

THREE-MINUTE TRAININGS OF MINDFULNESS AND CONCENTRATION

małopolski
instytut
kultury **mik**

MIND|THE
GAP|

THREE-MINUTE TRAININGS OF MINDFULNESS AND CONCENTRATION

We offer exercises in the form of simple commands, which can be read aloud for others or applied directly to oneself. We start with individual tasks, to be performed by each individual in silence. At the end, we present a few proposals that require the cooperation of the entire group.

When doing this type of exercise, establish clear rules with the group and ensure that they are followed. Ask the participants to continue the task, even if someone feels tired, bored, or annoyed (it's only a few minutes!). In particular, ask them not to comment out loud during the task. After finishing, let the students calm their emotions. Ask them how they were doing, what the exercise gave them, and what, if anything, may have challenged them.

Good questions after each exercise are, e.g.:

- How are you now?
- What do you feel?
- How did you like this exercise?
- What was challenging for you?
- What surprised you?
- What was pleasant?
- What helped you and what was disturbing?
- If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?
- Did this exercise give you anything? If yes, what was it?
- If it triggered difficult emotions, what were they?
- Do you want to repeat the exercise? If yes, do you want to do it right now, or in some other situation? When? Where?

Of course, you don't have to ask all of these questions. Choose the 1-3 most appropriate.

Remember that reactions can be extreme and that there's nothing wrong with that. The same exercise for some will prove to be pleasant and relaxing, while others will be stimulated or even irritated. Don't judge anyone in your comments, let them react freely.

After all, it's about everyone finding an individual way to train mindfulness. The goal is not to bring everyone to a common denominator or tell someone that something should relax them, just because it worked for most people. Finding it, however require trying different things, including those that raise our doubts (you can compare it to exploring different flavours, also through risky culinary experiments).

If someone feels that the exercise was helpful, encourage them to do it regularly. Maybe over time, it'll be possible to achieve a state where for the first three minutes of each homeroom period, students will relax in silence, each in their own favourite way.

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

Mindful five

Name:

- five sounds you hear now,
- five smells you felt today,
- five feelings in your body.

Counting in your head

Count in your head from 1 to 50, and when you're done count from 50 to 1.

Drawing the infinity sign ('lazy eight')

Straighten your hand in front of you and put your thumb out. Start following your thumb with your eyes, as it marks the sign of infinity. Keep the head steady.

Thinking man's hood

Grasp your auricles with the index fingers and thumbs of your both hands. Massage the ear by gently pulling it backwards and squeezing it. Start the massage from the top of the auricle and move down toward the earlobe. Then turn your hands – the left hand massages the right ear, the right hand massages the left ear. Repeat several times.

Breathing 4-7-8

Breathe as follows:

Breathe in for exactly 4 seconds, stop for 7 seconds and exhale for 8 seconds.

Dog after the bath

(This exercise must be done standing up).

Try to shake all the tension out of yourself – freely shake all parts of the body (like a dog after getting out of the water).

Weight of the body

Standing straight with your hands down by your sides, feel the weight of your body and look at the fixed point in front of you. Move the weight to the left foot and bend the right knee slowly, raising it. At the same time, take a deep breath. Gently hold the knee with both hands for a few seconds and keep the spine straight naturally. Take five deep breaths. Lower your leg when exhaling. Repeat the procedure by lifting the other leg. When you're done, think of an imaginary line running from your spine to the top of your head, keeping your balance during all your movements.

Focus of attention

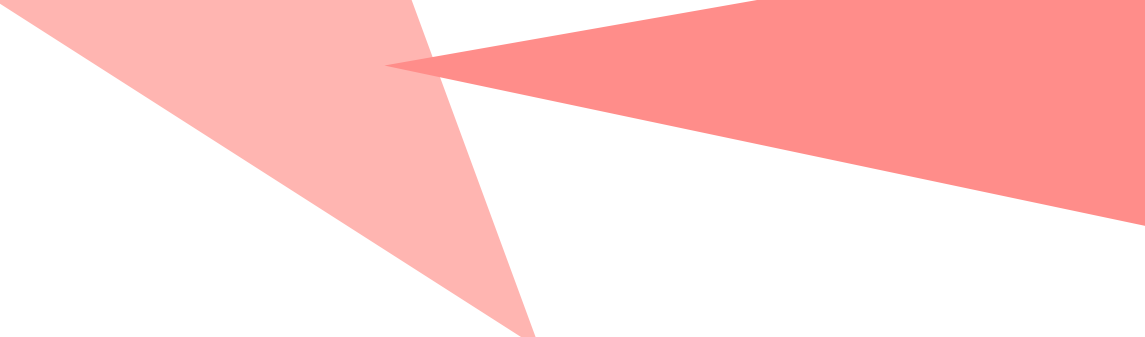
Draw a triangle on a piece of paper and colour it in any colour. When the picture is ready, put it in front of you and look at it. From that moment on, nothing else matters, only a triangle drawn on a piece of paper. Avoid all kinds of thoughts and distractions. All that exists is you and the triangle in front of you. Then close your eyes and visualize the drawing in your mind. If the image disappears, open your eyes for a moment, look at the triangle and repeat the process.

Increasingly larger

Sitting at your desk, focus your eyes on an object, a detail present in the classroom. Look at it for 30 seconds, thinking about what it's like: for example, imagining how it feels to the touch, what would happen if it fell to the ground, and so on.

30 seconds have passed. Now look for an object that is bigger than the one you looked at before. For the next 30 seconds, think only about what makes these objects different. Try to find as many differences as possible.

After 30 seconds, search for another object larger than the previous one. Repeat the whole procedure once or twice.



What's that noise?

Freeze for 60 seconds and focus only on the ambient sounds. Notice as many of them as you can by mentally naming them and identifying their sources. After a minute, write down all the sounds you remember.

After completing this activity in the classroom, you can read each other's lists or compare them in pairs.

Vital functions

Focus your attention on your body for 1.5 minute. Observe anything that shows you're alive. You can put your hand on your chest and feel the heartbeat, notice your breath, feel every itch, muscle tension, maybe pain?

After completing this activity in the classroom, you can discuss your impressions.

That's weird!

When I say 'start' stay still and silent until I say 'stop'. It will be about 1.5 minutes. During this time, be a careful observer of the environment and look for everything that's unusual, strange, interesting. After this time, write down your observations in the form of questions, e.g.:

'Who put the chewing gum on the chair in front of me?'

'Why is the ceiling cracked?'

'Whose stomach was rumbling?'

You don't have to look for answers to these questions at all. In this exercise, the goal is to awaken your curiosity.

How long is a minute?

When I say 'start', close your eyes and focus only on the passing time. We'll count one minute. You can count seconds in your head or rely on intuition. Say 'stop' when you think that the time has passed. I'll look at the stopwatch and tell you how close it was to the actual passage of time.

If you're doing this exercise in the classroom, turn on the stopwatch and calmly wait until each student says 'stop'. Note how long did it take them to say the first 'stop' and the last one. Also note who was closest to the exact time of 60 seconds. Don't make it a competition: what you need is to summarize the exercise by telling the class how big the gap between the first and last 'stop' was (without indicating who said it). You can indicate who was closest to the exact time, but it'll be much more interesting if you ask your students what strategies they have chosen to measure time.

Examination by touch

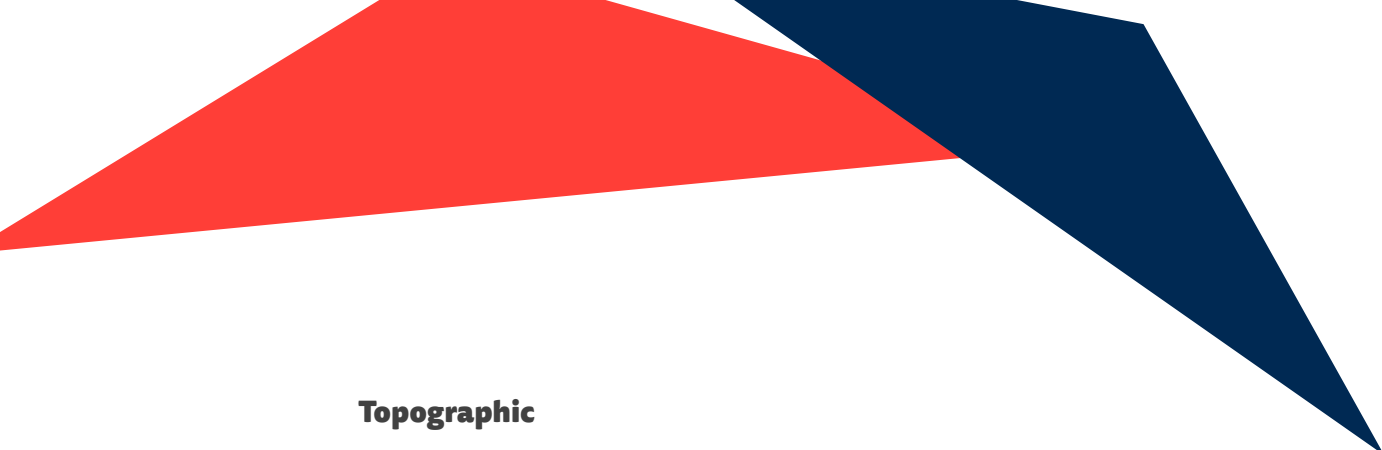
Close your eyes. With your eyes closed, without moving, try to look for an object within your reach. You can look in front of you, next to you, in your pockets... It doesn't matter if you know what kind of object it is. Look at it as if it was the first time in your life. Use the senses of touch, hearing and smell to register as many of its features as possible. You have 1.5 minutes for this exercise. Don't stop before the time has passed.

Drawing in the air

Hold out the hand with which you write and draw. I'll ask you to draw/write a few things in the air. Although your finger will leave no trace, try to focus on the precision of your drawing.

For 2 minutes, draw in order:

- simple geometric figures,
- small and big eights,
- an inscription: 'Where is Wally?' (with extra care as in the first grade),
- simple, characteristic animals (cat, snail, fish, elephant, crocodile).



Topographic

Put a clean sheet of paper in front of you and prepare a crayon, a marker or a pencil. For the next 3 minutes, focus only on drawing. I'll tell you when half the time is over. Your task is to draw a map of the itinerary of your arrival to school today. Try to do it as accurately as you can. Don't start over again and again if you don't succeed. I'll not judge your work – neither me nor anyone else, because that's not the purpose of this exercise. It's important to draw the entire route and at the same time include in the drawing as many details as possible. Take it as a challenge, but not as a competition.

A small Zen garden

For this exercise, everyone should have a paper plate or tray. Prepare also some loose material: salt, fine breadcrumbs or sand will work best.

Your task is to arrange the particles on the tray in a perfectly simple figure. If you want, you can start with something very simple, e.g., a triangle. Let it be a perfectly straight triangle. You can also try something more difficult: e.g., create a circle shape, a star, or arrange your initials.

You can help yourself with items that you have on hand, but don't get up, and try to make as little noise as possible.

Paper folding

Prepare a piece of paper (for this exercise, you can use the pages on which you have written something, but which are not damaged).

Your task will be to fold this paper in such a way as to compress it to the smallest possible size.

If you're doing this exercise in class, don't compare papers to see whose is smallest. Instead, you can ask people who are happy with how it went, to tell you what has affected their success and what advice they can share with those who had difficulty with the task.



Dance of hands

I'll now play some music. Please close your eyes and don't open them for the entire duration of the song. I invite you to perform any spontaneous dance that you feel goes well with this music. It'll differ from a regular dance in that you'll perform it only with your hands (especially your palms and fingers).

My song of power

(This activity requires each participant to acquire equipment: a phone with Internet connection and headphones).

Think of a musical piece that gives you the power of peace. It calms you, quiets your mind, relaxes you. Maybe it takes you to good, pleasant memories.

Now I give you time to listen to it. You don't have to tell me what the track is. Just listen and enjoy it.

You can also ask students in pairs to play each other's songs. However, this requires an open, friendly atmosphere in every couple, mutual respect and curiosity of students. If these conditions aren't met, be careful not to let the exercise become a pretext for teasing, unfriendly remarks, laughing at someone, hate speech.

Writing with both hands

Take a pencil or a pen in each hand. Try writing or drawing at the same time, with each hand separately:

- a star,
- your first name,
- digits from 1 to 10,
- any multi-word sentence.

More difficult versions:

Try to draw a heart so that the right hand creates the right part and the left hand creates the left (both hands draw at the same time). If you succeed, draw a house with a chimney and windows.

Try to write down the digits – the right hand writes them in order from 1 to 9, and the left hand writes them in order from 9 to 1.

With your left hand (or right, for left-handed people)

Try to do the things I ask you, with the hand you don't usually use for that purpose. See, e.g.:

- colouring a simple picture,
- carefully writing your name,
- sharpening crayons.

GROUP EXERCISES

These exercises usually require from the class the ability to adopt and pursue a common goal, without judging each other and criticizing the mistakes of individual persons. You can treat them as training in this regard. However, if the class is at odds or very competitive, the beginnings can be very difficult. It's particularly important then to guard the principles of good cooperation and to react to their violation, as well as to summarize the exercises only in terms of looking for the successes of the whole group, not those guilty of individual 'mistakes'.

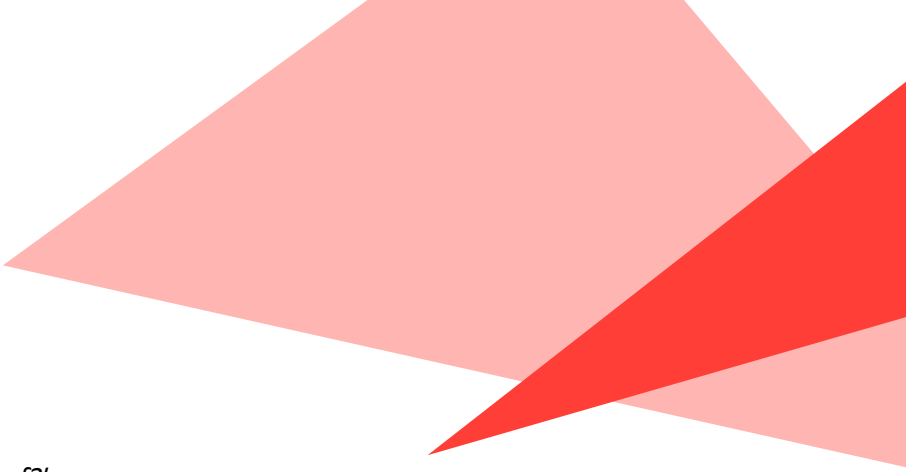
Colour associations

I'm about to give you the name of a colour. As a group, try to give as many examples as possible of something that is in this colour or that is associated with this colour (e.g.: red – blood, wine, Poland, poppy, light...). Answer in turn (if you sit in a circle, it'll be easier. If at the desks – set a fixed order). After one circle, start another until the time runs out. Try to do it smoothly without 'downtime'. If someone has no idea at the moment (which can happen to anyone), they simply say 'pass' and the next person continues. Listen to each other so as not to repeat the same idea.

This activity requires the suspension of judgement. Don't comment on good and bad answers, especially don't let the class comment when someone says 'pass'. If you don't make a big deal out of it, that person has a chance to open up and return to the state of attention in the next round. If they got sneered or ridiculed, they will stress themselves, lose their focus and block their creativity.

This exercise is worth repeating every now and then. Working long with a given class, you can show success, e.g.: 'you used to manage to develop 10 associations, and today it's over 30!'

To avoid students getting bored, change the 'task' every time. In addition to colours, these can be tasks such as:



'What is round?'

'What are YouTubers afraid of?'

'Who works at night?'

'Who has reason to hate summer?'

'What is there fewer than 10 of in the world?'

etc.

Chain of associations

I give the first word. I ask the first person to give any connection to the word I gave. Each subsequent person (it's worth it to determine the order in advance) adds an association to the word given by the previous person. Try to do it at a fast pace, without pauses for laughter, jokes or urging.

At the end, you can combine the first, starting word with the last association and think about what they have in common.

Mirror

Get together in pairs. You'll become the person in front of the mirror and its reflection. Set the roles. The first person performs an action and the second person follows it. Start with simple, slow actions, but after a while, make the task difficult by doing actions that are sudden, complex, fast-paced and so on. As a person standing in front of a mirror, remember to take care of your reflection – to challenge with actions that are difficult but can be accomplished. Give that person a little respite, interweaving difficult tasks with easier ones. You're also responsible for the safety of your reflection. Do not let them hit or turn over, don't force them to cross the limits of their comfort, don't ridicule them.

Change roles after 1.5 minutes.

Multi-headed expert

I will ask you, as a class, a question that requires a longer answer. The answer is to be given by the whole class, in a special way: each subsequent person can add only one word (all the parts of speech – pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, etc. – are words). Everyone can decide for themselves what to say, so refrain from commenting. It's important to determine the order (it's best to sit in a circle, but you can also stay at their desks – just arrange a constant order, who speaks after whom). The answer is supposed to be spontaneous, there's no time to consult.

Sample questions:

- What are modern teenagers?
- What should every student who is new to this school know?
- Why do students love holidays?
- Why do elephants need a trunk?
- Why did the chicken cross the road?

Counting up to 20 (or in a simpler version: up to 10)

The exercise consists in counting from 1 to 20 in such a way that each digit is spoken aloud by another person. This can happen at any rate, but two persons can't speak at the same time – when this happens, the counting starts again. You can't speak in turn, arrange a system (e.g., every other person speaks in the indicated order), or indicate who should speak – the exercise is based solely on mindfulness and observation of each other. It's also not allowed for the same person to say two numbers in a row.

Note: this game can be frustrating, because the task isn't easy. But it's a great training on how to be attentive to one another. It is worth repeating it regularly until it works.

MIND THE GAP
PARTNERS

MIND GAP | THE

Co-funded by:



Co-funded by
the European Union

Implemented by:

małopolski
instytut
kultury

mik

INSTYTUCJA KULTURY
WOJEWÓDZTWA
MAŁOPOLSKIEGO



MAŁOPOLSKA

Leader:



Partners:



Kulturtanken



PIONIRSKI DOM
CENTER ZA KULTURO MLADIH

małopolski
instytut
kultury



INSTYTUCJA KULTURY
WOJEWÓDZTWA
MAŁOPOLSKIEGO



PUBLISHER:

The Małopolska Institute of Culture in Krakow
30-233 Krakow, ul. 28 Lipca 1943 17 C
tel. 12 422 18 84, www.mik.krakow.pl

DIRECTOR: Tomasz Włodarski

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Katarzyna Dzigańska

EXPERT TEAM: Izabela Bryzik, Maja Dobkowska, Katarzyna Dzigańska, Anna Grajewska, Katarzyna Kanowska, Elżbieta Kaproń, Wojciech Rzehak

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Elżbieta Kaproń

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: Lingua Lab, www.lingualab.pl

VISUAL DESIGN: Hanna Nordström

TYPESETTING: Aneta Sitarz

Kraków 2026

This publication is not for sale.
It is available on an international Creative Commons
license: Acknowledgment of authorship –
Non-commercial use – On the same conditions 4.0
(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

