

# Teacher's Manual

EXPLORING Potential





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welcome!

Hello Teachers,

We are honored that you have chosen to participate in the Inner Explorer program. Your commitment to this initiative will help create a better and more peaceful school community for you and your students.

Throughout the development process, we have focused on ease of use for teachers, cost effectiveness for administrators and compelling programming for students, all with the goal of improving educational outcomes, reducing stress, and stimulating human potential.

We are continually using your feedback to further refine the program for k-12 students, for in-school and at-home applications. We thank you for your time and your input and we send good intentions your way as you venture into new territory....mindfully!

Sincerely,

Laura S. Bakosh  
Co-Founder  
Inner Explorer, Inc.

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Co-Founder  
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# Introduction

Welcome to Inner Explorer! You and your students are taking the first steps towards a better, brighter future. Inner Explorer is a Mindfulness Based Social Emotional Learning (MBSEL) program designed to lead students towards their highest potential by bolstering academic performance, creativity, social & emotional aptitude and wellbeing. It's also designed to allow teachers to participate on the journey of self-discovery.

The methodology that Inner Explorer uses is based on the widely researched and highly regarded Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program founded by Jon

Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness. According to Kabat-Zinn, “mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

MBSR sparked a growing interest and application of mindfulness ideas and practices in diverse environments including medicine, psychology, social work, education, athletics, business, law, corrections, military and others. Mindfulness practices have shown positive effect in all of the areas noted above. They have been utilized in k-12 education, as well as secondary education, to help students achieve greater academic success.

There are a multitude of benefits that occur as a result of practicing mindfulness. By using functional MRI images, researchers can actually see changes in the areas of the brain related to fear, anxiety, and self-regulation. People who practice mindfulness regularly show reduced arousal in the limbic system, responsible for the “fight or flight” response. They also show enhanced brain activity in the prefrontal cortex, related to long-term memory, complex planning and decision-making. Because mindfulness education involves contemplative trainings, it also helps develop skills that support individual and relational well-being, such as acceptance, equanimity, diversity, kindness, generosity, gratitude, and perspective-taking.

Without the benefit of mindfulness, people often act on automatic thoughts, which can be inaccurate or untrue. In fact, research from Duke University suggests that 40% of our daily activity is habitual and is done without thinking. However, by observing and bringing awareness to how the mind works, to how quickly thoughts change, and to how little we typically control our brain’s ongoing mental activity, we can begin to exercise choice.

By practicing mindfulness, we create space—in our minds and in our lives—to make thoughtful, conscious choices, and to make a habit out of responding, rather than reacting. We call this “learning from the inside out”.

The most critical step to obtaining the benefits of mindfulness is to develop a daily practice. As mindfulness teachers, we understand how difficult this step can be. Therefore, the Inner Explorer program is designed with students and teachers in mind to be a time efficient and welcomed daily practice that can be easily integrated into the school day and into the learning process.

“Mindfulness  
means paying  
attention in a  
particular way;  
on purpose,  
in the present  
moment, and  
nonjudgmentally.”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD.

# Exploring Potential Program

The Exploring Potential Program, weaves a number of concepts and practices throughout the program so that students develop inner awareness. The program starts with basic breathing and relaxation exercises that are integrated throughout the program. Students can use these exercises anytime and anywhere that they deem necessary...what a great tool for our growing children!

We then move into being mindful of our senses- hearing, smelling, seeing, touching, tasting and our gut sense that is sometimes referred to as our 6th sense. We utilize embodied memory and guided imagery to capture some of these senses. Students learn to focus on what is happening as it happens.

Next we focus on thoughts. This

segment is integrated throughout the program and includes topics such as chattering minds, being non-judgmental, slowing down, curiosity and discovery. This allows students to learn that thoughts come and go and that they have some control over their inner dialogue. This increased self-awareness offers new choices about how to best respond to situations as they arise.

We then flow into emotions. We focus on a few key emotions that are quite familiar to students, including love, happiness, confidence, peacefulness, and kindness. This allows children to recognize how emotions feel inside of them and how their bodies may respond to certain emotions. They become familiar with how emotions emerge for them and are quicker to identify

strong emotions when they begin to feel overwhelmed. This allows them to exercise their ability to pause and choose.

We then introduce the idea of transition/change. Children will explore how things change, including their thoughts, feelings and emotions. They will practice sensing them, and then allowing them to float away as they refocus their attention on other sensations. These exercises develop the skills of focused and open awareness. They also incorporate the concept of inner peace as they realize they have more than their thoughts and feelings.

Choice dovetails change by encouraging kids to remember times when they made choices, both deemed positive and negative. They practice recalling all



of the felt senses associated with those choices and are encouraged to practice, in their mind, making positive choices.

We re-introduce the lessons related to pausing, breathing, being non-judgmental, and emotions. We invite students' to practice how wise choices feel. They all have experiences in their lives that they can draw from. We then introduce kindness, from the inside out. We start out with what differences are, how we can send friendly wishes to self, loved ones, general people they like or don't like, as well as to all living things. This segment has a profound message towards bullying!

Then we move into connection to all. We encourage students to be more mindful of consequences, cause and effect, our life's tapestry, service towards others, giving towards others, and nature overall.

The Exploring Potential  
Program will help lead kids  
towards their highest  
potential by bolstering  
academic performance,  
creativity, social &  
emotional aptitude and  
wellbeing. Whereby, creating  
a more compassionate,  
joyful, healthful, loving and  
peaceful world!

# Teaching Method

*To create an environment of non-judgment and openness and to hold the space so that students may develop and experience values first hand, whenever they show up.*

*To create a consistent formal practice of mindfulness to naturally build the students awareness so the lessons are more self-evident as time goes on.*

This approach is a shift from traditional teaching methods; it is an experiential-embodied program. Experiential-embodied programs are organized in a bottom to top fashion where the teacher understands the concepts to be shared, but is prepared to be guided by the collective experiences of the children. This “mindful” teaching method is nonlinear and often organic. In this type of learning environment the students explore the concept through a guided or silent contemplative period. Students are then guided to draw or write about their thoughts and experiences in their own words to capture embodied memory. In this case, the teacher is a guide as well as a participant on the journey to knowledge and wisdom integration.



# Classroom Tools

## Exploring Potential Program

Mindfulness-based middle school program

## MP3 Player With Docking Station

to play the preloaded Exploring Potential audio tracks

## Tracking Sheet

for teachers to keep track of which day's audio will need to be played

## Notebooks for Each Student (optional)

one year supply for students use during the journaling exercise at the end of each track, to write or draw about their experiences

# Lesson Plan

## OBJECTIVES

- Students participate in the daily mindfulness practices*
- Students describe and integrate their experience of mindfulness by writing or drawing in their journal*
- Teachers facilitate Exploring Potential Program by integrating it into their normal day*

## APPROXIMATE TIME REQUIRED

7-10 minutes per day

### Getting Started:

Suggest that students listen closely to what is being said on the audio.

Turn off the lights if possible.

Depending on the room layout, some students may prefer to turn their chairs so they are not closely facing any other classmates.

There is an option to journal for 2 minutes at the end of each daily track. If you choose to use this option, have the students take out their journals and a pen or pencil ahead of time and turn to a blank page to write on.

### Additional Suggestions:

If possible, try to stay seated and looking downward or closing your eyes.

Most students will find these practices strange at first because it is unusual to sit with your eyes closed, but fully awake and aware.

Simply encourage them to continue to sit in silence so that they and others can listen.

Most students get comfortable with the practices after a week or two, and will very likely begin asking for this time each day.

Occasionally, there may be a student or two who has difficulty settling down and may need to fidget, this is perfectly acceptable. Continue to guide him/her towards quiet.

# Sample Letter

Dear Family:

Our classroom is starting a new program called Exploring Potential. This mindfulness-based program from Inner Explorer, helps students develop focus, self-awareness and self control, all critical skills for success in school. Several studies have demonstrated student's improved academic performance, behavioral aptitude, and well-being as a result of this training.

Each day, the class will participate in a 7-10 minute program delivered via an iPod and docking station in the classroom. The sessions will take place during normal transition times. The sessions focus on breathing and relaxation as well as awareness of senses, thoughts, emotions, choices and connection to others. This will help students 'learn from the inside out'.

We are thrilled to be participating in a program that has shown benefits across a wide spectrum of applications. Currently several US agencies are funding research related to mindfulness because the practices are easy to learn, require very little equipment, have no side effects and show significant enhancements to cognitive function and decreases in stress response. The National Institute of Health (NIH) is funding research on mindfulness to improve health and reduce the incidence of disease, the US Department of Education is funding research related to academic achievement and behavioral competence and the US Army is funding mindfulness research to help our troops improve their working memory and make better decisions while on the front line.

To learn more about Inner Explorer and to find more resources, including books for parents and students, visit them at [InnerExplorer.org](http://InnerExplorer.org).

Yours truly,

# Frequently Asked Questions

## General

*Does it matter what time of the day I run the program?*

No, the key is to pick a time that is a normal transition time and to stick with it. We recommend staying with the same time of the day, and running the program daily to help build the habit of a consistent practice. We also encourage each participating teacher to practice with the students. It's an opportunity to *learn from the inside out* together.

*How will I know what day I am on?*

We have included a checklist so you can mark each day to keep track. It is fine if you repeat or skip a day, the consistency of doing a practice each day is most important. The program does build from day to day, but there is enough overlap so that if you miss a day or duplicate a day, it is perfectly fine.

## Equipment

*What happens if my docking station or iPod breaks/stops working?*

Both are under a limited warranty so please let us know as soon as possible.

*What happens if I lose the iPod?*

You can purchase a new iPod (not the entire kit) and we will reload the program for you.



# Risks

## *What happens if a student gets emotional during or after the practice?*

Sometimes buried emotions surface during quiet reflection. This can be handled as any other similar situation in school. The student can be comforted in the classroom, or can be helped by the nurse or school social worker.

## *What should I do if questions come up about family issues?*

In some cases, indications of abuse or neglect may surface, as the student becomes more self-aware and self-confident. These issues can be managed, as they normally would be in a school setting.

# Pre-Program

## *How do I introduce this program to the students?*

We are happy to be selected to participate in a new program at \_\_\_\_\_ School. We will be using a daily 7-8 minute audio-guided program to help us explore our inner world....what is happening on the inside. This program can help our body and our brain.....a perfect way to do better in school and in life.

## *How do I start the program?*

Once the docking station is set up and your iPod is plugged in, simply touch the iPod screen, select “music”, then select “playlist”. The Inner Explorer playlist will appear which includes 40 tracks, labeled Inner Explorer Middle School-1 through 40. Begin with 1 and continue with a new track each day. **Be sure to adjust the volume each day**, as some tracks may be slightly softer or louder.

# Mindfulness

## *How will mindfulness help?*

Mindfulness training, with the foundational practices of contemplation and reflection, allows students the space and opportunity to access and embody their inner wisdom, self-control, compassion, and focused understanding. These skills grow and develop, from the inside out, with consistent practice.

## *What are the benefits to having mindfulness in the classroom?*

Studies have shown that students who practice mindfulness in school have experienced:

- Improved academic performance
- Improved self-control and self-regulation
- Enhanced social awareness and relational skills
- Reduced behavioral conflict
- Increased ability to cope effectively with stress in daily life
- Increased compassion and a better understanding of anti-bullying lessons

## *What is Mindfulness-Based Social Emotional Learning (MBSEL)?*

An MBSEL evidence-based curriculum develops similar values to a traditional SEL curriculum, but the method is entirely different. An MBSEL program helps the students embody the lessons in an integrated way. Through guided awareness exercises, students learn to connect with their direct experiences, they learn to honor their own wisdom and their own voice. Values including compassion, kindness, self-control, enthusiasm, openness, and tolerance naturally emerge through this process.

# Frequently Asked Questions

(continued)

# Program

## *What if some of the students don't want to participate?*

We understand this is new and many students rarely if ever have the chance to stop and pay attention to what is happening on the inside. This may feel uncomfortable at first and some students may “fight” it. This is totally normal and expected. They will get the hang of it, and very likely will be the ones who benefit the most.

We are very confident that the program will be beneficial for all students. Several top neuroscientists view awareness and attention exercises to be so important for development that they should be included in all school curricula beginning in preschool! In fact, Dr. Dan Siegel compares these practices to brushing one's teeth, he notes it's like “brushing the brain for brain health”. Not all students like to brush their teeth or wear bike helmets, however as adults, we understand the vast benefits of doing those things.

## *How should I handle parents/caretakers who want information about the program?*

Please see parent/caretaker letter. Also, feel free to direct them to our website, [www.InnerExplorer.org](http://www.InnerExplorer.org)

## *What if students talk or try to distract each other during the program?*

Explain to the students that it's important to remain quiet during the program so that everyone in the class has an opportunity to hear what is being said and to follow along. As we mentioned above, some students find it very difficult at the beginning because they are so unfamiliar with taking a moment to reflect and center.

## *What if students say it's boring, silly or they don't want to participate?*

This is a normal response for a program that is vastly different than what students do most of the time. Most toys, games, and programs are designed to activate the student's limbic system (the fight or flight system). This arousal sends stress hormones throughout the body. It often feels good and fun. The challenge is that consistent limbic activation, and stress response, as in adults, leads to a host of medical and psychological challenges for students. Our program is designed to reduce limbic arousal and to enhance prefrontal cortex activation (the executive center of the brain, responsible for complex planning, behavior modulation and decision making). This allows the student to exhibit more self-control and to make better choices. If the expectation is set that this is part of the curriculum, then students will join in.

## *What if I feel as though it's boring, silly or not working?*

All of those feelings are very common. Our thinking brain is not used to being quiet. In fact, in the beginning, it's typical to have a very busy mind (it's called “Monkey Mind”), to not want to sit, and to think of any excuse to avoid the practice. If you stick with it, even for just these few minutes a day, your thoughts will eventually slow down and you will find the practice to be peaceful and relaxing.

## *What if the students need more time during the integration writing exercise?*

Feel free to pause the recording if you feel as though more time would be useful.

# Reference Books

## **Mindfulness for Schools, A Training Course for Teachers and Teenagers**

Cattley, C., Lavelle, J., (2010).  
Oxford, England: The Goodwill Art Service.  
*The authors based their program on MBSR while customizing it for high school students. The exercises and instruction is well documented to make it accessible for teachers to include components regularly in their classrooms.*

## **Wherever You Go There You are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life**

Kabat-Zinn, J., (1994).  
New York: Hyperion.  
*One of the most accessible books ever written on the subject of mindfulness meditation. It provides clear concepts about the mechanisms of mindfulness and many effective ways to practice, right now. It's a wonderful refresher for those steeped in practice and an ideal introduction for beginners.*

## **Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to face Stress, Pain, and Illness**

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990).  
New York: Dell.  
*Kabat-Zinn translates the lessons from the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at UMass Stress Reduction Clinic (now the Center for Mindfulness) into a simple to follow plan for readers to heal from within. It offers practical information on developing a meditation practice and how to use the growing self-awareness to manage stress, anxiety and physical pain.*

## **Mindful Child: How to Help your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate**

Kaiser-Greenland, S., (2010).  
New York: Free Press  
*A comprehensive book that offers concrete examples of bringing mindfulness practices into the public school classroom. The book is filled*

*with stories, practices, games and songs to help teachers and parents inspire young children to connect with their own physical, emotional and spiritual selves. It's based on 10 years of in-class exploration and development with an inner city school system in Los Angeles*

## **The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being**

Siegel, D., (2007).  
New York: WW Norton.  
*"Being mindful is a way of becoming your own best friend". This book explores how the process of attunement may lead the brain to grow in ways that promote balanced self-regulation and a process called neural integration that enables flexibility and self-understanding. This way of feeling felt, of feeling connected in the world can help us understand how becoming attuned to yourself may promote physical and psychological health and well-being.*

### **Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness**

Schoeberlein, D., (2009).

*Provides a compelling reason to incorporate mindfulness tools into everyday teaching. She outlines short practices that can be used anytime to help facilitate attention, calming or focus. She gives step-by-step instructions on how to use the tools and provides ideas for enhancement and guidelines for issues that may arise.*

### **Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation**

Dan Siegel, (2010).

*This groundbreaking book, from one of the global innovators in the integration of brain science with psychotherapy, offers an extraordinary guide to the practice of “mindsight,” the potent skill that is the basis for both emotional and social intelligence. From anxiety to depression and feelings of shame and inadequacy, from mood swings to addictions, OCD, and traumatic memories, most of us have a mental “trap” that causes recurring conflict in our lives and relationships. Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and co-director of the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center, shows us how to use mindsight to escape these traps.*

### **A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance and Recapture the American Spirit**

Congressman Tim Ryan, (2012).

*All across America, people are running faster and faster yet falling farther behind. The economy struggles, wars rage on, and every week brings news of another environmental disaster. Despite this bleak outlook, strands of quiet hope and confidence are emerging. People are beginning to face challenges in a new way: they are slowing down, paying attention, and becoming aware of their inner resources.*

*Based on the timeless practice of mindfulness, the natural capabilities of our brains and minds, and the core American values of self-reliance, determination, and getting the job done, this new way is affecting every sector of our society. In A Mindful Nation, Congressman Tim Ryan connects the dots between what’s happening in the classrooms, hospitals, boardrooms, research labs, and military bases across the country. He explores the scientific findings that support the beneficial effects of mindfulness and shares powerful stories from the field, showing how this simple practice is helping schoolchildren improve their ability to learn, veterans heal from trauma, and CEOs become more effective leaders. Ryan also provides practical tips for how to incorporate mindfulness into your life today.*

### **Child’s Mind: Mindfulness Practices to help our Children be more Focused, Calm, & Relaxed**

Christopher Willard, (2010).

*Child’s Mind aims to teach parents and child professionals how to integrate mindfulness into their work with children and teach both young children and adolescents the basics of mindfulness. The book is a great resource for anyone who work with young people, including family coordinators at retreat centers, religious instructors in a range of traditions, teachers, therapists, and medical professionals. Child’s Mind aims to teach children the power that comes with the comfort of just being, as well as the capacity to be, be aware, and be comfortable with oneself.*

# Mindfulness Books (for students)



### **The Empty Pot**

Demi, (1996).

New York: Henry Holt and Company.  
*When the Emperor invites the children of the land to try to grow the most beautiful flower from a seed he gives them, they don't know that he has given them seeds that won't grow. Ping tries everything to grow a flower but nothing works. It's a story about working with what you have, of not giving up and of doing your best regardless of circumstances.*

### **The Gift of Nothing**

McDonnell, P., (2005)

New York: Little, Brown and Co.  
*Mooch wants to give a gift to his best friend Earl. Since Earl already has everything, Mooch decides to give him the gift of "nothing". He takes us on an adventure in his search of nothing. This is a sweet tale of friendship, gift giving and the possibility that "nothing" is not only enough but is everything.*

### **Three Questions**

Muth, J., (2002).

New York: Scholastic Press.  
*A charming book, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy, about a boy named Nikolai who was trying to learn how to "be a good person". He thought if he could find answers to his three questions, then he would know how to act. He asked his friends, "When is the best time to do things?" "Who is the most important one?" and "What is the right thing to*

*do?" He got different answers from each, which caused him to go on a journey to seek the truth. He eventually finds the answers in this heart-warming story.*

### **Anh's Anger**

Silver, G., (2009).

CA: Plum Blossom Books.

*When Anh becomes angry with his grandfather, he is sent to his room to "sit with his anger". Anh meets his anger in his room and realizes that when he takes care of his anger, it goes away. A tale about how strong emotions can be transformed with acceptance and patience.*

### **What Does It Mean To Be Present?**

DiOrio, R. (2010).

Belvedere, CA: Little Pickle Press LLC.  
*A vivid, sense-engaging picture book that introduces children to a life-changing ability in a playful and accessible way. This refreshing, vibrant picture book engages all of the senses to demonstrate the myriad of ways a child can seize the moment. The story sparks meaningful discussions about the important gift of appreciation, giving children and adults alike the opportunity to live more fully and richly.*

### **The Story of Ferdinand**

*Ferdinand's day in the arena gives readers not only an education in the historical tradition of bullfighting, but also a lesson in nonviolent tranquility. Robert*

*Lawson's black-and-white drawings are evocative and detailed, with especially sweet renditions of Ferdinand, the serene bull hero. The Story of Ferdinand closes with one of the happiest endings in the history of happy endings--readers of all ages will drift off to a peaceful sleep, dreaming of sweet-smelling flowers and contented cows.*

### **THE DOT**

*A frustrated grade school artist, Vashti sits slumped over her blank piece of paper at the end of art class. "I just CAN'T draw!" she tells her teacher. Her teacher first uses wit, then subtle yet clever encouragement to inspire her student to go beyond her insecurities and become, in the words of a younger boy who "can't" draw either, "a really great artist."*

### **If the World were a Village**

*This highly informative book will get kids thinking and asking questions. It's an eye-opener for all. These days, the world seems to be getting smaller. This timely, unique book enhances that sentiment. It is useful for a current understanding of the world's population. Thought-provoking and highly effective, this world-in-miniature will open eyes to a wider view of our planet and its human inhabitants.*

# Daily Tracking Sheet



1	Posture	31	6th Sense
2	Breathing/Relaxation	32	Chattering Mind
3	Stomach Breathing	33	Slowing Down
4	Watching Thoughts	34	Open Acceptance
5	Start w/the Heart	35	Comfortably Quiet
6	Comfortably Quiet	36	Curiosity/Discovery
7	Relaxation/Neck in Neck	37	All Living Things
8	Relaxation/Mind Massage	38	Acts of Kindness
9	Relaxation/Soothing Sounds	39	Gratitude
10	Body Scan	40	Body Scan
11	Deep Breathing		
12	Progressive Relaxation		
13	Mindful Minute		
14	Take 10		
15	Comfortably Quiet		
16	Anchoring		
17	Acceptance		
18	Vagus Baby		
19	Sound		
20	Body Scan		
21	Smell		
22	Sight		
23	Touch		
24	Taste		
25	Comfortably Quiet		
26	Loved Ones/Self		
27	Progressive Relaxation		
28	Neutral/Self		
29	Don't Like/Self		
30	Body Scan		



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