

**Check-In Circle: Practices for Building Relationships**

*Adapted from Circle Forward*

**Purpose:**

“To build a sense of connection among those in the classroom by sharing moods, feelings and moments of joy and pain; increase awareness of what is going on for others in the classroom; create a space to acknowledge and release tensions related to external situations that may otherwise be distracting.” (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, p.91)

**Materials Needed:**

1. Ball of yarn/string
2. Arrange seats in a circle

**Opening:**

Hello everyone! Stay standing. Why are our seats in a circle? So we can see everyone and stay connected. Today we’re going to talk about what we are thankful for in each other.

**Mindfulness:**

Stand up and shake your hands, then shake your arms, then shake your feet, then shake your legs, and then shake your whole body! Let’s get all the wiggles out before we take a seat. How do you feel after getting your wiggles out?

**Values: (if you have classroom values, you can reaffirm them here)**

Respect others when they’re talking, no interruptions, be kind to one another, etc.

**Round Questions:**

1. Let’s go around the circle and everyone do a check-in! Using the mood meter, let us know how you’re feeling today?
  - a. Why is it important that we know how people are feeling?
2. *Explain the yarn process:* We are going to use this ball of yarn as a talking piece, does anyone know why we have a talking piece?
  - a. We are going to go around the circle and explain why we are thankful for our classmates. I will start and roll the yarn to someone while holding the end. When someone rolls the ball of yarn to you, you grab a piece and say what you’re thankful for in someone else.

**Recap:**

Do you see how we’re all connected and thankful for each other? Why do you think this is important that we did this?

**Closing:**

Thank you for participating! How do you feel now knowing that your classmates are thankful for each other and for you?

## Creating a Classroom Chill Zone

### What is a classroom Chill Zone?

Chill Zones are a welcoming, calming, and safe space for students to 'escape' to when they may be living in a 'in-struggle' moment. This is a space reserved for students who may need some time to self-regulate and calm down. Important components to a Chill Zone are:

- Engaging sensory materials, but not too much that it may be overwhelming
- Soft materials: bean bag, blankets, etc.
- A clean and orderly corner, no excessive clutter
- No harsh light, soft and calming lamp or string lights
- Noise cancelling headphones or calming music
- No overwhelming scents, like candles or diffusers

### How does it help in the classroom?

For when students are experiencing trauma or stress responses in the classroom, implementing a Chill Zone will benefit not only the overall classroom climate, but also individual student well-being. The Chill Zone should not be overused, it should be reserved for special occasions and students should ask for permission to use the space. It may be helpful to provide 'Chill Zone Passes', maybe available only once or twice per week, and/or at the discretion of the educator. This is a special space, for special moments, when students may need to take a break or cool down.

### Resources and materials to help create a Chill Zone:

1. [\(TeachStarter\) Self-regulating emotions with a chill out corner in the classroom](#)
2. [\(TheArtofEducation\) How to create a calm down corner in five easy steps](#)
3. [\(ResponsiveClassroom\) A quiet place for rough moments](#)



## **Movement and Exercise: Dynamic Mindfulness Exercises**

### **What is Mindfulness and Dynamic Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is "... being present with each thought we have, each feeling we experience, and each action we take." (*Building a trauma-informed restorative school*, 2021, p.85). Mindfulness practices allow for students to be aware of their feelings and understand how they impact them and their classmates. Dynamic Mindfulness is just mindfulness incorporated with movement and exercise. Not only does this allow for students to become self-aware but also get out some wiggles.

### **How does it help in the classroom?**

Mindfulness and Dynamic Mindfulness allows students to experience a centering and calming moment in the classroom. These practices are supremely beneficial when going through classroom transitions (starting the day, coming back from lunch/recess, moving from nap to instruction, moving into a different subject, ending the day, etc.). Mindfulness and Dynamic Mindfulness, when exercised with fidelity and consistency, create a scheduled time for students to self-regulate throughout the day.

### **Resources and materials for Dynamic Mindfulness:**

1. [\(CounselorKeri\) Mindfulness for Kindergarten](#)
2. [\(Cosmic Kids Zen Den\) Be the Pond - 5 Minutes on Feelings](#)
3. [\(Cosmic Kids Zen Den\) Why are Some People Mean? - 5 Minutes on Feelings](#)
4. [\(Cosmic Kids Zen Den\) The Listening Game - 6 Minutes on Active Listening](#)
5. [\(Cosmic Kids Zen Den\) Tiny the T-Rex - 21 Minutes of Yoga](#)