

# Lesson 3: Focusing

## Introduction:

While a 3 or 4-year-old child can't yet sit and pay attention for extended periods of time, developing focus and concentration is vital for future classroom success. Focus-building is a must for kindergarten readiness. Using the chime which, when repeated each day, becomes a signal for the brain to focus. Simple attention training techniques like focusing on the breath, sound, or even slow, long out-breaths help to build the confidence and control needed to be able to pay attention for extended periods of time.



## Goals of this Lesson:

Children will learn different techniques to support the ability to focus.  
Children will be able to focus on one object for 30 seconds.  
Children will understand that they can get better at focusing if they practice.  
Teachers and parents will practice focusing skills with the children and follow-up with daily practice.

## Exercises:

### The Breath:

Hissing Breath

The "Breathing Stick."

### The Body:

Tic Toc

Rock Meditation

### The Senses:

## Guess the Sound Knowing an Orange

### Materials:

Chime

Clock Picture

Flat rocks for each person, including adults

Pipe cleaners, and beads

Collection of noise makers (coins, pasta, paper clips, and jars to hold them)

Oranges for each person

### Let's start the lesson:

Gather kids to sit in a circle. Talk about what “paying attention” means to them. Who tells them to do this in their lives? Why do we need to pay attention? Have the dog puppet talk about what makes it hard to concentrate. (Other kids are talking or fooling around, or when he’s feeling hungry or tired, or he feels bored). Then have the wise owl suggest some things that might help to turn your “focus button” when you need to.

## The Breath

### Breathing Stick

The "breathing stick" exercise is perfect for this age group. It's fun, interactive, allows the child to practice counting, and strengthen focusing ability. When a student is using the breathing stick, it helps her to focus on the present moment and pulls her away from any stimulus in her environment. You can either make the sticks ahead or if time permits have students make their own, which requires focusing on its own!



Taking a pipe cleaner knot one end to secure the beads. String 6 beads onto it. They should fit loosely and slide easily. Twist the other end to secure.



Move all the beads to one end of the pipe cleaner.

Invite students to breathe in as they slowly move one bead to the other end of the pipe cleaner, matching movement and breath.

On the exhale, move another bead.

Repeat for the remaining beads.

Move the beads back, one by one, to the beginning.

Repeat if desired.

Invite the students to place the breathing stick on their wrists as a reminder to breathe when they need to pay attention.



## Hissing Breath

It's wonderful to connect kids to their exhale to help them learn to slow themselves down, mentally and physically. The hiss provides a focal point.

Altogether, breathe in through the nose, a long deep inhale.

Breathe out through the mouth with a hissing sound, slow and long.

Extending the exhale will allow kids to slow down their inner speed.

Repeat this process, increasing or decreasing the sound of the hiss.

## The Body

### Tic Toc Like a Clock

(Created by Susan Kaiser Greenland)

This exercise is an excellent introduction to finding your focus, or center, especially with young children. The rocking motion is very integrative, syncing the mind and the body.

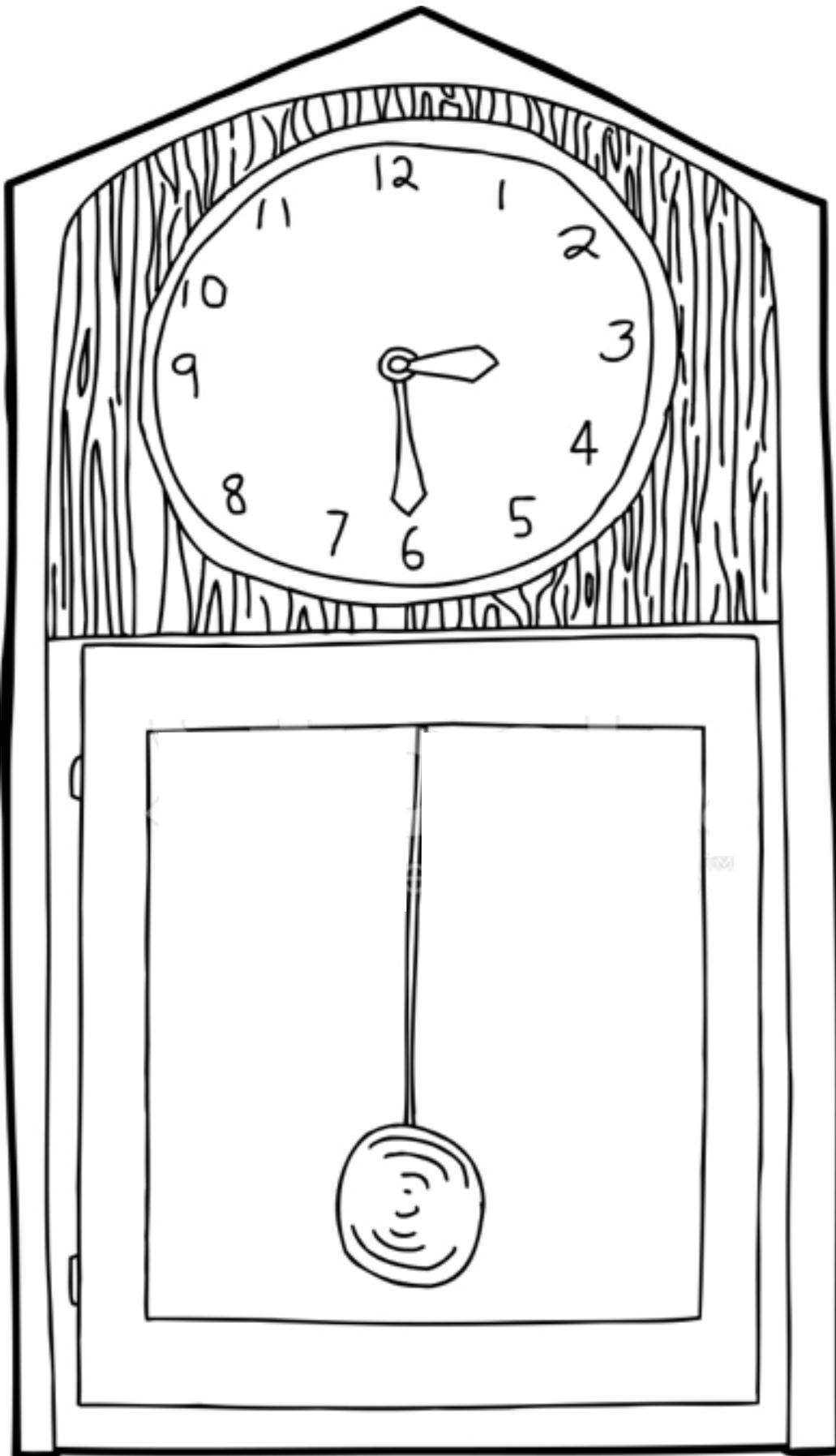
Show a picture of a grandfather clock, and what motion and sound it makes. Let's see if we can do that.

Ask kids to Sit up straight, legs crossed, and muscles relaxed.

Take three deep breaths...1...2...3.

Sway side-to-side and chant "tic toc like a clock, until we find our center."

Repeat three times.



## Rock Meditation

Collect enough rocks so that each student will have one. Find stones that are different sizes (no more than 4" in diameter), shapes (with at least one flat side), and textures. Sitting in a circle on the floor with the students explains that we are going to get to know our rocks using all of our senses. Ask kids to sit up tall like a mountain with backs straight, muscles relaxed, resting your hands on your knees.

Take a deep breath.

- 1 Now I will place a stone on the floor in front of you, and look at it all over without touching it. Does it have spots or cracks? What color is it? What shape is it? How is it different from other rocks?
- 2 Now pick up your rock. How does it feel? Is it cool or warm? Place it next to your neck, or in the crook of your arm. What do you notice?
- 3 Listen to it - what can you hear from your rock?
- 4 Smell it - How does it smell? What does the smell remind you of?
- 5 Now taste it. What does it taste like? Is it smooth or rough on your tongue? Hot or cold? Bitter or sweet? What does that taste remind you of?

6 Just sit with your rock for a few moments as you continue to get to know it.

When I ring the chime, take a deep breath.

Now everyone place your rock in the center of the circle in a pile. I will ring the chime again, and close your eyes. See if you can find your rock without looking. (This works better with one

child at a time.)

I will ring the chime again, and open your eyes and see your rock. It is the right one?



Like This Tree Frog, When We Need To Get Our Bodies Under Control, We can Do the Tree Pose  
(See if you can balance a rock on your head at the same time!)



Place your rock on your head, and sit quietly, balancing the rock. Take three deep breaths.

Can you do the Tic Toc exercise without having the rock slide off your head?

Place your rock in front of you on the floor. Breathe...and see your rock. You have practiced focusing, calming, and being aware altogether in this exercise! Keep your rock for times when you feel the need to use these skills.



## The Senses

### Guess the Sound

Place a few marbles in a glass jar. (Or any other objects like rice, or rocks, etc.)

Today we are going to practice listening carefully. First I will ask you to close your eyes or look downward, and then we will listen to the chime to get our brain ready to pay attention. Then I am going to make a noise. I want you to pay close attention and see if you can guess what the sound is.



Have each child make a guess without seeing the jar.

Explain that it is not really important to make the right guess, but that by listening to the sound carefully, we are training our brain to pay attention.

That's important if you want to do well in school!

### Knowing an Orange

Give each child in a group an orange.

With eyes closed or lowered, slowly investigate every aspect of the orange —looking at it, smelling it, weighing it, feeling its temperature and texture, and licking it.

Marvel at the shiny, protective layer over the orange, noting that it has no taste.

Peel off the skin and examine it very carefully, biting and tasting the skin.

Peel the fibrous layer and examine this.

Divide each orange into segments, take a segment and very carefully go through the examination procedure.

Then trade segments with everyone in the group.

Notice that each segment is different in taste and texture.

## What We Learned

We have experienced that by focusing on a single object or sense, our brain can screen out other noise distractions allowing us to pay attention more carefully, and focus on the task at hand.

## Integrating the Lesson

Practice, practice, practice! Practice being aware of your senses. Feel your legs getting out of bed and your feet hitting the floor. Remember five things you saw on the way to school. STOP - what are the sounds you can hear right now? Use snack time to do mindful eating: notice the sweetness in the juice, the softness of the banana, or the peanut in the peanut butter.

## Resources for Learning More About This Lesson

Mindful Child, Susan Kaiser Greenland  
Mindful Games, Susan Kaiser Greenland  
The Busy Little Squirrel, Nancy Tafuri