



FLOW AND TELL

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."

—Oscar Wilde

OVERVIEW

After checking in with their breath, body sensations, emotions, and thoughts, students take turns listening and sharing what they observe in the present moment.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Daily, for at least one week or longer
- At the start of a school day, during a transition between classes, to close a class
- When you would like your students to practice listening and attention skills

TIME REQUIRED

- 15 minutes

LEVEL

- Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- A talking stick to pass around the circle (optional)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Observe their thoughts, feelings, and body sensations in the present moment
- Listen to their peers without judgment or planning what they will say next

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Spend a couple of minutes during a break in the school day to focus your attention on how you are feeling right now. (If you're able, ask a colleague to join you.)
- Begin by taking paying attention to your breath, body sensations, emotions, and thoughts.
- Say to yourself, "In the present moment, I'm aware of..."
- What do you notice when you take the time to check in with yourself and your colleague?
- What do you notice in yourself as you practice listening?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- This exercise works best when everyone is seated in a circle. Pass around a talking piece so that each student has a few chances to share his or her thoughts.
- Speaking authentically can be an edgy experience for students. This practice should not be mandatory for any student who is uncomfortable with it.
- Special Note: For more information about how to facilitate "Flow and Tell," please watch the following [video](#) by [Daniel Rechtschaffen](#), the creator of this practice.

THE PRACTICE

- Let students know that today we will be learning how to communicate mindfully.
- Students will learn to communicate from the present moment instead of simply sharing past experiences or ideas about the future.
- Tell students:
 - *Making a present-moment statement means simply stating what we experience right now in our bodies.*
 - *We can say what sensations we feel in our bodies—what we see, hear, smell, or taste.*
 - *We can also share our emotions—if we are, for instance, nervous, happy, or excited.*
 - *Instead of Show and Tell we will be practicing Flow and Tell: sharing with each other whatever is flowing in our awareness right now.*
- Students begin by putting on their mindful bodies and practicing mindful listening for a minute, noticing everything they hear.
- Then, for one minute, they can scan through their bodies, noticing sensations.
- For another minute, they can check into their emotions.
- Then students can open up their awareness to perceive all of their sensations, breath, thoughts, and emotions at once.
- Invite them to keep their eyes closed and continue to practice, and tell them that as they do this, they are going to learn how to speak mindfully.
- They will go around in a circle and, when it is their turn to speak, they can look inside and say what they are experiencing in the present moment.
- Tell students:
 - *We can start our sentence with "In the present moment I am aware of _____"*
 - *Some examples would be:*
 - *"In the present moment I am aware of an itch on my hand."*
 - *"In the present moment I'm aware of the sound of a truck."*
 - *"In the present moment I am aware of feeling nervous."*
 - *"In the present moment I am aware of my busy mind."*
 - *We can go around in a circle a few times, and everyone can share what they are experiencing in the present moment.*
- Remind students to keep their eyes closed and their focus inside themselves. When students speak, remind them not to tell stories or describe ideas, but speak from what is happening right now.
- They can practice listening to other students without judgments or planning what they are going to say.

CLOSURE

- Write about (or draw) what you noticed in yourself as you were talking or listening.
- Consider the following questions:
 - Do you ever feel nervous or uncomfortable when you are talking to other people?
 - Do you ever feel judged or like you have to put on an act?
 - When do you feel most comfortable sharing with others?
 - When are you most able to focus and listen to others?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Where might you try it again? When might it be most well-received?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

While research on the effects of mindfulness on children and teens is still in the early stages, a [2014 meta-analysis](#) that focuses on 24 studies of K-12 students demonstrated changes in students' attention and resilience to stress, including positive emotions, self-esteem, and self-concept. Apart from affecting student well-being, some research studies suggest that mindfulness practices can also [foster curiosity and learning](#).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Many mindfulness practices involve turning inward to observe thoughts, breath patterns, and body sensations. However, this practice also prompts students to turn outward and engage with their peers.

Students may benefit from "Flow and Tell" because they are practicing paying attention paying attention to themselves and others in the present moment—a skill that may ultimately improve their [executive function](#) (e.g., attention, self-control, memory) and [academic achievement](#).

In addition, mindful listening is when we let go of our agendas and ideas to truly hear another person's perspective. The other part of mindful communication is mindful speaking, or speaking authentically. When we can really speak our truth and truly listen, true friendship and connection can thrive.

SOURCE

[Daniel Rechtschaffen](#) at [Mindful Education](#)