

CHANGING CHANNELS



BENEFITS

Teaches students the skill of shifting their attention and gives practice with this skill. Develops imagination. Helps them to focus on positive and healthy thoughts.

TIME

1 to 5 minutes

ACTIVITY

Ask the students to shut their eyes and notice what they begin to think about—what is on their minds. Then tell them they are going to practice changing the channel in their minds.

Now ask them to change the channel by imagining themselves playing in the snow: “Imagine that you are all bundled up in a coat, hat, and mittens, and you are having a snowball fight with a friend.” Keep them on that channel for 30 seconds or so, then have them change the channel to a sunny beach, imagining that they are lying on a towel with the sun shining on their face. Again hold that image for 30 seconds, then change the channel. Do this four or five times, then ask a student to change the channel for the group. It may help to give ideas. A few are offered below.

Afterward, ask the students when this activity might be useful. (Typical answers include “when I’m worried,” “when I have a nightmare,” or “when I’ve seen a scary movie and I keep seeing the images over and over again.”) Ask students how they might use this tool when they are about to take a test or do something challenging.

IDEAS FOR CHANNELS

- At home on the couch, drinking a warm cup of cocoa
- Baking a batch of cookies and smelling them in the oven
- Playing outdoors with a friend
- Swimming
- Being in a favorite place
- Holding a small pet
- Riding a bike
- Picking a bouquet of flowers
- Walking in the forest

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

Shift from something frightening to something pleasurable and notice the responses in the body.

Have the students walk around the room, shift attention, and notice whether it affects the pace of their walking.

Combine with Pinwheel Breath (p. 81), asking students to think of different things while they are breathing and notice the effects on the breath.

Combine with a balance pose and notice the effects of shifting attention on their ability to balance.

NOTES

As in relaxation activities (chapter 7), it is helpful to include sensory details (scents, sounds, sights, tastes, and physical sensations) when asking students to imagine.