

Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind

Section 8



“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”
– Audre Lorde

Sections 8-11 build upon a model called the Wellness Compass developed by the Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation. The symbols this model uses are cross-cultural, iconic, and connect us to our common humanity. A tool generated over 2000 years ago by the Han Dynasty, a compass shows us the way when we feel lost, while the use of four colors speaks to the wisdom encompassed in the medicine wheel, used by many Native American cultures to guide the development of a balanced life. The four sectors of the compass model – Mind, Spirit, Strength, and Heart – not only contribute to our overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build our compassion resilience. Before delving in further, you may want to take a [self-assessment](#) of your current wellness practices. Hold onto this and notice if any that you marked as “this never occurred to me” change as you encounter the next four sections of the toolkit.

Mind is the first sector we will explore. Participants discover the impact of one’s sense of organization, meaningful work, and being present on well-being. Mindfulness is a contemplative practice of being intentionally aware in the present moment. Mindfulness will be a key skill used in many of the Mind Section activities, as well as those that follow: Spirit, Strength, and Heart.



[Distribute this document to all participants to explore prior to the following application activities.](#)



Key Activity
[Appreciative Inquiry Reflection on Competence \(15-45 minutes\)](#)

Wellness Practice
[Wellness Compass Practices Assessment](#)

Circle Agenda
[Staff Circle Agenda, Section Eight](#)

Core Content Visual to Display in Common Staff Areas
[Mindsets – Use this Visual and Display in Staff Break Areas](#)

Posting this visual in common staff areas will serve as a reminder of content covered to staff and perhaps serve as a future conversation started for deeper reflection among staff members.

Supplementary Activities/Handouts
[Power of the Positive Word \(15-30 minutes\)](#)

[Practicing Mindfulness – The Body Scan and Pause \(3-10 minutes\)](#)



For links specifically for leadership and additional resources, please visit the Toolkit online.

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[The practice of mindfulness is displayed in this brief, animated video.](#) The goal of mindfulness is to be fully present with our emotions (HEART), with others (HEART), with our bodies (STRENGTH), with our environment (MIND), and with the universe (SPIRIT) (Davidson, 2012); therefore, mindfulness is a key skill that will form a foundation for building our compassion resilience in all four sectors of the wellness compass. It is through being fully present and aware and observing mindfully that we can participate most effectively in building our own resilience and wellness. A lot of mindfulness practices involve using an anchor, such as breathing, as a way to turn attention back to the present moment. In this [4-minute video](#), children show how a focus on breathing can be a helpful strategy for both adults and children. While the breath is a good anchor for many, it is not the best for everyone. Some use a focus on feeling their feet on the ground, others touch their thumb and index fingers together forming a circle, and there are many other ways to anchor ourselves.

Mindfulness is not only a mechanism to sharpen our attention, but is also a means of strengthening our compassion and empathy. Specifically, mindfulness is associated with increased self-compassion, higher compassion resilience, and lower compassion fatigue (Thielman & Cacciatore, 2014).

Because mindfulness is so intimately connected to compassion resilience, you may find it useful to assess how mindful you are. This article shares a few different surveys of mindfulness and sets assessing your mindfulness in a healthy context.

Developed in partnership with:



compassionresiliencetoolkit.org

How the practice of mindfulness can help build resilience in the Mind area of the wellness compass:

This area of wellness has to do with how we manage our time, workspace, and belongings. Let's pretend that Mary, a zealot in her first year of teaching who volunteers at every opportunity, is starting to feel overcommitted and over-scheduled. One week Mary double-books herself, is late to a meeting, and begins to feel strapped for time to dedicate to her lesson planning. Mary, ever attentive of when her life feels out of balance, notices how her tendency to say "yes" to everything makes it difficult to give her all to the things she has agreed to do. Rather than engage in self-blame (a form of judgment), Mary accepts that she cannot reasonably (and with compassion) do everything asked of her. She identifies the areas of her job where she has the freedom to say "no" and she vows to only say "yes" to opportunities that most reflect her interests and values.

Learning to say "no" compassionately (see [Compassionate Boundaries](#) – Section 6) especially in a professional or work culture where we might be expected to say "yes" (see [Expectations](#) – Section 5), is imperative to maintaining resilience in this sector of the compass.

If you struggle with taking on too much, you may benefit from [learning more](#) about the benefits of saying "no" and how to do so compassionately.

It is likely not news to anyone that living and working in an environment that is organized to support our activities and offers visuals or space that are calming adds to our overall well-being. Reflect on the following questions regarding your current level of organization:

1. In what area of your life are you most easily organized? (finances, belongings, workspace, connecting to friends and family, cleaning your living area, scheduling your time, etc.)
2. In what area do you find it the most challenging to be organized?
3. When you recognize a need for organization do you tend to use negative self-talk to try to motivate yourself or ask yourself what supports or skills might be helpful to you?

4. Our self-expectations can become unrealistic when it comes to how we approach getting more organized in areas that are a challenge. What step might you take to organize the part of your life that you listed in #2? (example: I want to recognize my family's birthdays. Do I start by figuring out how I can follow-through on sending happy birthday texts to my siblings or do I expect that I buy and send birthday cards to everyone in my extended family?)

To learn more about how to "organize your brain, your time, your workspace, and your projects," check out [this blog](#).

The mind area of the wellness compass also suggests that we have a strong need to do meaningful work that engages our individual gifts and skills. In "Mindsets," Dr. Carol Dweck (2016) shows that it is not just our abilities and talents that bring us success as teachers, but whether we approach our work with a fixed or growth mindset. People with fixed mindsets believe qualities are etched in stone and that abilities are fixed. This mindset often leads to people feeling deficient or incompetent when faced with difficult situations. When we feel a lack of competence, we may retreat from the challenge before us and become judgmental. For example, in a fixed mindset, if we are challenged by the complex needs of a student in our classroom that we do not feel competent to address, we may retreat from engagement with that child. In the process, we might blame ourselves and/or the student. Thus, our lack of a sense of competence can leave us in a place of compassion fatigue for that student.

In contrast, people with a growth mindset believe that abilities can be developed through practice and effort. Our skills and talents are not predetermined; therefore, people with growth mindsets stretch themselves to learn new things and believe themselves capable of learning through experience. These people are more resilient in the face of setbacks. In a growth mindset, if we experience compassion fatigue, we may view it as an opportunity to grow our compassion resilience!

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Finding a level of competence in the face of complex challenges is tough! We benefit from understanding our own growth potential; but, we also benefit from understanding the resilience and strengths of those we serve and those with whom we work. None of us are the sole source of connection, support, or learning for a student, parent, or colleague. And, all students, families, and colleagues have internal strengths that can be accessed to move them closer to the lives they desire. Many of the activities in this section invite us to recognize our own strengths and competencies and to celebrate the skills and strengths of those with whom we work.



Wellness and Resilience Strategies – Spirit

Appreciative Inquiry Reflection on Competence

Understanding and fostering the resilience and strength in ourselves and those with whom we work begins with noticing the positive and what is being done well. Appreciative inquiry is an approach to identifying and building those positives. It can help us become aware of our internal and external dialogues and shift or reframe them so that our focus is on what we want more of rather than on what we don't want, focusing on the good that is already present (that we may be filtering out!). One way to do this is to ask yourself or others questions that are framed in, and will elicit the good you experience in yourself, your work, and your school.

These questions can be used for individual reflection and/or conversations and planning in small teams or organization-wide.

- 1. Considering your entire time as a staff member at your school district, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement in the district?**
 - What made it an exciting experience? What gave it energy?
 - What was it about you – unique qualities you have – that contributed to the exchange?
 - What were the most important factors in your school that helped to make it a meaningful experience (e.g., leadership qualities, structure, rewards, systems, skills, strategy, relationships)?
- 2. Let's consider for a moment the things you value deeply. Specifically, the things you value about 1) yourself; 2) the nature of your work; and 3) your school district.**
 - Without being humble, what do you value the most about yourself – as a human being, a friend, a parent, a citizen, and son/daughter?
 - When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about the task itself?
 - What is the single most important thing the organization has contributed to your life?
- 3. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between diverse individuals or groups at your school?**
 - What made such cooperation possible (e.g., planning methods used, communication systems or process, leadership qualities, incentives for cooperation, skills, team development techniques)?
 - How could these lessons be applied to your team/staff?
- 4. In your mind, what is the common mission or purpose that unites everyone on the team/staff? How can this continue to be nurtured?**
- 5. What is the core factor that gives vitality and life to your school?**
- 6. If you could develop or transform your school in any way you wished, what three things would you do to heighten its vitality and overall health?**
 - How could these three things be brought to the Leadership Team?

The Wellness Compass Practices Assessment

“Self-care is not an indulgence. Self-care is a discipline. It requires tough-mindedness, a deep and personal understanding of your priorities, and a respect for both yourself and the people you choose to spend your life with.” – Tami Forman

The following worksheet is meant to be a reflection tool on how you care for yourself. It has many wellness practice options for your consideration. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you, your family, and community culture and mark those that are not with N/A. When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses that are clues about how you have been taking care of yourself recently. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Pay attention to your likes and dislikes. What items did you find interesting that you might want to try or do more of? Celebrate your areas of strength in your self-care. What do you say to yourself about making yourself a priority? Consider who you might talk to about this self-assessment that would listen to your reflections and reinforce your chosen self-care practices.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)	0 = I never do this
2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)	? = This never occurred to me. I might be interested
1 = I barely or rarely do this	N/A = doesn't apply or it's not of interest to m

<p>HEART</p>	<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with others whose company I enjoy <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in contact with important people in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Make time to reply to personal emails/letters; send holiday cards <input type="checkbox"/> Allow others to do things for me <input type="checkbox"/> Enlarge my social circle <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for help when I need it <input type="checkbox"/> Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust <input type="checkbox"/> Resolve a conflict with people in a productive way <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, spend time with my companion animals <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, schedule regular activities with my children <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	
	<p>Emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Give myself affirmations, praise myself <input type="checkbox"/> Practice self-compassion <input type="checkbox"/> Practice being mindfully present <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out comforting activities, objects, people, and places <input type="checkbox"/> Allow myself to cry <input type="checkbox"/> Find things that make me laugh <input type="checkbox"/> Notice my inner experience – my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests <input type="checkbox"/> Use emotional regulation strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 	

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 <p>SPIRIT</p>	<p>Core Values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Identify what is meaningful and notice its place in my life _____ Find a connection/community that shares my values _____ Have experiences of awe _____ Contribute my time or other resources to causes in which I believe _____ Read books or listen to talks/music that inspire me _____ Choose to focus my attention on ideas, people and situations that nurture my optimism and hope _____ Be aware of the non-material aspects of life that I value _____ Be curious and engage in conversations with other people about their values _____ Other:
	<p>Rest & Play</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Explore how to maintain balance in my work and non-work life _____ Make time for reflection to balance time spent doing _____ Take vacations _____ Take day trips or mini-vacations _____ Do something that makes me laugh _____ Take rest breaks in the day – a walk at work, brief nap, etc. _____ Spend time in nature _____ Sing _____ Meditate _____ Dance, swim, walk/run, play sports, or other physical activities _____ Other: 
 <p>STRENGTH</p>	<p>Stress Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet _____ Make time for self-reflection _____ Have my own personal support – professional or peer _____ Write in a journal _____ Read about things that are unrelated to work _____ Do something at which I am not an expert or in charge _____ Attend to minimizing stress in my life _____ Learn something new _____ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes _____ Practice accepting discomfort _____ Practice gratitude _____ Other:

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 <p>STRENGTH</p>	<p>Care for Body</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner) <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthily <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Explore new ways to exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular medical care for prevention <input type="checkbox"/> Get medical care when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Take time off when sick <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular comforting, relaxing and/or healing touch <input type="checkbox"/> If relevant, take time to be sexual – with myself, with a partner <input type="checkbox"/> Get enough sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Wear clothes I like <input type="checkbox"/> Make healthy decisions around use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
 <p>MIND</p>	<p>School/Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch) <input type="checkbox"/> Have intentional conversations with co-workers <input type="checkbox"/> Make quiet time to complete tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding <input type="checkbox"/> Set limits/boundaries with colleagues and people you serve <input type="checkbox"/> Balance work so that no one day or part of a day is “too much” <input type="checkbox"/> Get regular supervision or consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiate for my needs <input type="checkbox"/> Have a peer support group <input type="checkbox"/> Other: 
	<p>Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make a budget for how I plan to spend and save money <input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of how I spend my money <input type="checkbox"/> Use a calendar to plan my day, week, month, year <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize how I spend my time <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange my living space so it is comfortable and comforting <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange my workspace so it is comfortable and supports my efficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplish the tasks I plan each day <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Overall Balance

Maintain balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton. The compass model is adapted from the work of [The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation](#).

Staff Support



Circle Agenda

Circle Topic	CR Section 8: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind
<p>Planning</p>	<p>Send the introduction document from Section 8 in the online toolkit at least 4 days prior to the circle to all participants.</p> <p>Hold a meeting with leadership to prepare for this section and invite the leader(s) to consider the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This section begins the wellness practices portion of the toolkit. Your participation in the conversations as a peer-learner for personal well-being will provide opportunity for you to make authentic and personal connections with the group. 2. The wellness sessions should give you insight into potential well-being supports that you can offer to all staff. <p>For the full leadership preparation document, please visit this page.</p>
<p>Purpose of Circle/ Learning Objectives</p>	<p>Let participants know they will be discussing their results of The Compass Assessment in the circle. Request that they bring their completed assessments to the circle.</p> <p>We are learning how to build resilience in the Mind area of the wellness compass.</p>
<p>Materials/ Preparation/Time</p>	<p>Time: 45-50 minutes</p> <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Circle kit <input type="checkbox"/> Values and shared agreements created in first session <input type="checkbox"/> Extra copies of the Compass Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the culture behavior agreements created last session to put in the middle of the circle <input type="checkbox"/> Write pair-share questions from Guiding Questions section on flipchart <input type="checkbox"/> Pens/pencils <input type="checkbox"/> Post-it notes for the check-out activity <p>Set-up: Up to 15 chairs arranged in a circle without furniture in the middle.</p> <p>To consider: Understanding Your Social Location as a Facilitator – Active Bystander Intervention: Training and Facilitation Guide.</p>

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Circle Topic	CR Section 8: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind
Welcome/Check-In (5 minutes)	Welcome participants and complete check-in. (Go-around) How are you doing on a scale of 1-5 and what book, movie, or show have you read/seen recently that you would recommend to others and why?

Grounding/Wellness Practice (10 minutes)	<p><i>“Mindfulness involves focusing our attention on the present and noticing our thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance.” – CR Toolkit</i></p> <p>Share: Throughout the toolkit we’ve been invited to practice mindful self-awareness. Our ability to be present and focused in the moment is a skill needed in all areas of our well-being. In this case, mindfulness helps us to recognize meaning in our work and exercise organization in our life.</p> <p>Body Scan</p> <p>Explain: We are going to transition into a mindfulness activity. Mindfulness involves focusing our attention on the present and noticing our thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance. The goal of mindfulness is to be fully present with our emotions (HEART), with others (HEART), with our bodies (STRENGTH), with our environment (MIND), and with the universe (SPIRIT) (Davidson, 2012); therefore, mindfulness is a key skill that will form a foundation for building our compassion resilience in all four sectors of the wellness compass. We will practice doing a body scan which is an internal practice designed to train your mind to be more present.</p> <p>Lead your group in a body scan by following the directions below.</p> <p>Body Scan Directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a comfortable posture with your feet on the floor and your back erect. You may sit or stand and close your eyes or look at the ground. • Now find your breath, typically most apparent in your nose, chest, or stomach. Give your attention to your breathing and attune to it with curiosity. • Do not worry about your mind wandering, just gently bring it back to focus on the sensation of breathing. • Notice how breathing nourishes your body even when you are not paying attention to it. • Feel your whole body breathe, gently moving with the rise and fall of your breath. Try to pay attention to at least 5 breathing cycles. • Now, release your breath and allow everything that comes into awareness to just be as it is. <p>(Go-around) As you think through the toolkit, and the various strategies to support your compassion resilience (such as boundary setting and focusing on what you can control, etc.), where does focusing on the present and noticing your thoughts and feelings with an attitude of acceptance seem most important to your ability to act consistently with compassion?</p> <p>If you would like to consider a different grounding practice, please review the mindfulness appendix for additional suggestions.</p>
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Circle Topic	CR Section 8: Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Mind
<p>Review (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Share: I want to remind the group of the behavior agreements from last session for the culture in our organization. That culminated our four sessions on our team and organization supports for compassion resilience. Today we're completing the first session of four that look at our individual practices to support our compassion resilience. We'll begin today with a self-assessment in all four areas of the wellness compass and then focus in on the mind sector. The mind sector looks at our opportunities to find meaning in our work and how our ability to organize our time, belongings, priorities and finances engages our brain in supporting our well-being and mindfulness.</p>
<p>Assessment and Guiding Questions (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Ask participants to pull out their Compass Assessments and provide a copy to those who did not bring one.</p> <p>(Pair share) In which of the 8 areas do you see your greatest strength? What is one thing you do in that area to take care of yourself?</p> <p>(Pair share) Considering the eight areas of the compass, what is one area you'd like to focus more attention to in the next couple of months and why?</p> <p>Share: This will give you some personal focus as we look at the four sectors in the next four circles.</p>
<p>Putting it into Practice (15 minutes)</p>	<p>Share: One key to our finding meaning in our work is being able to connect our unique areas of competence to our daily work. Practicing mindful self-awareness around our competence is often a tough perspective to take. Our peers can help us to grow our self-awareness around our own competence. The following activity will give us a chance to practice that.</p> <p>Power of positive word directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have staff restate their first name and a favorite activity they like to do at work. • As each staff member describes the activity, the rest of the group writes down the person's name and a positive statement about that person's accomplishments, unique skill/aptitude, and/or a strength the person brings to the work environment on a post-it-note. • After every staff member has spoken and everyone has acknowledged an area of competence in each other they will hand those comments to their respective staff members. In the end, each staff member should receive a positive comment from each member of the group. • Allow staff a few minutes to read through their positive comments. Bring the group back together and take a moment of silence to reflect on "how it feels to be given positive comments about your strengths."
<p>Closing (5 minutes)</p>	<p>(Go-around) What is one thing you will take with you from your experience in our circle today?</p> <p>Bonus Activity: To learn more about how to "organize your brain, your time, your workspace, and your projects," check out the following blog.</p>

Growth Mindset

Growth Mindset is having “the passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even when it’s not going well.”



Fixed Mindset

“The Fixed Mindset does not allow people the luxury of becoming. They have to already be.”



From Dweck, Carol (2016). *Mindset*. Ballantine Books, New York, NY.

What examples can you add below to help us understand Dweck’s Growth Mindset?

Topic of Mindset	Fixed	Growth
View of students’ challenging behavior	Once challenging, always challenging.	Behavior represents opportunity to learn a skill or solve a problem.
Use of strategies in teaching	If I have tried it before and it didn’t work, I am not happy about being asked to try it again.	I can learn more about the strategy and apply it in a new setting.

Power of the Positive Word

Receiving praise from others can help us to focus on our strengths. This exercise also reminds us that others recognize our positive qualities and that we work in a setting that acknowledges and celebrates our work and unique attributes.

For this activity you will need the following materials:



- 2" x 2" pieces of paper or Post-it Notes – every person needs one for the number of individuals in the room.
- Pens/pencils

Have staff introduce themselves and state a favorite hobby or activity they like to do outside of work. Hobbies and favorite activities shed light into a person's interests and who they really are. In addition, hobbies and activities provide enjoyment, healthy perspectives, and life satisfaction.

As each staff member introduces themselves, the rest of the group writes down the person's name and a positive statement about that person. These statements can mention an accomplishment of the person, a unique skill/aptitude, and/or a strength the person brings to the school. After each staff member has introduced themselves and everyone has written positive comments, people will hand out their positive comment notes to respective staff members. In the end, each staff member should receive a positive comment from each member of the group.

Allow staff a few minutes to read through their positive comments. Bring the group back together and take a moment of silence to reflect on "how it feels to be given positive comments." Ask staff to share:

How it feels to receive positive comments?

How this exercise can be used as a foundation for creating a more positive culture?

Practicing Mindfulness: The Body Scan and Pause

The **body scan** is an internal practice designed to train your mind to be more present. Though there are many approaches to the body scan, these videos — offered as a [3-minute](#) or [5-minute](#) practice by renowned mindfulness author, Elisha Goldstein, will lead you through this exercise.

Many other mindful practices can be found [here](#).

Taking a brief pause throughout the day can help us re-center ourselves and calm our minds. Strategic, purposeful pauses can be especially helpful when we are feeling drained of energy or feeling unsettled or anxious. In short, pauses help us to refocus and provide clarity to help guide us to act intentionally, rather than reactively. Pauses give us time to step back from our “fixing mode” and instead shift our senses and thoughts to the present. When you practice this, the steps can take a minute or you can choose a longer pause.



One means of taking a “pause” is to focus on your breath by doing the following:

1. Find a comfortable posture with your feet on the floor and your back erect. You may sit or stand and close your eyes or look at the ground;
2. Now find your breath, typically most apparent in your nose, chest, or stomach. Give your attention to your breathing and attune to it with curiosity;
3. Do not worry about your mind wandering, just gently bring it back to focus on the sensation of breathing;
4. Notice how breathing nourishes your body even when you are not paying attention to it;
5. Feel your whole body breathe, gently moving with the rise and fall of your breath. Try to pay attention to at least 5 breathing cycles;
6. Now, release your breath and allow everything that comes into awareness to just be as it is.

Adapted from Lubar Solvang, S. (2017, April). The Pause. School Community Partnership for Mental Health newsletter.