

Jenga — Mindfulness meditation

EXPLANATION:

Mindfulness is the act of focusing one's attention on the present moment. In this activity Jenga® is used to promote mindfulness thinking and actions. The Jenga® activity requires concentrated attention and awareness. Therefore, it also provides opportunities for students to engage in mindfulness in an interactive way with their peers or independently.



YEAR LEVELS: Years 11–12

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion — playing game individually or in pairs

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 20-30mins

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Social skills and self-regulation skills are embedded throughout curriculum documents. Whilst these elements are specific to the Year 1 – 10 curriculum, they are essential capabilities in all phases of life.

One of the general capabilities of the ACARA curriculum, Personal and Social Capability supports students in becoming creative and confident individuals who 'have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing' (MCEETYA 2008). The development of personal and social capability is a foundation for learning and for citizenship.

This capability encompasses students' personal/emotional and social/relational dispositions, intelligences, sensibilities and learning. It develops effective life skills for students, including understanding and handling themselves, their relationships, learning and work. The organising elements of the Personal and Social capability are particularly relevant include self-management and self-awareness. Both the elements of self-awareness and of self-management relate to mindfulness meditation.

SCOPE OF TASK:

Some notes about mindfulness meditation:

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing using breathing and other techniques to enhance the experience. Research suggests there are many benefits associated with mindfulness practice, namely:

- Relieves stress
- Improves cognition and potentially academic performance
- Supports emotional regulation
- Increases mental wellbeing
- Improves resilience
- Reduces negative feelings

1. Activate students' prior knowledge of mindfulness meditation. Pose questions to determine student knowledge:

- What is mindfulness meditation?
- How do you practise mindfulness?
- What are some of the benefits of mindfulness?
- When can you practise mindfulness?

2. Inform the students that you have a tool that they can use to practise and support their mindfulness activity. Tell the students that the game Jenga® will be used to engage in mindfulness.

3. The mindful Jenga® rules are the same as the original game just with additional mindful steps:

- On each turn each player takes one block from any level of the tower using only one hand at any time
- The block removed must be placed on the topmost level
- Your turn ends 10 seconds after you stack your block - or as soon as the player to your left touches one.
- Keep removing and stacking blocks until someone topples the tower. It is reported that a tower of 36 stories high or more has been built!
- The game ends when the tower topples over or when any block falls from the tower

Ways that Jenga can be used to practise mindfulness:

- Students can cultivate a calm and clear mind through mindful breathing – students can inhale as they remove a block and exhale as they replace it



- After removing a block, a student can state something that they are grateful for – requiring them to think about appreciation and things for which they are grateful. Students can share their gratitude with the others or keep it private.

4. After the students have played Jenga® ask them to reflect on the experience:

- Did Jenga® as a tool assist them in the mindfulness practice – why or why not?
- Did they use Jenga® in a different way to the ways suggested?
- What are the ways that students engage in mindfulness meditation that other students might be interested in?

The Jenga® game can be left in the room for students to use in their spare classroom time – independently, in pairs or small groups.

RESOURCES:

- Jenga® game/s