



Tool 1.3

Moving to reduce climate anxiety

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking care of climate emotions and trauma

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool can provide practical ways to address overwhelm, stress and anxiety for an individual or a group, either preemptively or when they arise. Most of the suggested activities will be most effective if practiced on a regular basis, as they help expand our own window of tolerance to multiple emotions over time. All activities can be done in groups or individually. As a teacher, you may want to practice them regularly so as to help you regulate your emotions. Once you know the activities well, it will also be easier for you to judge which activities to suggest to your students when a need arises.

Activity 1.3.1

Breathing

Overview

Practices such as mindful breathing, eating, or walking, are most helpful as part of a daily or weekly routine for self-care to nurture emotional and mental health and wellbeing. All practices can be performed together as a group, or individually when the need arises.

Curriculum linkage

Civics & Social Studies, Physical Education & Health

Competences built

Emotional regulation, self-compassion, compassion

Prep Work

Prepare by practicing for yourself regularly.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

Tool 1.1. Fostering a trauma-informed learning environment

General understanding of our inner lives and how they relate to outer action.

Steps in the activity

1. Try it out

BASIC INFO

**Age range:**

6+

Duration:

From 10 minutes to 1-2 hours.
Regularity matters.

Group size:

Open

Level of difficulty:

Basic to advanced

Materials/space required:

None

Location:

Flexible

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Not necessarily.

Mindfulness practitioners could be invited to lead some practices.



Step 1: Try it out

Breathing: When you breathe mindfully, you focus your attention on only one thing: your in-breath and out-breath. This is concentration on your breath. It helps you to focus and at the same time become aware of our interconnectedness. Like all practices, it must be voluntary, and you can offer some flexibility (e.g., not engaging, sitting, standing, moving) to accommodate for different needs and capacities. Please note that deep breathing, particularly in a group, may not be a good exercise for students who have suffered different trauma or may be neurodiverse.

Possible instructions:

1. Let's take a moment to settle into our seats. Find a comfortable posture—upright yet relaxed.
2. Feel the strength of your back supporting you, while allowing your front to soften.
3. Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Sense the connection to the earth.
4. Rest your hands on your thighs with ease.
5. Close your eyes if that feels comfortable or keep them slightly open, softly gazing downward.
6. Notice how your body feels in this position.
7. Take a deep breath, and as you exhale, release as much as you can, all unnecessary tension in your body. Let yourself settle in. Take 2–3 more deep breaths.
8. Now, bring your attention to the sensation of your breath. Notice the air entering through your nose or mouth, filling your lungs. Feel where the sensations of your breath are most clearly felt — at or in your nose, chest, or belly. As you breathe, imagine the natural process that makes your breath possible. The oxygen you inhale comes from trees and plants, connecting you to the natural world. With every breath out, you give carbon dioxide back to the trees. This quiet exchange reminds you of your deep connection with the environment. Reminds us of the interdependence we have with nature. Giving and taking.
9. If your mind starts to wander, that's okay. Gently guide your attention back to your breath each time. No need to judge—just return to the simple act of breathing.



10. As you inhale, imagine calmness filling your body. As you exhale, let go of any stress. Feel how you and nature are part of a cycle of giving and receiving, sharing the air we breathe. Sharing this planet as a whole family.
11. Now, as we breathe together, notice other sensations in your body. Can you feel your clothes against your skin, or the gentle rhythm of your heartbeat? Simply observe these feelings, moment by moment.
12. Let's continue for a few more moments, allowing the breath to connect us to the natural world. Also notice how your thoughts, your feelings and your bodily sensations are interconnected.
13. Now, slowly begin to bring your awareness back to the room. Wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch if you'd like, and open your eyes when ready.
14. Take a brief moment to remember that the same air that sustains you also sustains everything around you. We are all connected through this breath.
15. You can return to this simple breathing practice anytime you need to feel calm, grounded, or connected to the world around you.

For small children:

For younger children, the practice can be adjusted to be shorter, and using imagination can be helpful. For example, imagine the belly as a balloon that expands when inhaling and contracts when exhaling. You could also invite them to place a small object or a book on their belly and watch it rise and fall with their breath. Using a singing bowl can also help; ask the children to focus on their breath as long as the bowl sings, and whoever notices the sound fading can raise their arm. These visual or sound elements make the experience more concrete and enjoyable for children. Or be a "nose-scientist" exploring where exactly the inbreath touches the nose.

Dos and don'ts**Adaptations**

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.



References

The above meditation was created in cooperation between the [Inner Green Deal](#) gGmbH, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies ([LUCSUS](#)) and its [Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program](#). They are based on practices from the Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation program, several Climate Leadership programs (e.g., developed for the European Commission, The UNDP Conscious Food Systems Alliance and the Inner Development Goals Initiative) as well as work with the Awaris GmbH and their resilience program.

Bristow, J., Bell, R., Wamsler, C. (2022) Reconnection – Meeting the climate crisis inside-out, policy report, The Mindfulness Initiative & LUCSUS. You can find the report and two online presentations of the report here: <https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/reconnection>

Wamsler, C., Osberg, G., Janss, J. et al. (2024) Revolutionising sustainability leadership and education: addressing the human dimension to support flourishing, culture and system transformation. *Climatic Change* 177, 4 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03636-8>

Wamsler, C. (2022) What the mind has to do with the climate crisis: Mindfulness and compassion as pathways to a more sustainable future. Essay written for the Mind&Life 35th anniversary, Mind&Life. See www.mindandlife.org/insight/what-the-mind-has-to-do/

Recording of an online event with Jon Kabat-Zinn that explains the role of mindfulness for climate action and sustainability, related science and education, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTUc_0GroGM

An overview of scientific research, policy reports, pod-casts and presentations on contemplative practices, mindfulness and sustainability can be found here: <https://www.contemplative-sustainable-futures.com/general-3-1>

For related **practices** check also: <https://www.thelongtimeacademy.com/practices>



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This Clarity Project Resource © 2024 by the Clarity Project Consortium is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

