

Mindfulness Lessons & Activities

FROM

Jesse Lewis 
Choose Love
Movement

+



Zensational Kids

breath • movement • mindfulness

INTRO TO ZENSATIONAL KIDS MINDFULNESS LESSONS/ACTIVITIES

Along with building knowledge and awareness of social and emotional skills through the Choose Love Program, we have partnered with Zensational Kids to combine the tools of yoga and mindfulness into our curriculum. These additional lesson plans will provide you with avenues to explore breath, movement and mindfulness with your students, as well as for yourself. Research is demonstrating how these specific tools help the nervous system relax, organize and process information, which is not only essential for learning, but also living healthy, happy lives. Yoga and mindfulness have been found to be highly effective practices to help students self-regulate, manage big emotions, focus their attention, and develop resilience. In order to care for the academic welfare of our students, taking an active role in caring for their overall well-being has become paramount in education. Mental health issues are on the rise and helping our students to cope with the trials of life, as well as learning, need to take a front seat in every classroom.

The Zensational Kids Program will provide you with lessons/activities to incorporate short breaks of breath, movement and mindfulness throughout the day. You do not need to be a yoga teacher or a mindfulness instructor to lead your students in these practices however, like anything you teach, it is helpful to have your own working knowledge of the material. The best way to obtain that knowledge is through your own personal exploration of mind/body practices. Although we provide you with a script of what to say, and the materials you will need to complete each activity, the essence of each breath, movement and mindfulness activity is to develop inner trust, compassion, understanding and peace. In order to authentically translate these characteristics in the teachings, it is important for you to embody them as well.

Studies have shown that the best way to teach compassion, is to be compassionate. The best way to teach empathy, is to be empathetic. It is more believable to the student that they can achieve these inner qualities through the practice, if you are working at attaining them as well. Again, you don't need to rush out and complete a 200-hour yoga training. Just take the time to familiarize yourself with and practice these activities before teaching them to your students. And just approaching these activities with enthusiasm, integrity and an open mind will make all the difference.

We want you to know that the Choose Love Movement and Zensational Kids feel that your life is of great importance as well. It is imperative that along with taking care of these children, you take care of you. We suggest starting with just 5 minutes a day to explore the suggested activities. Notice what feels right to you and stick with it for a few days, a week, a month, or longer. The main thing is, to find something that helps you to feel more relaxed and at ease. Notice if the practice helps to reduce the sensations of stress in your body and your mind. As you continue with even

short daily practices, you will boost your own resilience. And have fun exploring other mindfulness activities. There are many great videos and resources on the web. We hope that within it all, you also gain a sense of self-compassion and deep appreciation for all that you do. We don't always receive this recognition externally, but we can always provide it for ourselves. This is why you must cultivate this awareness for yourself.

Wishing you a school year of happiness, love and kindness,

Allison Morgan

Zensational Kids

26 Highland Road, Montvale, NJ 07645

(201) 446-0353 | zensationalkids.com



MINDFUL BODY BREAKS

Mountain Pose

This is a great posture to come to when ever you have your class stand to move to another activity, get in line, get their lunch, etc.

It brings awareness into the body and breath and gives them an opportunity to notice their own control before they have some freedom to move about the room.

Educator say,

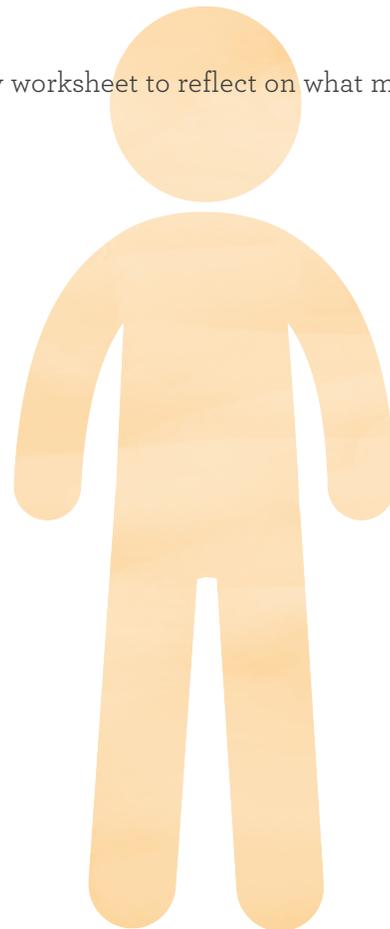
“Mountains are tall, steady and strong. Stand tall with your feet on the ground, placed a bit apart. Imagine that your feet are the bottom part of the mountain and your head is the top. Maybe it is even covered in snow while the bottom is like a hot desert. Some mountains are very tall. How tall are you?”

“Notice how secure your feet are while your head reaches for the sun.”

“Relax your arms by your side, with your palms facing forward.”

“This is your mountain pose. Take a few breaths here as you stay steady, strong, tall and calm, just like a mountain.”

Students can use the accompanying Mountain Pose Activity worksheet to reflect on what makes them feel grounded, strong, steady, and calm.



Volcano of Kindness

This is an exercise to use as a transition to help de-stress, and re-energize.

Educator say,



“Stand tall in your mountain pose: feet on the floor. Make sure you have room to move your arms side to side without touching your friends.”

“This is a magic volcano that does not erupt lava. Instead, it sends out kind wishes and thoughts to everyone.”

“Imagine that your mountain pose was about to transform into a volcano. Begin by shaking your hands. Let the vibration of the volcano energy move up your arms, into your shoulders, your belly and then legs. Shake everything, even your head as the volcano boils and brews.”

Count to 10 slowly as the class has an opportunity to shake as much as possible to stir up all of its magic potion.

“As the volcano prepares to erupt, stop shaking. Bring your palms together at the center of your body. Take a deep breath in and tighten every part of your body. While you are breathing in, think of the kind thought or feeling you would like to share with your entire class.”

“Count to 3, as you press your hands together, then forcefully exhale through your mouth, as you reach your pressed palms to the sky, then spread your arms out to the side as you spray the kind thoughts and feelings in an arc over your head. At the end of your exhale your arms return back down to your side.”

“Bring your palms back together. One eruption is never enough. Now think of the kindness you would like to share with your entire school. Inhale pushing your palms together and tightening your entire body. Count to 3 and explode again.”

“Eruption #3 will have to reach much farther. Let’s send this out to our entire town. Repeat the breath and movement.”

“How about sending this kindness out to the world?”

“Now come back to your mountain pose and close your eyes. How does it feel to have shared so much kindness to those that are close by and those that are far away?”

“How does it feel to receive the kindness that your classmates shared?”

“Do you think your classroom will have more energy of kindness today?”

Ask students to write down their thoughts of kindness using the accompanying Volcano of Kindness Activity worksheet.

Peaceful Warrior

This is a great pose to share with the class when they are about to take on a challenge. This can be learning a new unit where you really need them to focus. It may be before they stand in front of the class and give a report or maybe it is before they work in pairs and one person usually takes over the project. Boost everyone's confidence with a few warrior breaths and affirmations.

Educator say,

“Warriors get their strength from inner wisdom, courage and kindness. This is not only kindness to others, but also to themselves. Sometimes our snarky monkey mind can get pretty nasty. When it does, we feel less capable, and it is harder to excel in the things we are interested in. Let's use our peaceful warrior pose to help boost our inner and outer wisdom and courage by saying kind, powerful things to ourselves.”

“To get into our warrior pose, stand up and separate your feet a bit greater than the width of your hips. Turn the toes of your right foot out to the right. Bend your right knee while you keep your left knee straight. Inhale your arms out to the side so they come parallel to the floor. Look over your right fingers. Take a deep breath in and either say out loud, or as a quiet whisper or silently, ‘I am strong, I am proud, I am safe. I am brave.’ What else can you think of that makes you feel good?”

“Now strike your warrior pose on the other side, turning to the left. Any affirmations to add? Perhaps you say the same thing or something else that makes you feel confident, strong and courageous.”

Use the accompanying Peaceful Warrior Worksheet.



Big Oak Tree

This is a practice you can do at any time. It is helpful for cultivating inner strength and the ability to manage big emotions that make us feel out of control.

Educator say,

“Let’s start in our mountain pose. But for now, let’s imagine we have become a big oak tree. We are an old and wise tree, so our roots dive deep into the earth. We are extremely tall as well.”

“Take a big breath in and reach your arms towards the sun. Feel your strength in this pose. Your roots anchor you into the ground as your branches reach for the sky.”

“Are there times when you feel like a big oak tree? Steady, safe, secure, strong, proud?”

“Imagine a huge gust of wind comes, as if a storm was brewing. As you inhale, lean back and as you exhale bow gently forward. Continue with this front and back movement using your breath to guide you. You can exhale through your mouth and make the sound of a gust of wind as well.”

Repeat 5 times

“Come to the center and gently lean side to side. Inhale as you reach to the sky, exhale as you lean to the side.” *Repeat 5 times*

“Come to the center again and inhale your arms out into a “T” position. Rotate your body side to side using your breath in each direction of the twist.” *Repeat 5 times*

“Are there times that you feel like this big oak tree getting tossed around in all different directions? Perhaps it is when you are mad, or scared, or overwhelmed.”

“As you are moving with your breath in each direction, notice how your feet stay steady and secure into the ground. Notice how your branches can bend in all different directions without breaking off. You are just like this big oak tree. There are things that come and go and perhaps make us feel like we are being tossed by a big storm or big emotions or big situations. We can always find our balance and calm strength by remembering that we can bend, but don’t break. We can use our flexible body and mind to blow with the changing breeze of the storm, but it does not have to pull up our roots and knock us over.”

Use the accompanying Big Oak Tree Activity worksheet to help students think about what makes them feel safe and secure and what makes them feel like they are in the middle of a storm.

Stretch Breath

Educator say,

“This can be done seated or standing. Imagine that you are holding something stretchy in your hands. It can be a giant rubber band, pizza dough, putty, anything that stretches, but doesn’t break. Let’s start with a giant rubberband.”

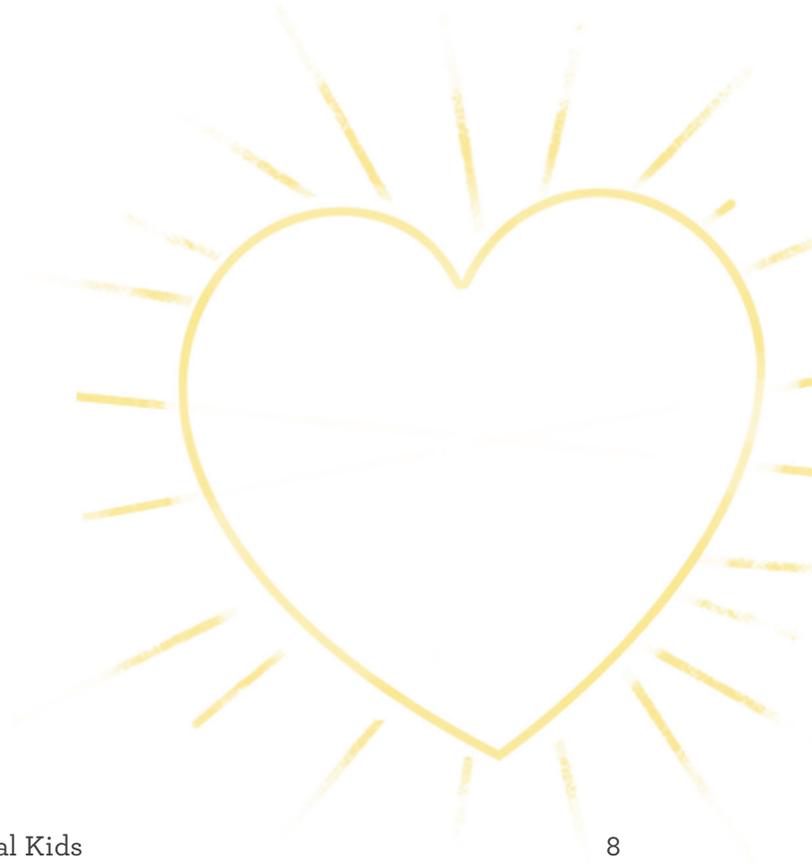
“Hold it in your hands and use your breath to pull it apart. As you breathe in, stretch your arms out to the sides, pulling your rubber band in both directions. As you exhale, the band pulls your hands back to the middle of your body (your starting position).”

“Inhale again, but this time, pull your arms apart in a different direction. Perhaps one arm reaches towards the sky and the other the floor. You decide. Each inhale pulls the band to make it long and thin. Each exhale pulls the band back to the starting position.”

“How long can you stretch your breath and the band?”

“Can you control your breath as you exhale, slowly bringing your hands back to the middle of your body?”

“Perhaps you enjoy having the band pull your hands back and you exhale quickly. You decide. Notice how moving you’re the band slowly and quickly may feel different.”



Rainbow Breath

Educator say,

“Stand or sit in your mountain pose with your arms resting by your sides. Fist your hands, but leave your thumb pointing out to the sides. Slowly inhale, imagining the color red filling your entire body from your feet, all the way up to the top of your head. As you are inhaling, keep your arms straight as you slowly lift your arms out to the sides and then over your head.”

“As your arms are reaching towards the sky, bring your thumbs to meet directly over your head. Once they touch, open your hands wide. Exhale as you float your extended arms back down to your sides, creating an arc of the color red all around you.”

“Imagine that you are surrounded by this arcing color red that is protecting you. No one can see the arc of color, but you can feel it and know it’s there protecting you and giving you this safe energy.”

Every color of the rainbow has a different energy and meaning. You can share all of the colors of the rainbow with your class, completing each one together, or perhaps you read them the list and let them choose what they feel they need that day and let them repeat that one color 3-4 times.

Red is the color of safety and protection

Orange is the color of being creative

Yellow is the color for inner power

Green is the color of compassion and kindness

Blue is the color of truth and honesty

Purple is the color of inner wisdom

At the end of this activity, give them a moment or two to imagine being surrounded by this arcing color protecting them. Let them know that although no one else can see the color, they can personally feel it and they will know it is there with them giving them a certain energy that corresponds with the color. For instance, the arc of orange gives them protection and creative energy. The arc of purple protects them with inner wisdom. Have students draw a picture of themselves and the rainbow or arc of color that is surrounding them. They can write the words used to describe what energy is surrounding them and how they feel. Younger students can just draw a rainbow.

BREATHING BRAKES

Educator say,

“Imagine riding in a car, or a train or on a bike that is traveling so fast that it feels out of control. When that happens, what can the driver do to gain control and slow things down? They apply the brakes.”

“Have you ever felt like you were moving too fast, or your body couldn’t settle? Or you were very upset and you had a hard time calming down? Or perhaps your mind was racing so much that you couldn’t focus on one thing at a time? Our mouth sometimes rambles as well. We say things that we wish we didn’t say, but seem to just slip out. Have any of those things ever happened to you?”

Allow a few minutes for reflection and discussion.

“Just like the car, the train and the bike, we have a brake system as well.”

“We can use our breath to slow us down so that we can gain control over our body and how we move, our brain and the thoughts in our head, our feelings, and our words.”

“Let’s practice applying our brakes.”

“Sit comfortably and place one hand on your heart and the other on your belly. Make sure your feet are on the floor. Close your eyes and begin to notice your breath and the movement of your hands as you breathe.”

“Feel your body and mind relax with each slow inhale and exhale. Feel your heart and belly move and know that by slowing down your breath, you are safe and you are in control of you. Keep breathing here for a few more breaths.”

To bring the class out of this mindful activity say,

“Take a deep breath in together, and a slow breath out. Notice how your body and mind feel right now. Slowly open your eyes.”

“The key to using your brakes effectively is to know when you need to apply them. It is OK to stop when you notice the sensations of becoming out of control in your body, mind, feelings or words. You can use your breathing brakes anywhere and anytime of the day or night. You get to decide. The more you practice using your brakes, the quicker they will help you to slow down, re-group and gain your personal control.”

You may have students fill out the accompanying worksheet to finish this lesson.

GIVE YOURSELF A HAND HAND MASSAGE

Educator Say,

“We all experience stress and overwhelm and it can happen at any time of the day and any place we go. It is helpful to have a few quick tricks up your sleeve to help you relax and be calm so you can quiet the protective, primitive brain and get that human, compassionate brain back in the game.”

“Acupressure is an ancient practice where you are able to affect one part of your body through pressure points on other parts of your body. It follows the same principles as acupuncture.”

“There are over 25 pressure points in your hands. Here are some ways to get started.”

“Simply rub your hands together until they become hot. As you rub them briskly back and forth, apply a little pressure into the palms as well. This creates a bit of friction and a bit more heat. After a few seconds, stop rubbing and separate your hands about an inch apart. Close your eyes and notice the sensation between your palms.”

“What does it feel like?”

“How does the sensation change as you slowly pull your palms apart another inch?”

“Allow them to move closer together again. How does that feel?”

Allow a few minutes for practice and reflection. Then continue,

“Massage your hand. Begin in the fleshy space between your thumb and pointer finger. This is called the hand valley point. This acupressure point is said to help relieve stress as well as relieve the pain associated with migraines, headaches, tension in the neck and shoulders and toothache. It also helps to release excess heat from the body. This can often occur when we are very angry and frustrated.”

“Apply pressure or simply massage the chunky muscle at the base of your thumb. This is the muscle that often fatigues or cramps when you do a lot of writing. While applying pressure or massaging, notice your breath. See if it becomes more relaxed and deeper.”

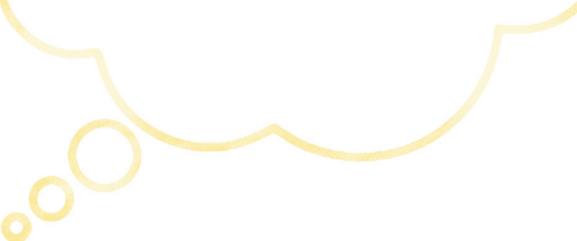
“Apply pressure to the tips of each finger. Squeeze the nail and the fleshy pad of each digit. This helps to turn on your thinking brain so you can come up with some creative ideas, or focus your attention to learn something new.”

Allow your students to play in with this space between their hands. Cue them to use their breath to inhale and separate their hands and exhale as they draw back towards each other.

After a minute or so, allow the students to describe their sensations and what they noticed with this exercise. They may even continue to do these exercises with a partner or in small groups.



MONKEY MIND



Some vocabulary for this lesson:

Monkey Mind – thoughts moving in and out of your awareness

Chatter Brakes (see Brakes lesson) – The point of your greatest awareness as you are breathing. This can be the part of your body that fills with air, the feeling of the air as it enters through your nose, the sound of the breath, etc.

Educator say,

“Have you ever noticed that there is a little voice inside your head? It tends to get very chatty sometimes. It’s sort of like having a monkey living in your mind, isn’t it? Of course that is not true. There is no silly monkey between your ears. That would be ridiculous. Well, if there is no monkey living inside your mind, who’s voice is that chatting and chatting away?”

“Have you ever noticed that the little voice inside your head interrupts and distracts you sometimes? It can happen when you are reading a book, hanging out with your friends, eating dinner with your family, or just going for a walk. All of a sudden, the little monkey voice says, ‘Some potatoes chips would be really nice right now. I wonder what my friend Dillon is doing right now. I can’t wait to go the park later..’ There can be a river of thoughts that fill your head throughout the day. Perhaps that little voice is interrupting you right now.”

“So, what is this voice in your head anyway? Why is it there?”

“The voice is simply your thoughts. Our brain is designed to keep us busy and the best way it can do that is by filling us up with thoughts. Our thoughts are not necessarily good or bad, right or wrong, they are just thoughts. They only have a significant meaning, if we allow them to.”

“Sometimes, we can get really upset because we think that every thought we have is true. This can really hurt our feelings because some of our thoughts can be sort of mean. Have you ever heard that voice in your head say things like, ‘You will never be good at this.’, ‘That is too hard.’, ‘I’ll never make the team.’ ”

“Just because the thought was in your head, it doesn’t make it true, but because it was in our head, we start to believe it is true. Now what about the really good thoughts that we have? You know the thoughts and the voice that says, ‘You can do it! You are really good at this game. You are really smart. You don’t need to be scared because you are safe.’ Now those thoughts are

helpful. They help us to feel good, strong and confident. I like to think of those kinds of thoughts as ‘the keepers,’ whereas the negative and hurtful thoughts are the ‘garbage.’”

“Here is the neat thing about all of these thoughts that stream in and out of your brain. YOU get to pick which you want to keep and which get thrown away. They are only true, if you want them to be. You have control over that pesky monkey. Only you and no one else. Let’s try a little practice.”

“Sit comfortably in your seat, with your spine long and proud. You need to show this monkey who is boss. Relax your body and notice your breath moving in and out of your body. Keep your focus on your breath. Maybe you hear the air moving in and out of your body. Perhaps you feel your body expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out. Keep your focus on your anchor. You will notice that thoughts may begin to stream in. Just notice them. That is all. Then go back to your anchor. Allow yourself to notice all the thoughts that come in, but continue to return to your breath, holding your attention on your anchor.”

Continue this for 1-3 minutes depending on how the class is responding to the lesson.

To bring the class out of this mindfulness activity say,

“Take a deep breath in together, and a slow breath out. Notice how your body and mind feel right now. Slowly open your eyes.”

Students can fill out the accompanying Monkey Mind worksheet to write down all of the thoughts that entered their mind during that activity. Just make a quick list. Take out red, green and blue colored pens, crayons or markers.

“Place a red check mark next to all of the thoughts that you would really like to toss in the garbage. These are the negative thoughts that don’t help you feel good, confident, kind and safe. Place a green mark next to all of the thoughts that are ‘keepers’. These are thoughts that make you smile, feel relaxed and happy. Place a blue check next to any thought that was sort of irrelevant, neutral, or had no real significance at all.”

You can have the class share by pairing students up into dyads or small groups, or have them share as a class. This opens great discussion and awareness of where our minds tend to focus and begins to give students an awareness of how they can choose their thoughts with greater skill.

PARTNER POSES

Try each pose individually first and then move to partners. For the Mirror/mirror activity, play some soft music. Have students remain in their seat, close their eyes and have the music move their hands in different directions.

DOUBLE DANCER

I am trusting

Educator say,

“Face your partner and connect your right palm to your partner’s right palm. Both partners bend their left knee and hold their left ankle with your left hand. Breathe in and lift your left leg behind you. Can you look at each other without laughing? Can you send a gentle smile to your friend? If you seem to wobble, look out in front of you at something that isn’t moving. Try it on the other side now. Is one side easier for you or your partner? How does it feel to be able to trust in a classmate?”

FOREST FRIENDS

I am supportive

Educator say,

“You are each going to be a tall tree in the forest and you will be connected to each other by vines. Stand next to your partner, facing the same direction. Allow your hands in between you to touch palm to palm. This connection is the vine. You may have to adjust how close you are standing next to each other.”

“Lift your outside foot and place it against your standing leg. You can place it by your ankle, below your knee, or above your knee. Choose a spot that is comfortable for you so that you can balance. You and your partner should be looking at something that isn’t moving. This will help you balance.”

“Can you and your partner take 5 breaths together without falling over? Help each other stay tall and strong. Provide support for each other. Don’t push and don’t pull. You need to help each other equally, otherwise you both fall over.”

Try this with a bigger group. Maybe even with the entire class.

Educator say,

“Can you send supportive thoughts to all of your peers so that everyone can stay together and create a strong forest? Feel courageous and grateful for this connection and support.”

MIRROR MIRROR *I am helpful*

Educator say,

“Sit or stand facing your partner. Bring your palms to meet their palms. One partner will be the mirror and the other the reflection. The mirror begins to move slowly while the reflection follows. Begin with your hands and arms, moving to the sides and up and down. The idea is to stay together so notice how fast or slow the mirror can move in order for your movements to stay in unison. Once you get the hang of it, try a facial expression, or moving your whole body.”

“Mirror: Notice how your partner is following your movements. Can you adjust your speed and direction in order to help them gain success in following you?”

“Reflection: How does it feel to move the way another person directs? Is it difficult to stay with them?”

“How did it feel to be connected to a classmate in this way?”



THE ANCHOR

Educator say,

“You know how a sailor will use an anchor to stop their ship from floating all over the sea? They drop an anchor when they want to “park” their boat and let it rest so they can enjoy the scenery, or perhaps fish. They drop the anchor so that the boat doesn’t float all over the ocean.”

“There are times when we are like a boat too. We travel throughout our day moving from one adventure to another. Sometimes it is nice to stop and enjoy the scenery, or just take a rest from the fast pace of our lives. We have our own kind of anchor that allows us to be steady and rest safely. We actually take this anchor with us wherever we go so we can use it whenever we need to. Our anchor is our breath.”

“Let’s get into our breathing position by putting our feet on the floor. Take a big breath in through our nose and hold it for a second. Then slowly let it out. Do that a few more times breathing in and out through the nose.”

“Try exhaling 1-2 times through the mouth.”

“Do that a few more times breathing in and out through the nose. What part of your body felt that breath the most? Was it your nose, as the air moved in and out? Was it your chest, or belly, or ribs as the air filled you up?”

“Try this a few times and notice for yourself, where you feel your breath. For everyone, it is a different spot. The part of your body that you feel the breath the most, is your anchor, so allow yourself the time to investigate where that is.”

“It may help to do this with your eyes closed so you can feel the air move in and out of your body a bit more.”

Allow the students to explore this for 1-3 minutes, depending on their level of attention for this activity.

To bring the class out of this mindfulness activity, say,

“Take a deep breath in together, and a slow breath out. Notice how your body and mind feel right now. Slowly open your eyes.”

“Did everyone find their anchor?”

Allow students to share where they felt their anchor. Let them know that they can ‘drop’ their anchor to help them steady, rest and feel safe, anytime of the day and anywhere they may go throughout the day. You may have students fill out the accompanying Anchor worksheet as part of this activity.

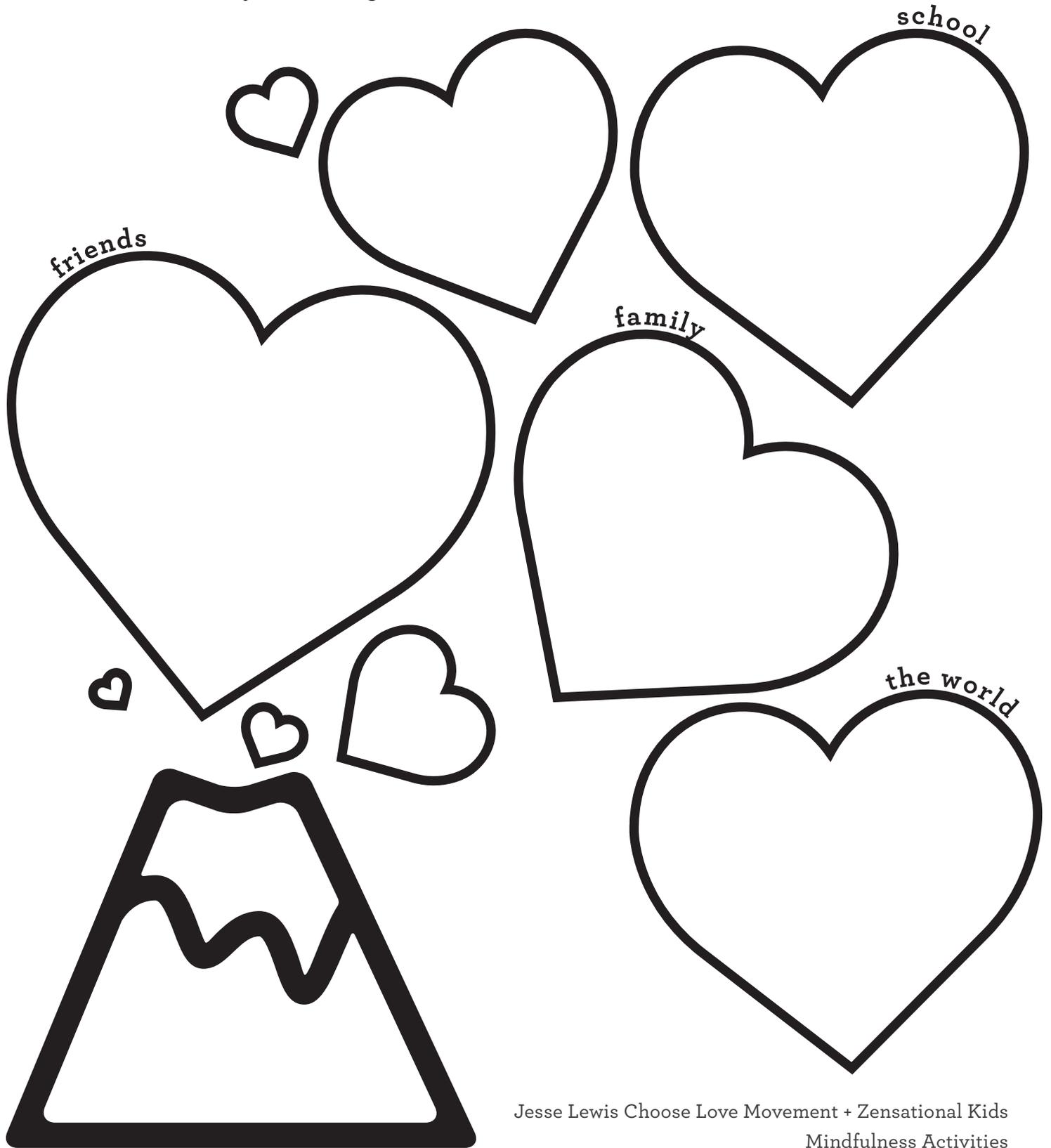
MOUNTAIN POSE ACTIVITY

What makes you feel grounded, strong, steady, and calm?



VOLCANO OF KINDNESS ACTIVITY

Write down your thoughts of kindness to share with...



I am
proud.
I am safe.

I am strong.

I am brave.

PEACEFUL WARRIOR ACTIVITY

Fill the warrior with more affirmations.



**What makes you feel like you
are in the middle of a storm?**

**What makes you feel
safe and secure?**

BIG OAK TREE ACTIVITY

Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement + Zensational Kids
Mindfulness Activities

BREATHING BRAKES ACTIVITY

My car is out of control when

Body _____

Mind _____

I feel _____

I say _____

When I put on my brakes

Body _____

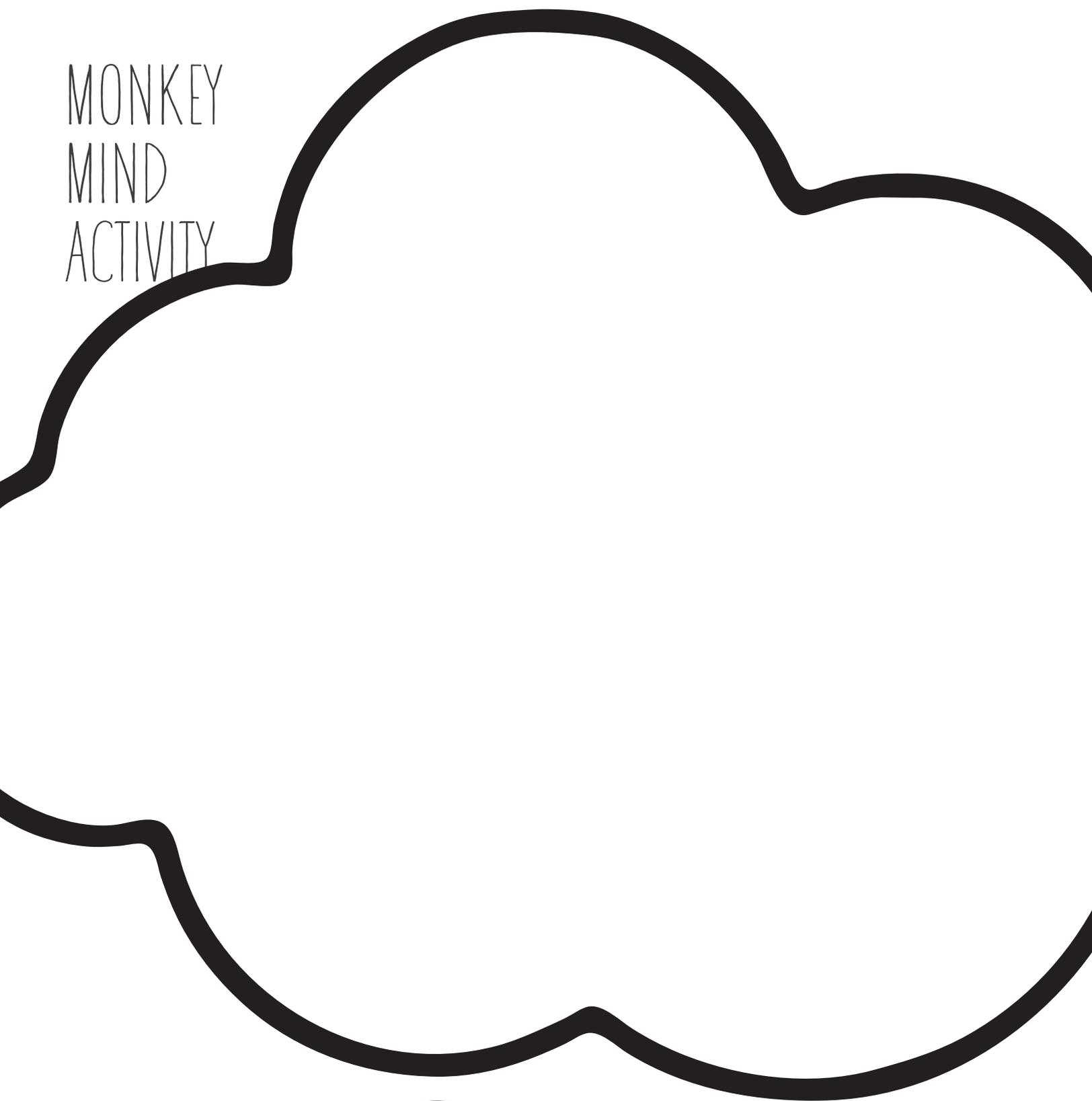
Mind _____

I feel _____

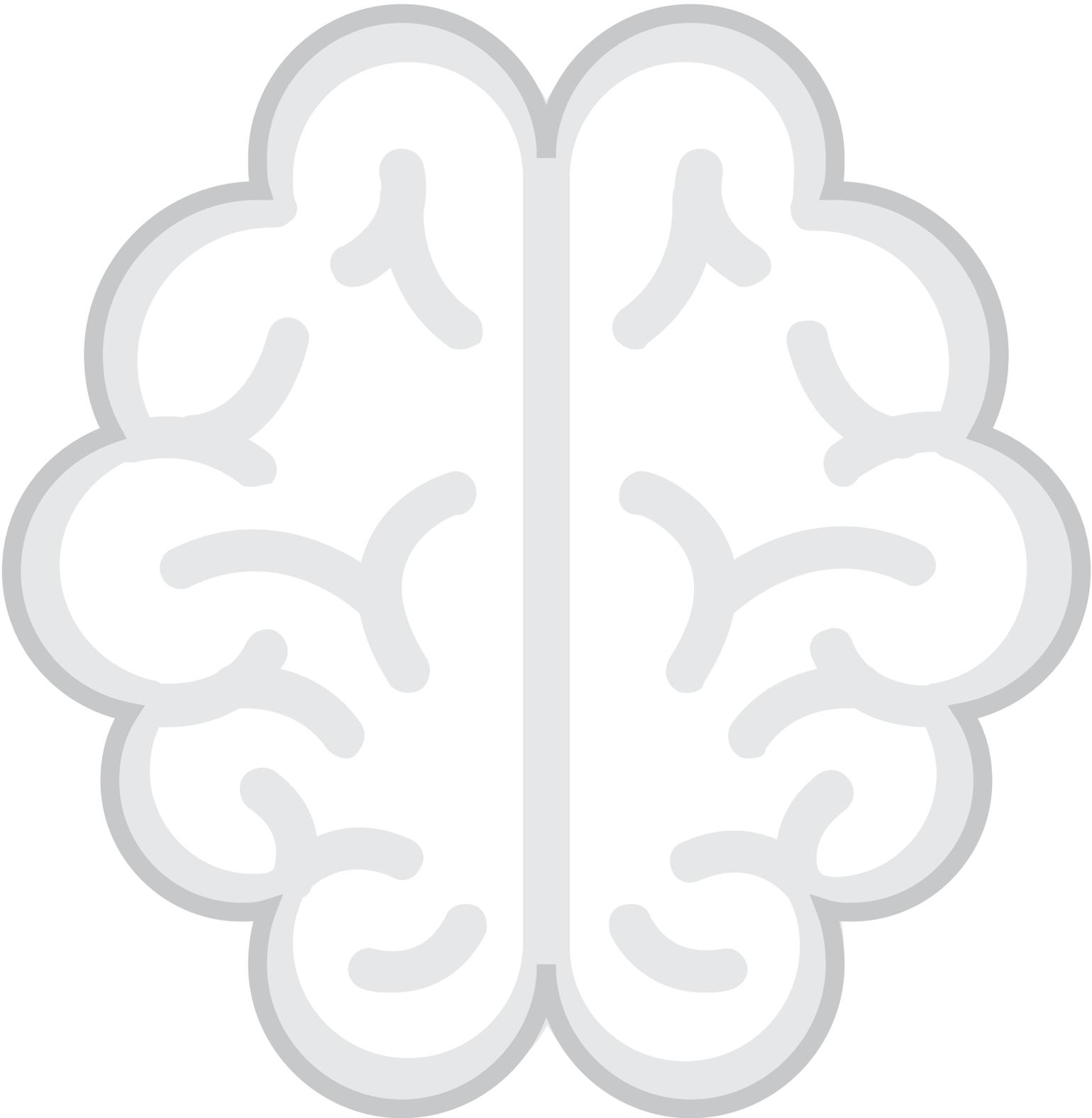
I say _____



MONKEY
MIND
ACTIVITY



MONKEY MIND ACTIVITY



ANCHOR ACTIVITY

How did you feel after the exercise?

examples: calm, quiet, tired, relaxed, happy

When could you use your anchor breath?

examples: before a test, when you get mad, if you are sad or scared

Color in the point in the body and down the anchor where you felt the breath.

