out through the

mouth (pause). Repeat this pattern two more times and then slowly and gently open your eyes. As you continue breathing, move into and hold this yoga pose. (Facilitator models one of the predetermined yoga poses and holds it for 30 seconds.)

- Resume sitting in your spot. Let's focus on our sense of sight. Look around you as you continue to take slow, deep breaths. What do you notice? Notice the way there are multiple shades of the same colour around you. Look for five different shades of green. Notice the way the light plays on the underside of a leaf. Maybe the grass around you has a different colour closer to the root than it does the tip of the stem. Look at the sky and see how the clouds move and change shape. See how the colours blend together. Now breathe. As you focus on your sense of sight, don't lose focus on your breath. As you continue focusing on what you see and breathing, move into and hold this yoga pose. (Facilitator models another one of the predetermined yoga poses and holds it for 30 seconds.)
- Resume sitting in your spot. Continue your focused breaths. Feel the quiet inhale in through your nose, and let the air fill your lungs silently again. Slowly, let the air escape from your mouth. If you feel comfortable, gently let your eyes close. Now bring your attention to what you can hear. Are there four sounds you can differentiate? What are they? Move your focus from one sound to the next and listen intently. Breathe. (Pause quietly for 30 seconds.) Bring your attention back to your focused breaths. Draw the air deeply into the very bottom of your lungs, and let it slowly flow back out from between your lips. Gently open your eyes as you continue to focus on the sounds around you. Continue to focus on what you hear as you move into and hold this yoga pose. (Facilitator models another one of the predetermined yoga poses and holds it for 30 seconds.)
- Resume sitting in your spot. Allow yourself to focus on what you can feel around you. Experiment with three different textures that you can reach from your sit spot. Appreciate the smooth, rough, granular, or spiky textures around you. Notice how they make you feel when you engage with them. Continue to breathe, drawing the air deeply into your lungs. Shift now to your sense of smell. What do you notice as you inhale? If you feel comfortable, let your eyes fall closed again as you focus on what your senses are telling you. Can you identify two different smells, and notice how they mix together to tell you about the world around you? Pause quietly for 30 seconds, allowing participants the time to perform the above and then continue with the script:

Continue your deep, controlled breathing and focus on what you feel or smell as you move into and hold this yoga pose. (Facilitator models another one of the predetermined yoga poses and holds it for 30 seconds.)

- Resume sitting in your spot. If you haven't already, consider letting your eyes close to focus on the way the air tastes today. As you take a big breath in, let the air roll around your tongue, down your throat and into your lungs. Know that sometimes, the air has a bit of a taste to it, particularly after a long rain or when it's really hot and humid. What can you taste? When you exhale, can you feel how the air has been warmed by your body? Does it carry a different taste? Focus here a moment and see what you are able to notice when you really turn inwards. What does the air taste like from where you sit? Pause quietly for 30 seconds, allowing participants the time to perform the above. Continue your deep, controlled breathing and focus on what you taste as you move into and hold this yoga pose. (Facilitator models another one of the predetermined yoga poses and holds it for 30 seconds.)
- Let's focus on all we have experienced through our breath, sight, listening, touching and tasting as we move through and transition into and out of the yoga poses we learned and practiced. (Facilitator models all the yoga poses, holding each for 30 seconds before transitioning to the next pose. Consider having participants perform the series of poses twice.)
- As we get ready to continue with our day, take a moment to focus on something or someone you are grateful for today. Focus all the love and energy you have in your body on this person or thing and hold it there as you breathe in (pause) and out (pause). Again (pause), in (pause) and out (pause). Take three more breaths just like this, and slowly, gently, open your eyes.
- Go forward into your day with a calm, peaceful mood, and be appreciative of the gifts we have been given on this day!

Adaptations

Consider these tips to maximize the challenge and the fun for participants.

- To increase the physical challenge of this activity, consider doing this activity as a 'Meditative Movement Moment' (i.e., going on a walk throughout the available natural space, and pausing to perform each of the tasks listed above).

- Consider having participants re-group following this activity for a large group discussion on the things they noticed, and how they felt after having performed this activity. Encourage them to take a mindful moment just like this whenever they feel the need!

Modifications

Consider these tips to maximize inclusion and fun for all participants.

- For participants with core strength challenges, consider having participants lay down on their backs on the ground for this activity.
- For participants that may lack one of their senses due to a disability, consider altering the script to include an additional expression of gratitude, or a focus on tightening/loosening of muscles (e.g., 'Drop your shoulders, and relax your hands and arms. Notice how you feel when your muscles are relaxed. Now, tighten them back up and notice the difference.').
- For participants who need an alternate position, provide the option of lying down or standing and adapt the narrative to allow for all levels of participation.
- Provide alternative yoga poses from seated/standing/lying positions to include all participants.