

## **To teachers:**

Thank you for inviting Brian Chevalier and his program, "Freedom Within" into your school. The strength of this program is in its simplicity. Students already possess the skills to be mindful in their everyday lives. When students are intently working on a drawing, or participating in a hobby or sport they are simply being present. Their minds are not lost in worry about the past or worry about the future....they are just "being present", or mindful.

Brian's program Mindfulness - Freedom Within, achieves several goals. First, through a line of inquiry, Brian helps students realize that they ALREADY possess the skills necessary to practice mindfulness on a daily basis. Your school will experience some mindful breathing techniques and learn when they may be useful to employ. They will also learn that there is more to mindfulness than breathing and meditating. Other important principles and ideas connected to mindfulness are things like gratitude, empathy, acceptance, being of service / community service and impermanence (things will always change). These concepts are very much a part of mindfulness and are also a part of creating an atmosphere of mindfulness in your classrooms. Some of these ideas are things that, as a teacher, you very likely do in your classroom. The difference is looking at these things through the lens of mindfulness. In other words, "How do these practices make me more centered or mindful?" In the presentation, Brian helps students answer that question in a way that is meaningful to them. Simply put, when "you get out of yourself" and think of others you're less apt to be stressed or worried about yourself. Also, it's about replacing negative thought patterns and behaviors with positive ones. When you focus on the problem, the problem increases, when you focus on the answer, the answer increases.

Once students realize that they ALREADY possess the skills necessary to practice daily mindfulness, Brian points out when and how we can intentionally use these skills (that we already possess). We can intentionally use these skills when we are feeling stressed, worried and anxious, or would like to feel more centered in general.

As much as teaching the students the important principles and techniques behind mindfulness, Brian is giving teachers ideas to use in their classroom to help create a culture of mindfulness. Brian does not expect the students to remember all of the ideas from the assembly. That's where the teachers can play a critical role by reminding students of these ideas.

**Enclosed is a Mindfulness Student Study Guide which contains activities that can be done with students before and after Brian's show. This will pre-set the students which will lead to a richer experience during the performance itself.**

# Mindfulness Student Study Guide



## What is mindfulness?

*Mindfulness is when you focus on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.*

-The Mayo Clinic

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity A: Gratitude List

**List three things for which you are grateful (thankful).**

Example: I am grateful for my dog Violet.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Think about each item on your gratitude list. How do these things make you feel?**

Example: I am grateful for my dog Violet because even if I have a tough day, Violet always is happy to see me. When I open the door, she runs over and excitedly wags her tail.

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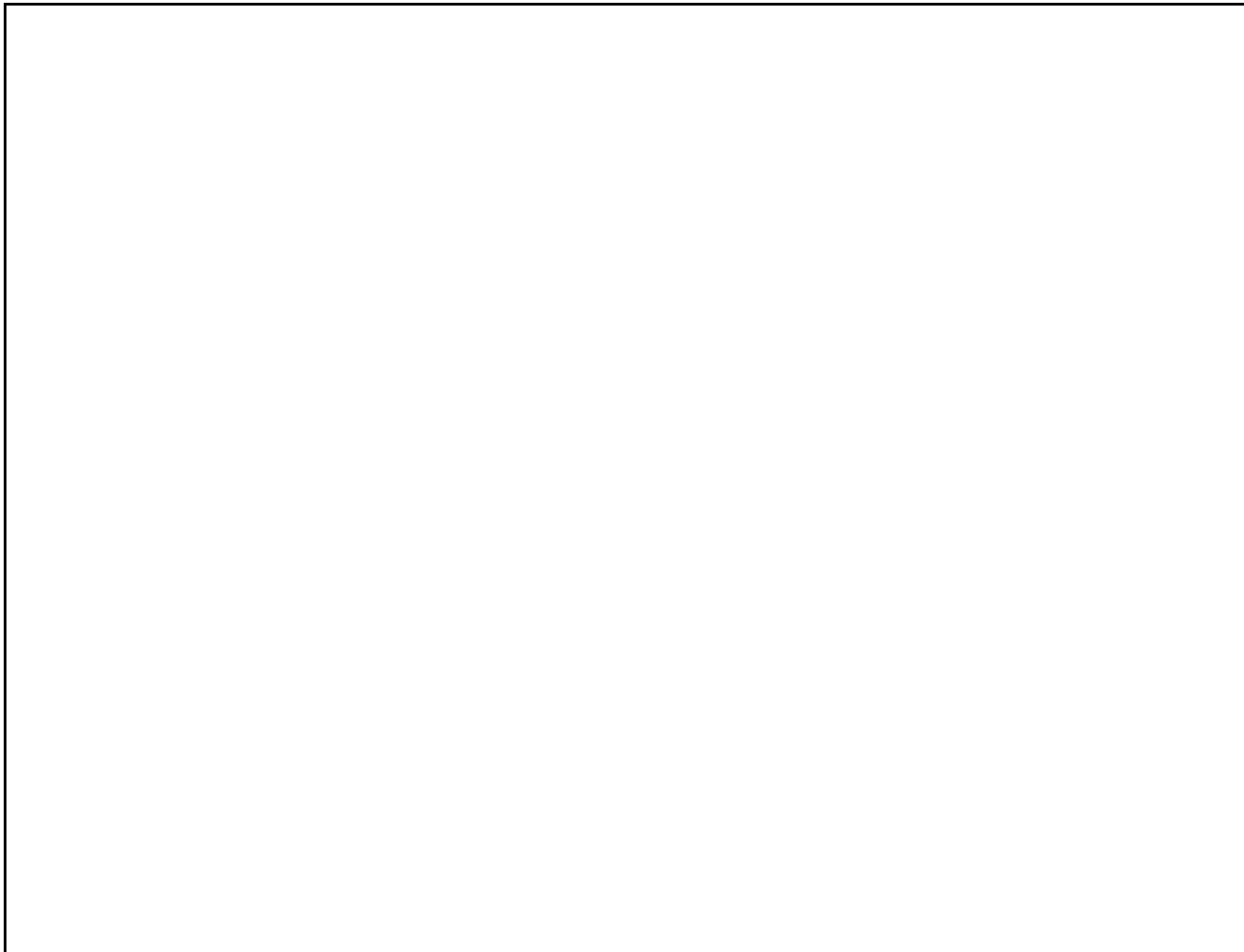
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## Activity B:

**Close your eyes for a minute and really pay attention to your five senses.** What do you hear, smell, feel, taste, see in your mind's eye? If your mind wanders, do not worry or think you are doing something "wrong" but just keep bringing your mind back to your senses.

Activity B continued on next page

**When you open your eyes, write (or draw) some of the words that come to your mind from doing this exercise.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write or draw their thoughts.

## Activity C:

**Reflect on the following questions. You may simply think about them, draw / write about your answers or share your answers with a partner or small group.**

- When have you gone out of your way to help someone else? How did they react? How did you feel?
- What are some of the things in your life that make you feel stressed?
- When you feel stress, what is your typical initial reaction? Does this reaction help? If so, how does it help? If not, what can you do differently?
- What positive strategies do you use to help calm yourself down when you feel stress? I.e. Deep breaths, going for a walk, etc.
- What does your “inner monologue” sound like? Do you criticize yourself internally? If so, what are some positive messages you can send to your brain instead?
- What are three things that you are grateful for?
- How often do you “keep your head where your feet are?” In other words, do you let your mind whirl with worry and anxiety about the past or the future? What strategies can you use to help yourself stay present?
- When was the last time you simply told someone (a friend, a teacher a family member) that you appreciate them? How did they react when you told them you appreciate them? How did telling them this make you feel?

Activity D:

**What is the most relaxing and peaceful place in your life?**

Example: The most relaxing and peaceful place in my life is when I go hiking on trails with my family.

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**Why do you think this place makes you feel peaceful? Try to use your five senses (see, hear, smell, feel, taste).**

Example: I think that hiking in the woods with my family is so peaceful because everything is so quiet. The trees are so tall and sometimes their leaves even seem to whistle from the wind. I love feeling of crackling dry leaves under my feet as I walk along.

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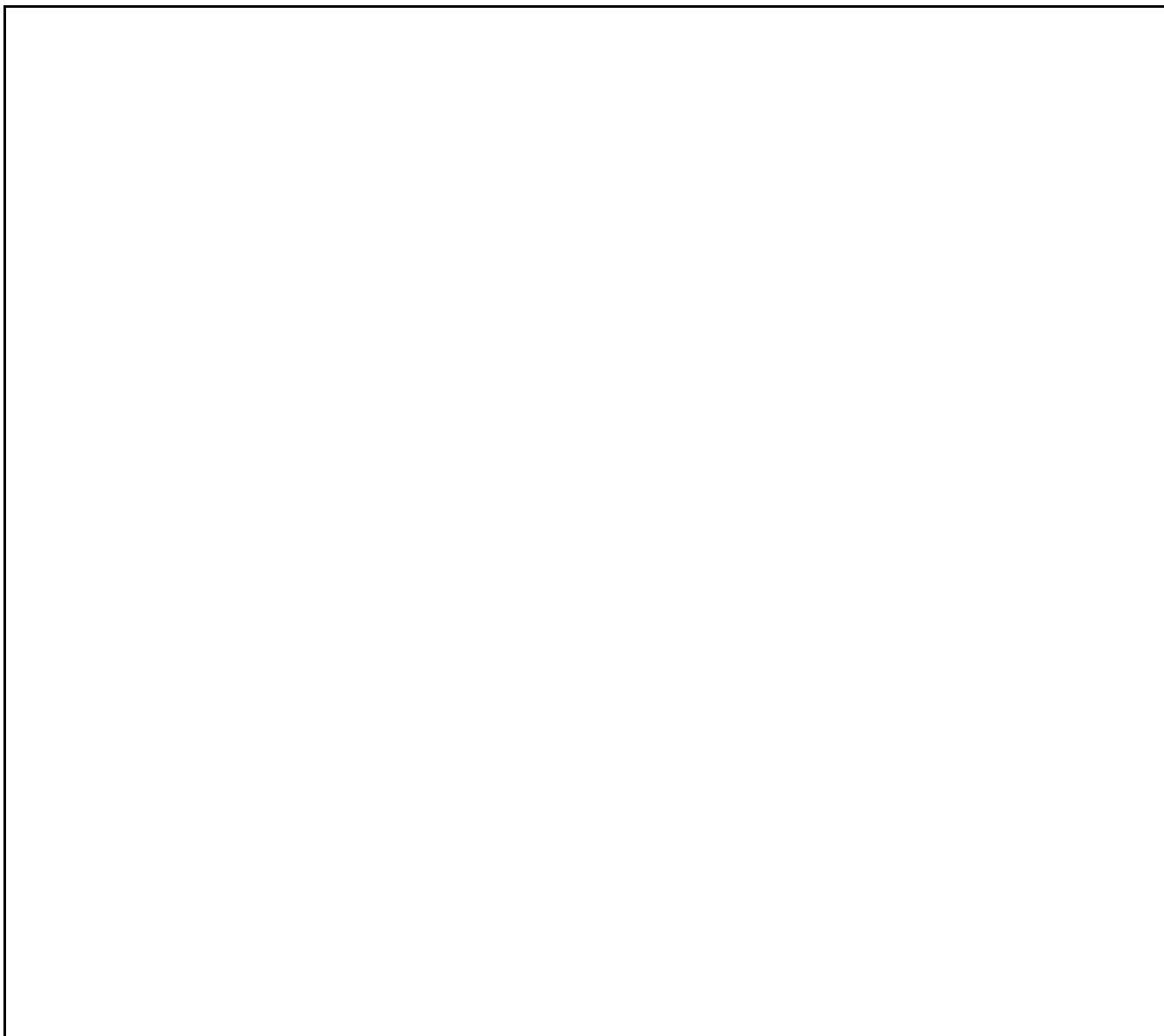
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**Activity D continues on next page.**

**Draw this peaceful place:**



Activity E:

**What is one thing that I can do when I am feeling stressed or upset?** I.e take 5 deep breaths, go for a walk, try to remain still and focus on my five senses, etc.

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**This works for me because** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Teacher's follow ups and reminders to go with student activities**

When I am feeling nervous or upset about something and I can't stop thinking about it I can think of 3 things I am grateful for. This changes negative thinking into positive thinking.

When I turn my thoughts to how I can help others it gets me out of myself and helps me stop worrying about myself. This changes negative thinking into positive thinking and actions.

Suggest taking just a few minutes each day and sitting in a quiet peaceful place and focus on your breathing and being present. Ask yourself, what do you feel, smell, hear, see and taste? How does air feel entering and leaving you? Warm, cool? Are you breathing fast or slow? Notice your stomach rising and falling.

If you're feeling nervous or upset you can: Take a deep single cleansing breath, think of things you are grateful for, turn your thoughts to others, take action and do your best, and / or visualize a peaceful place. But don't forget to stand up for yourself if needed or take action if necessary.

I expect that teachers will want to adjust this study guide for your grade as needed. That is why it is in a word doc.