



## Mindfulness Using Your Amygdala



### Materials:

- Lesson Script
- A water bottle filled with sand or glitter
- Paper or Journal to write thoughts (to keep a mindful journal)

### Instructions

1. Before you start reading, you may want another person to join you. This activity helps understand how the brain works and why mindfulness matters for our everyday lives.

### Lesson Script:

Today we are learning about the brain! Ask yourself how can you use your brain to make wise choices? Come up with three ways you know right now to help your brain make a wise choice? Awesome! ***Now stand up and stretch arms in the air over your head. Place one hand on your heart. Now say "I have the power to make wise choices!"***

"Once upon a time, there was a brain. The brain is made up of a lot of different structures. The limbic system controls our emotions. The amygdala (which means almond in Latin) is an almond shaped structure that reacts to danger and threat."

Now find someone and ask them to make the shape of an almond with their arms and bodies. Now say, ***"amygdala means almond (youth should call out Almond!) acts as the brain's security guard and gets the body ready to defend against danger"***

Now imagine a bee is flying near you..it might sting you....your amygdala part of your brain will say Stop! Danger! When the threat is real, we need to be ready! Ready to do what? That's right—RUN or getaway or protect yourself! What kinds of things does your body do when you are prepared to run or protect yourself?

So a funny thing happens when your brain is telling your body to run or protect yourself—Your brain stops any information from getting to the front of your brain, that's called the prefrontal cortex--used for reasoning and judgment. So you actually cannot, learn, or pay attention or even hear when you are afraid or upset. This is important information because the amygdala (which is shaped like a \_\_\_\_\_ ?)

This is kind of what happens in your brain when you're upset."

***Shake the bottle with sand and glitter.***

Look all the sand/glitter is swooshing around and not mixing well, the same happens with information that comes to your brain which could make you not think clearly, pay attention or learn.

Can you think of a time when you were so worried or upset or mad that your mind was working like the shaken bottle?

*Reflection take away:*

We're here to practice mindfulness which can help us think more clearly. If we are thinking more clearly, our brain makes wise choices. Mindfulness means paying attention in the moment "present". In mindfulness there are specific ways to achieve mindfulness.

- Straight back
- Still
- Silent
- Soft breathing

What can you hear when you are doing this? What do you think? How did that make you feel?

This time listen to the sounds with our eyes shut— . Did you notice anything different between listening with our eyes opened or closed?

Now let's close our eyes and listen to any sounds you hear—they can be sounds inside the room, outside the, or even sounds from your own body. Listen for 30 seconds."

After 30 seconds say: "Eyes open, what did you hear?"

So, how do you think paying attention to sound helps our brain make wise choices?

Journal and write down your thoughts

Now try using your amygdala (which is shaped like a \_\_\_\_\_ ?) to be mindful to make wise choices.