



# MindUP Booster Lesson

## Lesson 5: Generating Gratitude

Unit 4: Lessons 13 – 15

Grades K – 2 & 3 – 5

**Length of Lesson:** 30 minutes

### Summary of Unit 4 – Lessons delivered by teacher

- **Objective of Unit 4:** The lessons highlight the benefits of participating mindfully in positive social actions and the impact they have on social, emotional, and cognitive growth. By expressing gratitude and performing acts of kindness, students develop a stronger understanding of other’s feelings and a concern for the well-being of others.
- **Lesson 13 – Expressing Gratitude:** Students gain an appreciation for special people and things in their lives and discover the social, emotional, and cognitive benefits of showing gratitude.
- **Lesson 14 – Performing Acts of Kindness:** As students perform small acts of kindness for friends, classmates, teachers, and family, they learn how these positive actions can increase their optimism and brain power.
- **Lesson 15 – Taking Mindful Action in the World:** Students collaboratively plan and perform a group act of kindness and reflect on the way combined efforts can make an important difference in the world and connect them to their peers and the larger community.

### Lesson Overview

1. Reviewing Mindfulness & Gratitude – 5 min.
2. Gratitude Meditation – 10 min.
3. Gratitude Drawing – 10 min.
4. Heartful Phrases (optional) – 3 min.
5. Wrap Up – 2 min.

### Lesson Materials and Preparation

#### Materials:

- Chime
- “I am Grateful for...” handout (1 per student) – option to use the whiteboards in the classroom
- Pen (1 per student) – option to use any crayons or markers they have at their desks

#### Preparation:

- Determine if you want the students sitting on the carpet or their chairs for the meditation.



## MindUP Booster Lesson

### For Parent Review: Facts from MindUP lessons 13 – 15 (Grades K – 2 & 3 – 5)

#### Gratitude

- **Defining Gratitude:** Gratitude is a feeling of thankfulness and joy we feel in response to something we've received, whether the gift is tangible (concrete/physical) or intangible (not something you can touch), such as a smile of encouragement from a loved one or a beautiful view of the beach.
- **Physiological effects of gratitude on the brain and body:** research has shown when we think about something or someone we truly appreciate **our bodies calm themselves**, because the feelings associated with gratitude trigger the calming branch (parasympathetic system) of the autonomic nervous which tells the body to "rest and digest" and counteracts the "fight, flight, or freeze" response in the sympathetic system.

#### Acts of Kindness

- **Defining Acts of Kindness:** Mindful action intended to help another living thing. The act of kindness can be small, big, spontaneous, or well planned. Phrases commonly used to describe acts of kindness include, good deeds, gestures, generosity, paying it forward.
- **Our brains are built for compassion:** Studies have shown that our brains are rewarded for generosity with a release of dopamine during acts of kindness. We are hard-wired to feel good about doing good.
- Research shows that **actions that produce feelings of empathy and compassion have several positive benefits** including **boosting the production of the feel-good neurotransmitter dopamine**, increasing the likelihood that students will continue to act on their social concerns, and improving the capacity to take care of themselves.
- **Mirror Neurons – Kindness is Contagious:** Research on mirror neurons (brain cells that allow the brain to imitate the actions of others and to feel the emotions experienced by others) is helping us to understand the power of social interactions and connections. When a group of people work together in a positive and generous way the level of dopamine multiplies – making kindness contagious!



## MindUP Booster Lesson

### REVIEWING MINDFULNESS & GRATITUDE (5 min.)

Hello everyone, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and today is our last MindUP booster lesson for this year! Let's start the lesson by reviewing what mindfulness means. **Does anyone remember how we defined mindfulness?**

Yes, those are all great answers! Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention to what is going on right now, being present, knowing how you feel right now, and paying attention on purpose. **Mindfulness is about knowing what we are feeling, thinking, and what is happening in and around us.** Being mindful takes practice and the more we practice the stronger our mindfulness muscles get!

For today's lesson we will focus on gratitude because it is important to be mindful about what we are thankful for. Let's define gratitude as a class, **who has an idea of what gratitude means?**

Great answers, thank you for sharing with me. **Gratitude is a feeling of thankfulness and joy we feel in response to something we've been given**, whether the gift is something we can touch like a book (tangible/concrete/physical) or something we cannot touch (intangible), like a smile from a friend or a beautiful view of the beach.

The reason practicing gratitude is so important is because it helps **us become happier and think positively.** Gratitude also helps us become **more concerned (compassionate) for ourselves and others.** Gratitude **physically calms down our bodies** because the positive feelings trigger the calming branch (parasympathetic system) of the autonomic nervous which tells the body to "rest and digest" and offsets the "fight, flight, or freeze" response in the sympathetic system.

### GRATITUDE MEDITATION (10 min.)

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Taking time to practice gratitude increases compassion towards themselves and others, cultivates happiness and a positive mindset.

**PREPARATION:**

- Have students sitting on the carpet or in their chair prior to starting meditation.
- Chime

For this activity we are going to be seated (*in the chair or on the carpet*) in our own personal space. I am going to ask everyone to **settle into their seat and find a comfortable position and rest your hands** in your lap on your thighs. If you are sitting in a chair, please plant both feet firmly on the floor. During this meditation if your mind wanders just return to your breathing and refocus your attention on your breath.



## MindUP Booster Lesson

### Ring the Chime

#### **Meditation Script (read slowly and pause where it feels natural for you):**

*Let your eyes close and turn on your mindful bodies. Feel your breath coming in and out of your belly. Take two more deep inhales through your nose and gently release your breath.*

*Sometimes we forget all the things in our lives that we can be grateful for. It's like the rock at the top of a pyramid that isn't aware of all the rocks below it is sitting on. For you to be here, the sun has to keep rising every day to give life to the plants that we need to breathe and eat. There are so many people we don't even think of who clean the streets we walk on, drive the food to the store where we buy it, and build the building we live in.*

*Feel your breath coming in and out of your belly. Take two more deep inhales through your nose and gently release your breath. Once you feel calm, picture the person in your life who makes you feel the happiest. Get a picture of that person in your head, and then imagine they are sitting right next to you. Silently ask yourself, how does it feel to have them so close?*

*Now picture your favorite food and imagine it sitting right in front of you. Silently, picture the colors and the smells and see what your body feels like.*

*Now keep thinking of your favorite things and people in your life. Think of the things you are most grateful for. When you picture them, see how they make your body feel.*

*Now take a deep breath and let all the things you are grateful for go, and simply notice what your body feels like after gratefulness practice. Slowly refocus your attention back to the room by wiggling your toes and fingers. Slowly reach your arms above your head and take a stretch as you gently open your eyes.*

### Ring the Chime

Great job everyone. Silently raise your hands if you feel happy, joy, or positive after doing the meditation.

#### **Let's take a moment to share our gratitude:**

- How do you feel after thinking about all your favorite things? What does your body feel like?
- Who did you picture as your favorite person? How did you feel when you were imagining they were sitting next to you?
- What was your favorite food? How did thinking about it make you feel?
- Did anyone think of a happy memory they want to share?



## MindUP Booster Lesson

### GRATITUDE DRAWING (10 min.)

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Identifying and reflecting on gratitude in the classroom setting can shift the classroom environment in a positive way and assist students in identifying what about themselves and others they are grateful for.

**PREPARATION:**

- If the students are on the carpet have them move to their seats
- “I am Grateful for...” handout (1 per student) – option to use the whiteboards in the classroom
- Pen (1 per student) – option to use any crayons or markers they have at their desks
- Chime – optional

Now that we have had time to think about all the things we are grateful for, let’s take time to capture that in a drawing. I will pass out a handout titled, “I am grateful for...” and you will draw a picture of yourself surrounded by all the things you are most grateful for and things about yourself you are grateful for. If it is hard to draw everything you can write words and phrases also.

***Hold up a copy of the handout while you take time to give examples of concepts you would draw and an example of what the picture might be to represent that idea.***

**For example,** I would draw myself or write my name in the middle of the paper first. Then I would start drawing/writing the things that we just talked about that I am grateful for. I might draw people and things I am grateful for like my pet, my family, my favorite food, and the beach. I want to make sure I also draw things like a friend smiling at me, a friend cheering me up when I am sad, a happy memory with my family. Then I want to make sure I take time to draw the things about myself. For example, I am grateful for my sense of humor, helping others, and being a good friend.

**Pass out the handouts to the students and allow them to start. Circulate around the room to help answer any questions students may have.**

**Ring the Chime to signal the end of the drawing time.**

Excellent pictures! Let’s end our lesson by sharing some of our drawings:

- What is something you wrote/drew about yourself you are grateful for?
- What is something you drew/wrote that you didn’t share with the class yet?
- Did anyone write/draw something about the environment (sun, rain, water, ocean, air, etc.)?
- Who is planning to tell the person(s) they drew that they are grateful for them? How will you tell them?



## MindUP Booster Lesson

### HEARTFUL PHRASES – Optional (3 min.)

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Speaking heartfelt phrases generates care and compassion for self and others.

**PREPARATION:**

- Have students sitting in their seats
- Chime

We are going to end the lesson with heartfelt phrases. When we speak heartfelt phrases we are practicing kindness to ourselves and others.

#### Ring the Chime

**Heartful Phrases Script:**

*Let's take a deep inhale and a slow exhale. Let's give ourselves a big hug. Now that we are hugging ourselves, let's say some kind words to ourselves. Repeat after me, "**May I be happy.**" You can smile and let yourself feel good right now. Repeat after me, "**May I be healthy.**" You can feel your body strong and alive. Repeat after me, "**May I be safe.**" You can relax and know that you are safe right here. Repeat after me, "**May I be at peace.**" You can know you are totally perfect exactly as you are.*

*Now open your arms as if you are spreading your kindness out of your heart to everyone in the classroom. Repeat after me, "**May you be happy.**" "**May you be healthy.**" "**May you be safe.**" and "**May you be at peace.**"*

#### Ring the Chime

### WRAP UP (2 min.)

Now that we have reflected on what we are grateful for I hope everyone is feeling a sense of positivity, happiness, and recalling more happy memories.

Thank you for practicing gratitude with me today. Make sure to take time throughout the week to think about what you are grateful for and share it with your family and friends.

We look forward to seeing you next year for more MindUP lessons!

### REFERENCES

- Rechtschaffen, Daniel. *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students.* W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- *The MindUP Curriculum. Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning-and Living.* Scholastic, 2011. **Pages:** 126-151.