



Flourish

THE COMPASSIONATE SCHOOLS PROJECT CURRICULUM

4-5

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For more information about the Compassionate Schools Project, visit www.compassionschools.org

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CONTENTS

UNIT 1: COMPASSION

Unit Overview	2
Lesson 1: What is Compassion?	5
Lesson 2: Checking In	22
Lesson 3: When is it Difficult to Show Compassion?	33
Lesson 4: Creating a Compassionate Community	42
Lesson Extensions	48

UNIT 2: SELF-AWARENESS

Unit Overview	50
Lesson 1: Categories of Emotions	54
Lesson 2: Environment and Emotions	68
Lesson 3: Expressing Emotions	77
Lesson 4: When Emotions Help Us	89
Lesson 5: My Best Self	97
Lesson 6: Food and Mood	107
Lesson 7: Savoring the Delicious	116
Lesson Extensions	124

UNIT 3: SELF-MANAGEMENT

Unit Overview	128
Lesson 1: Coaching 101	132
Lesson 2: Coaching 102	145
Lesson 3: When It's Difficult to Be Your Best Self	153
Lesson 4: A Stressful Lesson	163
Lesson 5: Responding to Stress	173
Lesson 6: Ready, Set, Goal	185
Lesson 7: The Power You Hold	194
Lesson Extensions	203

UNIT 4: SOCIAL AWARENESS

PART 1—EMPATHY & PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Unit Overview	206
---------------	-----

Lesson 1: A Bug's View	210
Lesson 2: Selfies	224
Lesson 3: The Whole Food	232
Lesson 4: Your Side of the Story	242
Lesson 5: Storytelling	250
Lesson 6: Author, Author	260
Lesson Extensions	266

UNIT 5: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Unit Overview	268
Lesson 1: Developing Healthy Relationships	272
Lesson 2: Growing Good Listening	287
Lesson 3: Communicating Care	296
Lesson 4: Escalating and De-escalating	304
Lesson 5: Communicating About a Problem	315
Lesson 6: 4-step Process to Resolve Conflict with Friends	323
Lesson 7: Food with Friends	332
Lesson 8: Our Best Together	344
Lesson Extensions	350

UNIT 6: SOCIAL AWARENESS

PART 2—COMMUNITY

Unit Overview	354
Lesson 1: Community Support	358
Lesson 2: Contributing to a Group	371
Lesson 3: Community and Culture	378
Lesson 4: A Community Challenge	387
Lesson 5: A Vision of Community	396
Lesson 6: Community Impact	403
Lesson Extensions	410

UNIT 7: COMPASSION PROJECT

Unit Overview	414
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Unit 1



COMPASSION



Prior Knowledge

A general understanding of what it means to show and receive kindness.

Overview

In this unit, students will learn to recognize their own and others' needs for compassion. They will discover that when they take care of themselves and one another by showing compassion, they can create a safer, healthier community. They will also acknowledge that sometimes it can be difficult to show compassion, and they will take time to identify how they can act compassionately toward themselves and others in challenging situations. They will also explore what it means to be mindful and will consider whether and how mindfulness can help them show compassion to themselves and others.

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand:

- Compassion is showing care and kindness to someone in need.
- Showing compassion to themselves and others can help them create a safer, healthier community.

Essential Questions

- What is compassion?
- How can I show myself compassion?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to show compassion?
- How can I help create a compassionate community?

Lesson Summaries and Materials*

Lesson 1 pages 5–21

Lesson 1—What Is Compassion?:

Students learn that compassion means showing care and kindness to someone in need. Then they explore how compassion impacts individual and community well-being.

- Whiteboard or display screen (chalkboard or chart paper may be substituted)
- “*Lean on Me*” (Bill Withers, 1972) recording, written lyrics
- Sticky notes
- Pencils/pens

Lesson 2 pages 22–32

Lesson 2—Checking In: Students learn how practicing mindfulness can help them show compassion to themselves and others. Then they explore how they can help cultivate a compassionate community.

- Whiteboard or display screen
- “*Lean on Me*” recording and lyrics

Lesson 3 pages 33–41

Lesson 3—When is it Difficult to Show Compassion? Students explore why it is sometimes challenging to show compassion to themselves and others. Then they work in small groups to generate compassionate responses to difficult situations.

- Whiteboard or display screen (chalkboard or chart paper may be substituted)
- “*Lean on Me*” (Bill Withers, 1972) recording, written lyrics
- Copies of three scenarios and paper to record possible solutions
- Pencils
- [Optional] Student journals

Lesson 4 pages 42–47

Lesson 4—Creating a Compassionate Community: Students identify concrete ways they can help build compassionate communities at home, at school, and in their city/town.

- Whiteboard or display screen (chalkboard or chart paper may be substituted)
- A Map of Compassion display
- [Optional] Student journals

*All Lessons include:
Bell or chime
(Optional) Hoberman sphere

Differentiation*

- Differentiation activities offered for high-readiness students follow many of the activities within the unit lessons. When a differentiated activity is available, it is indicated by an asterisk next to the activity title.
- Suggestions for further reinforcement are embedded within the instructions for the activities that address more difficult concepts.

Performance Assessment

Students will be able to:

- Describe how practicing compassion impacts individuals and communities (Lesson 1).
- Conclude that mindfulness can help them show compassion to themselves and others (Lessons 1-2).
- Demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and importance of compassion during discussion and sharing (Lessons 1–4).
- Identify how they could act compassionately toward themselves and others in difficult situations (Lesson 3).
- Identify ways they can create a compassionate community (Lesson 4).

New Mindful Movements

Poses

Mountain

Sunrise

Sunset

Hands and Knees

Cat

Cow

Dog

Plank/Kneeling Plank

Easy Pose

Child's Pose

Cobra

Butterfly

Flower

Turtle

Monkey

Rest

Sequences

Sunrise/Sunset

Cat/Cow

Dog/Plank

Child's Pose/Cobra

Fresh Start Sequence (Part 1)

Fresh Start Sequence (Part 2)

Fresh Start Sequence

Closing Sequence

Mindful Moments

Calming and Focusing

Check-In

Breath Awareness

Mind and Body Awareness Experiment (I-III)

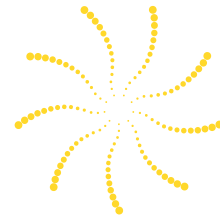
Share Your Moves

Rest and Reflection



Lesson 1

WHAT IS COMPASSION?



Goal Statement

Students will learn that compassion means showing care and kindness to someone in need. Then they will explore how compassion impacts individual and community well-being.

Essential Question

What is compassion?

“I Can” Statement

I can tell you what compassion is.

Key Learning Objectives

Students will know...

- Compassion means showing care and kindness to someone in need.
- Mindfulness means using their minds to pay attention on purpose with curiosity and kindness.

Students will be able to...

- Describe how practicing compassion impacts individuals and communities.

Materials

- Whiteboard or display screen (chalkboard or chart paper may be substituted)
- “*Lean on Me*” (Bill Withers, 1972) recording, written lyrics
- Sticky notes
- Pencils/pens

Preparation/Setup

- Cue recording of “*Lean on Me*.”
- Prepare lyrics to “*Lean on Me*” for display.
- Set out sticky notes and pens and pencils.

New Mindful Movements

Poses

Mountain
Sunrise
Sunset
Hands and Knees
Cat
Cow
Dog
Plank/Kneeling Plank
Easy Pose
Child’s Pose
Cobra
Butterfly
Flower
Turtle
Rest

Sequences

Sunrise/Sunset
Cat/Cow
Dog/Plank
Child’s Pose/Cobra
Closing Sequence

Mindful Moments

Calming and Focusing
Check-In
Breath Awareness
Rest and Reflection

Vocabulary

Mindfulness
Compassion
Sequence
Pay attention
On purpose
Curiosity
Kindness
Care
Focused
Inhale
Exhale

TEACHING TIP



An introduction to mindfulness is provided in this first lesson to accompany the Calming and Focusing exercise. The scripts and concepts here can be introduced and reinforced over time. It is not expected that students will fully grasp these concepts or the practices in the first lesson.

CALMING AND FOCUSING / 10 mins

Tell students that they are going to begin one of four lessons that will introduce the kinds of things they will learn in this class.

Tell students that the first skill they are going to practice is **mindfulness**.

Write the word mindfulness on the board and invite several students to share what they think it means.

After students have had an opportunity to share their guesses, tell them:

- *Mindfulness is our ability to use our minds to pay attention on purpose with curiosity and kindness to what is happening right here, right now. We can use mindfulness to really notice what we are experiencing inside us or around us.*

Then invite them to consider whether learning how to calm and focus their minds might be useful:

- *For me, the school day often feels quite busy and sometimes it can be challenging to feel focused. Have you ever had that experience?*
- *Practicing mindfulness is a great way to pause, check in and notice what's happening right here and now. Sometimes mindfulness can help us feel more calm and focused. Today we're going to learn an exercise that will help us try it out.*

Then introduce the concept of a **mindfulness muscle**:

*It can be helpful to think of our minds like a muscle; it becomes stronger with exercise. We're going to learn an exercise today that we'll do at the beginning of each class. By practicing mindfulness all year long, we'll strengthen our **mindfulness muscles**. The more we exercise our mindfulness muscles, the easier it will be to feel calm and focused when we want to.*

Introduce students to three steps they'll take to exercise their mindfulness muscles. Post these steps somewhere visible:

Step 1: Focus your attention on something (such as the breath or the sound of the bell).

Step 2: Notice when your mind wanders away from the breath or sound.

Step 3: Gently bring your attention back to the breath or the sound.

Tell students:

- *When we notice that our mind has wandered and bring our attention back to the breath or the bell, we are exercising our mindfulness muscles.*

MINDFULNESS MUSCLE



- *An important element of mindfulness is that it is curious and kind: when we notice our mind wandering, we don't get upset or judge ourselves, we just bring our attention back to the bell or the breath.*
- *It's normal for our minds to wander away. We can say to ourselves, "Nice catch!" when we notice it happening. Each time we notice our minds wandering, that's the moment when our mindfulness muscle becomes stronger.*

Then lead students through the Calming and Focusing exercise.

Calming

Tell students:

- *Let's begin by focusing our attention on our breath. Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. These two spots are our Anchors because they help us feel our breath moving in the body.*
- *As you take three long, slow breaths, focus your attention on any part of the breath you can feel.*
- *Notice the feeling of the air entering and leaving your nostrils. Feel your chest and belly expand with each breath.*
- *Remember the three steps: Pay attention to the way your breath feels in your body. Notice if your mind wanders. Then, bring your attention back to the sensation of your breath.*

NOTE If you have a Hoberman sphere, use it to help cue inhalations and exhalations. Otherwise, you can use a hand signal, such as moving the hands apart as you breathe in and bringing them together as you breathe out.

Focusing

Tell students:

- Next we'll focus our minds by listening to the bell.
- As you listen to the bell, focus your attention on the sound. Be curious about the sound, and see what you can notice about it.
- Remember the three steps: Pay attention to the sound. Notice if your mind wanders from the sound. Then, gently bring your attention back to the sound.

Ring the bell and wait until the bell stops ringing before saying:

- Now my mind is more focused and ready to begin the lesson. How does yours feel?

Invite several students to share what they notice after this exercise. Affirm that it's okay if the exercise was uncomfortable or if they had a hard time focusing. Remind them that it will get easier and more comfortable with practice. Consider inviting students to share their own ways of being mindful.

TEACHING TIP



You may wish to prepare some sticky notes with words related to compassion in case students don't make these connections on their own.

LEAN ON ME / 20 mins

Ask students to listen carefully to the beginning of the song "Lean on Me"* and to pay attention to the words as they listen. Play the song and show the words to the first stanza and chorus.

Lyrics

*"Sometimes in our lives,
We all have pain, we all have sorrow.
But if we are wise,
We know that there's always tomorrow.
Lean on me when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on.
For it won't be long till I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on."*

Give each student three or more sticky notes on which to write words (one per note) that aren't necessarily in the song but come to mind while they listen. Consider giving a couple of examples of words that it evokes for you (friendship, hope). While students are writing their words, move among them



*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

"Lean On Me"

Words and Music by Bill Withers

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and offer cues to help them get started.

Invite students to walk up to the board in groups of three to four to place their notes. Encourage them to look for other words that might be similar to their own and arrange them close together to begin to form clusters. For example, if their word is **kindness**, they could place it close to a similar word like **caring** to start a cluster.

Invite students to look at the words on the board and to come up with a few themes to name the clusters that have emerged. Discuss with the class to finalize the list of themes they observed. If **compassion** did not emerge, suggest compassion as a theme for the song.

Ask students to share ideas about the meaning of compassion. Help them conclude that compassion means **showing care and kindness to someone in need**. If students have a basic understanding of this meaning already, extend this definition to **the caring feeling of wanting to help when someone is feeling hurt, sad, or in some kind of pain**.

Then engage students in a discussion by asking questions such as:

-
- ***How does it feel when someone shows you compassion (or care or kindness)?***
 - ***How can showing compassion affect someone? Could showing compassion affect someone's health or well-being?***
 - ***Could it ever be important to have compassion for yourself?***
 - ***What would our school community be like if we all practiced showing more compassion to ourselves and each other? Would it be [safer, healthier, happier, stronger]?***
-

SUMMARIZE FOR STUDENTS:

- *Compassion means showing care and kindness to someone in need.*
- *When we take care of ourselves and one another by showing compassion, we can create a safer, healthier community.*

Tell students that in addition to mindfulness, they're going to learn more about compassion throughout the year (or your time together for this class).

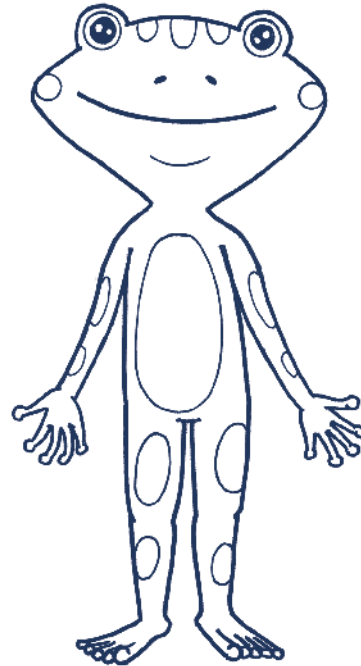


MINDFUL MOVEMENT / 15 mins

Introduction

Tell students:

- *Another thing we're going to do each time we meet for this class is called Mindful Movement.*
- *Mindful Movement is a great way for us to show compassion to ourselves by taking care of our bodies.*
- *We're going to take care of our bodies during this class throughout the year.*
- *Another way we can care for ourselves is to ask for help when we need it. While we learn these new movements today, practice listening to your body. If your body is telling you that something doesn't feel right, ask for my help!*



MOUNTAIN

Mountain new

Tell students:

- *The ready position for our movement practices is called Mountain pose.*
- *Raise your right hand if you've ever seen a real mountain.*
- *Raise your left hand if you've seen a picture of a mountain.*

Show students a picture of a mountain as a visual aid and ask them to identify words that describe a mountain (strong, still, tall, quiet, majestic, etc.).

Ask students to try embodying these qualities in their posture and to notice how it makes them feel to stand like mountains.

Then guide students into Mountain pose using the following cues as reference:

1. **Begin by standing with feet parallel, no more than hip-width apart.**
2. **Inhale: Imagine the top of your head lifting and your body growing taller.**
3. **Exhale: Press both feet into the floor and relax shoulders away from the ears.**
4. **Hold the pose for three breaths.**

Tell students that to check in with themselves is to *pause to listen to their minds and bodies with curiosity and kindness.*

Invite students to practice a brief Check-In by silently asking themselves:

-
- *How does my body feel right now?*
 - *How does my mind feel right now?*
-

Give students about twenty seconds to silently observe what they're experiencing. If time allows, invite several students to share what they notice.

Breath Awareness

Lead students through an exploration of the terms *inhale* and *exhale*. Remind students that to inhale is to fill the lungs with air, or breathe in, and to exhale is to empty air from the lungs, or breathe out.

> **OPTIONAL:** Use a Hoberman sphere as a visual aid.

Ask students to place one hand on their heart and one hand on their belly and tell them:

- *These are our Anchors where we can really feel our breath.*

Lead students in taking three deep breaths together. Then lead them in a discussion asking questions such as:

-
- *What do you notice when we inhale?*
 - *When we inhale, the stomach and chest expand to create space for the breath.*
 - *Can you feel your stomach pressing into your hands?*
 - *What do you notice when we exhale?*
 - *Does your stomach move toward your back?*
-



TEACHING TIP

As long as students are practicing the movements safely, do not focus on instructing students on correct alignment during this activity. Let the focus be on the fun of the movement. There is no need to give all of the cues referenced for each movement. Focus on modeling breathing and moving together and give cues to support students only as you see necessary.

Tell students:

- *During Mindful Movement today, pay attention to your breath. We will be linking our breath with the movement of our bodies in all of our Mindful Movement practices.*

Intro to Sequences

Ask students to guess what the word *sequence* might mean. After several students share, explain that a sequence is a series of actions or behaviors that moves step by step, following a particular order.

Ask students if there are times during their day when they follow a sequence. For example, *do they follow a particular morning routine to get from home to school? Do they follow an evening routine, taking particular steps to get ready for bed?*

Inform students that they will learn several mini-sequences during the lesson and that later, they will put together several of the mini-sequences to create one long sequence.



SUNRISE/SUNSET

Sunrise/Sunset new

Model and guide students through this mini-sequence using the following cues as reference:

1. **Begin in Mountain pose.**

2. **Inhale:** Stretch arms out to the sides and up above the head for Sunrise.
3. **Exhale:** From Sunrise, fold forward to Sunset pose. You may bend knees to get deeper into the forward fold. Let the whole upper body relax over the legs, letting the head hang heavy and the shoulders relax.
4. **Inhale:** Press feet downward and lift the body upward to return to Sunrise. Find the qualities of Mountain pose as you lift upright.

HANDS AND KNEES



Hands and Knees new

Model and guide students through this pose using the following cues as reference and explain that this pose will help them get ready for the next sequence:

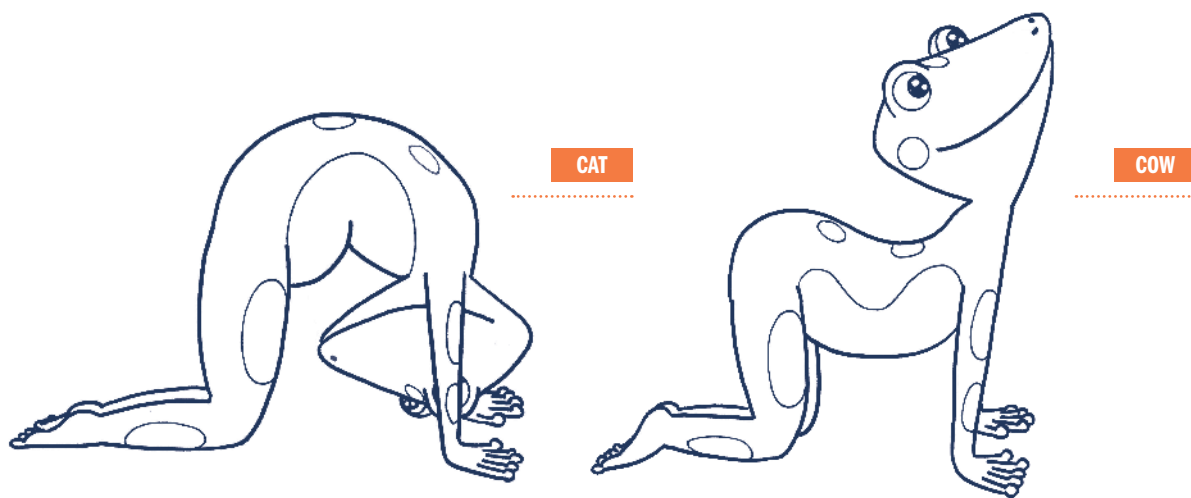
1. **Begin with your hands on the ground, shoulder-width apart, fingers spread wide apart, and your knees directly below your hips, hip-width apart.**
2. **Inhale and exhale with a straight back, chin slightly tilting toward the front of the neck to elongate the back of the neck.**

Explain to students that this is a transitional pose to connect standing movements with seated/kneeling movements.

Cat/Cow new

Model and guide students through the sequence using the following cues as reference:

1. **Begin in Hands and Knees pose.**
2. **Take a deep breath in.**
3. **Exhale (Cat): Lift the belly, rounding the back upward and lowering the head to look back at the belly.**



4. **Inhale (Cow):** Looking forward, lower the belly and lengthen the spine from tailbone to the crown of the head to create a slight U shape with the spine.

Repeat Cat and Cow two to three times.

5. **Breathing out, shift to Cat, letting the head and neck relax.**
6. **Breathing in, shift to Cow, lifting the head and heart. Finish in Hands and Knees.**

Dog/Plank new

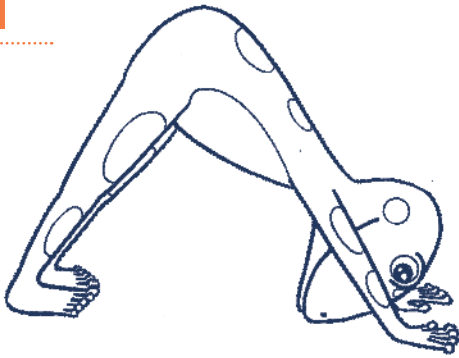
Model and guide students through the new sequence using the following cues as reference:

1. **Begin in Hands and Knees pose. Stack shoulders over palms and hips over knees, with a neutral spine.**
2. **Exhale (Dog):** Make an upside-down V-shape with the body by shifting the hips back and relaxing the head down. Create a long line from heels to hips and from hips to palms. Knees may be slightly bent.
3. **Inhale (Plank):** Shift forward to stack the shoulders over the palms with arms long and strong, straightening the body like a plank of wood. Drop the knees to the floor for support, while keeping a long straight line from the knees to the crown of the head. Explore two versions of the pose with knees on the floor (kneeling Plank) or with knees lifted to create a long line from the heels to the head.

Repeat the sequence two to three times.

Finish in Hands and Knees pose.

DOG



PLANK



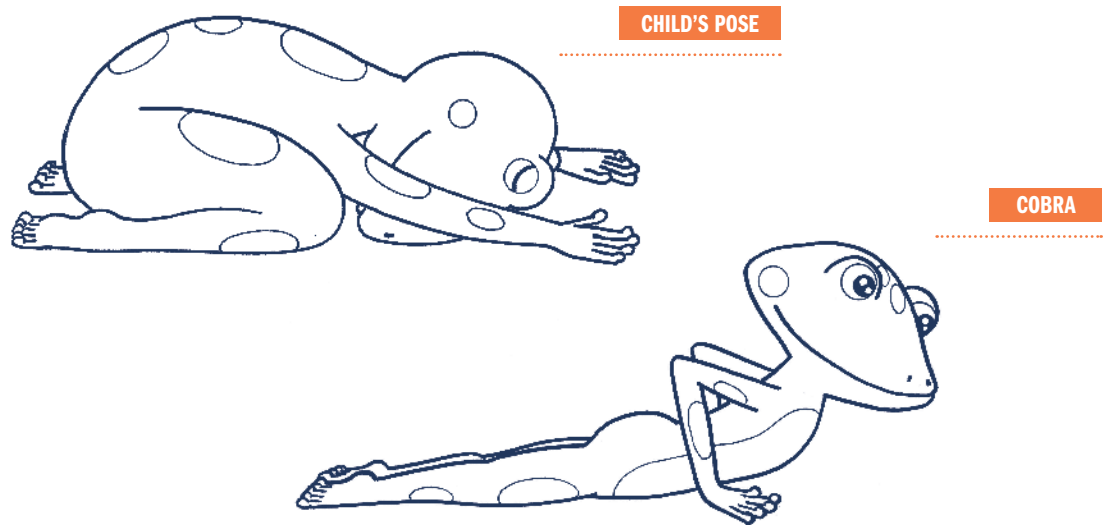
EASY POSE



Easy Pose/Check-In new

Guide students to sit in Easy pose on the ground with their legs crossed. Ask students to place one hand on their belly and one hand on their chest (their Anchors).

Have students take a few breaths here. Review the terms inhale and exhale and invite students to place their attention on the feeling of their breath flowing in and out.



Child's Pose/Cobra new

Model and guide students through the new sequence using the following cues as reference:

1. Begin in Hands and Knees pose.
2. Exhale (Child's pose): Send hips back toward heels, stretching arms out in front and letting the upper body (head, shoulders, and chest) sink down toward the mat in Child's pose.
3. Inhale: Plank (model kneeling version).
4. Exhale: Lower to belly.
5. Inhale (Cobra): Lift head and chest, rolling shoulders back and looking forward in Cobra. Use strength in the back to lift the head and chest, rather than the arms to lift up.

NOTE Demonstrate for students by holding the pose while lifting your hands off the floor to show that your arms are not holding you up.

6. Exhale: Press through palms to lift up and back to Child's pose.

As you guide them through the mini-sequence, tell students:

- *Child's pose is a posture that feels safe and relaxed for a lot of people. You can think of it as a safe space to come rest anytime you need a break. If Child's pose doesn't feel safe and relaxed for you, tell me and we'll find something that does!*

Additionally, demonstrate different height levels in Cobra. Tell students:

- You can be a tiny little snake resting in the grass or slither your way up tall to look up and puff out your chest like a cobra. Find the place that feels comfortable for your body and breathe there. Do not use your arms to push yourself up higher in the pose than your back can support on its own.

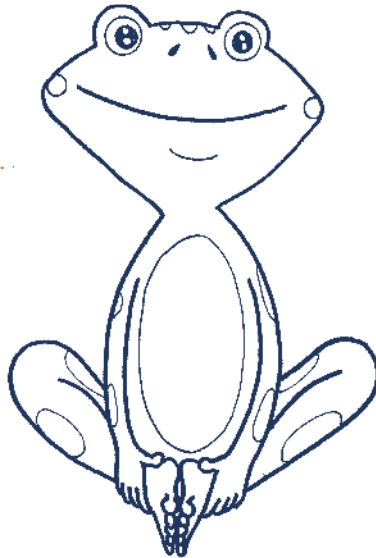
Closing Sequence new

Tell students:

- *Mindful Movement will always end with the Closing Sequence that we're about to learn. The Closing Sequence includes three poses: Butterfly, Flower, and Turtle.*

Model and guide students through the sequence using the following cues as reference:

BUTTERFLY



Butterfly new

1. Begin seated with soles of the feet together and knees down to the sides.
2. Inhale: Hold feet still and lengthen the back to sit up tall.
3. Exhale: Slightly fold forward over your legs.
4. Hold the pose for three breaths.
5. Inhale: Sit up straight.

Flower new

Demonstrate and teach Version 1 and add Version 2 if desired. Invite students to choose the version that feels right for them.



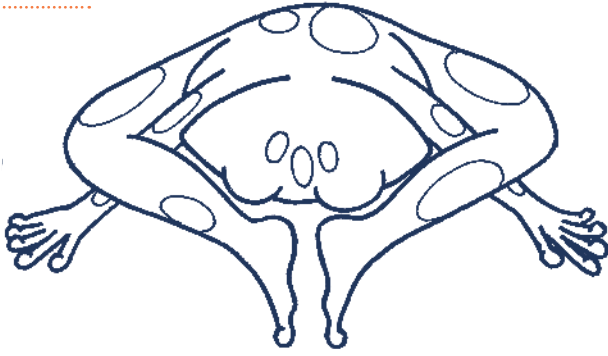
Version 1

1. Begin seated in Butterfly pose or another comfortable seated position.
2. Reach arms out to the sides, turning palms up and lifting the pinkies.
3. Inhale: Lift the chest and look upward.
4. Exhale: Drop the shoulders downward.
5. Hold the pose for three breaths.

Version 2 (with balance)

1. Begin by sitting upright in Butterfly pose with heels slightly farther away from the pelvis.
2. Thread arms through legs reaching under the knees. Bend elbows and lift palms up. Alternative: place hands on knees, palms up.
3. Inhale: Lift the chest and lean back slightly on sit bones to lift legs up from the floor.
4. Exhale: Find your balance.
5. Hold the pose for three breaths.
6. Gently lower the arms and release legs to sit up straight in Butterfly.

TURTLE

Turtle new

1. Begin by sitting in Butterfly pose.
2. Inhale: Slide your left arm inside and under your left leg and your right arm inside and under right leg, sliding palms forward on the ground.
3. Exhale: Fold down over the legs. Relax head down.
4. Hold the pose for three breaths.
5. Inhale: Sit up straight as you bring the arms from under the legs to Butterfly pose.



REST AND REFLECTION / 5 mins

Tell students:

- The last part of our classes will be Rest. Rest is an important part of taking care of ourselves and showing ourselves compassion, especially when we are tired.
- Did you know you don't need to go to sleep to rest your body? We all need plenty of sleep, but sometimes it is good for our bodies to rest even when we aren't sleeping. During this class we will be learning how to rest and relax without sleeping!
- Let's try it out: We're going to lie down still and quiet on our mats for a moment of rest. First, take a look around the room, then lie down in a

TEACHING TIP



Some students may feel vulnerable lying on their backs with their eyes closed or the lights dimmed. It is important to encourage students to find a Rest position in which they feel comfortable, safe, and able to be calm and quiet. Especially for students who have experienced trauma, this may look like a different way of lying down or even sitting with their back against the wall. It is completely normal for young students to be wiggly and distracted during Rest, especially while they first explore this practice. Many will grow their capacity to rest in calm, still, and quiet over time with practice. For some students, stillness may not be accessible, and their rest practice may involve some form of movement. Try to make Rest practice inclusive, supporting students in finding a version of Rest that is relaxing, safe, and comfortable for them and works in your space, even if it is not completely still or quiet.

way that feels safe and comfortable for you. If you'd like, you may close your eyes. If you would rather not close your eyes, you can find one place to rest your eyes.

Guide students to lie all the way down on their mats for Rest, flat on their backs with their eyes closed and their hands on their bellies. However, allow and encourage students to find a rest position that feels safe, calm, and comfortable. Then dim the lights, ensuring that you first ask students if they are okay with you doing so.

If students are restless, acknowledge that:

- *Sometimes it's hard to be still and quiet. If you feel like your body wants to move and it's hard to stay still, that's okay. Try to find a way to rest and relax that works for you.*

Then invite students to place their attention on their breath:

- *Actually, if you pay attention to your body, you will notice that even when you are lying in Rest pose, your body is still moving. Your breath makes your belly and chest move in and out. If it feels comfortable for you, place your hands on your heart and belly (your Anchors), and take a few moments to notice these small movements in and out. Feel your belly rise while you inhale and sink while you exhale.*

If anyone is lying on their belly, invite them to pay attention to the feeling of their belly and ribs expanding into the mat.

Allow one to two minutes of Rest.

- *As we finish the relaxation, take a deep inhale and a long exhale. Wiggle your fingers and your toes.*

Explain that you are going to ring the bell again, and when they can't hear the sound of the bell anymore, they should quietly move their bodies back up to their calm and ready seated pose.

Ring the bell.

Once students have returned to a seated position, invite them to silently check in with how their bodies feel:

- *Do you feel relaxed? Calm? Sleepy? Energized? Be curious and notice how you feel in body and mind.*

TAKE-HOME PRACTICE

- *As you go about your day, look for examples of compassion. Identify one example of someone showing compassion to a friend in need.*