



Mindfulness with Aloha Breath



Lesson 3 – Brain (Bear Awareness, Hippo, & Dino)

Grade Level: Pre-K-2

Objectives:

- Empower students with a research-based, socio-emotional tool (mindfulness) that is grounded in the values of aloha - aloha breath (AB).
- Develop students' understanding of the role and function of three key parts of the brain: frontal cortex (awareness & self-regulation), hippocampus (memory & its connection with emotions & motivation), and reptilian part (instinct & impulses including strong reactions like anger, aversion).
- Strengthen socio-emotional learning (self-awareness/self-regulation/skillful behavioral choices) with AB.

CCSS Benchmarks: HE.K-2.1.1/HE.2-3.1 (Mental/Emotional Health), HE.K-2.1.5 (Personal Health/Wellness)/ HE.K.2.5.2/HE.K.2.5.4 (Communication Skills)

Materials: *Mindfulness with Aloha Breath* storybook, chime/bell

Purpose:

- Increase academic excellence by providing students with research-based attentional training strategies that strengthen the prefrontal cortex.
- Foster students' ability to cultivate healthy self/emotional regulation, prosociality, and better decision making by encouraging students to pause and become aware of their inner/interpersonal experience before acting/reacting.
- Improve students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being so they may thrive throughout their lives, in and out of school.

Parts of the Brain:

- Invite students to describe what they thought about the different brain characters, and which one was their favorite: Bear Awareness, Hippo, and Dino.
- Explore the role that Bear Awareness played in the story.
 - "Bear Awareness is my favorite character because he is the wise observer. He notices without judgment; he is calm, and invites stomach to seek understanding rather than blaming."

- "We all have Bear Awareness. It is that front part of our brain (put your hand on your forehead to show students where the pre/frontal cortex is)."
- Connect Bear Awareness with being mindful.
 - Bear awareness remembers to breathe and to be aloha.
 - Bear awareness is a homophone, a play on the word 'bare awareness' meaning to be fully present, without the mind being distracted, and thinking about the past or future.
 - Express that practicing aloha breath gives Bear Awareness energy and power!
 - Ask students to share an experience when Bear Awareness was present.
- Explore the role that Hippo played in the story: "Hippo is part of your brain (hippocampus) that supports memory, and is very much tied to emotions such as positive ones like desires, happiness (yummy taste of cookies), as well as other emotions like sadness. We remember something when there is a strong emotion behind it."
 - Ask students to reflect on a memory and to notice what feelings, emotions are attached to that memory (e.g., last birthday party).
- Explore the role that Dino played in the story: "Dino is our most ancient, primitive part of the brain. Dino is very important because its function is to protect us and to help us survive (fight, flight, freeze). It is strongly connected with feelings such as fear and anger (function of amygdala), so when you feel really, really upset and scream, or you are afraid and want to hide, that is Dino!"
 - "We all have Dino. It is the back part of our brain." Point to the back part of your brain where it connects with the neck.
 - Ask students to reflect on a time when Dino was really roaring or present. Encourage them to describe what happened.
- Discuss the co-regulation of all three parts: "All three parts (Bear Awareness, Hippo, Dino) are all valued team members in the brain. but if Hippo and Dino are "ball hogs," and always take control, then the team suffers. To succeed, Bear Awareness has to be the leader, the decision maker, but Hippo can help guide the team to know what is liked and disliked (approach or avoid), and Dino alerts you to know whether you are in truly danger (fight or flight response)!"

Aloha Breath Practice:

- Invite students to practice aloha breath to give Bear Awareness energy and power to be a strong leader.

- Follow the guideline in the book by encouraging students to first feel parts of their body. Being in the body helps to center them into the present moment.
- Guide the students to breathe naturally, and notice how the body feels.
- Encourage students to focus on the feeling sensation of breathing - left hand on belly, right hand on heart, feeling the in- and out-breath.
- If they get distracted, it's ok, gently invite them to come back to the feeling, the sensation of breathing in the body.
- With the next breath, invite students to breathe in kindness, and to breathe out kindness. Repeat this three times. You may move to the next aloha values - harmony, gentleness, humility, patience, or just repeat breathing in-out kindness.
- End the AB practice with a gentle ring of the chime/bell.

Additional Activities:

- Have students draw/demonstrate the different parts of the brain and how they function.
- Create your own story of the adventures of these characters.
- Reflect on a time when Dino was in charge rather than Bear Awareness. If Dino is in charge unnecessarily (i.e., it is not a true threat/danger), then we can cause trouble to ourselves and others by reacting impulsively.
- Reflect on a time when Bear Awareness helps Dino to calm down.
- Plan a play in rotating groups, and present it to the class to guess which character is which. As rounds go on, you can make it harder and harder (silent charades, Pictionary, song/dance, etc.).

Activity Assessment:

- Assess the extent to which students understand the three different parts of the brain and its role in influencing behavior. Assess whether students realize that doing aloha breath can help make Bear Awareness be stronger so that they can make better decisions, and regulate their strong feelings/emotions.

Reflections

*Is labeling Bear Awareness as "good" and Dino/hippo as "bad" truly accurate? All parts of the brain have to work together in order to succeed (like, "The Floor is Lava" show...)

*Accepting the imperfect nature of being human may ease inner/outer conflicts and broaden our sense of compassion towards others.

LESSON PLAN ASSESSMENT:

Please scan this QR code on your phone, or click the link below, and provide us with a quick anonymous assessment of the lesson plan itself:



[Lesson Plan Assessment Link](#)

CONTACT US:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at: mindfulaloha@gmail.com

Thao Le, PhD, MPH
Professor

Benji Whitenack
Graduate Teaching Assistant

