

TEEN MINDFULNESS SKILLS WORKBOOK: Remedies for Worry, Anxiety & Stress

**A Practitioner's Guide to
Teaching Mindfulness Skills**



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Thank You!

Ester Leutenberg and John Liptak

Using this Workbook

This workbook has been designed as a practical tool for counselors, social workers, teachers, group leaders, therapists, and other helping professionals. Depending on the role of the professional using *Teen Mindfulness Skills Workbook: Remedies for Worry, Anxiety & Stress*, the modules can be used either individually or as part of an integrated mindfulness curriculum. The facilitator may choose to use this program with clients who need to slow down, live more in the present moment, pay attention rather than live on autopilot, and accept life and others without being judgmental. The activities in this workbook can be used with individual clients or with groups. The techniques used in the assessment tool and self-exploration activities are evidence-based and field-tested.

Format of the Workbook

The *Teen Mindfulness Skills Workbook: Remedies for Worry, Anxiety & Stress* contains a mindfulness assessment and many guided self-exploration activities in the chapters that can be used to enhance mindfulness and create greater well-being. The assessment can be used as a pre-test to discover participants' mindful state before training, and then used again as a post-test at the end of training to see the effects of the training. The purpose of this assessment (and any quick assessments throughout the chapters) is not to categorize people, but to allow them to explore various elements that are critical for success in developing mindfulness. This workbook contains self-assessments and not tests. Traditional tests measure knowledge and elicit either right or wrong responses. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes about topics related to a variety of coping skills and abilities.

In addition to the assessments, each chapter includes a set of guided self-exploration activities to help participants learn how to develop mindfulness in their daily lives. The activities assist participants in self-reflection and the practice of mindfulness techniques. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools are designed to promote insight and self-growth. Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided, so you may pick and choose the activities most suited and appealing to your participants. Many of the guided self-exploration activities include a journaling component that allows participants to gain insights into themselves and more effective ways of living their lives. The guided self-exploration activities are reproducible; you may photocopy as many pages as you wish for your participants.

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Teen Mindfulness Skills Workbook: Remedies for Worry, Anxiety & Stress

Introduction

Wouldn't it be great if we were wired to automatically deal with everyday hassles in a calm, mindful way? That is not always the case. However, together with identifying the worry, anxiety, and stress of everyday hassles and practicing mindfulness exercises, we can learn to shift quickly into a "mindfulness mode" when a situation warrants it. We may even decide that some seemingly major issues are really everyday hassles that can be expected, experienced, and resolved using mindfulness tools. Throughout this workbook, we will explore the various aspects involved in developing mindfulness as the antidote to help in coping with these daily hassles and their effects.

Mindfulness is the process of developing your mind so that it is fully attending to what's currently happening, to what you are doing in the present moment, and to the space you are moving through. In most cases of daily hassles, random ideas begin to fly through your mind, you lose touch with your body and environment, and soon you are experiencing a variety of obsessive thoughts about something that just happened or fretting about the future. This process produces worry, anxiety, and stress.

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about developing the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by daily hassles. Mindfulness is a tremendous technique, one that is powerful for snapping you back to where you are in the present and what you are doing and feeling. While all people possess the ability to develop mindfulness, it is rarely activated and utilized when daily hassles build up and begin to cause stress and frustration. The good news is that mindfulness can be developed and cultivated through the techniques utilized in this workbook.

Mindfulness has been described as a state of mind in which people can observe mental activity without attaching to it or evaluating it. Mindfulness is about becoming aware of your natural tendency to sleepwalk through life. When on autopilot, you navigate through the day totally unaware of what you are doing. This happens when a driver arrives at work and does not even remember traveling there, or the person who is so busy thinking about the future that the beauty of the present is overlooked. Through mindfulness, people can recognize when they are operating on autopilot and step into the present moment free from worry, anxiety, and stress. It is paying attention on purpose, being present in your surroundings and with people, and enjoying and appreciating life more. Mindfulness is about paying attention to what is going on with the body, mind, and environment which leads to an understanding of how you are getting stuck in autopilot. By developing mindfulness, people can build a fresh perspective and start to become more aware of personal habits that cause stress, fear, dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger. With this awareness comes the ability to stop reacting to daily hassles and start to begin to make more effective life choices.

Why Is Mindfulness Important?

Although mindfulness is not automatic and does not occur spontaneously, it can be learned and practiced so that it can be accessed intentionally when it is needed. Some of the characteristics of mindfulness include non-judgmental awareness, paying attention on purpose, remaining non-judgmental, staying in the present, being non-reactive, and remaining openhearted and compassionate.

Mindfulness has many benefits that can help to reduce the stress associated with daily hassles:

- **Increased acceptance**—By not making evaluations, participants can accept the internal thoughts in their mind and see these messages as simple mental processes rather than pure truths.
- **Greater awareness**—Participants will be able to experience expanded awareness and a clearer vision of the world and its processes.
- **Less intense reactions**—Participants will be less inclined to react when experiencing the stress of daily hassles. Instead, they will develop an observer stance through which they are free from evaluation, attachment, and frustration.
- **Relaxed approach**—Participants will learn to cope with worry, anxiety, and stress related to daily hassles in life.
- **Calm demeanor**—Participants will develop a state of mind in which they are mentally and physically at peace. They will be prepared to deal more effectively with the daily worry, stress and hassles, and anxiety, and will then experience greater overall well-being.
- **Mental functioning**—Participants will experience greater concentration, focus, and self-awareness to promote greater personal and professional growth and development.

Don't We All Have Daily Hassles?

Throughout this workbook, teens will explore the ways that daily hassles can affect their levels of worry, anxiety, and stress; and thus, their overall well-being. Daily hassles can be described as the small, day to day irritations, repeated many times, that cause teens to worry, feel a heightened sense of anxiety, and feel stressed. Examples of daily hassles include frustrations such as occurrences when there are computer problems, losing keys, being stuck in traffic, not enough money for lunch, way too much homework, a sick parent who can't help with a project for school. Daily hassles are those irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterize our everyday transactions with the environment. The accumulation of minor daily hassles create persistent irritations, frustrations, and overloads which lead to more serious reactions such as chronic worry, anxiety, and stress. The following illustrates the process of moving from the irritation of daily hassles to a state of calm.

The Desired Process



Chapter Descriptions

The chapter titles and the activity page titles all ask questions to think about and respond to. They will help your client lead a more mindful life.

Chapter 1: Are You on Autopilot?

This chapter will alert teens to wake-up calls, or reminders for them to not react immediately, but to come back to awareness so that they can be more mindful during daily activities. It will explore those stressors that wake us up to the calm that can be part of our everyday lives. When daily hassles affect participants, mindfulness triggers will remind them to break out of autopilot so they can be mindful, spontaneous, calm, and free.

Chapter 2: Do You Pay Full Attention?

This chapter will focus on teens developing awareness of their own body, thoughts, and sensations that arise in their experience. It will provide activities to help in applying mindful awareness to all aspects of their bodily experience. Teens will be instructed to mindfully notice what they see, hear, taste, feel, and smell. They will be instructed on how to cultivate an open, curious, and gentle attitude of mindfulness towards what they sense and feel about the hassles occurring in their lives.

Chapter 3: Can You Stay in the Present Moment?

This chapter will help teens choose to fully observe the events and feelings that are happening in their internal and external experiences right now. It will help participants let go of the need to continually focus on the past or the future and bring their full awareness to each moment in time.

Chapter 4: Do You Accept Others By Using Wise Judgment?

This chapter will stress that in a state of true mindfulness, teens will choose to refrain from making any judgments about their daily hassle experiences, no matter how painful they may be. Mindfulness is not about solving problems and searching for solutions. Rather, it is more about observing your present-moment experiences with curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love. Teens will then be instructed to practice describing their internal and external experiences with non-judgmental language.

Chapter 5: Do You Have a Backpack of Mindfulness Techniques?

This chapter will provide a variety of common mindfulness practices as well as unique practices that can be used in any situation or at any time to overcome worry, anxiety, and stress.

Mindfulness Assessment

The assessment on pages 5, 6, and 7 measures the main ideas in each of the four modules of this workbook.

- The first page (below) is the introduction and directions.
- The second page is the assessment.
- The third page includes the descriptions, scoring directions and profile interpretation.

This assessment can be used as a pre-test to assess participants' mindful state before training, and then used again as a post-test at the end of training to measure the effects of the mindfulness training.

Introduction and Directions

Mindfulness is a state of awareness in which people can observe events occurring in life without preconception, living in the present, and thinking with discernment and clarity.

The *Mindfulness Assessment* is designed to help you explore how mindful you currently are.

This assessment contains 24 statements related to how much you exhibit a mindful state. Read each of the statements and decide whether or not the statement describes you.

If the statement does describe you, circle the number next to that item in the YES column. If the statement does not describe you, circle the number next to that item in the NO column.

This is not a test.

There are no right or wrong answers.
Do not spend too much time thinking about your responses.

Be sure to respond to every statement.

(Continued on the next page)

Mindfulness Assessment

	YES	NO
I do things without thinking about them	1	2
I often forget how I arrived somewhere	1	2
I think before I react to stress	2	1
I have many biased notions about the world	1	2
I accept things just as they are	2	1
I notice things that happen each day	2	1

A.P. TOTAL = _____

I am aware of the various feelings in my body	2	1
I am unaware of many of the sounds around me	1	2
I am aware of my negative thoughts	2	1
I do not know what triggers my negative emotions	1	2
I do not feel unpleasant experiences in my body	1	2
I can distinguish between body and emotional sensations	2	1

P.L. TOTAL = _____

I spend a lot of time worrying about my past history	1	2
I live in the present a lot of the time	2	1
I can appreciate the present moment	2	1
I think way too much about the future	1	2
I pay attention to what is happening right now	2	1
When I am focused on the past, I can bring my awareness to now	2	1

P.M. TOTAL = _____

I am gentle with others	2	1
I judge my experiences as good or bad, nothing in between	1	2
I try not to judge the actions of others	2	1
I cannot bring my mind back into focus when it strays	1	2
I accept people for who and what they are	2	1
I often feel like a silent observer of my life	2	1

A.O. TOTAL = _____

Mindfulness Assessment

Scoring Directions

For each of the four sections on the previous pages, total the scores you circled and write them on the TOTAL line in each section. Then, transfer your scores to the Individual Section Score column in the Table below. Then add all four together and put that total in the “ALL 4” line below.

Code	Section	The Goal	Individual Section Score
A.P.	Autopilot	Breaking away from being on autopilot all of the time.	
P.L.	Purposeful Life	Being more aware of yourself and your environment.	
P.M.	Present Moment	Staying in the present and not drifting into the past or the future.	
A.O.	Acceptance of Others	Seeing situations and people as they are and not judging them.	
ALL 4	TOTAL	TOTAL OF ALL FOUR SECTIONS SCORE	

Profile Interpretation for Individual Sections

Individual Sections	Score	Indications
11 to 12	High	You are a mindful person in the particular area in which you scored high. With additional practice, you can become even more mindful in this area.
8 to 10	Moderate	You are somewhat mindful in the particular area in which you scored moderate. With practice, you can become even more mindful.
6 to 7	Low	You are not very mindful at this point in time in the particular area in which you scored low. With practice, you can become much more mindful.

Profile Interpretation for All Four Sections

Total Sections	Score	Indications
36 to 48	High	You are a mindful person. With additional practice, you can become even more mindful.
25 to 35	Moderate	You are somewhat mindful. With practice, you can become even more mindful than you are right now.
12 to 24	Low	You are not very mindful at this point in time. With practice, you can become more mindful.

Are You on Autopilot?

A BACKPACK OF MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

Throughout the “Are You on Autopilot?” chapter, you will find a variety of activity pages designed to help participants develop mindfulness attitudes and a mindful state of awareness.

As your participants complete an activity in this chapter, you may want to refer to Chapter Five, “Do You Have a Backpack of Mindfulness Techniques?” for practical tools and techniques that you can use to supplement and strengthen participant understanding of how to live a full life without being on autopilot.

Practitioner’s Discussion Prior to Each Handout

The suggested discussions are written for groups; however, you can easily adapt them when you are working with an individual.

Chapter 1 – Are You on Autopilot?

What Are Your Daily Hassles?22
Tell the group that daily hassles are those little irritations that cause stress. Ask each person to name one of their daily hassles.

What are Your Difficult Hassles?23
Explain that a difficult hassle is any hassle that continues to make one’s life difficult. Ask for volunteers to describe one of their difficult hassles. *Example: My back hurts and I cannot do some of the activities I would like to engage in.*

How Mindful Are You?24
Ask for volunteers to give a description of mindfulness. After they have had a chance to respond, share your own or this description - Mindfulness is an active state of mind when one engages in activities that are stimulating, fun, novel, and challenging. It is experienced when a sense of spirit fills one up with joy and wonderment or deep connectedness. It is a way to live without being on autopilot.

Are You Living on Autopilot?25
Ask the group participants, “What does it mean to be on autopilot?” Write their descriptors on the board for everyone to see. Provide an example of autopilot as realizing that one has driven oneself home, but hasn’t really been paying attention. Then ask for other examples of being on autopilot.

What’s Wearing You Down?26
Break participants into groups and ask participants to respond to each statement as TRUE or FALSE. Ask each group for their answer to each statement and then have a discussion based around each statement:

- Daily hassles can wear you down over time (TRUE)
- Daily hassles affect all people the same (FALSE)
- Over time, stress from daily hassles wears people down (TRUE)
- Daily hassles do not impact motivation and interest (FALSE)
- Many go through life mindlessly and operate on autopilot rather than following their plans, interests, or desires (TRUE)

Are Your Old Habits Positive or Negative?27
Ask participants, “Why do people rely on old, familiar habits when times get stressful?”

How is Worry, Anxiety & Stress Effecting You?28
Remind participants that this handout is a quick assessment and not a test, and that the results are based solely on self-reported data provided by them. Also stress that nobody else will see their results, so they can be completely honest.

(Continued on the next page)

Practitioner’s Discussion Prior to Each Handout *(Continued)*

Chapter 1 – Are You on Auto Pilot?

Can You Slow Down?29
Ask group participants to describe the rate of speed at which they move through their lives. Ask for a volunteer to describe what makes his or her life so frantic. Describe the fact that in order to begin being more mindful in life, it is critical that one begins to slow down and live life more fully.

When Do You Zone Out?30
Ask participants what zoning out means to them. *Example: Cutting off emotionally from everyone. Overlooking details. Forgetting.*

Do You Celebrate the Little Things?31
Ask for volunteers to describe some of the big events or problems they are currently dealing with. Explain that focusing on big stuff can cause people to overlook some of the small things in life that are exciting and uplifting.

What are Two Daily Worries, Anxieties, and/or Stressors?32
Ask for volunteers to mention something, big or little, that they worry about, feel anxious about, or stress about every day.

How Do You Start The Day?33
Ask the group for a show of hands of those who felt that they were mindful in the morning opposed to just being on autopilot. Ask for volunteers to explain how that felt.

Do You Have a Restless Mind?34
Ask for a show of hands for each of the following questions:
Tell participants that they can raise their hands for more than one.
“Who are worriers?”
“Who are logical and rationalize?”
“Who are chatterers, with constant streams of thoughts going on?”
“Who are distracters, jumping from one thing to another?”

Are You Comfortable Being with Yourself?35
Explain that it is often difficult for people to be alone with themselves and just do nothing. They think things they don’t want to think, rehash the day’s hassles, and can’t turn their minds off. Ask for volunteers to offer what people who feel like that tend to do. *(Example: Obsessively check the phone, email, social media, watch non-stop television, or keep themselves busy every moment in some way.)*

How Can You Become More Aware?36
Tell participants that they can use their senses to become more aware. Ask for examples of how seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, watching body language, noticing verbal and nonverbal cues, etc. can ensure they are more aware.

What are Your Daily Hassles?

Negative life events (Example: car accident, death of a loved one, moving to another location, etc.) can be extremely stressful and can cloud every moment of the day. It is the daily hassles – those annoying or troublesome concerns – that cause enough worry, anxiety, and/or stress to wear people down over time.

Identify your daily hassles below by placing a check mark in front of the hassles that stress you out and then after each one that you check, describe why it is a daily hassle for you.

- Acceptance/Discrimination _____
- Accidents _____
- Body Language _____
- Dating _____
- Disagreements _____
- Environmental Issues _____
- Family _____
- Friends _____
- Future plans _____
- Gossip _____
- Job _____
- Laws _____
- Living space _____
- Loneliness _____
- Losing things _____
- Money _____
- Peer _____
- Physical and/or Mental Health _____
- Politics _____
- Pollution _____
- Responsibilities _____
- Rules _____
- School _____
- Sleep _____
- Social Media _____
- Technology _____
- Time _____
- To-Do list _____
- Transportation _____
- Unkindness _____
- Volunteer _____
- Waiting _____
- Other _____

What are Your Difficult Hassles?

It is important to be mindful and reflect on the hassles that seem difficult to you. Identifying them will help you to recognize when and why they are difficult, and to figure out how to cope with them.

Below, draw or doodle some of the difficult hassles in your life right now, why each is such a hassle, and think of how you can possibly deal with each one. (Example: It's my job to empty the dishwasher at home. It seems it always needs emptying when I am in a hurry. I can deal with it by remembering that the adults in our home do a lot for me and work hard to provide for us.)

“Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.”
 ~ Robert H. Schuller

How Mindful are You?

Mindfulness is an active state of mind when you engage in activities that are stimulating, fun, novel, and challenging. It is experienced when a sense of spirit fills you up with joy and wonderment or deep connectedness. It is a way to live without being on autopilot and when you are able to be fully present. Living on autopilot means to do something without focusing on it or thinking about what is actually happening. Many people live their lives doing the same things over and over regardless of the results they receive. When this occurs, people lack awareness of what is occurring in their lives, and they operate from habit.

Respond to the questions below by journaling about your day yesterday to see how mindful you are.

What time did you wake up in the morning?

What did you eat for breakfast? Lunch? Dinner?

What did you learn?

With whom did you connect throughout the day?

What was your most stressful moment and how did you feel?

What was your most pleasant moment of the day and how did you feel?

Who was kind to you? Explain.

To whom were you kind? Explain.

What made your day better?

What did you do to make someone else's day better?

How did your day end?

What time did you go to sleep?

The more you remember about your day, the more mindful you tend to be. On a separate sheet of paper, pick one or two items and expand your reflections in detail.