

SELF-MANAGEMENT



29. MINDFUL MOMENTS

- ▶ **WHAT?** Adults will practice and become proficient in several mindfulness strategies for regulating emotions and building awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- ▶ **WHY?** Studies continually confirm the benefits of mindfulness practice (meditation, deep breathing, labeling emotions, etc) and how these efforts improve attention, focus, cognitive performance, behavior, and emotional control. The key is to provide numerous opportunities for practicing these skills until they become habits.
- ▶ **WHEN?** To start a meeting, after an emotional incident, or anytime adults are feeling overwhelmed.

MATERIALS

- ❑ One chart paper for creating a **“Mindful Moment Strategies” Anchor Chart**
- ❑ Project this slide tinyurl.com/mindfulplug (Edit as needed)

SEL FOCUS

- **Self-Awareness:** Identifying automatic negative thoughts and emotions
- **Self-Management:** Managing emotions, stress management, self-discipline, motivation, focus and attention, self-control, and resilience

Launch Activity (9min+)

- I. **3min- Whole group discussion:** Describe a moment when you were not able to control your emotions and you did something you later regretted. Why did this happen? Why is managing our emotions important in the work we do? Give some examples of when this is critical.
- II. **3min- Teach the “flip your lid” hand brain model** to help adults understand why we sometimes “lose it” and what we can do to regain control of our thinking brain.

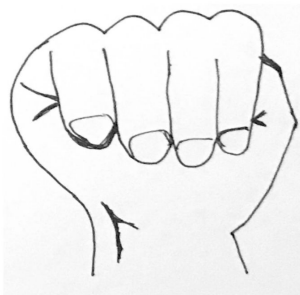


Fig. 1 Brain model
(Emotions are under control)

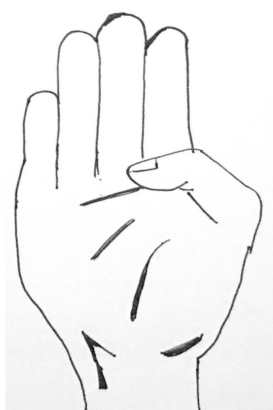


Fig. 2 Flipping your lid
(Losing control of our emotions)

**Model adapted from Dr. Daniel Siegel*

Make a fist with your thumb tucked under your fingers. This will represent our brain when our emotions are under control. See figure 1.

The thumb represents the midbrain, also called the limbic system, the **emotional brain** where the hippocampus (in charge of memory and learning) and amygdala (the danger detector) are located.

Our **fingers** represent the cerebral cortex, also called the **thinking brain** which controls our ability to think and reason.

Our **fingernails** represent the **prefrontal cortex** which controls our emotions and helps us problem-solve and make good decisions.

When the emotional brain (thumb) senses a threat, the connection between the prefrontal cortex (fingernails) and the emotional brain (thumb) weakens, and we are not able to control our emotions, problem-solve, and make good choices. Our emotions take over and we flip our lid! (See figure 2) This is also known as an **amygdala hijack** because the emotional brain takes over and is now in charge. Notice how the prefrontal cortex (fingernails) can't control our emotions now because there is no connection. However, if we calm down our emotions with different strategies and activate our prefrontal cortex, we can strengthen this connection, preventing us from flipping our lid.

29. MINDFUL MOMENTS

- Continued -

- III. **3min- Discuss:** What strategies do you use to calm your emotions down when you're sad, angry, stressed, or frustrated? What methods intensify your emotions? Document adult responses on an anchor chart titled, "**Mindful Moment Strategies.**" Contribute some ideas and have adults identify their favorite. Add any of these research-proven ideas below.

Mindful Moment Strategies Chart	
When I'm frustrated, angry, stressed, sad, or overwhelmed I can:	
1.	Breathe deeply: Belly breathing, boxed breathing, priming, Kapalabhati Pranayama breathing, etc.
2.	Countdown from 10 or say the last 10 alphabet letters backwards (Z, Y, X, W, V, U...)
3.	Label my emotions
4.	Think of my values (ex: kindness, learning, honesty, empathy, etc) or of being my future best self
5.	Imagine a person we love and respect and what they'd say to us (Grandma, God, mom, pastor, etc)
6.	Think of a happy moment, something I'm grateful for, proud of, or visualize my goal
7.	FRAP method, Affirmations, Positive Self-talk to calm my inner critic

Mindful Moments

Jumping Jacks. With each jump, visualize your body getting energized!

Stand confidently like Superman while you imagine your top 3 goals for today being accomplished.

Belly Breathe and think about three things you're proud of that you accomplished recently.

Smile widely and thinking about 3 things you're grateful for.

Take 5 big gulps of your water bottle and think about something fun you're excited to do later

Pick one of the following activities to do for one whole minute while experiencing the highlighted emotion. (1min)

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Alternative Option: Another option is to project this slide tinyurl.com/mindfulplug or one similar that contains these mindful moment strategies for adults to use at staff meetings.

SEL Routine (3-5min+)

- 1min- Reflection:** Adults reflect on the following questions: How are you feeling today? 2. What thoughts are causing you to feel that way? 3. How would you like to feel? 4. Which strategy from the **Mindful Moment Strategies Chart** will help you feel the way you want to? Note: Or project a slide such as this one: tinyurl.com/mindfulplug for staff to choose from.
- 2min- Mindful Moment:** Adults practice their selected strategy. If it doesn't help them, they can select another strategy. They can rate how they felt before and after (1-10 rating).
- 2min- Reflection (Optional):** Adults answer the following questions: Which strategy was the most effective for me? Why? What did I learn about myself? How can I make sure I don't forget to use this in the future? Create an "If-then" statement: **"When I sense that I'm getting _____ I will then _____."**

Extensions

- Update the "Mindful Moment Strategies" Chart:** Leave the poster up and adults can add new ideas as they discover new methods. If they're stressed, or might need to cool down, remind them to use the anchor chart to think about ways to stay present, calm, and collected.
- Model calming down** in front of your team repeatedly. Ex: "Team, I just learned that the field trip I planned was cancelled. I sense myself getting frustrated, and I feel it right here in my chest, but I will choose to not let it affect my day. I'm just going to breathe in deeply and count backwards from 5 and see the opportunity in this. Oh, you know what, the opportunity gained from this all is that I learned how to order buses, get parent volunteers, and since it will be rescheduled, it gives me more time to better prepare you for it. There's always a bright side to anything if you stay patient and look for it!"

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