

Power Source Appendix: **Meditations and Visualizations**

In this section, you'll find a selection of additional meditations and visualizations that you can use for booster sessions, to supplement existing PS groups, or individually with youth. They are categorized based on type, though as you'll find, the concepts do overlap.

In the Intro Guide, as well as throughout the curriculum, there are questions for use at the conclusion of these exercises to give youth an opportunity to discuss their reactions and experiences. In addition, you may find these questions helpful:

- *How was that for you?*
- *How do you feel right now?*
- *What did you notice or learn about yourself during this meditation?*
- *When can you use this?*
- *What was the most interesting part?*
- *Was any part challenging?*
- *Can you teach this to anyone you know?*
- *How do you think this meditation session will affect you?*
- *How do you think this meditation session will affect others around you?*

Descriptions of Categories

Awareness: The meditations here are meant to introduce and/or foster deeper connections with youths' awareness of their own selves, using breath, sight, and sound.

1. Simple Breathing Awareness
2. 2-Senses Awareness Meditation

Breathing: These meditations are more specifically geared toward breathing and breath control.

3. The Breathing Guard
4. Breathe Like Waves
5. Box Breathing (Sama Vritti Pranayama)
6. Focus on the Exhale

Body-Based and Mindful Movement: Here, the meditations are focused more on the body, from progressive muscle relaxation, to mindful movement exercises, all aimed to build and reinforce the mind-body connection.

7. Body Relaxation
8. Walking Meditation
9. Eating Meditation

- 10. Mindful Sound: Humming
- 11. Mindful Movement: Shoulders
- 12. Mindful Movement: Hands
- 13. Mindful Movement: Inner Rhythm

Visualization: In this category, we move from meditation to focused imagery or visualization. The beginning exercises are more positively valanced, while the latter exercises tackle more difficult subject matter (shame, unfairness, loss).

- 14. Big Sky
- 15. Bright Light
- 16. Safe Place
- 17. The Unfairness of Life

Compassion: This last visualization is meant to increase youths' capacity for compassion, for others and towards themselves. It can be adapted to fit the needs of the youth you are working with or for specific groups (e.g., towards victims, family members, etc.).

- 18. Loving-Kindness Meditation

Exercise #1: **Simple Breathing Awareness**

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

Now, place your attention on your belly. If it helps, gently place one or both hands across your stomach, almost like you're holding a basketball. Notice how your belly expands or gets bigger as you take a breath in and the air fills your lungs. As you breathe out, you'll feel your chest and belly sink, just like letting the air out of a basketball. Let your breath come in and go out naturally. You don't have to "try" and take deep or regular breaths. Just let your body's natural breathing rhythm happen. Your job is not to change your breath; it's just to pay attention to what's going on already.

Pause

As you meditate, your mind will naturally wander. This is just how the brain works. Each time this happens, your job is simply to bring your attention gently back to your breathing. If you hear a sound, just say "sound" to yourself and return to your breathing. Your mind might wander many times as you meditate. That's okay. Each time you notice it wandering, gently turn your attention back to the breath.

Pause

As we close, take three deep, big belly breaths, focusing on allowing your whole body to soften, as we did at the beginning. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room. You might find it helpful to gently wiggle your fingers and toes, turn the head and look around the room, or take a stretch.

Exercise #2: **Two-Senses Awareness Meditation**

*In this meditation, we're going to work with the concept of **awareness**. Being aware of things around us is important, not only so that we can see danger if it's there, but also so that we can take in things that let us know we are safe and okay. When we are aware, we can make better choices because we have a fuller perspective. We'll practice being aware today with two of our five senses: sight and hearing. We'll focus on the others another day.*

For this one, we're actually going to begin with our eyes open. So, go ahead and get comfortable in your chairs, back straight and tall, feet firmly on the floor. You can rest your eyes on a point on the floor in front of you to start.

Let's take three deep breaths together. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Once more, inhaling (pause) and exhaling.

I'd like you to begin to notice what you see around you. Starting with where you're looking now, notice what comes into awareness. The color of the floor, the texture of the floor, or anything you can see out of the corners of your eyes.

*When it feels right, I invite you to **slowly** start to turn your head, looking up, down, sideways, behind you, anywhere you want. Look for things you haven't noticed before. Experiment with how slowly you can move your gaze around, taking in your surroundings. Notice what you become aware of, both directly in front of you, as well as what you see out of the corners of your eyes. If you make eye contact with another person, no big deal, just notice it, give a little smile if you want, and continue moving your gaze around. (pause)*

The big question is, as you look around, what do you become aware of? Colors, shapes, sizes? Things you didn't see before? Without speaking them out loud, just notice them to yourself.

Facilitators can model this action, turning your head to look around. If you'd like to give youth more structure, you can ask them to silently count 5 things that are blue, white, green, etc. **Allow youth to experiment with this for 1-3 minutes.**

Begin to allow your gaze to come to a rest on the floor in front of you. Notice any changes in your mind or body from when we started. You don't have to do anything but notice. (pause).

If you'd like to close your eyes as we move to the other senses, go ahead and try it now. Otherwise, continue to keep your focus on the space in front of you.

Begin to become aware of all of the sounds that you hear. They might be very loud, or very faint. Some of them might blend together, others may sound completely different. What kinds of sounds do you hear? Without judging them as sounds you like or dislike, and without speaking them out loud, just notice them to yourself. Even if it's really, really quiet, there is almost always something to hear, even the sound of your own breathing. If you lose focus, just bring your attention back to any sound that you hear.

Allow youth to experiment with this for 1-3 minutes.

Begin to slowly bring your attention back to your body. You can do a quick scan, noticing your feet (small pause), your lower legs, your upper legs and hips, (small pause), belly and chest, arms, hands and fingers (small pause), up through your neck and head. Let's close with three more deep breaths. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Once more, inhaling (pause) and exhaling.

When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room. You might find it helpful to gently wiggle your fingers and toes, turn the head and look around the room, or take a stretch.

Exercise #3: The Breathing Guard

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting. Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

As you pay attention to your breathing, imagine that you are a guard at a castle. You have been told that your only responsibility is to guard the gates in the wall that surrounds and protects the castle. To do this, you must pay attention each breath that comes in through your nose and each out breath that leaves. This is your only job. As the guard, you must follow each breath carefully as it enters the castle gates and as it goes out.

Pause

If you feel your mind wander, gently bring it back to the gates of the castle where it can guard each breath. One at a time. Feel the breath enter through the gateways of the nose (nostrils) and leave back through the same gates. Almost as soon as the last breath leaves, a new one is ready to enter the castle. Once again, your only job is to pay attention to the breath as it enters and leaves the castle gates.

Pause

Sometimes your mind will wander. When this happens, just gently move your attention to the breath entering and leaving the gates of the castle. At times, the sensations in your body or sounds around you might draw your attention away. Simply notice them and return to your breathing.

Pause

As we close, take three deep, big belly breaths on your own, focusing on allowing your whole body to soften, as we did at the beginning. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.

Exercise #5: Breathe Like Waves

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

Now, imagine that your breathing is like an ocean wave. With waves, it's hard to find the exact point where one ends and another begins, and our breath is very similar. As you continue to focus on your breathing, see if you can notice the point where the breath shifts from inhale to exhale at the top, and from exhale to inhale at the bottom.

You don't have to do anything to change your breathing or try to purposely pause at these points, just bring your attention to those spots: the tip of the inhale, and the tip of the exhale. If it feels right, you can imagine waves flowing in an ocean or river.

Allow youth to experiment for 1-5 minutes (or longer). Every 30 seconds to a minute or so, encourage youth to return to their breathing if their mind wanders or they become distracted.

Begin to slowly bring your attention back to your body. You can do a quick scan, noticing your feet (small pause), your lower legs, your upper legs and hips, (small pause), belly and chest, arms, hands and fingers (small pause), up through your neck and head. Let's close with three deep breaths together again. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Inhaling (pause) and exhaling. Once more, inhaling (pause) and exhaling.

When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room. You might find it helpful to gently wiggle your fingers and toes, turn your head and look around the room, or take a stretch.

Exercise #5: Box Breathing

Note: The purpose of this exercise is to equalize or balance for the four components of breath: inhale, retention, exhale, retention. We scripted this for three rounds of holding for four counts, but as youth get used to this, you can slowly increase the count, working your way up to a steady count of 10 (e.g., breathe in for 6, out for 6; then 8; then 10). Only go to a count that youth maintain comfort and ease in the body and mind. This breathing meditation is based on the Sama Vritti Pranayama technique, which means “equal movement” or “equal fluctuations” in Sanskrit.

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

We're now going to breath together in a cycle to the count of four. We'll breathe in for a count of four, hold full for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, then hold empty for a count of four. We'll do these three times. Each time, try to make your breath as balanced as possible as you breathe in and out.

(Facilitators: read this at an even, gentle pace). Let's begin. Breathing in, two, three four. Hold, two, three, four. Exhale, two, three, four. Hold, two three four.

Breathing in, two, three, four. Hold, two, three, four. Exhale, two, three, four. Hold, two, three, four.

Breathing in, two, three four. Hold, two, three, four. Exhale, two, three, four. Hold, two three, four.

Now begin to breathe at whatever pace feels good to you. Notice any changes in your body from when we began the exercise. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.

Exercise #6: Focus on the Exhale

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

Now, as you continue to breathe, bring your attention to your exhale. Without speaking, just notice to yourself what you observe about your exhale. Where do you feel it the strongest? What else happens when you exhale?

Pause

See if it's possible to make your exhale slightly longer than your inhale. You don't have to count, though you can if you want. The focus is just on making the exhale slightly longer than the inhale.

Allow youth to experiment for 1-3 minutes (or longer). Every 30 seconds to a minute or so, encourage youth to return to their breathing if their mind wanders or they become distracted.

Now begin to breathe on your own, at whatever pace feels good to you. Notice any changes in your body from when we began the exercise.

When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.

Exercise #7: Progressive Body Relaxation

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

In this exercise, we're going to focus on helping our bodies to relax. We'll do this by tensing and releasing parts of our body, going at a pace like we would for a body scan. As we do this, keep breathing normally. Don't tense too hard that it hurts, just enough so that you feel the tension.

To begin, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

Pause

Release the tension in your feet. Notice the difference between tensing and relaxing, and just allow your feet to relax.

Next, begin to focus on your lower leg, your shin and calves. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension.

Pause

Release the tension and notice the feeling of relaxation. Take a moment here to check in with your breathing.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg and thighs. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together, or pushing the backs of your legs into the chair.

Pause

Release the tension and notice the feeling of relaxation.

We'll now begin to tense the belly and chest area. To do this, you can imagine you are squeezing all the air of your lungs and pulling your belly in.

Pause

Release the tension. Allow your body to breathe normally, noticing the feeling of relaxation. Continue taking deep breaths.

Now, tense the muscles in your upper back by bringing your shoulders together behind you, trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold them tightly.

Pause

And release. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Pause

Now, lift your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold this for about 5 seconds, then gently allow them to drop. Notice this difference.

Pause

From here, make fists with both hands. Squeeze your fingers together tightly. Hold here.

Pause

And release. Now, tense both arms, from your fists to your shoulders. Hold it.

Pause

Release your arms. You can allow them to hang at your sides if you want. Be aware of what you notice here, like body sensations or heat.

Pause

Now, let's move up to your head and face. Tense the features of the face, squeezing the eyes, nose, and mouth (short pause).

And release. Now, tense your entire body. From your toes, feet, legs, belly, chest, arms, fingers, all the way to your face. Hold this tension without straining.

Pause

And release. Allow your entire body to relax. Notice this feeling of relaxation. You might feel your body sink a bit into the chair. How relaxed can your body feel?

Pause

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. From your toes to your fingertips, stretch your muscles gently. Open your eyes when you're ready.

Exercise #8: Walking Meditation

*In the Power Source groups, we talk a lot about keeping your power and control by **Stopping** yourself from doing things that are high-risk. What are some examples of some of those behaviors we've been using mindfulness to help STOP?*

- *Fighting*
- *Abusing Drugs or Alcohol*
- *Stealing*
- *Having risky sex*

*Great. Well sometimes we can get into trouble by **NOT STARTING** something we need to do. Can anyone give me an example?*

- *Not starting homework*
- *Not getting out of bed in order to get to school or work on time*
- *Not doing what a teacher, staff, or CO asks*
- *Not showing up for a drug test or probation meeting*

Right. Good answers. Everyone's probably heard the saying, "The first step is the hardest to take." Whether it's opening your books to study for a test or turning off the alarm and swinging your legs out of bed. Or sitting quietly and paying attention to the first few breaths in a meditation. Keeping our power means making the choice to take that first step in doing positive things. And today's meditation is going to help us do that.

*So far, we've been practicing **sitting meditation** together. And you've been doing a great job with it. But today, we want to show you another way to meditate, it's called walking meditation.*

In our sitting meditation we ask you to pay attention to some different things. What are some things we ask you to bring your awareness to? Right. Your breath, sounds that are going on around you, and different sensations in your body. So, you've already got that part down, right? So... who here knows how to walk? Great, so you already know how to do that as well!

Now let's get into a circle with your right shoulder facing in. You should be more than an arm's length away from the person in front of you.

Direct participants to stand in a circle with their right shoulders facing towards the center of the circle. Keep about an arms distance of length between participants. Once they are ready, resume:

Our walking meditation starts off in a similar way to our sitting meditation. The first and most important thing is to make your back nice and straight and to lift your chest

with dignity and pride.

Great, nice job. But now, instead of closing our eyes like we do in our sitting meditation, keep your gaze downward about 2 feet in front of you and focus your eyes there. Let your arms hang comfortably by your sides.

Now let's take two breaths together like you've been doing -- in breath one, out breath one, in breath two, out breath two.

Great.

Okay, let's start the walking meditation now by keeping our gaze downward in front of us and bringing our full attention to our feet. Feel both feet pressing into the ground. Notice if they're hot or if they're cold. The way the socks feel around your feet and the tightness of the shoes or sneakers around your feet. Just bring all of your attention to your feet.

Now, lifting your right foot and paying total attention to your feet, legs and your body while you're walking, let's take three slow steps together.

Take three steps and count aloud: 1, 2, 3.

Now we're going to continue the walking meditation. To help you pay attention to each step, it might be helpful at the beginning to actually say to yourself, "lifting, moving, placing" (demonstrate this.) So, let's practice that.

Now take three more steps while silently saying to yourself, "lifting, moving, placing" as you walk.

Good job.

Now, let's walk around in our circle one more time-- paying total attention to walking - to your feet, legs and body - to lifting, moving, placing - as you walk.

Walk around in the circle one more time, with each person finishing where they started. As you go, read the following:

When you're slowly shifting the weight of your body onto one leg, notice if the leg holding your weight feels different than your other leg?

Like with the sitting meditation, you're paying attention to something you do all the time but in a really slowed down and focused kind of way.

If your mind starts to wander away from the movement of your body and its sensations, that's okay. That's what the mind does. Just like in sitting meditation as soon as you've noticed your mind has wandered, bring all your attention back to walking -- to your feet, legs and body.

Stop walking. *Really great job, everyone.*

A good way to practice this in everyday life is to count how many steps you can take with each in breath and how many steps you take with each out breath. So that would look like this (demonstrating) in breath, 2, 3, 4 and out breath, 2, 3, 4. Did I look like I was meditating? That's the great thing about walking meditation, you can practice as you walk to the bathroom in the morning, or as you walk down the hall.

Now we're going to practice a little more. Try counting the number of steps you take with each in breath and each out breath.

Walk silently for three more minutes. Then ask people to return to their seats.

Great work everyone. What were some of the things you noticed while doing this walking meditation? (allow participants to respond).

How is mindful walking different than the walking we do every day where we're not really paying attention, but are on "autopilot?"

Prompt for noticing sensations in the body that we don't notice when walking on autopilot.

And like we said at the beginning of the exercise, the walking meditation can help you get started with things that you've put off in the past. In the walking meditation, every step happened because you decided to take it. You weren't locked on autopilot. You made each step happen.

We can bring that same power and awareness to making other things happen in our lives. Things that will help us be stronger, more productive, and stay on the right track. Next time you are in a situation that you know requires you to get started, bring your complete attention to the situation, your body and your thoughts. And take the first step.

Exercise #9: Eating Meditation

Note: This exercise requires each participant to have a small, edible snack to eat. It's traditionally done with a raisin, but there are many options (e.g., kernels of popcorn, piece of chocolate, slice of an apple).

We've talked a lot in this group about how meditation helps us to make the Pause in the Cycle of Risk bigger. About how when we take a moment and notice what's going on around us, we can really be aware of what our triggers are. And when we know what our triggers are and how they show up in our bodies, we can create space by taking a breath and making a decision that's going to keep us in control and will allow us to keep our power.

We can always find time to slow things down and to be mindful. Meditation or practicing mindfulness doesn't always have to be done while we're sitting down with our eyes closed. Who can tell me some times in your day to day life when you can be mindful about what you're doing?

Possible responses: Walking to school, answering a text, cleaning/doing chores, exercising, etc.

Great answers. Has anyone ever thought about slowing down and being mindful when you eat? We're going to try something today called an eating meditation.

Hand out a raisin (or other snack) to each participant.

We're going to start out by just placing the raisin in the palm of our hand and using our eyes to observe it. Just noticing the color, maybe it's a little darker in some spots, maybe a little lighter in others. Is your raisin more round or is it a little flatter? Look closely at all of the grooves, and the shapes that are in the raisin. What can you see if you look really close? Can you see lips? An eye? What shapes can you see when you look closely at the raisin?

Now we're going to listen to the raisin. Believe it or not, if you pay close attention, you might actually hear a raisin! What do you think a raisin is going to sound like? Just place the raisin between your two fingers and bring it up to your ear. As you gently roll the raisin between your fingers, what do you hear? Does your raisin sound juicy or dry? Is the sound what you expected? What do you have to do to really hear this sound?

We all know what raisins taste like, but what do they smell like? Do they have a smell at all? Bring the raisin up to your nose and breathe in. Does it smell like it tastes? Is it sweeter, more bitter? Do you think it has a smell at all? Now close off your left nostril and only smell the raisin through your right nostril. How does it smell? Now close off

your right nostril, and only smell it through your left nostril. Is it different? Can you smell it more in one nostril than the other?

So now we're going to feel our raisin. Now this is going to be really challenging, but we're going to place the raisin in our mouths and we're not going to bite into it. Just notice the feeling of the raisin against your tongue. Can you feel the raisin more now than you did with your fingers? Can you feel all of those grooves and all of those shapes that you observed with your eyes?

Now, we're just going to take a single bite. What happened? Did your mouth start to water? Is the raisin sweeter than you thought it was going to be? Do you want to keep chewing, or can you be satisfied with just that one bite? Now take a second bite. Does the raisin become more sweet or less sweet? Does your mouth water even more? Now see if you can take a whole minute to finish eating this raisin. Take a bite. Notice what happens to your taste buds. Take your time and take another bite. Keep doing this until the raisin completely breaks down in your mouth.

So that is what we call an eating meditation. Has anyone ever taken 15 minutes to eat a single raisin before? What did you think of it? Are you satisfied with that one raisin or do you want to have more? Why do you think we practiced this today? Right, because it's another way to show that if we slow things down a little bit, we are able to really see the whole story; the look of the raisin, the sound, the smell, the feeling and the taste. We've created space so that we could have a full experience in tasting the raisin, just like we create that gap after we are triggered and before we react to a situation and get caught up in the Cycle of Risk.

Great job, everyone!

Exercise #10: Mindful Sound: Humming

Today we're going to try something a big different. We speak often in this group about our Core Selves and how we might get in touch with this part—by meditating, through being with people we trust, being in nature, journaling, or any practice that allows us to tap into the deepest parts of ourselves.

*For some of us, though, beginning to listen to our Core Selves is challenging. One way we can continue to practice listening to our own voice is by **actually listening** to ourselves and our own voices. Taking a moment to stop, breathe, and tune in, literally.*

The practice we'll do today is also really great for turning down our Survival Brains and turning on our relaxation response—it's just another way to slow down, listen, and be with ourselves, just like we do in our regular meditation practice.

The things we'll try today may seem a bit weird at first, but just like meditation, the more you do it the less weird it gets!

So, let's get started. All I ask for today is an open and curious mind, and a willingness to give it a try. Remember, there are no judgments in this group!

Begin with your feet planted firmly on the ground, spine tall, hands in your lap, or where ever feels comfortable to you. You can either close your eyes or have your gaze pointed to a spot on the floor or wall in front of you. Let's take two deep breaths together, breathing in (pause), and out. In, (pause), and out.

Now, breathe in the biggest breath you can take, and hold it at its fullest. When you think you can't take in any more air, take a bit more air in through the nose, and more, and more, keep holding (short pause), and exhale through the mouth. Gently push all the air out of your lungs on the exhale, seeing how empty you can be. Hold here on this empty (short pause), then inhale again through the nose, breathing in all the air you can take. When you're full, see if you can take in a little more, and a little more, and a little more, holding this fullness (short pause). Then exhale it all out through the mouth, finding the deepest exhale you can.

Begin to breathe normally now. Take a moment to check in with your body, noticing how it feels today. (say at an even pace): You may notice your feet, legs, hips, back, shoulders, chest, arms, hands, neck, and head.

When your attention has come to your face, I invite you to allow a big yawn to come through. Even if it's pretend at first, see what happens when you yawn. And not just a tiny little yawn, pretend it's a really big one, like you're just about to go to bed. Try this a few times (short pause).

From here, we'll take another inhale together, and on the exhale, flutter your lips, like blowing raspberries (short pause). Once more, inhaling, and on the exhale, flutter the lips.

Now we'll add some sound to this. Inhale, and on the exhale, flutter the lips with a little noise. You can start at any pitch, and go higher, lower, or the same (short pause). Try it once more, inhaling, and exhale, flutter with sound.

Let your breath and body return to rest, breathing on your own. Listen carefully as I explain this next part. In a moment, I'll invite you to slowly cup your hands over your ears. Not harshly, just making your hand into a cup as though you'd hold some water in your palm. From there, I'll invite you to allow a soft, gentle hum as you exhale. Not loud, just soft enough for you to hear it from the safety of your own ears. You can experiment with low sounds, high sounds, or anything in between. Remember, just soft enough so that you can hear yourself. This helps us to tap into and start to listen to our own voices.

Let's try it. Make two little cups with the palms of your hands and place them over your ears. As you breathe, allow your lips to gently come together and the tongue to drop away from the roof of the mouth. Take an inhale, and on your exhale, allow a soft, gentle hum to come through for the length of your exhale. Remember, you can experiment here with high or low sounds, or with the intensity of your humming. You might feel the tips of your lips buzzing. Continue to inhale, and exhale out a hum. I'll tell you when to stop.

Pause, allow participants to experiment with this for a few moments.

Allow yourself to come back to center, removing the hands from the ears, and allowing the breathing to return to your own rhythm. Take a moment here to check in with your body. What do you notice?

Pause. From here, facilitators can close the exercise, bringing participants back to the room. Or, if youth seem on board, continue into this next section.

For this next part, youth will be invited to hum together and match a particular note. Facilitators can choose to use their own voice as the home pitch, or use an instrument or music track-- anything that has a pronounced, sustained note.

Let's go a step further here. We'll now do some humming together.

I'll start us off (or will play this music track, or will ring the bell), and your only job is to match the sound you hear. Inhale, exhale out a hum that's close to the sound you hear, for as long as you can sustain it, and then repeat. We'll all have different lengths of exhales, so eventually will all be starting and stopping at different points, and that's okay. Keep going until I bring us to a close. Here we go.

Allow for 2-3 minutes (or longer) of sustained humming. About halfway through, you can invite youth to experiment with pitch or intensity (higher/lower, louder/softer).

Great job, begin to come back to your breath. Notice anything that's changed since we began today's practice. You may notice a slight vibration in your body, or just that everything feels very still. Or, you may notice lots of energy. Whatever it is, do your best to just notice it.

When you're ready, slowly begin to orient yourself to any sounds you hear around you, and when you're ready, gently begin to open the eyes. It might feel nice to give the arms and legs a little stretch. Take a look around the room, and when you're ready, bring your attention back to group.

Exercise #11: **Mindful Movement: Shoulders**

So often in our sitting meditation practice, we are asked to notice or observe our impulses, like the impulse to scratch an itch, or move, or open our eyes, without acting on it or doing anything with it. As we know, every time we are able to observe the impulse without acting on it, we are making the space we call “The Pause” in the Cycle of Risk bigger. The time from when we notice something and choose to act on it. And that increases our power.

*Another way to observe our body and its sensations is to combine our breath **with** a little bit of movement, on purpose. We’re going to try that today with some simple shoulder rolls. (if appropriate for your group, you can explain the exercise and demonstrate here, before you begin the meditation).*

Find a place where you’re sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don’t want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Begin by landing here in your seat. Once you’ve settled in your seat, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Keep your eyes closed and continue breathing as I explain this next part. Now, for the next four breaths, we’re going to combine our breath with simple shoulder rolls. On the inhale, we’ll bring our shoulders forward and up towards our ears, on the exhale, we’ll bring our shoulders back and down. As you inhale, you can imagine that the breath is actually moving your shoulders for you. On the exhale, you can imagine the breath allowing the shoulders to settle.

Try it with me now: inhale, up, exhale, down. Inhale, up, exhale, down. Inhale, up, exhale, down. Last time, inhale, up, exhale, down.

Allow your shoulders to find stillness, and notice what happens as you do this. Continue to breathe on your own, just allowing this feeling of stillness to move through your whole body. Notice how the feeling of movement is different than the feeling of stillness.

Pause

Now, for the next four breaths, we're going to do those same shoulder rolls, but the other way around. On the inhale, we'll bring our shoulders back and up towards our ears, on the exhale, we'll bring our shoulders forward and down.

Try it with me now, inhale, back and up, exhale, forward and down. Inhale, up, exhale, down. Inhale, up, exhale, down. Last time, inhale, up, exhale, down.

Allow your shoulders to find stillness, and notice what happens as you do this. Continue to breathe on your own, just allowing this feeling of stillness to move through your whole body. Notice how the feeling of movement is different than the feeling of stillness.

Pause

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. From your toes to your fingertips, stretch your muscles gently. Open your eyes when you're ready.

Exercise #12: Mindful Movement: Hands

So often in our sitting meditation practice, we are asked to notice or observe our impulses, like the impulse to scratch an itch, or move, or open our eyes, without acting on it or doing anything with it. As we know, every time we are able to observe the impulse without acting on it, we are making the space we call “The Pause” in the Cycle of Risk bigger. The time from when we notice something to the time we choose to act on it. The longer the Pause, the greater our power.

*Another way to strengthen our power and self-control is to combine our breath **with** a little bit of movement, on purpose. This helps us make sure that when we do act, we do so with intention. We’re going to try that today with some simple hand motions. (if appropriate for your group, you can explain the exercise and demonstrate here, before you begin the meditation).*

For this meditation, we’re actually going to stand up and keep our eyes open. You’ll just focus your eyes on a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are standing.

We’ll begin the same way we always do, with four deep breaths. Let’s do them together today.

Inhale, feeling your chest rise. Exhale, feeling your chest fall.

Inhale, taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Inhale, taking the air in. Exhale, allowing air to leave your body. Once more, inhaling (pause) and exhaling.

Pause

Keep your eyes still and continue breathing as I explain this next part. Raise your hands up to about waist level, palms facing up. The next time you inhale, raise your hands up to about your shoulders. As you exhale, face your palms down and move your hands back down towards your waist.

Let’s continue to do this together for five more breaths. Inhale, hands up (pause), exhale, hands down (repeat four more times).

Allow your body to breathe on its own for a few moments, noticing what you notice after doing that small practice.

Pause

This time, we'll do that same exercise, but now you get to choose your arm motion. Some people like to bring their arms out to the side. Some like to make circles or swirling motions. Some like to do a wave. You do what works for you. Whatever you choose, stick with it for five breaths.

Let's start together. Inhale, (pause), exhale (repeat four more times).

Allow your body to breathe on its own for a few moments, noticing what you notice after doing that small practice.

Pause. Here, facilitators can choose to have participants add on or continue making their own movements, or close the exercise.

As we close out this exercise, begin by wiggling your toes and maybe moving your feet a bit, feeling the connection to the ground. It might also feel nice to stretch your arms overhead, like you just woke up.

When you're ready, bring your attention back to the room.

Exercise #13: **Mindful Movement: Inner Rhythm**

So often in our sitting meditation practice, we are asked to notice or observe our impulses, like the impulse to scratch an itch, or move, or open our eyes, without acting on it or doing anything with it. As we know, every time we are able to observe the impulse without acting on it, we are making the space we call “The Pause” in the Cycle of Risk bigger. The time from when we notice something to the time we choose to act on it. The longer the Pause, the greater our power.

*Another way to strengthen our power and self-control is to combine our breath **with** a little bit of movement, on purpose. This helps us make sure that when we do act, we do so with intention. We’re going to try that today with some simple movement that will help us connect to our inner rhythm. (if appropriate for your group, you can explain the exercise and demonstrate here, before you begin the meditation).*

For this meditation, we’re going to stand up and keep our eyes open. Now just gently focus your eyes on a place in front of you, maybe on a table, floor, or the wall across from where you are standing. (Facilitators: this can also be done seated, though adjust the script accordingly).

We’ll begin the same way we always do, with four deep breaths. Let’s do them together today.

Inhale, feeling your chest rise, exhale, feeling your chest fall.

Inhale, taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Inhale, taking the air in. Exhale, allowing air to leave your body. Once more, inhaling (pause) and exhaling.

Pause

Keep your eyes still and continue breathing as I explain this next part. In a few moments, I’ll invite you to notice your feet and to begin to gently shift your body weight from one foot to the other. We’ll go right, left, forward, back, and around, all while keeping our feet in the same place. At some point, it might look like you are rocking or swaying. The goal here is just to notice this weight transfer. I’ll guide you through all of the other parts.

Let’s begin. Bring all of your attention to your feet, making sure they are about hips distance apart. (Pause). Notice your shoes, your socks, or anything else that’s touching your feet. Notice any temperature—are your feet hot? Cold? Notice the parts of your feet that are holding most of your weight. The inside of the foot? The outside of the

foot? The toes, or the heels? Are both feet the same, or do they hold your body differently? Without doing anything to change it, just notice your feet.

Pause

Imagine that both feet are glued to the ground. As we go through the next part, try not to allow your feet to move from their spots at all. You may find that you lose your balance, and if so, that's okay, just come back to where you were.

Now, begin to slowly shift your weight over to your right side, noticing the increase of weight onto your right foot. See if you can move so slowly that someone watching you wouldn't be able to notice you were moving. Then, when you're ready, slowly switch your weight over towards your left foot. You'll pass through your center point, with your weight even between both feet. See if you can catch that point for yourself.

When you reach the left side and feel ready, return to the right side. Go ahead. As you make your way over to the right, again, notice when you hit "center" for yourself.

Pause, allowing participants to move.

When you've gotten back to your right side, hang out there for a moment. See what it's like to move your weight forward and back on your right foot. To your toes, and to your heels. When it feels right to you, shift your weight over to your left side, and try the same thing.

Pause, allowing participants to move.

Now, I invite you to experiment with this forward, back, left, right movements on your own. See if you can follow what rhythm your body naturally wants to do. There is no right or wrong here. You can play with going quickly, going slowly, making bigger sways, or small, almost impossible-to-see sways. Whatever you want.

Pause, allowing participants to move. Give a bit more time here than previously, judging based on what participants are doing.

From wherever you are, begin to slowly come to a place of rest in your center. Both feet holding about an equal amount of weight. Bring your attention to your breath, and notice its quality. Feel the air come in through your nose as you breathe in, and out through your mouth on the exhale. You don't have to force your breath, just notice it.

Pause

*For this last part, we're going to see what happens if we move **with** our breath. As you breathe in, allow your body to move. In the space between the in and out breath, see if you can find some stillness and rest, where ever you are. You don't have to return to center each time, it can be anywhere. On the exhale, we'll move again. And on the*

space between the out and in breath, see if you can find a resting point. Inhale and move, come to rest in between, exhale and move, come to rest in between.

Let's try. Inhaling, allowing your body to sway right, left, forward, back, or anywhere, for the length of your inhale. Pausing for a brief moment in the space before your exhale, and then on the exhale, allowing your body to move. In the space before the next inhale, coming to stillness. Inhaling, movement. Pause. Exhaling, movement. Pause. Continue on your own for a few moments.

If you forget what to do, or you find your mind wandering off into thoughts or daydreams, no worries at all. Just bring your attention back to your breath again.

What we are doing here is very important. Some people think of allowing our breath to move our bodies as way to come home to ourselves.

Pause, allowing participants to move. Give a bit more time here than previously, judging based on what participants are doing.

From wherever you are, begin to slowly come to a place of rest in your center. Both feet holding about the equal amount of weight. Bring your attention to your breath, and notice its quality. Feel the air come in through your nose as you breathe in, and out through your mouth on the exhale. You don't have to force your breath, just notice it.

Pause

As we close out this exercise, begin by wiggling your toes and maybe moving your feet a bit, feeling the connection to the ground. It might also feel nice to stretch your arms overhead, like you just woke up. Take a yawn, and while turning your head and neck, look around the room.

When you're ready, bring your attention back to the room.

Exercise #14: **Visualization: Big Sky**

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes relax and soften.

Pause

Place all of your attention on your breath as it moves through your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breathe in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Pause

Now, imagine a big, blue sky. Try picturing a wide-open space that seems to go on forever with nothing else in sight. The emptiness is calm and peaceful. There are no trees, houses, or people. There are no sounds to interrupt the silence of the big sky. For miles and miles there is nothing but wide-open, blue sky. Now imagine that your mind is just like that sky—large, peaceful, and calm.

Pause

Sometimes a small cloud appears overhead and floats through the big sky. Although you can see it, it's just a tiny object compared to the vastness of the big sky. The cloud makes its way across the open space above until it gets smaller and fainter and then vanishes. As you meditate, think of yourself as the big sky. Thoughts may pop into your head—just like a little cloud—but they don't stay forever. Soon they disappear just as they arrived. But, no matter what, the endless, calm sky is still there.

Pause

You may notice sounds as you meditate. No problem, just another small cloud soon to fade away. Thoughts, memories, or great ideas might come up, but while doing this meditation, see them all as no big deal. Just tell yourself, "Hey, another small cloud in the big sky," and return your focus to your breathing and to the peace and calm of the big sky.

Pause

Occasionally, we may lose our perspective on the big sky. We look up expecting to see a calm, wide-open space, but see thunderheads and darkness instead. But this is just an illusion. Above the clouds, the same big sky is there—blue, endless, and filled with light. The clouds may cover the big sky temporarily, but above it all, the perfect calm of the big sky is there.

As you go through your day, take some time to remember the big sky that surrounds you. If something upsetting or annoying happens, picture the clear, calm, expansive big sky. Stay with this image until you feel ready to handle whatever situation is in front of you.

Exercise #15: **Visualization: Bright Light**

Find a place where you're sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Now, take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take the air in and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, picture all of the noise and problems in your life going out of your body. All that is left behind is the quiet, calm, and peacefulness of your Core Self.

Pause

Imagine that this calm energy is at the center of your body near your heart. It's like a bright light glowing deep inside of you. As you breathe out, feel the light getting brighter. Each time you breathe in and out, that light gets stronger, like the sun's light growing. See this light, and watch it grow with each breath.

Pause

All of the troubles you have had to face in your life can't put the light out. In fact, all of those struggles have made you wiser and more powerful. These troubles have made the light more brilliant and stronger.

Pause

The next time you are faced with a difficult situation or problem, remind yourself of this light that is always within you. Let this peaceful energy help calm you and guide you in making positive decisions.

Pause

Think of how your life up to now has made you powerful and strong. See these strengths as part of your wisdom and power. See yourself dealing with the challenges in your life using the strength you already possess. This is the power within you that cannot be destroyed. This light within you, this is your Core Self.

Pause

Begin to gently bring your attention back to the room. Notice the sounds you hear around you, then gently begin to open your eyes, taking in what you see. When you feel ready, return your attention to the room.

Exercise #16:

Visualization: Safe Place

Find a comfortable position to sit. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Take five deep, relaxing, letting-go breaths. With each out breath, remind yourself to relax. Allow the belly to soften, the shoulders to soften, and the features of the face to soften.

Pause

Now, imagine that you are in a safe and comfortable place. You may have been there before, or you may create such a place in your mind right now. In this place, only you are allowed. In this place, no one can come without your invitation.

Pause

Notice what you see around you. Try to imagine it with as great detail as you can. Are you in a place you've been before, or is it new? Take an imaginary walk around and notice what you see.

Pause

Are you in nature? Do you see mountains, a forest, trees? Are you near water, the ocean, a river, a lake, or stream? Or are you in an apartment, a house, or another safe space? You can create any place that you want, even one from your imagination, a place you've never been before. Imagine what it looks like. Are there people around that you know and feel safe with? Are animals around you?

Pause

Notice any sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds both near and far, those that are loud, and those that are soft. Notice any smells, like fresh cut grass, flowers, the ocean, a favorite perfume, cookies... anything.

Pause

Notice how this place looks, how peaceful it feels. Feel yourself being comfortable here, calm and relaxed. Breathe in and feel a calm strength within you.

You can choose to relax here a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. Know that this place of peace, stillness, and safety is always available to you in your imagination, and you can come back here anytime you wish.

I invite you now to begin to bring your attention back to the room, gently opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now.

Exercise #17: **Visualization: The Unfairness of Life**

Find a comfortable position to sit. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Take five deep, relaxing, letting-go breaths. With each out breath, remind yourself to relax. Allow your belly to soften, your shoulders to soften, and the features of your face to soften.

Pause

Now, gently think back to something in your life that you feel was unfair. Maybe it was growing up poor, having parents who used drugs, or seeing violence in your home or neighborhood. Take a minute now to silently tell yourself that you did not deserve to have this thing happen in your life. Tell yourself that no child deserves to go through that. Take a few deep, letting go breaths.

Pause

Imagine all of the hurt, sadness, and anger that you have carried around because of this unfair event or situation start to leave your body. It's like a gray smoke that floats into the air. As the smoke drifts away, you feel the tension being released from your chest, your shoulders, your back, or wherever else you hold these emotions. Imagine these negative feelings flowing out of your body, leaving you calm and peaceful. By doing this, you're not saying the situation was okay, but instead, you are releasing yourself from having to carry the pain of going through it.

Pause

Remember that within you is a strength that cannot be destroyed, the power of your Core Self. Even though we may carry pain from the unfairness of our life, that pain does not have to control who we are, the masks we wear, or our behavior. The power of your Core Self has never left you, and it is always within you..

Pause

Take a minute and breathe three or four times. With each breath, imagine that the last traces of these emotions are being let go from your body. When you're ready, begin to gently bring your attention back to the room. Notice sounds you hear around you, then begin to open your eyes, taking in what you see. When you feel ready, return your attention to group.

Exercise #18: **Visualization: Loving-Kindness**

Note: Loving-Kindness, or Metta Meditation, has been used in various Buddhist traditions to increase a sense of compassion, or unconditional kindness, for others and for oneself. In fact, research has shown the benefits of loving-kindness to include decreases in depression and anxiety, as well as increases in mindfulness, compassion, positive emotions, empathy, feelings of connectedness to others, and overall well-being (see Galante, Galante, Bekkers, & Gallacher, 2014 and Zeng, Chiu, Wang, Oei, & Leung, 2015 for extensive reviews).

The script here is written towards one person the youth love, though this exercise can be done towards a variety of people, including towards themselves (which can be very powerful). To do this, just substitute the opening script for the person(s) you wish to focus on. In many traditional lineages, the exercise is done for many people in succession within the same sitting. This may be too much for some youth, and many people have found it useful to break it up, so do what is right for your group. If you choose to add people or change the script, consider using the following:

- The youth themselves (“May I be safe” etc.)
- Someone youth feel thankful for or who has helped them
- Someone youth feel neutral about—people they neither like nor dislike
- Someone they don’t like or who they are having a difficult time dealing with
- Everyone in the world (“May all beings everywhere be happy and free”)

In our meditations, we usually pick one thing to focus on—sometimes it’s our breath, sometimes it’s an image or idea. For today’s meditation, we’re going to focus on some people in our lives that we love, those that makes us smile. We’ll focus on wishing them some kindness, well-being, and peace. Take a moment now to think of one person you’d like to focus on. It could be someone special in your life, like a parent or friend, or even another person in this room that you think could use some extra kindness today. (Give youth time to think of someone).

Would anyone like to share who they chose? You don’t have to, but maybe just a sentence or two about why you chose this person. What makes them special to you? (Allow time for responses).

Great, thanks for sharing. Let’s begin. Find a comfortable position to sit. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don’t want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting.

Take five deep, relaxing, letting-go breaths. With each out-breath, remind yourself to relax. Allow your belly to soften, your shoulders to soften, and the features of your face to soften.

Pause

Bring to mind the person you've chosen for today. Really see them in your mind's eye. Maybe you picture them doing something you know they love to do, or you just picture them in a quiet, safe place, sitting comfortably. Picture the expression on their face— maybe they're smiling, laughing, or just look very calm. Take some time to really see this.

Pause

I'm now going to say some phrases, and as it feels right to you, imagine saying them to this person. As you imagine this, see the light of your Core Self sending them some love and kindness. I'll repeat these phrases three times.

May you be safe.

May you be healthy and strong.

May you be happy.

May you be peaceful and at ease.

Repeat the phrases three times.

Now, just focus on this person one last time, seeing them happy, free, and safe.

Pause for a minute or so to allow participants time to integrate the experience.

Begin to bring your attention back to your breath, noticing the inhales and exhales. Take a moment to also notice your mood. Some people notice feeling lighter, happier, or calmer after this experience. Whatever is true for you, just notice it.

When it feels right to you, slowly open your eyes and bring your attention back to the room.