




The Starfish Check-In + Take Five





Students will learn a mindfulness meditation practice called The Starfish Check-In [K-4] or Take 5 [5-12], in order to build their understanding of, and connection between their mind and body by noticing sensations or feelings in their body, interpreting the information, and completing journal prompts to reflect upon 5 different aspects of themselves: physical, emotional, intellectual, kind awareness, and community.

 Teacher Led	 (optional) Requires Computer OR Mobile Device	 (optional) Requires Spaces
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Learning Goals

1. Students will practice a mindfulness meditation called “**The Starfish Check-In**” [for grades PK4-4] or “**Take Five**” [5-12] in order to scan their body for sensations to determine feelings in their body.
2. Students will identify body sensations such as bubbly, sparkly, fuzzy, fizzy, bright, light, tight, warm, cool, buzzing, fluttering, heavy, etc.
3. Students will analyze their body sensations (as noted above) to interpret what the sensations may be telling them about their mental, emotional, and physical state.
4. Students will reflect upon the body sensations that they observed and note in a *Starfish Check-In Journal Activity* what they may need in the following five (5) domains: physical, intellectual, emotional, kind awareness, and community.
5. Students will be able to define Starfish Breath or Take 5, and utilize the Starfish Breath (or Take 5) during moments of mental and emotional challenge, or as a tool to prepare their mind for optimal learning.

Materials

 Student Handouts	Take 5 Journal Prompts Starfish Check-In [Teacher Created] (Optional)
 Technology Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internet (optional)• Mobile device, tablet, or laptop (optional)• Spaces (optional)
 Video/Audio Clips	Take 5 Breath Video Demo - https://youtu.be/wQPxDImTw_M Starfish Finger Breath Demo - https://youtu.be/Yu1I8eW-rAQ
 Additional Materials	Plain paper, pen or pencil, crayons or markers, starfish image

Starfish Breath Exercise + Take Five

Purpose

Define: **Starfish Breath and Take Five** - a mindfulness breathing exercise to help focus attention, calm racing thoughts and challenging emotions, and bring awareness to various sensations in the body.

This breathing tool can be used in moments of mental and emotional challenge or as a way to prepare for a successful day.

Breathing Activity

Ask students to clear away all items from their desk.

Students can sit cross-legged on the floor or feet uncrossed at their desk. If students are at their desk, ask students to gently push their feet into the floor, sit up nice and tall, and close their eyes. If students are uncomfortable with closing their eyes, they can bring a gentle gaze toward their hand during this breathing exercise.

Starfish Breath [K-4]

Note on mindful breathing - inhale long, slow, deep breath in through the nose, and exhale a slightly longer exhale out of the nose or mouth.

Practice the mindful breathing pattern a few times before the starfish breath technique.

Start on the left or right hand. Spread your “starfish fingers” wide. Take the index finger of the opposite hand and gently place it at the base of the opposite thumb. Students will inhale as they trace their index finger gently up the base of the thumb to the top of the thumb and exhale as they trace their opposing index finger gently down the inside of the thumb. Then inhale up the index finger, exhale down in the index finger.

Keep gently tracing up and down the fingers until students get to the outside of the pinky finger, then start the process again backwards. Trace the opposing index finger gently on the outside of the pinky while inhaling up the pinky finger, then trace inside the pinky finger while exhaling down.

Do this Starfish Breath technique on the opposite hand.

The teacher can guide the students by directing them to “Gently inhale your index finger up your thumb, exhale slowly as you trace your finger down your thumb, inhale up your index finger, exhale down your index finger, inhale up your middle finger, exhale down your middle finger, etc.”

Once completed, ask students to open their eyes or if their eyes are already open, ask students to bring their attention back to your eyes by tracking you.

Guiding Questions

1. What did you notice on the inside during the starfish breath?
2. How did you feel?
3. Did your thoughts feel busy or still?
4. What sensations did you become aware of in your body? Example: tickling sensation in the hand, buzzing in the heart, soft or tight muscles in the belly, cool or warm in the body?

Remind students it’s okay to notice nothing at all! Noticing the sensations in the body is a practice that takes time to learn. It’s like learning a new language.

Take Five Breath [5-12]

This is very similar to the Starfish Breath but without using the starfish as a visual image to make it more connecting to older students. Follow the script above, but instead of tracing the outside of the fingers, direct students to place the opposing index finger in the middle of the base of the palm, then inhale up the thumb, exhale down the thumb back to the middle of the base of the palm, inhale up the index finger, exhale down the index finger back to the middle of the base of the palm, inhale up the middle finger, exhale down the middle finger back to the base of the palm, etc. Once you complete this round with the pinky finger, continue backwards from the pinky finger back to the base of the thumb. Complete another around on the opposing hand.

You can ask older students the same guiding questions above.

Movement Break

Have students take a movement break of their choice for 3-5 minutes.

Journal Check-In Activity

Grades K-4: Disperse plain paper and a pen or pencil. Have students trace the outside of their hand on the plain sheet of paper. Make sure that they spread their fingers wide in order to have room to write the sentences.

Label the drawing as follows:

Title: The Starfish Check-In

Thumb - Label the thumb "1" and draw a line or arrow from the top of the thumb 2 inches up and to the right. Just to the right of the line or arrow, have students write this sentence with a blank line to fill in: "My body needs _____ to feel calm and healthy."

Example: My body needs to play and run to feel calm and healthy.

Index Finger - Label the index finger "2" and draw a line or arrow from the top of the index finger 2 inches up and to the right. Just to the right of the line or arrow, have students write this sentence with a blank line to fill in: "My brain needs _____ to grow."

Example: My brain needs to learn new reading skills to grow.

Middle Finger - Label the middle finger "3" and draw a line or arrow from the top of the middle finger 2 inches up and to the right. Just to the right of the line or arrow, have students write this sentence with a blank line to fill in: "The emotion I feel is _____. The emotion I would like to feel is _____."

Example: I feel anxious. The emotion I would like to feel is calm.

Ring Finger - Label the ring finger "4" and draw a line or arrow from the top of the ring finger 2 inches up and to the right. Just to the right of the line or arrow, have students write this sentence with a blank line to fill in: "I can show kindness to myself today by _____."

Example: I can show kindness to myself today by taking a walk outside to calm my mind and body.

Pinky Finger - Label the pinky finger "5" and draw a line or arrow from the top of the middle finger 2 inches up and to the right. Just to the right of the line or arrow, have students write this sentence with a blank line to fill in: "I can do _____ to help my class shine bright today."

Example: I can compliment a classmate or help them with something if they are struggling in class.

Teacher Tip!

Additional Preparation Note: For Kinder students, the teacher may want to draw this image, do the labeling prior to the activity, and make copies so students can fill in the blank along with the teacher.

Journal Check-In Activity with Starfish Finger Breath/ Take 5

Have students take a Starfish Finger Breath or Take 5 Breath in between completing the journal question so they can practice noticing on the inside what they need. Facilitate a round of mindful breathing, then ask the journal prompt question. Have students fill in the blank or complete the journal prompt.

Movement Suggestions: it may be helpful to take quick movement breaks between each mindful breath facilitation and journal prompt question. Read your students and incorporate movement breaks as necessary.

Decorating the Starfish Check-In: *if time allows, have students decorate or color their Starfish Check-in*

Pro Tip!

Technology Options: *You can incorporate technology by using Spaces. Create a “Starfish Check-In Assignment” in Spaces Activities. Students can take a picture of their Starfish Check-In and upload it as part of their assignment. You could also do this in the Class Space and make it optional for students to share/upload their pictures of their Check-In.*

Lesson Close

Ask students if they would like to share something that they learned about themselves from the activity.

You can prompt them by asking:

What did you learn that you need to stay healthy in your mind? Body? Emotions?

Why is it important to check-in with our mind, body, and heart each day?

Why does this information matter to your success in the classroom?

You can help students along this inquiry by having them think about how racing thoughts and challenging emotions or a busy body makes it hard to focus and pay attention in class.

Thank students for their participation in the mindfulness-based social and emotional learning activity. Remind them that it's a practice, that it's like learning a new language, and that with practice they will get better at learning what their body sensations are telling them about what they need to keep their mind, body, and heart healthy.

End the lesson with air high fives or high tens, air hugs, or silent shine fingers by making eye contact with each student.

Remind them they can use Starfish Finger Breathing or Take 5 any time they need a brain break, check-in, or reset throughout the day. Encourage older students to use the journal prompts on a daily basis before and after school to help them understand their needs for the day or evening.

Teacher Tip!

Key points to stamp:

Each day our mind, body, and heart need different things to succeed. It's important to use the Starfish Check-In/Take 5 to know what will help us be the best we can be each day.

Images

The Starfish Check-In image can be used in a slide deck. (*optional*)

- This image can be used in a slide deck and projected on the screen or Smartboard while the teacher is leading the check-in process.

The Starfish Check-In

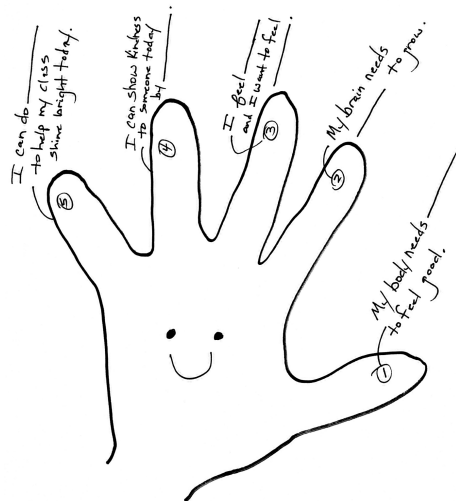


1. What does my body need to feel good?
2. What does my brain need to to grow?
3. What am I feeling AND what do I want to feel?
4. How can I show kindness to someone today?
5. What can I do today to help my class shine bright?

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- Example of The Starfish Check-In Template

The Starfish Check-In



Ms. Davis

Take 5 Journal Prompts [5-12]

After the mindfulness meditation, students will complete the journal prompt by answering the following questions. Set the timer for 5-10 minutes (depending on available time). This is a self-reflective activity.

Note: The answers to the journal prompts will not be shared unless the student would like to share something they discovered in this activity with their classmates or teacher.

1. What does your **physical self** need today? *Examples:* exercise, more rest, healthy food.

2. What does your **intellectual self** need today? *Examples:* book to read, learning a new skill, reflection time.

3. What does your **emotional self** need today? *Examples:* mindful breathing, connection with others, solitude.

4. How can you **cultivate kind awareness** today? *Examples:* mindful breathing, yoga poses, art activity, walking in nature, journaling.

5. What is a **positive contribution** that you can make to your **community** today (classroom, school, home, etc.)? *Examples:* leaving a kind note; complimenting someone; listening attentively to a friend, teacher, or parent; actively contributing to classroom discussions; helping someone with schoolwork or being a caring friend.
