



Arab-American Family
Support Center

MINDFULNESS

PROJECT TOOLKIT

TASKFORCE ON RACIAL
INCLUSION & EQUITY (TRIE)

Briarwood,
Queens

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Introduction

In April 2020, New York City launched the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. The Taskforce identified 33 neighborhoods, representing some of the hardest-hit neighborhoods in New York City. Seeing first-hand the devastating impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and an increase in demand for social services, AAFSC joined this taskforce to deepen and expand our efforts to promote the physical and mental health and well-being of vulnerable communities through a racial equity lens.

Selected by the community through a participatory budgeting process, the revitalization of two community gardens – PS 117 and MS 217 – aims to combat the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrant communities of color. This spring, AAFSC volunteers, school leaders, and youth ambassadors kick-started our gardening effort to transform this space and broaden food access and mental health resources in the local Briarwood community.

Project Sustainability

The Mindfulness Toolkit is a sustainable, accessible, and lasting resource for all. Each activity welcomes Briarwood community members to fully engage with their mind, body, and surroundings. These activities provide opportunities for relaxation, stretching, and awareness of oneself to promote resilient mental health.

Furthermore, these activities are publicly accessible online and in the gardens at PS 117 and MS 217, so they can be practiced by everyone in the community. For example, School Principals in Briarwood can rotate through the 7 activities periodically throughout the year over morning announcements to help students refresh and get ready for the day. Through the online link, community members all over Briarwood and New York City more broadly can access the activities and use them as needed.

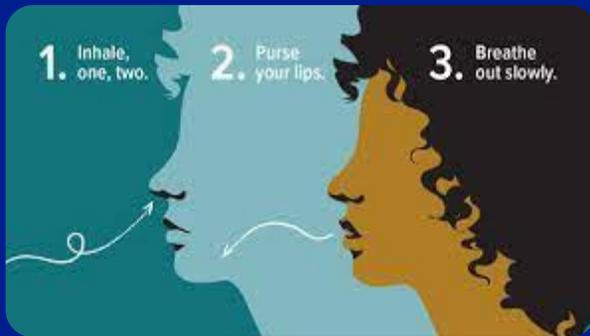
Activity 1:

Breathing Body Scan



Purpose:

To relax the body and relieve all stress before engaging in any activity



- Position your body comfortably, either in a chair or on the floor. Close the eyes or keep them open. Keep your back straight and chest up, and place hands wherever feels good.
- Begin by breathing in through the nose and exhaling out through the mouth. Do this 4 times, each breath controlled and steady.
- Notice where the breath lies in the body without changing it, then let it drop into the belly, letting the belly rise and fall with every breath.
- Then slow down the breath, inhale and exhale out through the nose, making the inhales and exhales equal length. Sometimes counting 3 or 5 counts in and out helps, or just keep it simple and breathe slowly.

Activity 2:

Stretch It Out



Purpose:

To release muscle tension in the body such as the back, neck, and shoulders. This helps with posture, stress alleviation, and the clearing of thoughts



- Begin standing up with your back straight and hands at your sides. 10 shoulder rolls: 5 forward and 5 back.
- Next, 20 neck rolls: 10 clockwise and 10 counterclockwise.
- All movements should be slow and controlled, feeling the muscles and tension with each turn.
- Gently twist in your chair, floor, or standing up, not forcing just breathing into the belly, wringing out the spine.

Activity 3:

Roses, Thorns, and Buds



Purpose:

To reflect on our past, present, and future experiences related to COVID-19 and the pandemic—both positive and negative



- Everyone sits/stands in a circle. One person volunteers to go first and the person to their left goes next and so on.
- The roses represent something positive you experienced during the pandemic or something you learned that made you happy.
- The thorns represent a negative experience related to COVID, but the participant can choose whether to go into depth or not.
- The buds represents something the pandemic has taught you that you can apply to future interactions, situations, and problems.

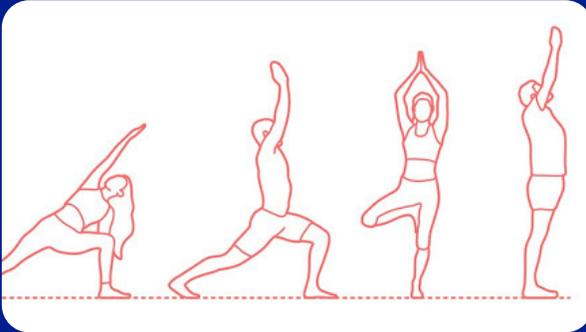
Activity 4:

Stress Relieving Yoga (standing poses)



Purpose:

To build strength, awareness, and harmony in your mind, body, and environment



- 4 poses total, requires balance and focus. Each pose should be held for one minute.
- Pose 1 (Tree Pose): Praying hands at chest and slowly raise above your head. Gradually lift your heel to your inner thigh
- Pose 2 (Mountain Salute): Stand up straight, facing the sky, keeping your neck and back aligned. Reach for the sky.
- Pose 3 (Side Angle): Lunge to the side. As one hand extends to the sky, the other grabs the ankle.
- Pose 4 (Warrior): Forward lunge. Hands start at praying position at the chest then extend upwards to the sky, then release to stay parallel to each other.

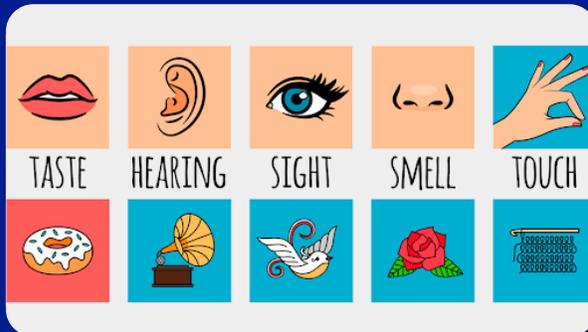
Activity 5:

Five Senses Exercise



Purpose:

To bring awareness to your surroundings and picture something you are experiencing with each of the five senses



- Notice five things that you can see. Look around yourself and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick something that you don't normally notice, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.
- Notice four things that you can feel. Bring awareness to four things that you are currently feeling, like the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.
- Notice three things you can hear. Take a moment to listen, and note three things that you hear in the background. This can be the chirp of a bird, the hum of the refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic from a nearby road.
- Notice two things you can smell. Bring your awareness to smells that you usually filter out, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. Perhaps the breeze is carrying a whiff of pine trees if you're outside, or the smell of a fast-food restaurant across the street.
- Notice one thing you can taste. Focus on one thing that you can taste right now, at this moment. You can take a sip of a drink, chew a piece of gum, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open your mouth to search the air for a taste.

Activity 6:

The Wiggle and Freeze Game



Purpose:

To loosen up muscle tension through quick movement and reflect on the physical sensations felt



- Everyone wiggles, bounces around, or dances at first until someone yells, "Freeze!"
- Then everyone freezes; while they are not moving, the participants should take time to notice what they can feel in their bodies, which could include movement, tingling, heat, shaking, buzzing, or any other feeling they might have.

You are free to repeat this activity as many times as you like! It's a fun way to get some exercise while also beginning to cultivate a better awareness of physical sensations, which is an important part of mindfulness practice.

Activity 7:

Seeing Nature: Expanding Your Mind's Eye



- Find a tree or some flowers with a comfortable view.
- Stand or sit near the tree/flower and let it fill your entire visual field.
- Observe as many details as you can (parts of the trunk, branches, leaves, petals and stems).
- Notice what is going on in your mind – how it observes the "tree as object."
- Spread your vision to encompass the whole tree/flower using a soft expansive gaze.
- Keep in mind these questions: where does the tree begin and end? Where do you?

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