



MINDFUL POETRY MOMENTS

"Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before."

—Audre Lorde

OVERVIEW

Each day for a week, the entire school (or classroom) mindfully listens to a 4-minute recording of David Whyte's "Everything is Waiting For You."

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- In the morning, over announcements for the whole school
- During a language arts unit on poetry
- At the beginning of a staff meeting

TIME REQUIRED

- Four minutes per day for five days

LEVEL

- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- Adult

MATERIALS

- links to audio clips (in practice below)
- [PDF Mindful Poetry Moments](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Develop an embodied sense of calm and focus
- Notice the effect of the poem on their mental and emotional state as well as on their perspective about life
- Foster a deep appreciation of the poem

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

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Review the [pdf from Mindful Poetry](#) to familiarize yourself with the poem and poet.
- Before using this practice with students, choose a quiet moment to try it yourself. Each audio file includes an invitation to become ready to listen and a prompt for reflection. Notice how the practice makes you feel.

INSTRUCTIONS

Note: The practice is self-contained in the daily audio files; all instructions given there are also included here for your reference.

DAILY PROMPTS

The first day's recording introduces the poet and the poem, David Whyte's "[Everything is Waiting For You](#)."

- **Day 1 Prompt:** *Let's just settle into this poem. What does it make you think about? How does it make you feel? There's no right or wrong answer—just let this poem tell you a story.*
- **Day 2 Prompt:** *This week we're listening to the poem "Everything is Waiting for You" by David Whyte. So let's get ready to listen. Put your feet on the floor, hands on your lap or on your desk, sit up nice and tall, close or focus your eyes, and find your breath. As you listen, notice where you feel this poem in your body.*

- **Day 3 Prompt:** *Let's get ready to listen to "Everything is Waiting for You" by the poet David Whyte. Put your feet on the floor, hands on your lap or on your desk, sit up nice and tall, close or focus your eyes, and find your breath. When David Whyte reads one of his poems, he often repeats lines in the poem. Listen today for the repetition. Why do you think he does this?*
- **Day 4 Prompt:** *Let's get ready to listen to "Everything is Waiting for You". Put your feet on the floor, hands on your lap or on your desk, sit up nice and tall, close or focus your eyes, and find your breath. In this poem, Whyte is asking us to pay attention to the details of our life. What or who do you want to pay more attention to in your life?*
- **Day 5 Prompt:** *It's our final day to listen to David Whyte's "Everything is Waiting for You". So let's get ready to listen. Put your feet on the floor, hands on your lap or on your desk, sit up nice and tall, close or focus your eyes, and find your breath. Imagine moving through your day with the attitude that everything is waiting for you. Visualize yourself in a world where every object and every person wishes to help you.*

CLOSURE

- Give students time to process the experience, even if just giving them the opportunity to say what they noticed or how they felt.
 - Be sure to allow students to have agency over their responses. For example, if a student doesn't like the poem, suggest they listen again the next day and see if they still feel the same way, or prompt them to notice what happens in their body when they feel dislike. Does their body tense? Breath shorten?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this practice? Do they seem more present or focused? Are their bodies and/or emotions calmer?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

While research on the effectiveness of mindfulness programs in schools is still in the early stages, studies have found that mindfulness may reduce stress in students, increase their [well-being](#), and improve their [attention](#) and executive functioning.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Children face numerous stressors everyday, from school, home, and society, which can negatively impact their learning and development. Giving students an opportunity to take a moment to breathe and mindfully appreciate a poem can ultimately help them to manage their own stress, improving both their academic achievement and personal well-being.

SOURCE

Imagine an entire school—students, teachers and administrators—taking time each morning to turn inward together, listen to a brief mindfulness prompt and to esteemed poets or to world class music. That's [Mindful Music Moments](#), now in more than 100 K-12 schools, camps and social service organizations daily, touching 50,000+ students in a calming and focusing ritual. In the Spring of 2019, a collaboration with the On Being Project allowed the addition of four weeks of Mindful Poetry Moments during National Poetry Month.