

VERITY WATTS AND BERNIE HALKYARD

MUSIC AND MINDFULNESS

Plugging in.

Timed
Steps to
Success

Ready to go

**A SIMPLE WAY
TO SUCCESS**

Keeping going

Refuelling

FEATURING:

FLASHCARDS

POSTER

AUDIO RECORDINGS

STEP BY STEP EASY TO

FOLLOW TIMED

EXERCISES FOR ALL

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MUSIC AND MINDFULNESS



Timed
Steps to success
&
Audio Recordings

Plugging in.

1. Strong Silence
2. Count Your Breaths
3. Noticing the Sounds
4. Energy Ball
5. Power Shower

Ready to go.

1. Inside Outside
2. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1
3. Taste Challenge
4. Group Counting
5. Power Punch



Keeping going

1. Thought Sift
2. Kindness Spiral
3. Safe Place
4. Touching Base
5. Power Point

**A SIMPLE
WAY
TO SUCCESS**

Refuelling.

1. Helping Hand
2. Pass the Penny
3. Body Scan
4. Tense & Relax
5. Feel & Glow



Plugging in 1 Minute Exercise



Strong Silence

This is an awareness exercise to reset and practise 'Attunement' and 'Calmness' - a perfect approach to regulate groups for rehearsals, performances or school assemblies.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar.

Step 2: Deep breath in and out, blowing down to their feet.

Step 3: They take another deep breath in and as they blow out the teacher says that by the end of the breath he/she is listening for a strong silence.

(A calm approach to getting everyone to listen and await further instruction)

Attunement And Calmness



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Plugging in 1 Minute Exercise



Count Your Breaths

This is an awareness exercise to work on focus and place the student in the moment.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing or sitting on the floor in a circle (if it's a group)

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to listen for the bell and then count the breaths they take before the bell is rung again

Step 3: The teacher rings the bell and waits for 1 minute before ringing the bell again

Step 4: The students can then share the results with others

(A lovely way of creating a non-threatening ice-breaker and encouraging communication between students)

Noticing and Sharing



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Plugging in 2 Minute Exercise



Noticing the Sound

This is an awareness exercise to reset and practise 'noticing'.

Step 1: Students sit in a circle

Step 2: Deep breath in and out

Step 3: Eyes open and listening

Step 4: Teacher rings the bell and students are asked to put their hand in the air when the sound has disappeared

Step 5: Repeat with eyes closed to improve noticing and focus

(A really simple distraction technique for a student who may be showing signs of panic or being overwhelmed).

Noticing and Focus



Plugging in 3 Minute Exercise



Energy Ball

This is a gentle stretching physical exercise to connect the body with the breath. It is excellent for singers, brass and wind instrument players to improve breath control.

Step 1: Students are sitting on a chair with hands on laps, clasped together like they are cradling a baby

Step 2: Teacher invites the students that they will take a deep breath in, through the nose, and as they do so they will bring the linked arms out in front of them, turning the palms away from them as they move their arms up over their heads. They stretch the palms of their hands towards the ceiling watching their hands as they do so

Step 3: Breathing out through the mouth, they should reverse the action and bring their arms back down into their laps, turning their palms upwards again before they reach the end of the movement

Step 4: Repeat until they are feeling confident and connected to the breath

(The whole movement should be completed on one breath and is best done sitting down to avoid falling over, until the student has mastered the art of controlling the breath whilst stretching. Then this exercise can be done standing up)

Connecting the Breath with the Body



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Plugging in 3 Minute Exercise



Power Shower

This is a psychological and physical attunement exercise. In performance it can re-energise, build confidence and relax students into learning.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing or lying down on the floor.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out really focusing on the breath with eyes open, or closed, in their own bubble.

Step 3: Teacher describes a shower of energy coming in through the top of the head down and gradually travelling through each part of the body and out of the feet. He/She talks through this process, as the student feels and visualises the energy moving through the body.

(A brilliant introduction to visualisation and body scanning techniques; creates a calm and warm sensation using this self-soothing technique; valuable to re-align after crisis/panic)

Attuning the Breath and the Body



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Ready to Go

3 Minute Exercise



5, 4, 3, 2, 1

This is a focusing and noticing exercise to heighten awareness and mindfulness (and is effective for calming performance nerves).

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing or lying down on the floor

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breath in and out really focusing on the breath with eyes open or closed in their own bubble

Step 3: Teacher says that we should focus on noticing:

5 different things that you can see.

4 different things that you can hear.

3 different things that you can touch.

2 different things that you can smell.

1 thing that you can taste.

(Another ice-breaker where people can share their findings and discuss them. It's a lovely introduction to perspective and how we use our senses in the same way but can often see, hear and feel things differently, even when we are all together in the same room).

Focusing and Noticing



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Ready to Go

3 Minute Exercise



Taste Challenge

This is a tasting and noticing exercise to heighten awareness of food (can be used at break-times, lunchtimes or circle time) for mindful eating, or a calming focusing technique for anxiety.

Step 1: Teacher places an item of food on the palms of the students' hand and then guides the students through the process of noticing:

Step 2: Feeling the food between thumb and finger.

Step 3: Running the finger across the food to notice the surface.

Step 4: Hold the food and look at how the light reflects upon it.

Step 5: Smell the food and really breathe in the smell of the food and see how it makes you feel.

Step 6: Place it to the lips and feel the temperature and sensations.

Step 7: Pop the food into the mouth and run it around the mouth slowly, noticing the flavours.

Step 8: Then chew the food noticing the intensity of the flavours and texture of the food, before we eventually swallow it.

(Another ice-breaker where people can share their findings and discuss them).

Tasting and Noticing



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Ready to Go

3 Minute Exercise



Inside and Outside

This is a focusing exercise to create calm and awareness. This exercise could be used to calm the nerves before an examination or performance.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or in a safe space.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out really focusing on the breath, with eyes open or closed, in their own bubble.

Step 3: Teacher asks the students to listen for sounds that are inside the room and really use their ears to pick out the individual sounds counting each one in their heads.

Step 4: Focus on the breath again.

Step 5: Teacher asks to focus on the sounds outside of the room, to really hone in and distinguish what they hear outside, over the sounds that are inside the room.

(This can be done as an individual, or a group. You can share their findings and discuss them. How many different things did you hear? Which sounds did you hear?)

Awareness and Realisation



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Ready to Go

5+ Minute Exercise



Group Counting

This is a focusing exercise to challenge our ability to be aware of each other and work as a group to achieve our goals. This exercise is good for orchestras or choirs for group awareness and timing.

Step 1: Students sit in a circle.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out, really focusing on the breath, with eyes open or closed, in their own bubble.

Step 3: Teacher explains that the students will be counting from 1 to 10, as a group, although only one student can say a number at a time. The students cannot cheat by using eye contact or signals to communicate who should go next. N.B. If a student does not want to close their eyes, they must keep their head down to avoid eye contact.

Step 4: Teacher says "one" and now it's up to the students to take turns to complete the sequence. If more than one person says a number at the same time, they have to start from number one again until the sequence is complete.

(This number sequence can be expanded, or the alphabet could be used. It's a brilliant way for a group to attune to each other and manage success or failure together, without blame!)

Awareness and Attunement



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Ready to Go

3+ Minute Exercise



Power Punch

This is an adrenaline fuelling, confidence building exercise to help overcome an impending challenge such as a performance, or examination trepidation.

Step 1: Students stand in a space in the room, making sure that they are at least an arms width apart from each other

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out really focusing on the breath with eyes open, or closed, in their own bubble.

Step 3: Students stand with their feet hip width apart and firmly rooted on the ground.

Step 4: Teacher says "Imagine that you are connected to the ground by your feet and power is coming into your body through the soles of your feet, up through the knees and the hips; the waist and the chest; then up into your arms, sending them skywards until you punch the air and the power is released through your fist, then you relax back down, ready to repeat".

(This can be repeated and end in a firm 'super hero' style stance, which can be held until the students feel ready to tackle anything! A good exercise to do before going into a performance, or examination room)

Body and Brain Connection



Refuelling

5 Minute Exercise



Helping Hand

This is a feeling and noticing exercise (circle time) and can be a distraction comfort technique for anxiety or crisis.

Step 1: Students are sitting in a circle focusing on their breathing and are told to hold out their left palm, and keep it in front of them, until further instructions are given.

Step 2: Teacher walks around and places some lotion into their left palm and then guides the students through the process of noticing.

Step 3: Encourage the students to look for any blemishes on the hands and apply cream to them. Then rub the cream into the lines on the palms of their hands and down the fingers, paying close attention to how it feels and how the cream soaks into the skin. Move the cream up and down the edge of the fingers and notice the knuckles and the finger nails.

Step 4: Do the same as Step 3 on the right hand.

(A good exercise for looking after the hands. This can benefit any students prone to sore fingers from playing instruments and increase motor skills and hand flexibility in young musicians)

Focusing on the Body



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Refuelling

5 Minute Exercise



Pass the Penny

This is a good exercise for team work and applying new strategies and techniques to performance. Learning how to improve practising and being a focused audience member.

Step 1: Students sit in a circle ready to participate in the activity.

Step 2: Teacher places a penny or a button onto the back of one of the student's hands and they are instructed that the penny has to make its way around the circle without anyone using their palms or fingers. The exercise is best done in silence and by watching each other, as the group develops a strategy to transport the penny around the circle.

Step 3: Teacher adds another penny and sends it around the circle in the opposite direction, so that there are now 2 pennies in the circle. If it falls on the floor the students have to work out how to pick it up without using their fingers.

(You can use either a button, a penny or any small flat item like a guitar pick or a clarinet reed)

Listening, Attuning and Team work



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Refuelling

5 Minute Exercise



Body Scan

This is a psychological and physical attunement exercise. In performance it can re-energise, build confidence and relax students into learning.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing, or lying down on the floor.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out really focusing on the breath, with eyes open, or closed and in their own bubble.

Step 3: The teacher guides the body scan inviting the student to start with a focus on their feet and to notice any sensations and feelings in the feet. The teacher will then guide the student to focus their attention on one part of the body at a time. The teacher will ask the student to notice tension points in the body as they work slowly through each part, finally finishing with the head.

(A more thorough body scanning technique to create a calm and warm sensation, valuable to re-align after crisis/panic; to prepare a student for practising or to alleviate frustrations when finding things tricky)

Relaxing, Focusing and Noticing



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Refuelling

2 Minute Exercise



Tense and Relax

This is a psychological and physical attunement exercise. It can help to focus the student into the 'here and now', if the student is beginning to feel nervous. It can alleviate the effects of 'stage fright' or last minute 'performance anxiety'.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing, or lying down on the floor.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out, really focusing on the breath, with eyes open or closed and in their own bubble.

Step 3: The teacher guides the student through the exercise, inviting them to tense and release each part of the body, starting with the feet. This will continue from the tips of the toes to the face, making sure that steady breathing is occurring throughout the exercise.

(This is an exercise that the student can carry out independently if they are beginning to feel nervous before a performance, rehearsal or an examination).

Relaxing, Focusing and Taking Control



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Refuelling

3 Minute Exercise



Feel and Glow

This is an attunement exercise, excellent for building confidence. By embedding this empowering technique into their practice, students can manage performance anxiety.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing, or lying down on the floor.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out, really focusing on the breath, with eyes open or closed and in their own bubble.

Step 3: Teacher asks the students to think of a time when they felt happy and shares examples of places and events. When the students have a happy memory, they are then asked to focus on the feeling of happiness and if possible to focus on feeling the emotion in their stomach or heart area. The students are then asked to place their hand upon the place where they are experiencing the happy feeling.

Step 4: The teacher then asks the students to begin to make a circular movement with their hand on the stomach or heart, wherever they are starting to experience the happy feeling. The students focus on taking deep breaths in and out. Then, with each breath and circling with the hand, focus on expanding the feeling of happiness throughout the body and finally up into the face, allowing the happiness to radiate from the face with a beaming smile.

Relaxing, Focusing and Empowering



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Keeping Going

4+ Minute Exercise



Thought Sift

This exercise enables the students to begin to recognise and learn over time to ignore the demoralising 'self critic' - the voice in the head which is negative and critical. The 'Thought Sift' is beneficial when doubts begin to creep in regarding the students ability to practice or perform. Often constructive criticism can be perceived negatively and can lead to feelings of self doubt, so this exercise can help to address this.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair with their feet on the floor or the bar, or they can be standing, or lying down on the floor.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out, really focusing on the breath, with eyes open or closed and in their own bubble. They are asked to notice the thoughts that pop into their heads, as they sit quietly.

Step 3: Teacher asks the student to acknowledge each thought and imagine that it's inside a bubble. As the bubbles pop up the student is encouraged to decide whether the thought bubble is positive or negative. If it is a negative thought, they should then imagine that they have a pin and they are popping the negative bubbles and keeping the positive ones. This process can continue as long as the student feels able, and until they are happy that they have managed to pop some negative thought bubbles.

(This is an exercise that the student is able to do alone, and would be useful when doubts about their ability to play a piece are creeping in).

Noticing, Cleansing and Self-Esteem



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Keeping Going

3+ Minute Exercise



Kindness Spiral

This exercise is about feeling good, being grateful and spreading those feelings outwards. A young performer can find it difficult to appreciate applause and accept the beautiful and profound effect their music has on others. This simple exercise helps us to give and receive compliments.

Step 1: Students sit in a circle or opposite each other.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe in and out, really focusing on the breath, with eyes open and think, or say out loud:

"I am happy", "I am safe", "I am healthy", "I am kind to myself and to others".

Step 3. Then they are asked to think of someone that they are close to and say, or think, the words out loud: "(NAME) I hope you are happy", "I hope you are safe", "I hope you are healthy", "I hope you are kind to yourself and to others".

Step 4. They are then asked to chose someone in the circle, or the room, that they may or may not know and repeat step 3.

Step 5. Now they are asked to think of someone that they may have had a disagreement with and send the same words, or thoughts, to them too. This creates a 'Kindness Spiral' from ourselves to others.

Kindness, Sharing and Gratitude



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Keeping Going

5+ Minute Exercise



Safe Place

This exercise is about how to cope when we are asked to challenge ourselves, or step outside of our comfort zones.

Step 1: Students sit on a chair and focus on the breath, breathing deeply and warmly, using the diaphragm.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to visualise a place where they feel safe and gives examples, it could be the student's bedroom, sitting under their favourite tree or on a quiet beach

Step 3. Now they are in that place, ask them to begin to imagine the sounds, the warmth of the sun, the smells and the feeling of being relaxed and safe.

Step 4. Now invite the students to notice the inner strength arising from feeling safe and allow this to expand through the body as each breath helps the feeling to grow. Invite the students to keep taking deep breaths in and out and as they do, to imagine they are fuelling the strength of the safe feeling they have, until they are ready to keep going.

(This is a self-care exercise that can be used when performance anxiety or feelings of inadequacy begin to overwhelm the students. This could be when they are joining a new group of musicians, if they have been asked to perform a solo or are scared of making a mistake when performing a piece).

Focusing, Attuning and Feeling Safe



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Keeping Going

5 Minute Exercise



Touching Base

This is a physical exercise that is similar to the idea of mindful walking. It's one that can be fun to do and will help the student to appreciate the connections we have with our surroundings. It's a lovely exercise to do with a whole ensemble of musicians to feel the group connection.

Step 1: Students stand in a space in the room. This can be done with or without footwear.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to slowly walk around the room and notice how the floor feels under their feet. The students are asked to imagine that, as they step, the floor is rising up to cup their foot (just like one hand cups the other in a hand shake).

Step 3. Still walking around, the students are asked to roll the foot around and onto it's side to feel like the foot is being supported by a sponge on the floor.

Step 4. Now the students are asked to imagine that the weight of their body pushing down, is equal to the weight of the ground rising up to support them. They are equally balanced and perfectly matched in every step, as the floor rises to greet their feet.

Step 5. Standing still and breathing they should now notice the feeling of the power of the earth connecting and rising up through their bodies. The sensation moves though their feet and out through the top of their heads, filling them with the strength, love and warmth of the universe.

(This is a group care exercise that will ground the students and leave them feeling present and invigorated).

Moving, Attuning and Noticing



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Keeping Going

4+ Minute Exercise



Power Point

This is a wonderful group exercise and can be used with choirs, ensembles and musicians to really create and combine energy, power and sound in a room. The volume can be increased or diminished as desired and the feeling of working together is powerful and unifying.

Step 1: Students are sitting on a chair and start with focusing on the breath.

Step 2: Teacher invites the students to breathe deeply from the stomach and imagine that they are breathing from a ball of light inside them that connects through the chest and the throat, and then out through the mouth into the room.

Step 3. The Teacher invites the students to imagine that the ball of light is connecting and adding power to the words and sounds they let out of their mouths. These vibrations of light and power will send sound out into the throat and then into a hum.

Step 4. The students should continue to breathe and send the sound vibrations through the mouth, buzzing on the lips, in a humming sound. Then the students can open up the hum into an 'aah' sound, connecting with the others in the room to create a powerful, unifying vibration.

(This is a group care exercise that will invigorate and centre the students, unifying their energy so they are ready to work as an ensemble).

Connecting, Sharing and Attuning



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Verity Watts is passionate about the use of Mindfulness to help to calm, focus, become centred and in the moment when both rehearsing and performing. These are all skills Verity learned in her training and experience as a professional actress prior to becoming a drama teacher and then Headteacher of an SEMH special school and P.R.U. where Mindfulness was an important tool for regulation for both staff and pupils.

Bernie Halkyard is a Buddhist music teacher who learned, from a young age, just how important it is to remain composed and calm when practising and performing. She has 30 years of experience working with children and adults, she was inspired to write and share some of her techniques for good breathing and staying calm under pressure.

"We want the resource to help teachers to prepare students for learning, sharing, communicating, performing and just being in the moment, without the worry of failure or prejudice. We have created the 'Music and Mindfulness' resource to help everyone feel comfortable, happy and confident in their own ability".

Find out more about Verity and Bernie at

www.musicmindfulnesseducation.co.uk

...this pack would make a great resource for schools, colleges and also the ABRSM. Without a resource of this quality readily available to students (and teachers) we are failing to fully equip them with all the elements needed to create fully prepared performers. Professor Roger Webster, Royal Northern College of music.



Bernie Halkyard



Verity watts



www.maddotspress.com

Designed by: David Lunn dave@360buildtour.com

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