

# Parent / Teacher Guide

Being present with uncomfortable feelings

## Beach Day Blues for Wally



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I am thankful and grateful for how this book has come into your hands and for taking the time to read, contemplate and share it with others.

-Cindy Olejar

**May this book,  
and with whomever you read it with,  
deepen your presence and connections.**

**This book can teach children and adults a life long skill that can cultivate resilience, gratitude, compassion, contentment, peace and love.**

**The key is to practice consistently observing your breath regularly. Doing this a little each day can be more beneficial than doing the breath practice longer once or twice a week.**

### **Tips for the Practice**

**1. Read the book often and talk about how to apply the tool of observing one's breath to other situations when the child experiences uncomfortable sensations, such as worry, fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, sadness, grief, resentment, etc.**

**2. Have your child, and you can model this along with them, practice observing their breath at least twice a day for one to two minutes or longer if desired. To create a life long habit of this you could practice every morning and every evening. You could also practice before every meal.**

**Be creative and have fun with this!**

**\*This practice may not help a child who is overwhelmed with an uncomfortable feeling at first but there is a carry over effect that can happen with a consistent practice of observing the breath that can bring an increase of awareness over time to uncomfortable feelings before they become overwhelming. When aware, you now have the ability to understand the intention or purpose of your choice and make a different choice than before if you want to.**

## Here are a few ways to read this book

1. Read the whole book first without asking any questions until the end.
2. Read the book without asking any questions and then ask the child what he or she got out of the book. Read the book frequently to see if new insights or questions arise.
3. Pick one or two questions from the list of questions below before reading the book to focus on and discuss.
4. As you read the book you can stop at a certain page and ask the questions outlined below that follow the pages of the book.

**After reading the book, when your child or student experiences uncomfortable feelings and or faces a challenging situation you can ask,**

**“What would Wally do?”**

This question can be a reference for the child or student to remember to use the tool of observing the breath non-judgmentally to help them become more calm, which can help to regulate their nervous system. Once the child or student is more relaxed and calm they can tune into any wisdom that may come up to keep them calm and at peace.

They are tuning into learning what their needs are with what is available in the present moment. One thing to note is that if the wisdom does not bring value to all, this insight is not wisdom. If that is the case, they can continue to observe their breath. This helps to deepen relaxation, which can help bring forth their choices that will bring value to all because it will be coming from a state of peace rather than from fear.

## **Possible Questions to ask Before, During or After Reading the Book**

Before reading the book you could discuss what being present is and is not, what the difference is between uncomfortable and comfortable feelings, or what nonjudgmental and judgmental means. You could also do this after reading the book too.

### **What is being present?**

Being present is when you are not waiting for the next moment to be better.

Being present, or presence, is when you accept what is happening without judgment. You look at what is occurring like a neutral witness, a neutral bystander.

This does not mean you have to agree with what is happening, it just means you are noticing what is going on without trying to fix or control what you are not able to control, like nature or another person.

Your superpower, what you have control with, is in how you show up to the situation. When you don't judge the situation you can see more clearly what your choices are in how you can show up and bring value to the situation.

### **What is being present vs not being present?**

#### **How do you know when you are not present?**

- What are you doing or not doing?
- What are you thinking or not thinking?
- What words are you saying or not saying?
- How does your body feel when not present?

When not present you may be worried about the future, fearful of the past, have judgments of others, compare others and yourself, say hurtful words, complain, feel angry, hurt, frustrated, anxious, overwhelmed, you may bully yourself or others, or not own or take responsibility of your feelings and actions.

### **How do you know when you are present?**

- What are you doing or not doing?
- What are you thinking or not thinking?
- What words are you saying or not saying?
- How does your body feel when present?

When present you may feel calm, content, accepting, nonjudgmental, humble, open, aware, alert, loving, kind and peaceful. Your actions and words bring value to not just yourself but to others to.

Each person can make a list of attributes of when they are not present and when they are present and post this on a wall. You can revisit the list periodically to see if anyone wants to add or change anything too as learning to be present takes practice and the more practice the more it becomes a habit.

When I am present I . . .

When I am not present I . . . .

### **What is an uncomfortable feeling/sensation vs a comfortable feeling/sensation?**

#### **What is an example of an uncomfortable feeling?**

-How do you know the feeling is uncomfortable?

-How does your body feel when there is an uncomfortable feeling? See if you can describe the sensation in the body, such it feels heavy, knotted, sharp, pulsing, tight, hard, etc.

What thoughts do you have when you feel uncomfortable?

### **What is an example of a comfortable feeling?**

-How do you know when the feeling is comfortable?

-How does your body feel when there is a comfortable feeling? See if you can describe how the body feels, such as light, flowing, smooth, fluffy, warm, etc.

What thoughts do you have when you feel comfortable?

Are uncomfortable feelings wrong or bad to have? Why or why not?

Uncomfortable feelings are not wrong or bad. They have great messages. They can be a reminder that you are not present. You may be worrying about the future or fearing the past or trying to control something you can't control.

The uncomfortable feelings can be a message that something is wanting your loving and kind attention.

The uncomfortable feelings could be an alert for you to process something, make a request to someone or to take action for change that brings value to you, others and the situation.

### **What does judgmental vs nonjudgmental mean?**

#### **What does it mean to be judgmental?**

An opinion of something or someone, negative or positive, that is not necessarily factual or true. It is a perceived thought that is usually derived from one's beliefs, expectations and experiences.

What are some examples of judging someone or something?

## **What does it mean to be nonjudgmental?**

Observing someone or something without adding an opinion, interpretation, expectation, comparison, measurement, or label to it.

What does it mean to watch and observe without any judgments? It means to be a neutral witness to what is happening; observing without having a positive or negative opinion. Aware of what is happening as it is, without any filters, without any biases.

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## **Other Questions to Pose and Discuss Before, During or After Reading**

**These questions sequentially follow the pages of the book**

What does it mean to be eager? What are other words that mean to be eager? Yearning, longing, hopeful, aching, wishing, impatient, excited, anxious, etc.

Are you or have you ever been eager or excited for something?

What are you or were you eager or excited for?

What does or did the eagerness or excitement feel like in your body?

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Have you ever had a hard time falling asleep because you were eager or excited about something? If so, how were you eventually able to get to sleep? Thoughts can influence how we feel. When we can watch our thoughts without hooking into them we can learn to not get hooked and pulled into them. We can learn which thoughts we want to give attention to and which ones we don't want to give attention to.



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Have you ever had plans canceled that you were excited for?

-What were the plans that got canceled?

-How did you feel when you learned the plan was canceled?

-How did your breath and body feel? Tense, loose, heavy, light, etc?

-What were you able to control with the situation?

-What were you not able to control with the situation?

-What would you do the same next time or when you are in a similar situation?

-What would you do differently next time or when you are in a similar situation?

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What does it mean to be physically active? It means to use, move or exercise your body. What are some examples of being physically active? Playing tag, swimming, skating, running, basketball, yoga, walking, tennis, dancing, etc.

Why would Wally feel tired if he had not been doing anything physically active? Negative thinking and having worried and fearful thoughts can drain and tire a person out mentally because the energy used for this stressful thinking can overwhelm and tax the nervous system, the system that helps to regulate and keep you calm. If you are stressed out often your nervous system does not have time to rest and rejuvenate.

Do you remember a time when you were tired and you had not been physically active? What were you thinking about?

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What does complaining and judging about someone or something limit or stop you from? Complaining and judging others can get

you stuck in only seeing the negative aspects of something rather than seeing things as they are, or seeing the positive aspects of the situation, or being grateful for what is here.

Complaining can also get you stuck in not finding or seeing peaceful choices and can limit you from coming up with creative ideas to the situation that will bring value to you and others.

Have you ever been around a relaxed dog or cat? If so, how did you know the dog or cat was relaxed?

How does it feel to be around someone who is relaxed, calm and peaceful?

How do you know when you are relaxed?

How do you know when you are not relaxed?

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What did paying attention to his breath do for Wally? Shifting his focus on his breath got him out of thinking and into the now, into the present moment, where he could see what was available, including his choices, in the now more clearly.

Close your eyes and notice how you are breathing right now without judging your breath. Just observe your breath neutrally, like a neutral bystander or witness, non-judgmentally.

-What do you notice about how you are breathing?

-By just watching your breath non-judgmentally, did anything shift or change with your breath, body or feelings? If so, what?

-Why do you think your breath changes by just watching it?

Now open your eyes and as you continue to calmly and relaxingly focus on your breathing, can you notice anything here differently than you did before?

Notice how you are feeling right now without judging the feeling. Notice the feeling sensation without labeling it.

If you observe the feeling without trying to change the feeling, what happens to the feeling?

If the feeling faded, why do you think it did so?

Why did Wally feel sad and angry after seeing the beach towel on his chair? Wally began thinking again of what he could not have and what he could not control.

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What are distracting thoughts? Distracting thoughts can be negative thoughts that get you out of being present. They can also be thoughts that try to control something you can't control. Distracting thoughts get you out of being present and over time can often times drain a person mentally.

How can you not be distracted by thoughts? By observing your breath you can get out of thinking and into being present more.

Are distracting thoughts bad to have? No, distracting and negative thoughts can be great messages that can tell you what is needing your loving and kind attention.

How did continuing to pay attention to his breath when he looked out the window help Wally?

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When Wally and his friend Mark went outside to play, how were they being present?

How do creative ideas come to you?

Have you ever come up with a new idea that you had not heard before?

When and how do your best ideas come?

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What does Wally's dad mean when he says to Wally, "Looks like you found a way to be at peace with the rain day"? That Wally had accepted that the rain was happening. This helped Wally see what his choices in the present moment were more clearly.

Once Wally was able to acknowledge that the rain was actually happening and that he could not change the weather he discovered how to be with the rain in a way that was peaceful and brought value to the situation.

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What does Wally mean when Wally said he welcomed the rain? He accepted that the rain was here and that he was not going to be able to stop the rain.

Rather than expend unneeded negative and draining energy by complaining about the rain or arguing with the rain or judging the rain badly, Wally acknowledged that, yes, the rain is happening, and now he can either continue to be negative about the rain or he could find another way to experience the present moment with the rain.

What is another word or phrase that means welcome? Accept, acknowledge, notice neutrally, be aware of. This does not mean

you have to agree with what is happening, it just means you are not trying to ignore, resist or deny that it is happening.

When you welcome, accept and are aware of what is happening then what to do can come from peace rather than from fear. When responding and acting from peace it will bring value to all.

What does Wally mean when he says he started to see what was here? Rather than focusing on what he could not have, Wally started to see what was available in the present moment.

How did Wally start to see what was here? He stopped thinking about what he could not have and instead was able to be aware of what was in the present.

How did Wally become present?

What would you do on a rainy day?

How are you welcoming the present moment?

- How does your body feel?
- How does your breath feel?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What thoughts are you having?

If you are uncomfortable right now in the present moment, what do you think Wally would do if he felt the uncomfortable feeling you are experiencing? What would you do?

Does your idea bring positive value to you and others or does your idea affect yourself or others negatively?

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On the last page of the book why is the cat not on the bed with Wally? This symbolizes that Wally has discovered how to find peace from within rather than needing his peace to come from the beach or other external item.

What do you notice about the weather on the last page? Just like weather continually changes so do our thoughts and feelings.

Notice how often your thoughts and feelings change in a day, a week, a month and a year.

Are your thoughts different today than they were yesterday or even from this morning? Are your feelings different today than they were yesterday or from this morning?

## Other Thought Provoking Questions

What did you learn from Wally?

What did you learn from Murphy the cat?

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Do you have to be lying down to observe your breath? No, that is just one way to do it.

Do you have to have your eyes closed to observe your breath? No, you can also observe your breath with your eyes open or closed.

Do you have to be by yourself to observe your breath? No, you can also observe your breath while you talk to someone and while you listen to someone else or when you are engaged in an activity like doing your homework or brushing your teeth, etc.

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Did Wally's sister, Amy, and his brother, Donny, seem as upset about not being able to go to the beach as Wally was?

Why do you think Wally's sister and brother were not as upset? We all have likes and dislikes, and we each may have different likes and dislikes. Maybe Amy and Donny were not as upset as Wally was because they did not like going to the beach as much as Wally does.

Or maybe Amy and Donny were also unhappy, like Wally was about not being able to go to the beach, but they did not let their negative thinking control them. They were able to accept how they felt and then see what was here for them in the present moment with the change of the weather.

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Do uncomfortable feelings always stay around? No, you are not your feelings, you experience feelings. Feelings will come and they will also go. You are the witness of feelings. Instead of saying “I am sad” or “I am angry”, instead see what happens when you say, “I am experiencing sadness” and “I am experiencing anger.”

Do comfortable feelings always stay around? No, these feelings also come and go.

Why is it helpful to know that uncomfortable and comfortable feelings come and go? This helps to know because the uncomfortable feelings will eventually fade and it helps to not cling to and get attached to comfortable feelings.

How did Wally change / shift from having uncomfortable feelings, such as disappointment, sadness and anger, to not having them?

-Wally focused on his breath and this helped him get out of his head and into his heart. He got out of following his distressing thoughts, he got out of his narrow focused thinking, and he got into being aware of the present moment, seeing what was here for him now.

-Wally decided to let go of trying to fight the disappointment and let go of what he could not have.

-When Wally accepted and welcomed his uncomfortable physical sensations and feelings he was able to relax and see what is here for him in the present.



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There is a page in the book where Wally looked around his room and only saw his swimsuit even though you learn later that there were other items in his room. What was the illustration trying to tell you by not showing the other items in the room?

When you get out of being present your thoughts can limit you from seeing the whole picture. Your fearful and distressing thoughts can create a narrow picture of what is actually there to try to convince you that your worry, fear or distressing thought is true. So don't always believe your thoughts, question them. You can ask, "Is this thought 100% true?"

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Could Wally change the weather? No, so complaining about and trying to control the weather was unnecessary attention and energy he used that ended up draining him which can affect one's health. Instead, he can focus his attention and energy on things that nourished him like playing his drum or writing in his journal, etc.

Is it worth spending your time and energy thinking about things you can't change? Why or why not?

What did Wally's complaining do for him? It got him stuck seeing and thinking of what he couldn't have and drained him and he did not use the time he had for something that would bring value and nourish him.

The next time you notice you are about to complain or judge, what could you do instead?

What happens when you fight or argue with what you can't control or have?

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Welcoming and accepting what is happening in the present moment does not mean you have to agree with it. Welcoming and accepting the present moment allows you to keep calm, relaxed and at peace when responding to life situations. This can help promote your wellbeing and can help you to see peaceful choices that can bring value to all.

What are some ways to advocate for change with something you don't like that also brings value to everyone? Share examples with kids/students on how to set conditions and boundaries in a peaceful tone and peaceful words that honor and respect one's needs to keep calm and peaceful. This could be with how to share toys or other items. How to let someone know the need for your personal physical space boundary. How to let someone know what you are ok and not ok to talk about with them.

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Why is being present beneficial? Being present can create a sense of relaxation, contentment, peace and fulfillment.

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How can being present help with uncomfortable feelings? When you welcome and accept uncomfortable feelings you allow them to move around and eventually move out.

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What does the cat, Murphy, symbolize? What is the metaphor of the cat? The cat is a mirror for Wally that is helping to bring out Wally's inner wisdom. The cat is helping Wally sense his inner wisdom. Wally senses the cat's peacefulness and learns to discover this within himself.

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What is inner wisdom? Inner wisdom is a felt sense from within, not reliant on something external, like a person or object. Inner wisdom can come in the form of words, images, smells or action as well as no words and no action, which are also types of action. Wisdom will always bring value to all. If the words, silence, image, action or no action do not bring value to all, this is not wisdom.

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What is the symbolism of the cat moving from Wally's feet, along his body and up to his head the second time he lies down and observes his breath? Energy is constantly flowing in and out and around and up and down us. When our bodies are relaxed this energy flows more easily, which is beneficial for our nervous system and organs to function well. This flowing energy helps with our digestion, breathing, vision, hearing, development of our bones and so much more!

When the cat is moving from Wally's feet up to his head it symbolizes that Wally is relaxing more and the energy is flowing from his feet to his head better.

What does the cat on top of Wally's head symbolize?

That Wally is becoming more stable in being present where he is calm and relaxed. Gently put your hand or hands on the top of

your head. How does this feel? Your attention to the feeling helps you get out of thinking and into being aware of the now, of the present moment better.

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How can being present help you in other areas of your life?

With the following situations, when you become present, when you observe your breath while the below is happening, what wisdom arises for you? What ideas and choices come up for you that bring value to you, others and the situation when you observe your breath and become calm, relaxed and neutral to the following?

- You have homework due tomorrow but you don't like it.
- You are worried about a test.
- You disagree about something with a friend.
- Someone lies to you.
- Someone says they do not like your clothes.
- Someone says they do not like your idea.
- Someone does not want to share a toy with you.
- Someone does not want to follow the guidelines/rules.
- You have chores to do, but you don't like doing them.
- You don't like what someone says or does to you.
- You don't like someone's tone of voice towards you.
- You feel lonely.
- Someone tries to bully you with words.
- You don't get invited to a party.
- Your best friend moves away.
- You aren't asked to play at recess.
- What is another situation you can think of?

## Present for Peace

May you receive the gift of peace being present.

[www.presentforpeace.com](http://www.presentforpeace.com)



