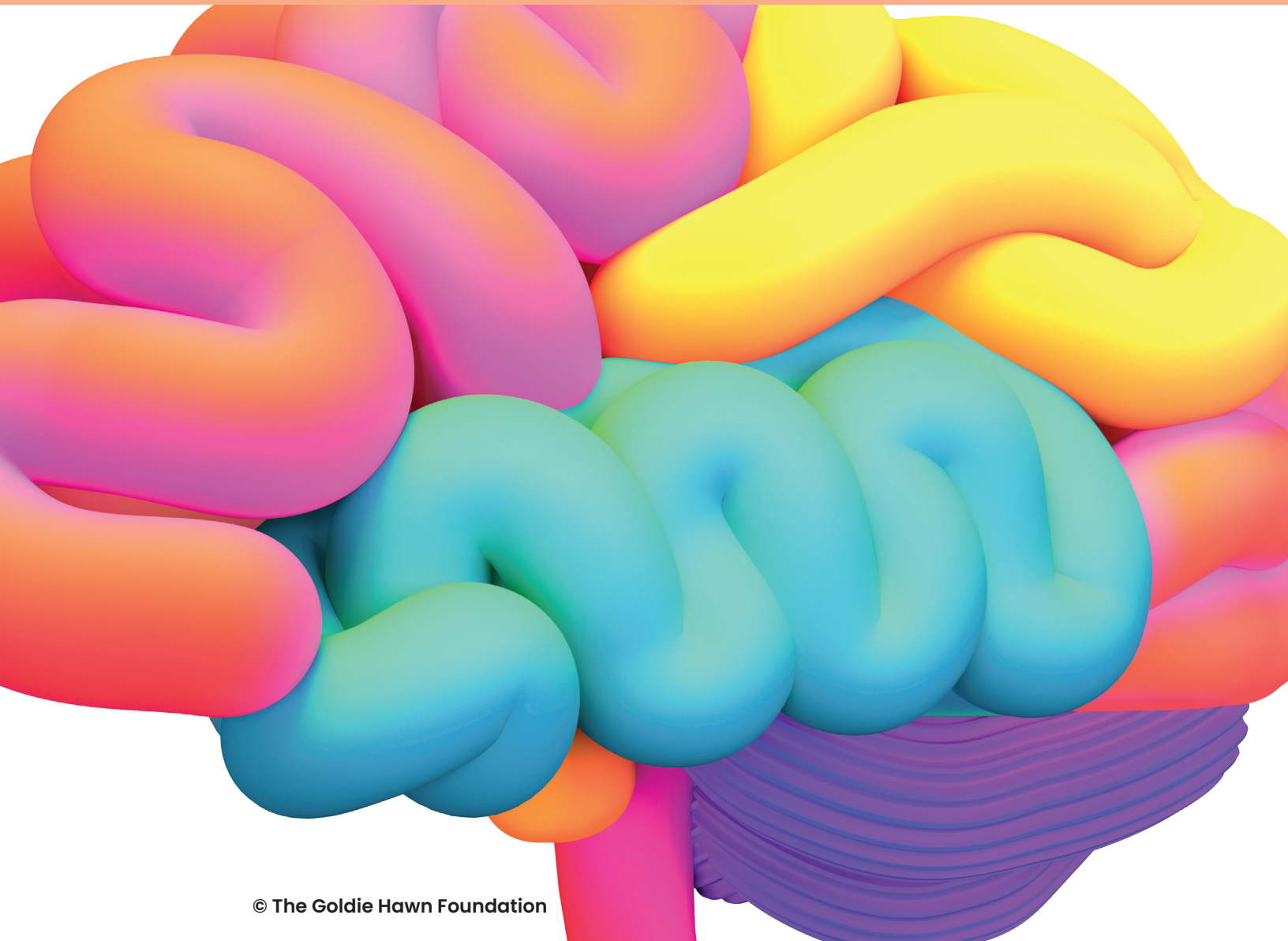


Unit 1: Mindful Me

Early Years



Theme 1: Building the MindUP Community

Overview

To create a safe, caring classroom environment, build positive connections among children, and foster positive teacher–student relationships.

Purpose

A caring classroom environment helps students feel a sense of belonging and connection to their classmates and teachers.

Theme Objectives

Children will:

- Get to know one another
- Begin to build an inclusive community
- Listen to one another’s perspectives
- Start the day with connection and kindness

Social and Emotional Learning Connections

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

Activities in this theme

- ① Welcome All of Us
- ② Me Too!
- ③ Welcome Hearts
- ④ Welcome to Our Classroom

Materials

- ✓ Art materials
- ✓ Children’s literature (optional)



Estimated Time:
5 – 15 minutes per activity

Brain Link

The Importance of Relationships

Relationships are essential, not just for our happiness, but for our ability to **learn and grow** in positive ways.

For children, feeling a sense of **belonging** and **connectedness** with peers and adults predicts learning outcomes, well-being, and life satisfaction.

This underscores the importance of developing **inclusive environments** where all children feel they are safe and belong! The first MindUP activities you will do with your students is building a positive, supportive, and **joyful learning community**.



Getting Started With This Theme

Prior to beginning the MindUP program, introduce children to mindful actions and words that will serve as guidelines for *ways of being together* in the classroom. This helps to create an inclusive, participatory learning environment where children feel safe to engage and share.

Suggested guidelines for children:

- Please be thoughtful towards others.
- Please listen when another friend is talking.

Be sure to ensure all children understand any new vocabulary that you might introduce. For example, *“thoughtful means to be friendly and think about what other people might need.”*

As you move through the curriculum, you may expand these mindful reminders by incorporating the language and ideas that are introduced throughout the program.

Examples include:

- Remember to be mindful of others (following Theme 2)
- Be mindful of your body (following Theme 10).
- Remember to use friendly words (following Theme 13).
- Act with kindness towards others, animals, and nature (following Theme 15).

Regularly remind children of these important guidelines and explain that these ways of being together help us to feel safe and that we all belong.

Engage your students in the following welcome activities. If you are starting MindUP at the beginning of the school year, begin with Activity 1: Welcome All of Us, and Activity 2: Getting to Know You, to establish positive connections amongst students and teachers.

If you feel your class already knows one another, you may skip to Activity 3: Welcome Hearts. This activity can be used routinely throughout the year to help establish a caring classroom.

Activity 1

Welcome All of Us

Steps

1. At circle time, invite each child to say his/her name.
2. The rest of the circle can reply "Welcome, NAME."
3. Go around the circle until each child has shared his/her name

Practice this activity over the first one or two weeks of the school year to help children learn one another's names and feel more connected as a group.

Activity 2

Me Too!

Steps

1. Invite Children to play a game of “Me Too!”
2. While children are seated in a circle, call out various phrases, such as “I like pizza!” If a child identifies with the phrase, he/ she can stand up.

Ideas for sharing:

- I have a pet
 - I like cats
 - I like dogs
 - I like ice cream
 - I have a brother
 - I have a sister
 - I like playing games
 - I am three years old
 - I am four years old
 - I like singing
 - I like dancing
3. Once children get the hang of the game, invite them to share ideas for the circle.
 4. You can play this game several times over the course of a few days or weeks to help children get to know each other.



Note: If you have children in your class who are learning English as a second language, print out pictures of items to aid understanding.

Activity 3

Welcome Hearts

Steps

1. At the beginning of the day, invite children to sit in a circle. Children will go around the circle and welcome the child sitting next to them. The first child will begin by turning to the child sitting next to them and saying, "Good morning/afternoon (Name)." Then, the child will smile, look the friend in the eyes, and say, "I wish you a happy day!" The next child will greet, and so on.

Optional: You can have children pass a classroom object around as they give their greeting, such as a small heart, stuffed animal, or whatever fun item they choose.

Script

Once children are seated in a circle, give the class the simple guided instructions below. Provide prompting where needed until every child is welcomed.

- Welcome everybody!
- To start our day, we are going to begin by wishing each other a happy day.
- We will go around the circle, and when it is your turn, look at your friend beside you, smile, look into their eyes and wish them a happy day.
- Then, pass the object to your friend, and we will continue going around the circle.
- Let's begin – I will start.
- Good morning/afternoon (Name), I wish you a happy day!

Activity 4

Welcome to our Classroom

Steps

1. Read children “All Are Welcome” by Alexandra Penfold (or another book from the literature list on page 9) as a springboard for discussion about Welcoming Others
2. Invite children to decorate the classroom with art they create. The art can be a variety of drawing, painting, and craft projects with the theme of “Welcome to our Classroom.” One option is to create a Welcome Mural project in which children work together to create.

MindUP for Home and Life

Encourage parents/caregivers to join the Welcome Circle so that they can experience the morning activity with their child and the class.

Once they are familiar with the activity, invite families to begin practicing Welcome Hearts at home. Each morning, family members can wish their child a happy day. Children can wish their parents, caregivers, and siblings a happy day, and so on.

You may use the Parent Handout at the end of this Theme.



Tips for Building the MindUP Learning Community

Use the following ways to build community and connection with your students. You may already be using many of these approaches!

- Greet and say goodbye to each child by name with a smile each day.
- Establish positive problem-solving and restorative practices for solving conflicts.
- At circle time, read books about friendship and invite children to name kind, friendly words they hear in the story.
- Group children in different configurations so that they get an opportunity to interact with each classmate.
- Invite parents and family members to join class activities to extend community and encourage common language in the classroom and the home.
- At circle time, help further illuminate each theme's content by reading books from the MindUP children's literature list (included at the end of each theme).

Developmentally Appropriate Scaffolding

Support learning and practice:

- Role-model the activity for children to help them understand what to do. Provide visual and verbal cues as a support for practice. For example, use pictures of activities for the Me Too! to help children get started (i.e. print out pictures of various food items, sports, and activities).
- Prompt children with verbal cues when it is their turn to share.
- Have a simple object for children to pass to the next child to help children know when it is their turn to share. This could be a smooth rock, a small stuffed toy, or a wand.

Extend learning and practice:

- The Welcome Hearts activity can become a regular routine in your classroom. After children become familiar with the greeting, you can invite them to personalize their wishes for their classmates (for example, “have a great day” or “let’s have fun together, today).

The Mindful Me! Portfolio Ideas

- Document children’s learning by recording observations during the Me Too! Activity
- Observe and document progress of how/what children share during the Welcome Hearts Activity
- Include artwork from the Welcome to Our Classroom Activity



Children's Literature List

All Are Welcome

Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman

One Smile

Cindy McKinley

What Does Peace Feel Like?

Vladimir Radunsky

Can You Say Peace?

Karen Katz

The Peace Book

Todd Parr

Chocolate Me!

Taye Diggs and Shane W. Evans



Building our MindUP Community

Why is this important?

A caring classroom environment helps students feel a sense of belonging and connection to their classmates and teachers.

Skills your child is learning:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

Activity Instructions

- Join our Welcome Circle. You will observe Welcome Hearts, an activity we have been practicing since the beginning of our school year.
- Practice Welcome Hearts at home. Each morning, family members can wish your child a happy day. Children can wish you and other family members a happy day, and so on.

Tips

- Role model wishing your child a happy day.
- Make this a part of your morning ritual.
- Alternatively, you can talk about a happy moment from your day as part of a bedtime ritual.
- Remember, young children need lots of practice!

