



SUPER SENSOR

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS
AND SENSORY AWARENESS

Games and Activities for
Building Emotional Awareness

MIGHTIER



SUPER SENSOR UNIT

Exploring Mindfulness and Sensory Awareness



Unit Overview

This unit focuses on sensory awareness and the practice of mindfulness. Students will discover how animals use their super senses to build awareness of their surroundings and how humans can use senses to be present and mindful. Through stories, art, exploration, and collaborative activities, students will learn about the power of a sensory experience and how to use sensory awareness to practice mindfulness when they feel overwhelmed or dysregulated.



Lessons

- **Lesson 1: Super Sensor Intro**
 - Skill introduction
 - Short, collaborative activities
- **Lesson 2: Meet the Lavalings: Stu**
 - Character bio
 - Bonus: Art/Comic strip
- **Lesson 3: Sensory Scavenger Hunt**
 - Skill-based activity
- **Lesson 4: Mindful Pet**
 - Art project



Essential Questions

- How can we tune into our senses?
- How do different sensory experiences impact us?
- How can we use our senses to practice mindfulness?



Key Vocabulary

- **Senses:** the special abilities our bodies have to help us understand our world. They include touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell, and a few more!
- **Sensory experience:** a moment that is experienced with the senses (anything you hear, see, touch, taste, or smell!).
- **Sensory awareness:** noticing and focusing on a particular sense/senses (e.g. touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell).
- **Sensory overwhelm:** the experience of having too much going on around you, and too much information for your senses to handle.
- **Surroundings:** the environment, or place, that is immediately around us.
- **Mindfulness:** the act of slowing down and focusing on the present moment. It's an exercise that forces us to be aware of our surroundings, body, and emotions.
- **Body cues:** signals from your body that are connected to the emotion you're experiencing (e.g. rapid heart rate when anxious, muscle tension when angry, fidgety when excited).

SUPER SENSOR UNIT

Exploring Mindfulness and Sensory Awareness



Standards/Alignment

CASEL Competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

ELA (Mass)

- R.PK-12.1
 - Read closely to determine what a text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from a text.
- W.PK-12.4
 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- SL.PK-12.1
 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Arts (Mass)

- PK-K.V.Cr.01
 - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
- PK-K.V.Cr.02
 - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Comprehensive Health (Mass)

- CH.PH.01.02
 - Identify behaviors and environmental factors that influence functioning of body systems
- CH.PH.01.08
 - Describe the influence of health habits on growth and development
- CH.PH.01.09
 - Apply skills that increase immediate peak functioning of body systems (vigorous exercise, eating nutritious foods, adequate rest)
- CH.SEH.05.01
 - Identify the various feelings that most people experience and describe the physical and emotional reactions of the body to intense positive and negative feelings
- CH.SEH.05.02
 - Apply methods to accommodate a variety of feelings in a constructive manner in order to promote well being
- CH.SEH.05.11
 - Analyze healthy ways to express emotions and to cope with feelings, including the common causes of stress, its effects on the body, and managing stress



Supporting Research

The fundamental component of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is mindfulness, defined as present moment awareness with an attitude of openness and non-judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for children fosters present-moment awareness of thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations by allowing children to 'drop into' their senses (e.g., hearing, touch) (Semple-Lee, 2011).

Engaging children in sensory awareness as a mindfulness practice has many benefits for their well-being and development. Sensory awareness promotes self-monitoring and attentional control, while mindfulness practice promotes emotional control. Research shows that mindful awareness practices help children improve their executive function, especially for children with executive function difficulties (Flook et al., 2010). It is critical that the activities are age-appropriate and grounded in developmentally appropriate practices (Vekety et al., 2022).

Flook, L., Smalley, S. L., Kitil, M. J., Galla, B. M., Kaiser-Greenland, S., Locke, J., ... & Kasari, C. (2010). Effects of mindful awareness practices on executive functions in elementary school children. *Journal of applied school psychology*.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future.

Semple, R. J., & Lee, J. (2014). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for children. In *Mindfulness-based treatment approaches* (pp. 161-188). Academic Press.

Semple, R. J., & Lee, J. (2007). *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for anxious children: A manual for treating childhood anxiety*. New Harbinger Publications.

Vekety, B., Kassai, R., & Takacs, Z. K. (2022). Mindfulness with children: a content analysis of evidence-based interventions from a developmental perspective. *Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 39(2), 231-244.



Teacher Notes

Awareness of how our bodies and emotions interact with the environment is a crucial and fundamental part of developing emotional awareness. It first introduces children to the value of their senses, then begins to explore how the brain, heart rate, and emotions are influenced by sensory input in calming, alerting, and bothersome ways. Lessons in this unit use "animal senses" as a way to deliver educational concepts, and encourage children to explore different types of sensory input through play-based activities.

During this unit it's important to present children with a variety of sensory choices and to encourage different types of responses and answers from children. While one type of sensory input may be pleasant and calming for one child, the same sensory input may be unsettling and uncomfortable for another. Helping children to explore and think about their senses in this way gives them a better understanding of how their emotional state is impacted by their senses, and gives them calming sensory strategies to add to their personal toolkit.



Lesson Overview

Est. time: 20 minutes

Students will discover how animals use their super senses to build awareness of their surroundings and how we can use our senses to practice mindfulness.



Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- Explain each of the five senses and their importance.
- Describe how sensory awareness helps animals and humans.
- Use sensory awareness as a mindful practice.



Materials

- Super Sensors handout for each student
- Writing tool for each student



Step-by-Step Directions

Introduction:

- Read through the Introduction with the students.
- Discuss afterwards:
 - *What are all of the senses?*
 - *Fun fact: They are actually more than 5! But we often focus on 'touch, taste, hearing, sight, and smell' as the main ones.*
 - *Can you think of an animal who has a strong sense? Which sense do they use? How does it help them?*
- Have students close their eyes and take a few slow deep breaths. Then go through the guided sensory exploration.
 - *Let's start with touch. Feel the material beneath you. Is it hard or soft? Touch your knees. Notice how your legs feel.*
 - *Now, onto taste. Think of what you ate last. Can you taste any of it still in your mouth? Try and imagine the taste of your last meal.*
 - *Now let's listen. Name 3 sounds you hear - don't say them aloud. (Pause for 20 seconds).*
 - *Cup your hands around your nose. Take a slow, deep breath in. What do you notice about how your hands smell?*
 - *Now open your eyes, try and find 3 shapes and 3 different colors.*
 - *Now that we are aware of our five senses, let's explore how they can help us.*

Sensory Survival Skills Questions:

- As a class, in partners, or independently, have students answer the questions on Sensory Survival Skills.
 - Discuss as a whole group how senses help us gather important information about our surroundings.



Step-by-step Directions continued...

Sensory Surprise Activity:

- Assign partners or have students select a partner for the Sensory Surprise Activity. One partner is the guesser and the other is the getter.
 - The guesser should sit down and close their eyes while the getter finds an object from around the room.
 - It should be an object they can touch, smell, and/or hear (not taste or see!)
 - Examples: pencil, book, paper, marker etc.
 - The guesser tries to guess what the object is using their senses.
 - Switch who is the guesser/getter and complete the activity again.
 - Have students answer reflection questions on their handout afterwards.
 - Teacher tip: Allow kids to have fun finding creative or unique objects as long as the objects are appropriate.
 - Make sure they use only the three senses: touch, smell, and hear (not taste or sight!).
- Discuss sensory awareness:
 - *How do we use our senses to figure out new information?* (Examples: Reading a sign, smelling smoke, hearing an alarm)
 - *How do our senses tell us about our surroundings?*



Accommodations & Modifications

- Provide support:
 - For students with sensory processing disorder or sensory sensitivities, discuss which sense they are most comfortable with and have them focus on that sense for the activities.
- Provide challenge:
 - Gather a variety of materials and objects from home/around the school for the Sensory Surprise to increase options for students.
 - Research additional senses as a class and how they help us: proprioception and vestibular senses.
 - Option to complete Sensory Survival Skills outside and think about your senses in nature.



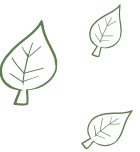
Lesson 1: Super Sensor

Exploring Mindfulness

Imagine walking through the jungle - full of sounds, bright colors, and smells. It can be overwhelming. How do animals find their way? They use mindfulness to focus their senses on what they need. Elephants use their super-sensing nose to smell water over 12 miles away. A monitor lizard uses their super-sensing tongue to detect the direction of dinner. A tiger uses their super-sensing night vision to hunt through the darkness.

Mindfulness is the practice of slowing down and focusing on something. This can be applied to anything - the smell of baking cookies, the sound of rain, your heart rate, or how your body feels when you're frustrated. Because emotions are felt in the body, practicing mindfulness is an important part of building mind-body connections and strengthening emotional awareness. This unit will help us tune into our bodies and emotions by exploring our senses.

Sensory Survival Skills



Let's get in tune with our senses like animals do! Answer the following questions about how your senses help you navigate the world around you.

1. Name a sound that alerts you and makes you pay attention:

2. Name something you see that makes you feel safe:

3. Name two ways to determine if a food has gone bad:

4. Name something that you try to avoid touching:

5. Name a taste or smell that brings you comfort:

Sensory Surprise

Can we use our senses to identify the mystery objects?

1. With a partner, choose who is going to be the 'guesser' first. The guesser should close their eyes and sit still.
2. The other partner, the 'getter', should get an object from around the room that their partner can **touch, smell, and/or hear** (not taste or see!) and hand it to their partner who has their eyes closed. The guesser will have to guess using their senses of touch, hear, and/or smell to determine what the object is.
3. Switch roles and repeat!



Reflection:

1. What was the object you had to guess?

2. How did you use your senses to identify your object?

3. How did you feel while you couldn't use your sense of sight?

4. Which sense do you use the most in your everyday life? Which sense is most helpful to you? Why?



Lesson Overview

Est. time: 20 minutes

Students will learn about one of the Lavalings, Stu, who uses sensory awareness as a mindfulness practice when he is feeling overwhelmed. Students will discuss different scenarios to help Stu get back to his cool state. Additionally, there is the option of learning to draw Stu and creating a short comic strip to illustrate sensory awareness.



Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- Read about sensory awareness through Stu’s story.
- Discuss how sensory experiences can help us return to a calm/cool state.
- Use sensory awareness as a mindful practice.



Materials

- Meet Stu handout for each student
- Writing tool for each student



Step-by-Step Directions

Stu’s Bio and Sensory Notebook:

- Read Stu’s Bio and Sensory Notebook to learn about Stu and discuss the questions below:
 - *Can you think of a time when your senses felt overwhelmed? How did it make your body feel? How did it make your head feel?*
 - *What does ‘getting out of your brain and getting into your body’ mean?*
 - *Which sensory awareness strategy from Stu’s notebook did you like best? When would you use it?*

What Would Stu Do Discussion:

- Complete What Should Stu Do activity by reading through the different scenarios and discussing which senses are overwhelming to Stu and how he can use sensory awareness/mindfulness to get back to a calm state.

Bonus Activities:

- Students will create their own comic to help Stu get back to his calm state.
 - If students need more room they can fold a piece of blank paper into six squares and create an extended comic strip.
 - Option to have students share out or hang the comic strips around the room.
 - Encourage students to add themselves into the story.



Accommodations & Modifications

- Provide support:
 - Put the definition of both mindfulness and sensory awareness up for reference.
 - Encourage students to write their comic strip before they add drawings.
- Provide challenge:
 - Have students incorporate an animal as a character in their comic that uses a super sense to help Stu practice mindfulness.
 - Create their own story starter and sensory awareness strategy.



Lesson 2: Meet the Lavalings: Stu

Exploring Mindfulness



Stu
(Stuartz)

Common

"Has a lot on his mind"

Strengths are: Pausing, observing, connecting with others

Struggles are: Anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, busy places

Do you ever feel like there is too much going on around you? Stu knows about that overwhelming feeling. He lives in a busy world full of sights, sounds, and smells. The chaos sometimes leaves his head spinning, his heart racing, and his body feeling uneasy. Whenever Stu feels overwhelmed by his senses, he heads out into nature and practices **sensory awareness**. By focusing on one sense at a time, he gets out of his brain and back into his body. This helps him feel calmer and at ease.

Stu has compiled a notebook full of mindful strategies that he has gathered from observing animals in nature. Check out some of his favorites below!

Stu's Sensory Notebook

- Birds touch water in a bird bath.
 - Tip: Wash your hands or soak them in a bowl of cool or warm water. Notice how it feels.
- Tigers can see very well – especially at night! This helps them to notice any slight movement.
 - Tip: Stand still and look around you. Look for any signs of movement, even the smallest breeze in the wind. What do you notice?
- Elephants can smell over 12 miles away. This helps them detect water.
 - Tip: Pay attention to different smells as you walk around a room. Notice 3 different smells.



What Should Stu Do?



Read these short stories to help Stu identify what senses are putting him in a hot state. Then, give Stu a suggestion on how he can use his senses to cool down.

1. Stu is at the beach but it's very crowded. He can't find anywhere to sit and the heat is making him squint and sweat. He feels himself getting more and more frustrated and overheated.

- What sense(s) are overwhelming Stu? _____
- How can Stu use sensory awareness to cool down?

2. Stu is trying to sleep but it isn't dark out yet! He keeps getting distracted by a bug crawling on the floor or a flash of light. He tosses and turns in his bed and can't get comfortable. His bed feels rough and scratchy. Even though he's tired, he can't fall asleep. He starts to get annoyed.

- What sense(s) are overwhelming Stu? _____
- How can Stu use sensory awareness to cool down?

3. Stu is at school and he's trying to take a test. He can hear the tap, tap, tap of the pencil next to him and the ticking of the clock. He can't focus and is getting frustrated. One of his Lavalings friends has taken out their snack and the smell of the sticky fruit is too much. He wants to scream!

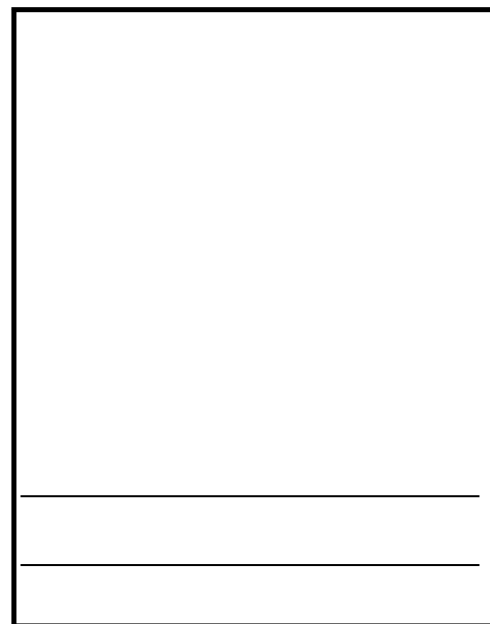
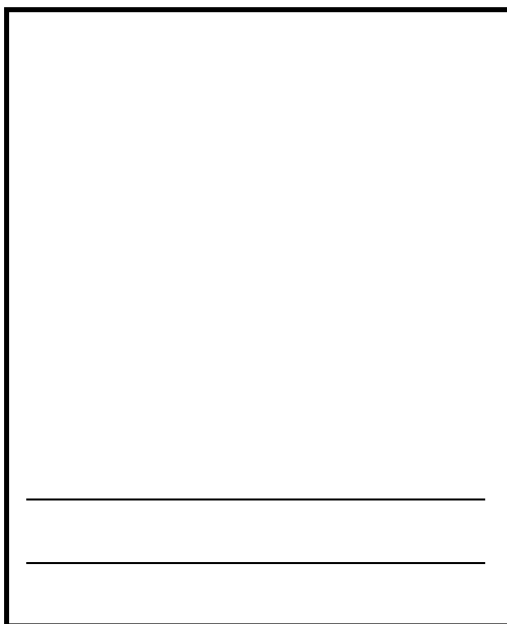
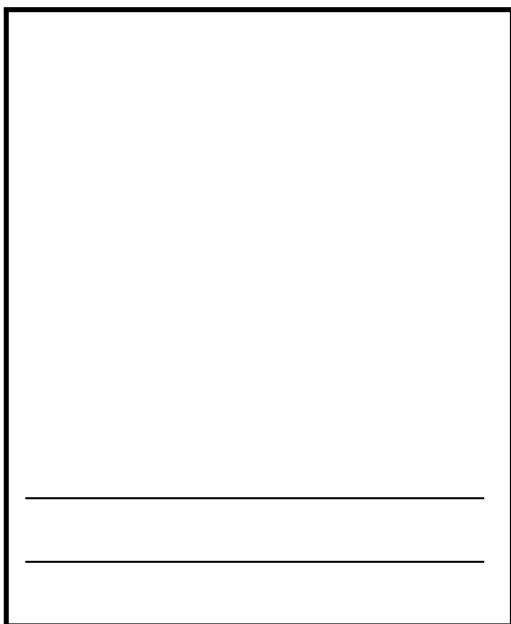
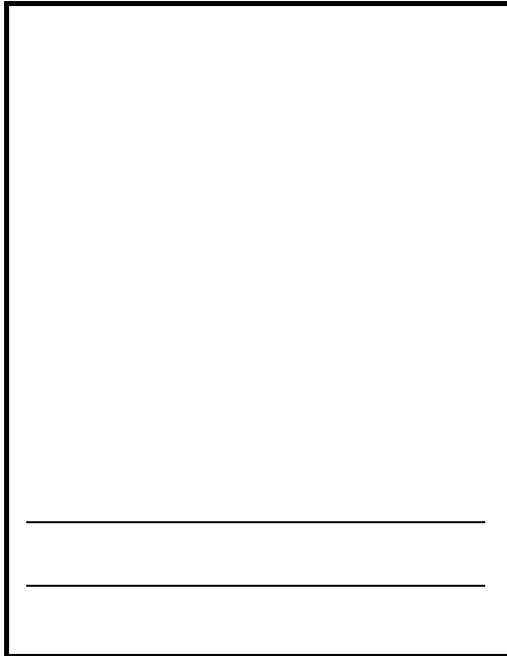
- What sense(s) are overwhelming Stu? _____
- How can Stu use sensory awareness to cool down? _____

Name: _____

Bonus Activities

Finish the Comic

Help Stu use sensory awareness to return to his cool state. Build a story using this pictures!





Lesson Overview

Est. time: 20 minutes

Students will go on a Sensory Scavenger Hunt to explore different senses and their effect on their body. Students will create a Mindful Mission to use sensory awareness during an anxious, stressful, or frustrating moment.



Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- Explore different senses and how they affect our mind and body.
- Discuss how sensory awareness can help us return to a calm/cool state.
- Use sensory awareness as a mindful practice.



Materials

- Sensory Scavenger Hunt handout for each student
- Writing tool for each student
- Books (for Scavenger Hunt)
- Scrap paper (for Scavenger Hunt)



Step-by-Step Directions

Introduction:

- Read through the Introduction and discuss how different sensory experiences can impact our body and emotions.
 - *What's an example of a relaxing sensory experience? What body cues let you know you feel relaxed?*
 - *What's an example of a bothersome sensory experience? What body cues let you know you feel bothered?*
 - *What's an example of an alerting sensory experience? What body cues let you know you feel alert?*
 - *What's an example of an overwhelming sensory experience? What body cues let you know you feel overwhelmed?*

Sensory Scavenger Hunt Activity:

- Explain the directions for the Sensory Scavenger Hunt and give students 10 minutes to complete.
 - There is an optional outdoor section that can be done in class or at home.
 - Option to assign 'Bonus Round' as an at-home assignment or have students 'think' instead of 'find' their answers (since they include 'taste' and other prompts that may be difficult to do in the classroom).
- Revisit the connection between sensory experiences, how our bodies feel, and our emotional state.
 - *What is an example of how a sensory experience can be overwhelming?*
 - *What is an example of how a sense can be calming?*
- Revisit the concepts of mindfulness and sensory awareness. Discuss how sensory awareness can be a mindful practice.
 - Mindfulness is the act of slowing down and focusing on the present moment. It's an exercise that forces us to be aware of our surroundings, body, and emotions.
 - Sensory awareness is noticing and focusing on a particular sense/senses (e.g. touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell).

Mindful Mission Reflection:

- Have students reflect and plan for a moment that is overwhelming or frustrating.



Accommodations & Modifications

- Provide support:
 - Have students complete the Scavenger Hunt in pairs.
 - Read through all of the prompts before exploring.
- Provide challenge:
 - Assign the bonus round and outdoor challenges to complete.
 - Have students create their own scavenger hunt prompts.

Name: _____



Lesson 3: Sensory Scavenger Hunt

Exploring Mindfulness

The world is experienced through your senses: taste, smell, sight, hearing, and touch. They have a strong impact on how you feel and can also be used to manage your feelings. Some noises and textures might bother you, make you feel upset, or send your heart rate into the red zone. Some noises and textures might be calming, slow your heart rate down, and put you in the blue zone. Some sensory experiences are alerting, increasing your heart rate in a positive, energizing way, waking you up, or helping you feel focused., and touch. They have a strong impact on how you feel and can also be used to manage your feelings. Some noises and textures might bother you, make you feel upset, and send your heart rate into the red zone. Some noises and textures might be calming, slow your heart rate, and put you in the blue zone. Some sensory experiences are alerting, increasing your heart rate in a positive, energizing way, waking you up, or helping you feel focused.

Let's go on a sensory scavenger hunt and see how our senses connect to how we feel. See if you can fill out the grid below with different sights, sounds, tastes, textures, and smells that either put you into the red or blue. How does each one make you feel in your mind and body?



Spend the next 10 minutes with these sensory activities. Write down what you notice about the prompt, what sense you are using, and how it makes you feel.

Prompt	What sense are you using?	What do you notice?	Circle how it feels
Roll a pencil between your palms.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Smell the inside of a book.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Rip up a piece of paper.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating

Name: _____

Prompt	What sense are you using?	What do you notice?	Circle how it feels
Close your eyes and listen for 30 seconds.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Look out a window for one minute and notice the wind.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Scratch your nails on a rug or chalkboard.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Put both hands on the ground and press down. Wiggle your fingers.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Optional outdoor: Look up at the sky for one minute.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating
Optional outdoor: Look for as many shades of green as you can. Switch to another color.			Positive Negative Pleasant Unpleasant Calming Energizing Enjoyable Frustrating



Bonus Round

Name: _____

1. Find/think of a texture that irritates or bothers you. What is it?

2. Find/think of a texture that is calming. What is it?

3. Find/think of a sound that alerts you and gets your heart rate up. What is it?

4. Find/think of a sound that is calming. What is it?

5. Find/think of a color that helps you feel relaxed. What is it?

6. Find/think of a smell that would get you excited. What is it?

7. Find/think of something comfortable that makes you feel safe. What is it?

Mindful Mission

1. How can our senses help us practice mindfulness?

2. Write down something that frustrates you or makes you overwhelmed.

3. Now think of a way that your senses could help you come back to a cool state. Name a sensory experience that could be helpful.

- Mindfulness is the act of slowing down and focusing on the present moment. It's an exercise that forces us to be aware of our surroundings, body, and emotions.
- Sensory awareness is noticing and focusing on a particular sense/senses (e.g. touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell).





Lesson Overview

Est. time: 20 minutes

Students will create and construct a Mindful Pet that uses their super senses to stay calm. Students will determine a positive sensory environment for their Mindful Pet.



Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- Follow directions to construct a Mindful Pet.
- Use their imagination to create background information and a home for the Mindful Pet.
- Reflect on how to use their surroundings to create a positive sensory environment.



Materials

- Mindful Pet handout for each student
- Meet My Mindful Pet handout for each student
- Scissors
- Tape
- Coloring materials



Step-by-Step Directions

Introduction:

- Read through the Introduction.
- Have students color the different parts of the animal and then cut out and create their Mindful Pet.

Mindful Pet Project:

- Have students fill out their Meet My Mindful Pet handout.
- Share out Mindful Pets afterwards and discuss where each student is going to place them at home. How can they serve as a reminder to be mindful?
- Discuss a place where you feel calm. It could be your bed, room, kitchen, park, classroom, community center etc.
 - *What does this place look like? Sound like? Smell like? Is there anything to taste? Touch? How can changing our environments help us practice mindfulness?*



Accommodations & Modifications

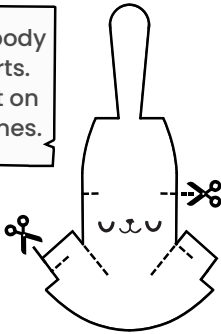
- Provide support:
 - Have children follow along with you as you cut out and create the pet. .
- Provide challenge:
 - Have children create an environment/home for their Mindful Pet by creating a paper trifold background or home in a shoebox. Have children think about how the surroundings can create a positive sensory experience.

MIGHTIER™ Mindful Pet

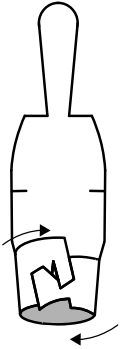
Mindfulness is a super power that lets us tune into our senses. Focusing on our senses can help us feel calmer and more aware of our emotions. But mindfulness isn't just for us! Animals use it too, to focus on their environment and survive in the wild.

Follow these instructions to create your own unique mindful pet! When choosing parts, patterns, and colors for your pet think about how they could use their senses. Once you're done you can place them somewhere special as a helpful reminder to take a moment for mindfulness!

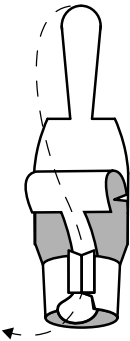
Cut out body and parts. Then cut on dotted lines.



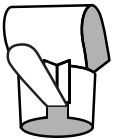
Flip paper. Slide slots together to form body.



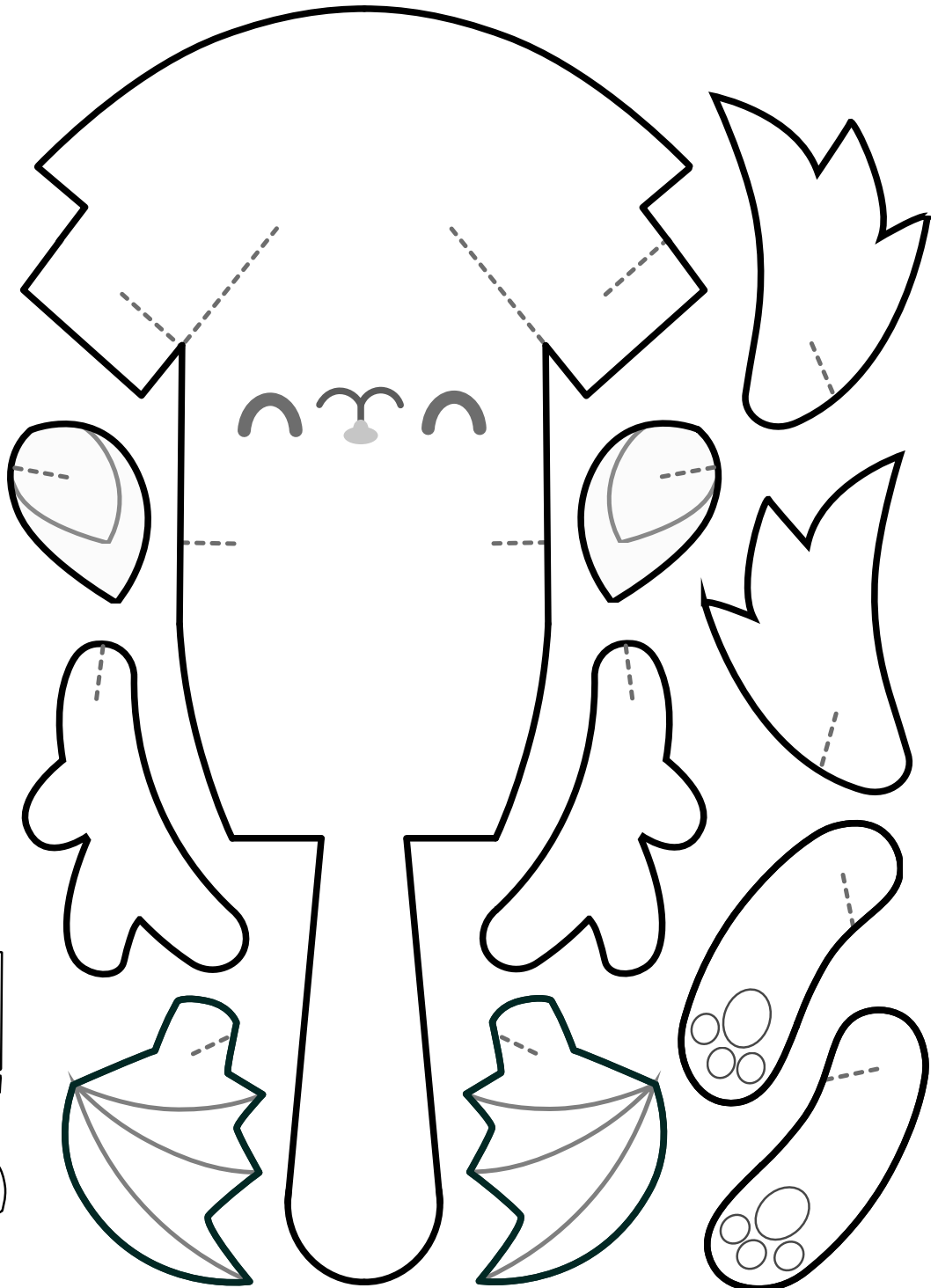
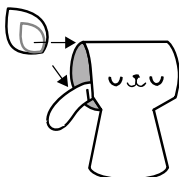
Slide tail through the body.



Pull tail out and fold up against body.



Slide on parts any way you want!



Name: _____

Meet My Mindful Pet

1. What is the name of your pet? _____

2. What is a sense that could be overwhelming for your pet? Give a specific example.

3. Circle the super sense that helps your pet get back to a cool state?

Touch Taste Hearing Sight Smell

4. How does your mindful pet use their super sense? Give an example of how it helps them.

5. Describe or draw your mindful pet's ideal environment. Use senses to explain what their home looks, smells, feels, and sounds like.

