ML.MT Mindfulness Gratitude Practice

So we’re now going to try a little bit of ‘taking in the good’, which is also sometimes called a ‘gratitude practice’.

*Whilst this practice is likely to be more emotional for adults than for children, it’s still important to give guidance that resources the class to ‘be’ with any difficult emotions. It’s helpful to watch the class carefully whilst leading this practice.*

*Start this gratitude practice with a FOFBOC, settling the class into a mindful awareness of body and breath, really shifting awareness into the feet and lower half of the body. Once they are settled, say something along the lines of:*

If you notice any emotions come up during this practice, you can do a .b or just become aware of yourself sitting on the chair or feeling your feet on the floor. This will help you ‘be with’ any emotions that are arising without feeling overwhelmed by them. And if it is too much, just open your eyes and stop!

*Then begin the gratitude practice, making sure to leave room for silence between instructions.*

…and now bringing to mind someone who, at one time or another, has been kind to you. It might be a close friend or someone who you know less well, but who said something or did something which you remember for being nice.

*It is easier to guide this practice if all the pupils have a person in their minds, but if you are working with young people who find it very difficult to bring to mind somebody they are grateful for, then you can add the following:*

Or if you can’t think of anybody, then maybe a pet that you love, or even a place that you really appreciate and feel grateful for. Just sitting for a while with the image or the name of that person (or pet or place) in your mind, and tuning into the body as you do this - noticing how it feels. It’s like you’re dropping the idea or the image of that person into the pool of your mind, and noticing any ripples this creates in the way you feel, in the way you breathe.

Zooming in a little closer now, try focusing on the sensations of breathing as you inhale, and then saying in your mind the name of that person as you exhale.

Breathing IN with your attention on the breath, breathing OUT with your attention on the image or name of the person. Don’t worry if you can’t do this. It’s no problem if you find it easier to stick with either the breathing, or with the person. But have a go. Tuning in, if you can, to any sensations of ease, or loosening of tension, of calm. Seeing if you can soak a little in feelings of goodness and wellness.

What we’re doing here is making a conscious effort to take in the good, to let it sink into our bones. And finally, how does it feel if, silently but with all of your heart, you thank that person. Thank you for being there ... or thank you for saying what you said… or thank you for doing what you did.

Perhaps also seeing who else comes to mind that you might wish to thank. And then as you open your eyes, still being with your breathing and noticing any kind of after-effects, or perhaps after-glow, from this gratitude practice.

*Now run the enquiry as you normally would. Depending on the class you could do this in pairs, or ask for feedback via hands up. The key here is to keep discussion and enquiry around the key learning here: noticing how quickly the mind may go to the difficult, but if we are able to ‘take in the good’, there can be a real shift in our experience.*

*If the mood is a positive one you might ask what stops us from deliberately ‘taking in the good’ more often. You could refer to the evolutionary reasons for why we think about threats and danger more instinctively. If some found this really difficult then see if you can understand why. Was it difficult to think of anybody? Or was the difficulty in ‘picturing’ the person in the mind’s eye? Which parts of the exercise worked and which didn’t? Make it clear that any difficulties with this are very normal.*