



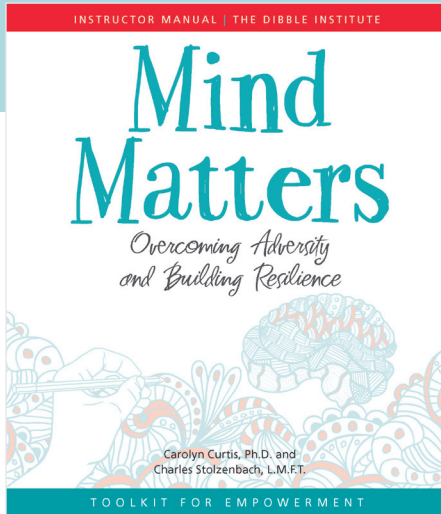
The Dibble Institute

Relationship Skills for Teens and Young Adults

Sample Activity

Mind Matters

Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience



TOOLKIT FOR EMPOWERMENT

BY: CAROLYN CURTIS, PH.D. AND CHARLES STOLZENBACH, L.M.F.T

Young people who have experienced trauma and toxic stress often have difficulty regulating their emotional responses when facing challenges in school, life, and relationships. As students learn the skills and strategies in ***Mind Matters***, they can begin to say, “I am not a victim of what happened to me.”

Mind Matters’ 12 one-hour lessons teach participants to respond to negative experiences with innovative methods based on current research and neuroscience. These skills give young people a way to take charge of their emotions and improve their states of mind. Students learn to address their physical, relational, and mental health needs.

Mind Matters’ practical, hands-on lessons explore the effects of adversity and toxic stress along with the healing process. Each lesson includes activities that build resilience and increase hope.

The skills taught in ***Mind Matters*** are designed to be practiced over a lifetime. The curriculum is not meant to be group therapy or to replace psychotherapy. Rather, it is intended to be facilitated by paraprofessionals to inspire, uplift, and set young people on the journey of healing as they cultivate deeper resilience.

- **Instructor’s Manual** with 12 Lesson Plans for ages 12-25
- Engaging **Participant Journal** that doubles as a coloring book
- Reproducible **master copies** of handouts
- **PowerPoint Slides** with guiding notes for the instructor
- **Enriching activities:** coloring, videos, music, dancing, and more
- Online **Bonus Materials**

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Mind Matters

Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience

Instructor's Kit

\$299

- Instructor's Manual with 12 lesson plans including all handouts.
- Toolkit cards with breath exercises, self-soothing skills, self-awareness skills for easy use.
- PowerPoint slides for every lesson with embedded videos.
- Access to online Bonus Materials to supplement the lessons.
- 5 Participant Journals to build confidence and competence.

Participant Journals

\$49

(for a pack of 5)

- 64 pages that build participants' skills and confidence.

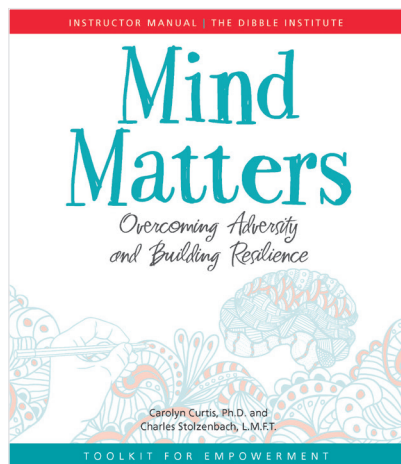


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Forewords

"Dr. Vincent Felitti, co-principle investigator of the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study), a groundbreaking research project that identified the link between childhood trauma and adult onset of chronic disease, violence, and being a victim of violence, once said that there weren't enough therapists in the world to help people who suffer from the effects of childhood trauma.

He believed that people in the helping professions — teachers, clergy, emergency medical technicians, home visitors, youth workers, etc. — can benefit by education and tools to help others heal.

Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience — A Toolkit for Empowerment is just that. It's a well-written, well thought-out, and tested 12-hour course. It can stand alone or be integrated into other courses. It can be used with people of all ages — including teens, youth, and adults — in schools, community-based organizations, the justice system, foster care, shelters, and group homes. The instructors' manual is a remarkably clear and concise guide.

Dr. Carolyn Curtis and Charles Stolzenbach have truly created a gift to the community of people looking for a way to help others learn about just how normal childhood adversity is, how profound its effects are on our brains, bodies, lives, and communities, and, most importantly, how to soothe and heal ourselves.

Healing begins, within ourselves. From there we can continue to pay forward this new knowledge of human behavior and help people help themselves heal, with this toolkit tucked under our arms."

JANE STEVENS

Founder, publisher

ACEs Connection Network

ACEsTooHigh.com/ ACEsConnection.com

"This is a long-overdue curriculum. We've known for years that many of our students experienced trauma and other adverse life events that compromise their ability to learn the social and cognitive skills needed for success in today's world. Perhaps we imagined that we could do a work-around — that our curricula could be effective without attending to the central issues of adversity and resilience. Or maybe we assumed that other professionals or programs were taking care of those issues.

Now that we have "*Mind Matters*," there is no excuse for this blind spot. With a blend of up-to-date teaching strategies and scientific understanding, along with good pacing and sensitivity to student privacy and boundaries, this curriculum will be welcomed in a wide range of settings. It's the missing ingredient we've needed."

WILLIAM J. DOHERTY, PH.D.

Professor of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota

Regular contributor to Psychotherapy Networker

"As of this writing I served as a licensed psychotherapist for more than 40 years. I encountered numerous individuals whose lives have been seared by trauma. There are many types of trauma. The cause could be a sudden overwhelming explosion or repeated abuse. The resultant symptoms are consistent across cultures: hypersensitivity, intrusive memories, and social withdrawal. Trauma survivors are "burn" victims. They are raw. When a patient suffers a physical burn, the gentle healing procedures of a concerned physician cause pain because there is no protective insulation.

But, trauma survivors can learn from their ordeal. The Chinese concept for crisis is composed of two juxtaposed characters, danger and opportunity. Trauma can be a pathway for accessing resilience. But a map is needed.

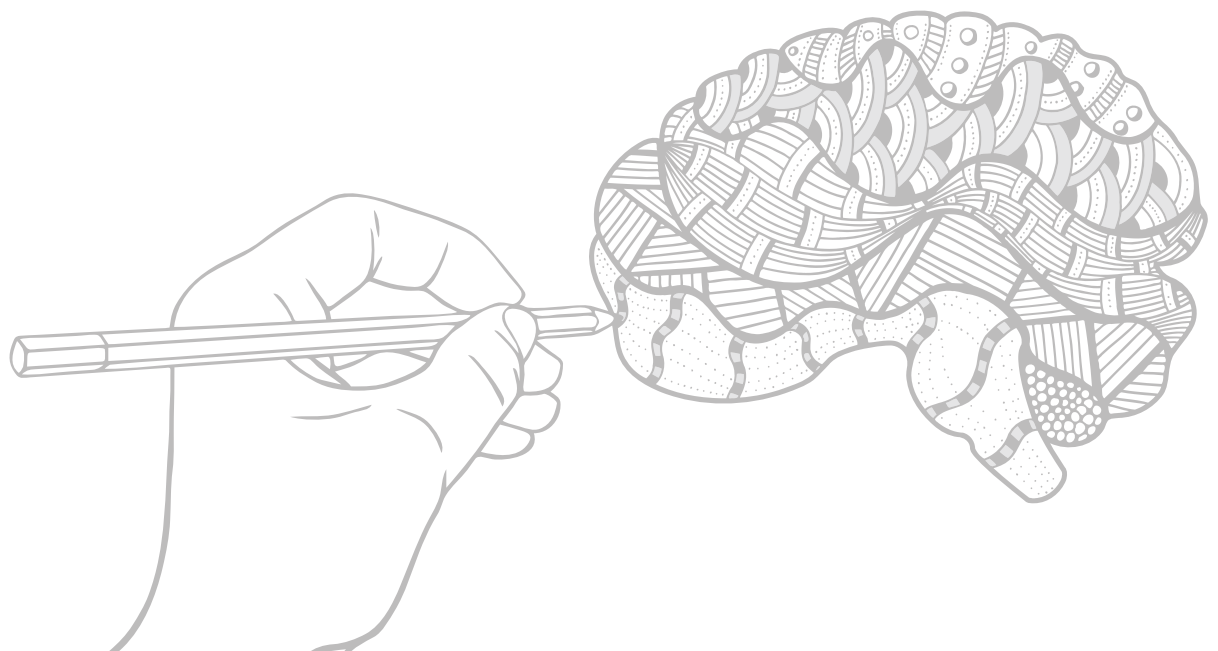
Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience is a clear, comprehensive program that consists of experiences that can create resilience and stress inoculation. By following this path those who have suffered trauma can heal themselves in the places where they were previously scorched. The skills learned can have a proactive effect in building insulation — eliciting resilience in those who have not yet been subjected to stressful events.

The program outlined by Carolyn Curtis in *Mind Matters* should be instituted in multiple settings to assist trauma survivors towards much needed healing. It is remarkably engaging, well researched and well formulated path to creating resilience."

JEFFREY K ZEIG, PH.D.

Director

Milton H. Erickson Foundation and the Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference



Mind Matters Overview

The Mind Matters Pinwheel | Six Major Topics

The evidence-based materials in this program build on research in neuroscience and on the work of the leaders in trauma care. The curriculum focuses on five major topics: (1) Self-Soothing, (2) Developing an Observing Self, (3) Relationship Skills, (4) Compassion for the Hijacked Brain, (5) Self-Care, and (6) Intentionality.

1. Self-Soothing

Class begins with the Marshmallow Test for participants to understand the importance of intentionality. This light-hearted lesson includes four different self-soothing and emotional regulation skills.

2. Developing an Observing Self

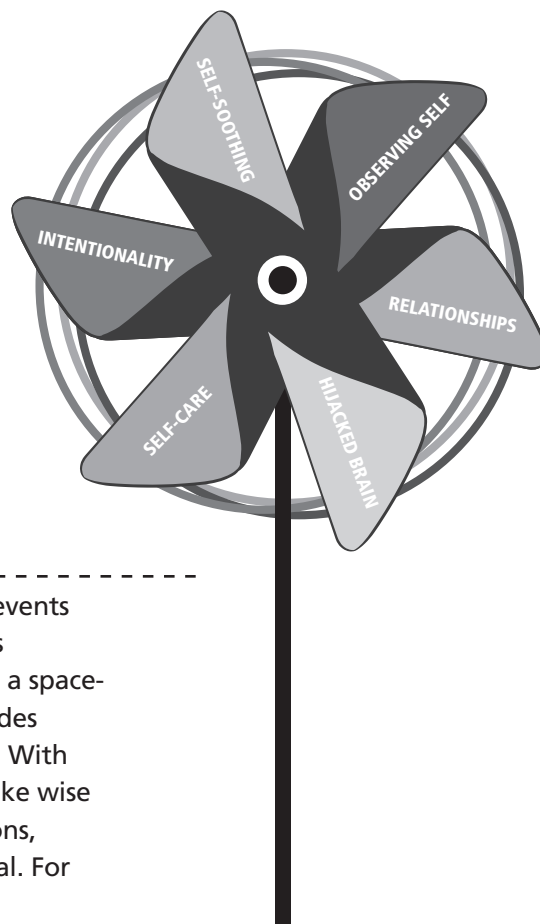
Developing an Observing Self allows us to observe and monitor events and processes, thoughts and emotions of our internal world. This observing capacity is a valuable personal tool and skill, providing a space-in-time between an event and response. This space-in-time provides an extra moment to decide how to respond to a given life event. With such tools, people are better equipped to observe, learn, and make wise choices. Participants will learn to do a Body Scan, identify emotions, distinguish thoughts and emotions, and create an Internal Journal. For many, this will be their first experience with self-study.

3. Relationship Skills

Supportive relationships are key to recovery from trauma. The ability to build relationships is essential. Participants will learn to listen deeply and are guided in developing compassion and understanding for others. Participants will also learn how to develop a personal support system and how to ask for help.

4. Compassion for the Hijacked Brain

Most participants in this program experienced trauma in their childhoods. These adverse experiences have left major effects on thinking and behavior. Overcoming trauma begins with understanding how traumatic experiences have changed the brain: emotionally, cognitively, and interpersonally. All lessons in this curriculum are directed towards growing the brain to overcome the impact of these traumas. In the Compassion for the Hijacked Brain section, participants can take the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire, if they wish. We emphasize the importance of installing a daily practice of skills that, over time, will change the brain's architecture. *Mind Matters* is a curriculum of hope.



5. Self-Care

Practicing self-care is an important ingredient in recovering from traumatic experiences. Mind Matters self-care lessons focus on a variety of different approaches. The importance of physical activity and sleep hygiene are components of self-care that are often overlooked. *Mind Matters* recognizes that each person is different in their requirement and desire for physical activity. Participants will design a plan of physical activity based on their interests and abilities. Included is a 15-minute Chair Yoga workout. The Efficient Sleep component provides information encouraging healthy sleep habits based on current research. An innovative section on music and dance as a healing modality draws on the cultural backgrounds of the participants. Emotional Freedom Techniques (Tapping) offers an additional beneficial procedure for healing. All self-care methods from exercise to sleep and from play time to down time lead to a more balanced life.

6. Intentionality

Intentionality returns our focus to the Marshmallow study in the first lesson. Here, learning to wait is presented as a component and a first step in the development of intentionality. Final lessons cover goal setting and planning for the future. Values are clarified with the Honor Shield. Participants review the entire program and then sign a personal contract committing to continued habits of practice and personal growth.

Lesson 1 *Self-Soothing*

(Sample Lesson—through Activity 1.3)

Why We Do This

Self-Soothing is a skill that is developed over time through practice. The goal of self-soothing is to dial-down the reactive response of the body's central nervous system. Following an adverse or traumatic event, the nervous system is easily activated by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, causing abrupt, unplanned, and embarrassing social consequences. A traumatized person needs a means of reducing this automatic reactivity of their nervous system. Self-soothing techniques provide this. In this first lesson, four self-soothing skills are taught that will be practiced throughout the *Mind Matters* program.

Participant Objectives

1. Connect the key concept of self-soothing/self-regulation to positive life outcomes.
2. Recognize the difference between taking the time to decide rather than immediately reacting to persons, places, and things.
3. Learn four different self-soothing skills that can be used inside and outside of the classroom.
4. Practice self-soothing skills at least twice while in class.

Lesson 1 at a Glance (60 minutes)

WHAT IS MIND MATTERS?

- 1.1 Introduction to Mind Matters (15 minutes)
- 1.2 Marshmallow Test Overview and Activity (15 minutes)

SELF-SOOTHING SKILLS

- 1.3 Focused Breathing (10 minutes)
- 1.4 Peripheral Vision (5 minutes)
- 1.5 5-4-3-2-1 Skill (5 minutes)
- 1.6 Coloring

SUMMARY, PRACTICE PLAN, AND FINAL SKILL EXERCISE (10 MINUTES)

Materials Checklist

RESOURCES

- Lesson 1 PowerPoint (<http://digital.dibbleinstitute.org/MM-MATERIALS>)
- Toolkit (found in the pocket of this Instructor's Manual):
 - 1.a Focused Breathing
 - 2.a Peripheral Vision
 - 2.b 5-4-3-2-1 Skill

VIDEOS | hyperlinked in Lesson 1 PowerPoint:

- The Marshmallow Test (3:27)
- (Optional) Three-Minute Breathing Space (4:59)

CELL PHONE APP: hyperlinked in Lesson 1 PowerPoint

MATERIALS

- Flipchart/board and markers (for Group Agreements)
- Bag of marshmallows (optional)

PARTICIPANT JOURNAL: Lesson 1 (pgs. 2-4)

Please Note: Only the full explanations for Activities 1.1-1.3 are included in this sample.

Lesson 1 *Self-Soothing*

Preparation

- Read through the entire lesson
- View the two recommended videos (Marshmallow Test, Three-Minute Breathing Space).
- Look over the Participant Journal pages connected with this lesson.
- Practice each self-soothing skill using the directions in the Toolkit until you are comfortable leading each one (Focused Breathing, Peripheral vision, and 5-4-3-2-1 Skill).

1.1 Introduction to Mind Matters | 15 minutes

Preparation Check

- _____ PowerPoint Lesson 1
- _____ Flipchart/board and markers (for group agreements)

Rationale

The goal of this section is to create a safe space for participants.



INTRODUCTION TO MIND MATTERS

Introduce yourself and your co-leader, modeling the way you would like the participants to introduce themselves. Consider the number of participants and the amount of time that you have when deciding what to have each person share about themselves. Participants might share an interest, favorite place, or something they do for fun. Have each person at least share their name and one of the above suggestions.

Discuss General Logistics

Provide needed information, such as when the group will end, breaks, snacks, childcare details, etc.

Create a Safe Environment

Discuss and decide on group agreements that should include, but are not limited to, respect and confidentiality. Be clear with participants that everything shared in the room is confidential unless it necessitates reporting. Share information related to mandated reporting following your program's policies and procedures.

Special Note to Instructor: The following statement will be repeated at the beginning of each lesson and as needed to ensure a safe space: *The various skills and exercises we will be teaching are designed to change levels of personal awareness. If anyone experiences discomfort with a skill, please stop your practice, sit quietly, and relax. Should the uneasiness continue, raise your hand so you can be helped.*

12 Marshmallow Test Overview and Activity | 15 minutes

Preparation Check

- _____ PowerPoint Lesson 1
- _____ *The Marshmallow Test* video (3:27) found in PowerPoint Lesson 1
- _____ Flipchart/board and markers (for “Discuss the concept of waiting” activity)
- _____ Bag of marshmallows (optional)

Rationale

This section will begin to teach tools that decrease reactivity, assist with self-regulation, and help develop resilience.

Marshmallow study. We start with the Marshmallow Study because it is funny and starts the class in a lighthearted way. At the same time, it presents the foundation for the class: reducing reactivity and increasing self-soothing skills. People who can wait do better in school, better in relationships, make more money, and are more successful in life. They can overcome obstacles because they can wait, assess the challenge, and make wiser choices. They can respond rather than react. This introduction is an explanation for the profound benefits this curriculum can have on people: learning to wait or delaying gratification.

Safety Tip

During discussion “Waiting and You,” some participants may over-share (share confidential or traumatic information) regarding a time they wish they had waited. Use your best judgment with your population regarding whether or not to offer sharing a time about when they wish they had waited. You can model a very light example and/or choose to have them share regarding a time they were thankful that they waited.



MARSHMALLOW TEST OVERVIEW AND ACTIVITY

Show “Marshmallow” video then begin a discussion using the material that follows.

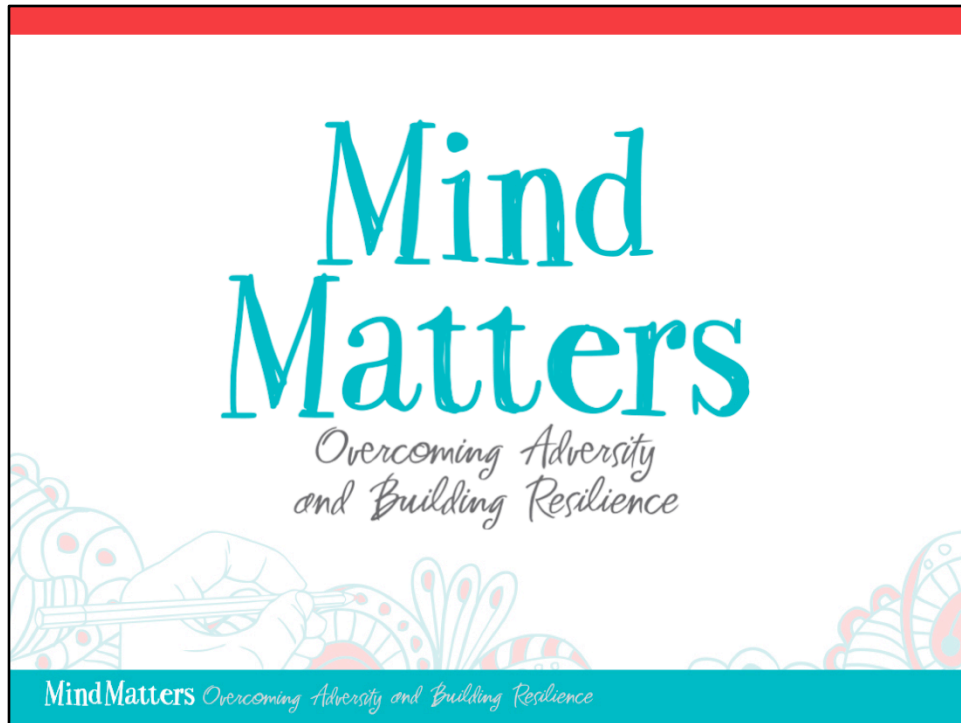
The video is hyperlinked inside the PowerPoint slide for Lesson 1. Enjoy the laughter and giggling.

This video is a result of a study by a group of social scientists who wanted to know what it took to have the emotional control to wait for something and to have patience. They invited parents to bring their young children as subjects of this research. They wanted to know what difference it makes over the course of a child's life if he or she can wait and have emotional control. These same researchers, then, kept track of these children over the next twenty years.

Optional: Pass out marshmallows so that each participant has one marshmallow to hold while watching the video or until the end of class.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3



PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3



1.1 Introduction to *Mind Matters* (pg. 2)

Introductions:

- Introduce yourself and your co-leader.
- Have each participant share their name and something else about themselves.

Discuss General Logistics

Create a Safe Environment:

- Group agreements (including respect, confidentiality, mandated reporting)

Please share:

“The various skills and exercises we will be teaching are designed to change levels of personal awareness. If anyone experiences discomfort with a skill, please stop your practice, sit quietly, and relax. Should the uneasiness continue, raise your hand so you can be helped.”

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Lesson 1: Self-Soothing



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Change to Instructor Manual.

Start with showing the marshmallow video. No need for an introduction. The introduction will reduce the impact of the video.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Marshmallow Test

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ



MindMatters Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience

1.2 Marshmallow Test Overview and Activity (pg. 3)

Start with showing the video. No discussion. Say something like lets watch this video.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

What can we learn from the Marshmallow Test?



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Marshmallow Research Study

- Social scientists wanted to know what it took to have the emotional control to wait for something and to have patience
- Young children were subjects of this research.
- How long can a child wait before needing to eat a marshmallow?
- Kept track of these children over the next twenty years.

Optional: Pass out marshmallows so that each participant has one marshmallow to hold while watching the video or until the end of class.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Why couldn't some kids wait?



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Discuss the concept of waiting

Why couldn't some kids wait?

Let's brainstorm some reasons why you think they couldn't wait.

If time permits, write their answers on a flip chart/board. There are no wrong answers.

Encourage their answers to include:

1. Physical hunger
2. Emotional excitement, especially if someone really likes marshmallows
3. Mistrust of the person who is supposed to bring the second marshmallow
4. Experiences with parents or other caretakers not being there so trust is difficult
5. A general lack of stability in someone's life.
6. If you grow up in a family where there is not enough to go around, you learn that you better eat it now or there will not be anything for you.
7. For some people, they believe the word "wait" means "no."

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Let's talk about
the emotional side to waiting.



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Let's Talk about the Emotional Side of Waiting

Emotional reactions are quick, almost instantaneous.

A person may not even notice that a decision was made.

Responses include: Increased heart rate, feeling something in your stomach, or muscle tightness, a sudden pause or becoming confused.

Emotional reactions are hard to explain; they vary with each person and situation to situation.

When emotional reactions happen, it might mean that something from the past is interfering with the present.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

When do you wish you would have waited?

When were you thankful or proud that you waited?



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Waiting is a challenge for many.

Most people have had moments when they have been impulsive:

- eating the next cookie,
- doing something risky,
- deciding not to take good care of themselves.

If a person is particularly hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, they are more likely to be unable to wait.

We know there are moments in which quick decisions happen.

These are the times when there is no thought about the consequences.

Questions:

Can you think of times when it would have been better for you to wait?

Or, can you think of a time when you were thankful that you did wait?

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Research shows
why waiting matters.



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Discuss the research results

Researchers kept track of these kids for the next twenty years.

They did find some big differences between the lives of the kids who could wait to eat the marshmallows and the kids who couldn't.

- What do you think the researchers found about kids who could wait
- How were their lives different?

Allow time for brainstorming.

Here is what the researchers found.

Kids who could wait . . .

- did better in school, scoring 125 points higher on college entrance exams.
- made more money.
- were more likely to have long-term, satisfying relationships.

When they redid this study with 65 to 90 year-olds they found, once again, in a study with snacks, that people who could wait lived happier, healthier, and wealthier lives.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

People who can wait have skills for
success.



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

What skills do people who can wait have that make their lives more successful?

- Resilience: This means that they can stay calm and in control when faced with a challenge.
- Ability to focus their attention
- Control their emotions and impulses
- Ability to learn because they have a working memory
- Cognitively flexible

These abilities lead to better reasoning, problem-solving, and planning that are necessary for achieving their chosen goals.

People can learn to wait

This research may make it seem like people are doomed to a bad life if they can't wait.

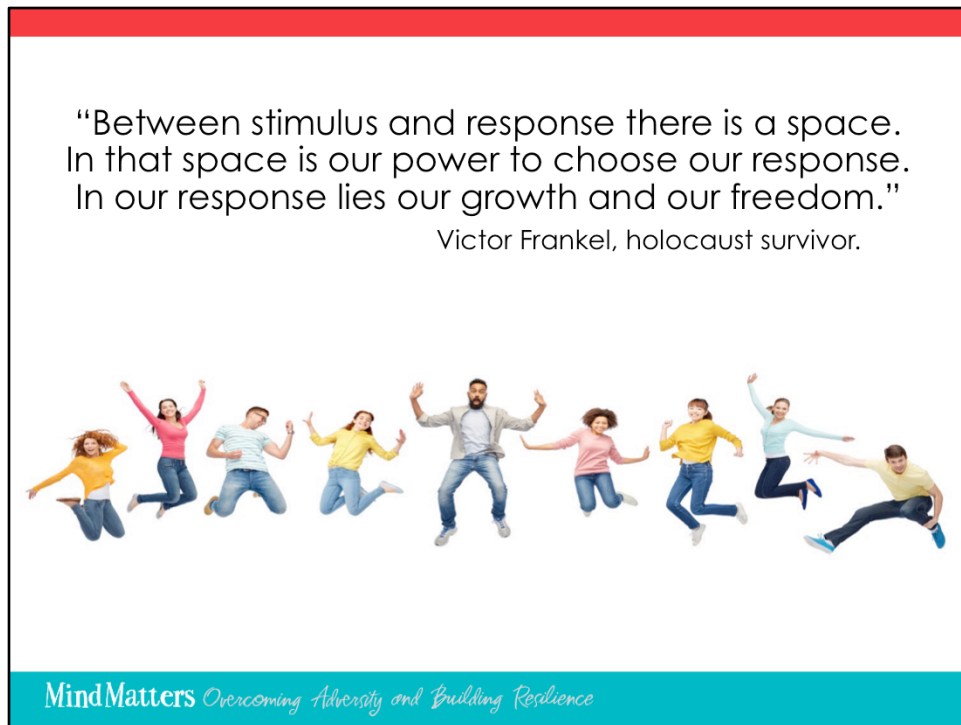
We can grow our brain and build the skills necessary to be able to wait!

These abilities can improve at any time over the course of our lives.

Most of us want the life of a person who can wait. They appear smarter, make more money, have long-term relationships, and are happier.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3



“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

What does this mean?

With increased space, people can learn how to respond rather than react, which will lead to personal growth and the freedom to choose.

What is the difference between reacting and responding?

When we react:

- This might be when someone pushes our buttons
- let our emotions take over.
- act quickly, without much thought.
- heart races, breath quickens, and we might even feel sick to our stomachs.
- We often act in a way that we regret.

With these exercises, we can learn how to pause and make a thoughtful response

- pause, we slow down, think it through, and realize that we have a choice.
- act more from logic and less from emotion.
- We call this “making space.”

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

The purpose of this class is to become someone who can wait.



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

With Mind Matters: we hope to expand that space between stimulus and response in each moment of every day.

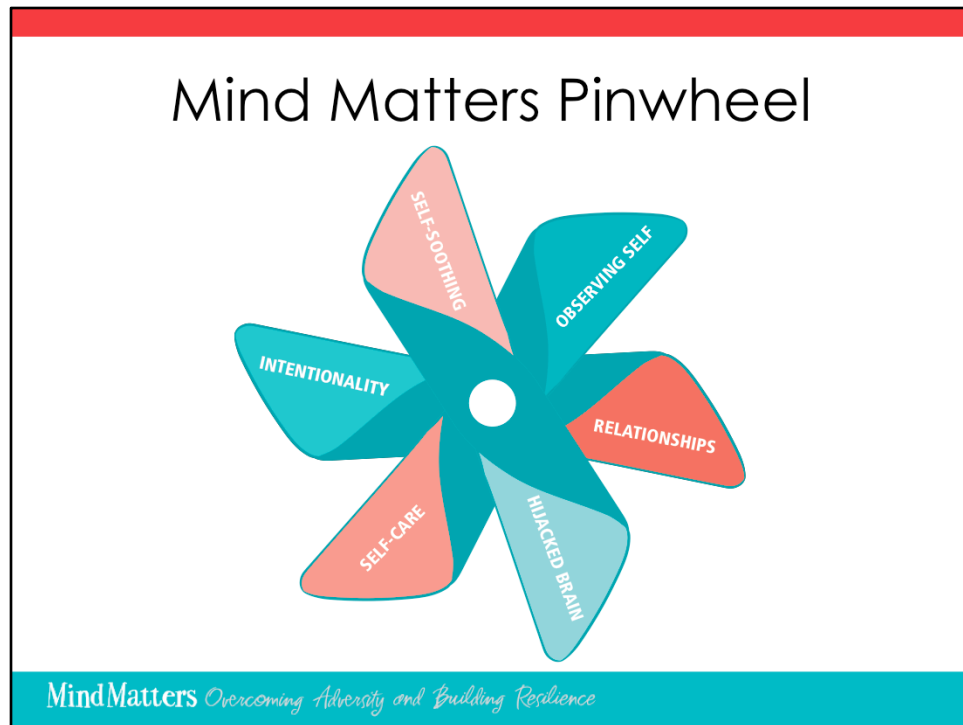
- Learn skills that are mental exercises.
- With practice, these can improve our ability to wait.

The purpose of this class is to become someone who can wait, someone who can pause.

As the research shows, this increases the possibility that we will have a healthier, wealthier, and happier life!

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3



1.3 Focused Breathing (pg. 6)

This is the Mind Matters Pinwheel.

It is also on the back of the Participant Journal.

In this class we will be covering six topics to help us improve our lives.
Each topic is represented on a curl of our Mind Matters Pinwheel.

- Self-soothing
- Developing an Observing Self
- Relationships Skills
- Compassion for the Hijacked Brain
- Self-Care
- Intentionality

Today we start with Self-Soothing.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

Today we are going to learn 4 skills that can increase our ability to wait.



- Focused Breathing
- Peripheral Vision
- 5-4-3-2-1 Skill
- Coloring

MindMatters Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience

Learning 4 new skills that:

- Increase our ability to wait
- Help with Self-soothing

The Skills:

- Focused Breathing
- Peripheral Vision
- 5-4-3-2-1 Skill
- Coloring

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

The first skill is Focused Breathing.



MindMatters Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience

Self-Soothing Skill 1: Focused Breathing

- Purpose of this exercise is to calm the body and quiet the mind.
- Studies have shown that consistent practice can change the brain for the better, letting people think rather than become reactive to situations.

Not all exercises work for everyone.

- Each person will need to find what works for them.
- For example, some people like to have their eyes shut; others like their eyes open.
- For some, this exercise may not be effective because the sound of heavy breathing may remind them of a time that was unpleasant or very scary.
- If an exercise is making you uncomfortable, stop and sit quietly. If you stop and you are still uncomfortable, raise your hand so we can be helpful to you.

Do Focused Breathing

Play the video Three Minute Breathing Space (4:59)

<http://www.mindful.org/the-three-minute-breathing-space-practice/>

or use the instructions for Focused Breathing in the Toolkit

What are your thoughts about Focused Breathing?

How did it feel?

Any answers are okay. It's important not to judge their experiences.

PowerPoint Slides for Lesson 1

Activities 1, 2, and 3

How can Focused Breathing benefit us?



MindMatters *Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*

Provide research supporting Focused Breathing

1. The flight-fight part of the brain decreases.
2. The thinking, compassionate part of the brain increases.
3. Our ability to think about difficult situations increases, which reduces our reactivity.
4. Physical changes: new receptors get built at busy synapses, sensitizing them. These new brain connections grow in a matter of minutes.
5. The brain cells responsible for troubling thoughts, emotions, and memories begin to wither away.
6. DNA can begin its creative work, causing growth and strengthened connections within your brain.
7. We have decreased levels of stress hormones.

Just like repeatedly lifting weights to build a muscle, repeated patterns of mental activity, like Focused Breathing, build new brain structure.