

KIND MIND Program Syllabus for
Mindfulness, Kindness & Nature Immersion for Climate Justice

This curriculum is intended to foster a deep appreciation and care for Nature: all life on Earth and the interconnected web of ecosystems and communities life depends on. In parallel, students are invited to explore their own psychological inner landscapes and come to appreciate Nature within. Through playful nature immersion and awakened senses, students' love of Nature and aspiration to nurture Nature grows. Feelings of anxiety, anger, apathy, guilt and grief triggered by climate injustices are acknowledged and complemented by simultaneous cultivation of openness, compassion, curiosity, hope, joy and equanimity. The goal is for students to remain engaged, motivated and interconnected despite the growing knowledge of social and climate crises. These carefully crafted lessons prepare and empower students to take impactful actions in the world with resilience, courage, kindness, understanding, tolerance, and nonviolence.

Lesson 1: Introductions, Intention Setting, and Connecting

1. Facilitators introduce themselves
2. Etiquette and purpose of relational circles for sharing and connecting
3. Learn how mindfulness practices complement the study of climate justice
4. Students introduce themselves and share what they care about in nature
5. Establish rapport and have fun with a mindful nature-connection game



Lesson 2: Mindful Walking in Nature: Opening the sense gates

1. Introduce mindful walking practice
2. Learn which animals move mindfully and carefully
3. Mindful walking with cat paws: Notice your body and movement sensations
4. Option to walk barefoot where possible
5. Open the 5 sense gates - let nature happen to you
6. Share what you noticed or enjoyed about mindful walking



Lesson 3: Mindful Seeing: the Sights of Nature

1. Introduce mindful seeing practice
2. Learn which animals have the best sight
3. Mindful seeing with eagle eyes (what is alive; what is regenerating)
4. Notice the sights of nature as if seeing it the first time (like an alien or a puppy)
5. Describe a pattern (shapes/colors/textures) you see; let others guess what you saw
6. Find a special natural object or creature you find interesting or appreciate
7. Share how you found it and what you appreciate about it, and what else you enjoyed seeing



Lesson 4: Mindful Hearing: the Sounds of Nature

1. Learn how to practice mindful hearing
2. Learn which animals have the best hearing
3. Mindful listening with owl ears to nature sounds
4. Notice the quietest, farthest, closest, variety, fading, repeating, wind, animal sounds
5. Share what you noticed or enjoyed about what you heard



Lesson 5: Posture, Stillness, Mindful Movement

1. Playing with posture and body language for aliveness vs tiredness
2. Learn what happens in our bodies and minds when we get energized
3. Learn how movement prepares us to be still: Choices for focused practice
4. Observe a tree; be still and solid like a trunk; move slowly like branches in the wind
5. Pretend to be a wilting plant revived by water; feel your body come alive



Lesson 6: Mindful Breathing and the Interdependence of Life

1. Learn about the gas exchange between plants and animals
2. Learn about the interdependence of life and ecosystems
3. Learn how to practice mindful breathing with plants
4. Practice gratitude for exchanging breath with plants



5. Share what you noticed and enjoyed about mindful breathing

Lesson 7: Grounding in Mindful Touch, Texture, Temperature, and Smell

1. Learn which animals have the best sense of touch (manatees, etc.)
2. Learn which animals have the best sense of smell (elephants, etc.)
3. Touch and smell soil, wood bark, grass, rock, flowers, etc., with eyes closed
4. Notice the mind coming in and let go of labeling, stay with the sensations
5. Lay down on the ground, sense your body contact with ground and the Earth holding you
6. Sense the temperature on your skin and of your inhale and exhale as you surrender into Earth



Lesson 8: Emotions - Recognize, Name, Intensity, Change

1. Learn that there are many kinds of emotions, similar to weather events
2. Practice naming emotions and recognizing their facial cues/gestures
3. Practice mimicking gestures to develop the felt sense of empathy
4. Learn that emotions come and go, like weather and the tides
5. Learn about the similarity of our out-of-balance, intense emotions and extreme weather events
6. Develop skills to identify (name it to tame it) and report the intensity of our emotions



Lesson 9: Mindfulness of Emotional Balance

1. Learn about the benefits, and how and where emotions can be felt in the body
2. Learn about the physiology of the stress and relaxation response
3. Practice of feeling emotions in the body while playing mindful games
4. Learn to move attention from one body part to the next to allow feeling of emotions in the body
5. Relax each part of the body from head to toes, to balance emotions



Lesson 10: Body & Movement Awareness

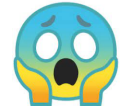
1. Learn how being aware of body sensations can help us relax and release stress
2. Share what upsets you about climate change



3. Practice “shaking it off” to release stress from your body
4. Learn to tense different body parts and let go of the tension (tense & release)
5. Learn movement awareness of specific body parts, and moving fast vs. slow
6. Practice everyday movements mindfully and slowly, following the breath

Lesson 11: Mindfulness of Fear, Anxiety, Worry, Anger - Accept and Let Go

1. Learn how fear responses serve us and allowing ourselves to really feel them helps.
2. Share: What worries, anxiety and anger surface regarding climate change
3. Learn about freeze & fright responses and related anxiety, helplessness, worry, etc.
4. Learn about fight responses and related anger, fighting, and aggression
5. Recognize body sensation and emotions of self-protection, withdrawal, anger, and aggression
6. Learn skills to accept and release fear, and cultivate feelings of safety and calm.



Lesson 12: Mindfulness of Sadness and Grief - Self-compassion

1. Learn how the emotions of sadness and grief and the act of mourning serves us
2. Learn how grief and mourning reflect feelings of care and love
3. Discuss eco-grief: species extinction, habitat loss, harm to vulnerable populations
4. Recognize the five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance)
5. Develop skills to allow body sensations of sadness and grief with acceptance and equanimity
6. Practice self-compassion: giving ourselves permission to really feel sad and wishing ourselves well



Lesson 13: Celebrating Biodiversity and Diversity of People

1. Learn about different types of diversity (biodiversity, ethnic, cultural)
2. Learn about interdependence, and why diversity is important
3. Explore how diversity and interdependence make our communities and world better
4. Share or journal about your experiences with diversity and how you can be inclusive
5. Practice kind acceptance of differences and celebration of diversity



Lesson 14: Mindful Eating: Appreciating the Nourishment that Nature Provides

1. Discussion: food waste contributing to, and food insecurity due to climate change
2. Gratitude and awareness for all that and those involved in creating food
3. Celebration of cultural traditions around foods
4. Share: our family's and our personal favorites
5. Introduce and practice mindful eating
6. Benefits of eating mindfully in daily life



Lesson 15: Gratitude Practice: Appreciating, Thanking & Reconnecting to Nature

1. Introduce the regular practice of gratitude to accompany despair, disappointment
2. Share: What breaks my heart about our world is _____
3. Discuss how to find strength to turn to gratitude when faced with challenges
4. Share: What I am grateful for about nature is _____
5. Gratitude walk in nature
6. Share or journal: What would a future thriving world be like _____
7. Share or journal: An action I can take for that future world is _____



Lesson 16: Tree of Kindness

1. Story: trees above and below ground - nourishment, support and communication
2. Reflect on sources of support and kindness for us
3. Reflect on how we can show kindness and caring to the world
4. Draw a tree of kindness (roots - our supports, branches - our offerings)
5. Share what you discovered about your identity and what is important to you



Lesson 17: The Emotion of Guilt & Regret - Self-Forgiveness, Growth Mindset

1. Discussion: everyone makes mistakes, and has regrets
2. Share: what actions and behaviors of ours contribute to climate change
3. Learn that it's OK to make mistakes, and we learn from our mistakes
4. Learn how practicing self-forgiveness can help us let go of guilt



5. Practice self-forgiveness and do growth mindset activities

Lesson 18: Kindness, Generosity and Fairness toward Other People

1. Discuss: disproportionate harm on those that least contributed to climate change
2. Introduce generosity and compassion practices toward others
3. Explore benefits of compassion, generosity and fairness
4. Discuss: how to be generous and fair with resource distribution to address climate impacts
5. Practice sending kind wishes and notice how it feels
6. Journal to come up with specific unique kind wishes and ways we can be generous
7. Practice compassion using your own phrases



Lesson 19: Kindness and Altruism to Nature, Animals, and Plants

1. Learn about how compassion practices, self-care and altruism are compatible
2. Compassion toward pets, cute animals, and then less attractive animals
3. Compassion toward animals suffering and going extinct due to climate change
4. Explore ways humans are exploitative and altruistic toward nature and other people
5. Understand how it feels in our bodies when we are altruistic and compassionate
6. Discuss how compassion practice can inspire altruism and acts of kindness



Lesson 20: Mindfulness of Joy, Love, Hope, Belonging & Compassion

1. Learn how turning toward joy, love, compassion and hope can develop resilience
2. Learn how we can generate positive emotions without their conditions
3. Story: monarch butterflies, metamorphosis, transformation, change, and rebirth
4. Discuss the Butterfly effect: Community belonging, Collective action and Social activism
5. Share or journal about including and supporting displaced and marginalized communities
6. Practice compassion toward self, our inner circle, beyond our circle, all beings, and the Earth



Lesson 21: Mindfulness of Thoughts

1. Learn about the nature of thoughts and our relationship to them



2. Learn and share about noticing our thoughts and mind wandering
3. Practice noticing thoughts and bringing attention back to present moment
4. Notice content of thoughts: images, talking/sounds, daydreaming, past, future
5. Journal to set intention for kind thoughts and to discover patterns of thinking

Lesson 22: Sensory Clarity, Curiosity, Patience and Equanimity



1. Introduce the skill of mindful sensing of touch and temperature
2. Play with the sense of touch to discover a hidden, natural object with eyes closed
3. Learn to be with not knowing what the hidden object is; cultivate curiosity and patience
4. Learn ways to cope with discomfort with equanimity: ice-cube challenge
5. Learn to pay attention to different sensations of the skin with sensory clarity
6. Share or journal about applying equanimity, patience and curiosity in the face of uncertainty and challenges due to climate change

Lesson 23: Mindful Living - Practicing Mindfulness in All Areas of Life



1. Discuss how we can incorporate mindfulness skills into our day-to-day lives
2. Review the anchors to presence: breath, senses, movement and body awareness
3. Practice facilitating your fellow students in your favorite mindfulness practices
4. Share about how you plan to weave informal practices into your everyday activities
5. Journal about your vision for how you would like to take kind action for climate justice

Lesson 24: Kind and Joyful Living - Practicing Kindness in All Areas of Life



1. Discuss how we can incorporate compassion skills into our day-to-day lives
2. Review positivity practices: gratitude, compassion, appreciations, kind acts, playfulness, good-natured humor, games & fun
3. Practice facilitating your fellow students in your favorite positivity practices
4. Share about how you plan to weave informal practices into your everyday activities
5. Journal in detail about your plan for taking concrete steps for kind action towards climate justice