



10

Mindful Movements



A programme of 10 movements for daily mindfulness practice and wellbeing in primary schools

What are Mindful Movements?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to whatever is happening, as it is happening – both inside us and in our surroundings. It means being more aware of our thoughts as we are thinking them, our body sensations as we are sensing them and our feelings as we are feeling them. Simply put, we could say that mindfulness is *Being Aware, Right Here, Right Now*.

Mindful movements are an accessible and enjoyable way to bring mindfulness into the classroom through movement.



The **10 Mindful Movements** in this guide help pupils to pay attention to the different parts of their bodies as they move in different ways. The focus is on moving **slowly** and **intentionally**, using the process of moving to tune into body sensations, noticing any effects on the mind and emotions as they are happening in the moment.

Using the 10 Mindful Movements



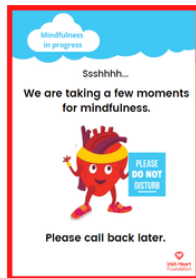
Irish Heart
Foundation

- *10 Mindful Movements* is designed to be **classroom friendly**, with maximum **flexibility** and potential for **differentiation**.
- Mindful movements **can be performed anywhere**; inside the classroom, PE hall, outdoors or at home.
- Mindful movements can be used at **any time of the day** to calm and focus the body and mind. Using just one of the movements or a few of them consecutively, is an ideal way to start the school day; as transitions between lessons; while standing in the line or to break up long periods of sitting.
- The different movements can be **introduced gradually**; you might choose to introduce a new movement each week and build up to a sequence of movements, or just focus on a small selection of the movements.
- The 10 movements are presented in order of difficulty, moving **from easier to more complex**. The lower numbered movements are suitable for younger classes and beginners while the higher numbers are more challenging. The movements are designed to lead into each other and can be performed from 1 to 10 as a full sequence.
- All movements can be adapted to any age group or ability. Use your own judgement in choosing movements to best serve the needs of your class.

Teaching Tips 1: Preparation

NOTICE:

- Hang a sign on the classroom door before your mindfulness practice to let visitors know not to disturb the class. A printable notice is included in this pack.



MUSIC:

- Using music with a slow, repetitive beat can help to optimise the experience of mindful movement. The slow tempo of the music can guide the speed of the the movements, helping to ensure that each movement and breath is slow and intentional.
- Recommended music can be found at www.irishheart.ie

VOICE:

- Instructions for each movement are presented as a script.
- Become familiar with the script, so that you can lead the movement confidently, giving the instructions as seamlessly as possible - in a soft, calm voice.
- Tell pupils that *"the mind will wander off... so when we notice this, we gently bring it back to focus on my voice and the movement we are doing right now."*

BODY:

- All of the movements begin in the Standing Mountain position (detailed on separate page below).
- Most movements could also be done from a seated position.
- Beginning by describing the starting position helps pupils to 'ground' themselves and tune into their bodies in a purposeful way.

Teaching Tips 2: Practice

BREATHING:

- Focusing on the breath is an 'anchor' that can help to steady us in the present moment.
- Movement actions are linked with the cycle of the breath; breathing in can signal the start of a movement and breathing out can signal a change in the movement.
- Encourage pupils to 'tune in' to the breath for the duration of each movement.

SMILING:

- The act of smiling sends a message to the brain resulting in a feel-good chemical response in the body.
- This aids in lowering heart rate and helps us relax and feel good. We can activate this 'feel-good response' by simply incorporating smiling into the mindfulness practice.

FLOW:

- Each movement is repeated 3 times.
- As pupils become more comfortable with the movements, encourage a fluid transition from one repetition to the next, so that each sequence 'flows' smoothly into the next one without an obvious stop or pause.

CLOSING:

- When coming to the end of a practice, it can help with transitioning to say something like *"Now you are ready to continue with your day"*. Prompt reflection on the experience (e.g. *"Did you feel steady?...did you feel wobbly at any stage? Did you get distracted... maybe by thoughts or sounds outside? What did you do when you noticed you were getting distracted?..."*)
- Allow a few moments for pupils to re-adjust before returning to classwork.

Mindfulness
in progress

Ssshhhh...

**We are taking a few moments
for mindfulness.**



Please call back later.

SPHE Curriculum Links



STRAND

STRAND UNIT

Myself

Self-identity

- Self-awareness
- Developing self-confidence

Taking care of my body

- Knowing about my body
- Health and well-being

Growing and changing

- As I grow I change
- Feelings and emotions

Myself and Others

My friends and other people

- Care and consideration
- Courtesy and good manners

Relating to others

- Communicating

Myself and the Wider World

Developing citizenship

- My school community
- Living in the local community

Standing Mountain (Starting position)

All of the 10 Mindful Movements begin in a standing position called Standing Mountain. Use the following script before starting a mindful movement to prepare physically and mentally for the movement.

- 1 We are going to stand strong like a mountain. Stand up straight and tall, with feet apart (about hip distance)...
- 2 Shift your weight to the back of your feet (heels), try to wiggle your toes. Keep your knees nice and soft, not fully straightened out...
- 3 Feeling strong and steady like a mountain, relax your neck and head.
- 4 Taking a breath in, roll your shoulders back and down, then relax your shoulders...and your arms.
- 5 Let your arms hang by your sides, hands nice and soft.
- 6 Now soften (relax) your eyes... breathe normally... and smile.



Alternatively, movements could also be done in a seated position.

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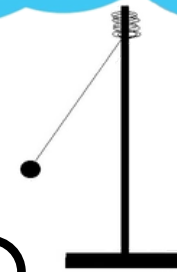
1. Heartbeat Twists



1. Heartbeat Twists



In this movement, you will swing your arms across your body like the string of a spin drum or swingball.



1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. (Swing 1) As you **breathe in**, gently swing the left arm around the front of the body (with hands about hip height) and let the right arm swing around the back at the same time. Let your head, neck and upper body follow your arms.
3. As you **breathe out**, swing the opposite way with right arm in front and left arm behind. Left and right is one full swing.
4. (Swing 2) Now, **breathing in**, swing the left arm around again, this time a little higher, across the belly. As you **breathe out**, do the same on the other side.
5. (Swing 3) **Breathing in**, swing the left arm up across the heart centre, left hand reaching to touch the right side of the chest (at collarbone). Repeat on the other side as you **breathe out**.
6. Going back down now, **breathing in**, swing the left arm back to belly level. As you **breathe out**, repeat on the other side.
7. Lastly, **breathing in**, swing left arm back down at hip height. As you **breathe out**, do the same on the other side.

Repeat this sequence (3 full swings up and back down) 3 times.

8. Coming back to Standing Mountain... pause, breathe normally and smile.

A swing to the left + a swing to the right = 1 full swing

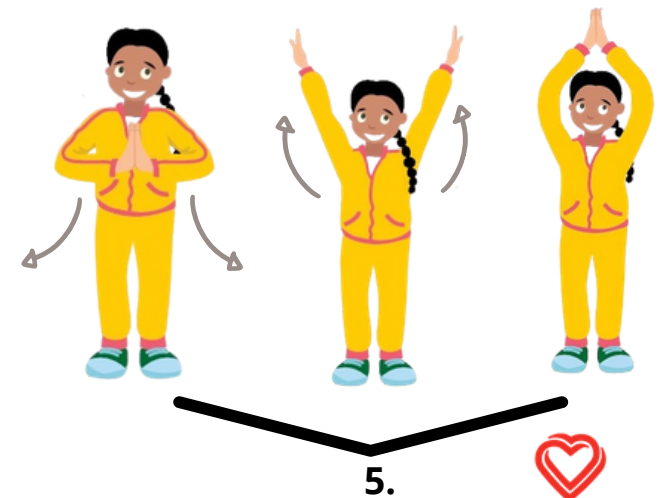
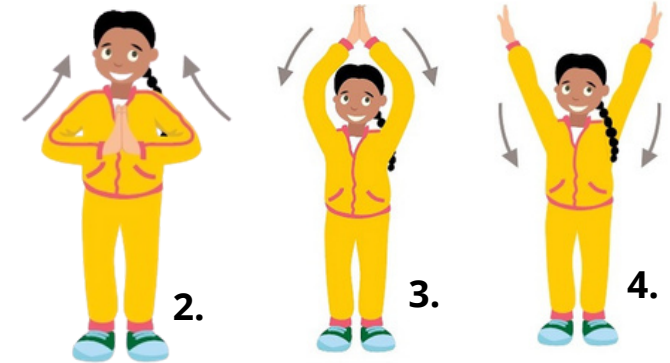


2. Heart Circles

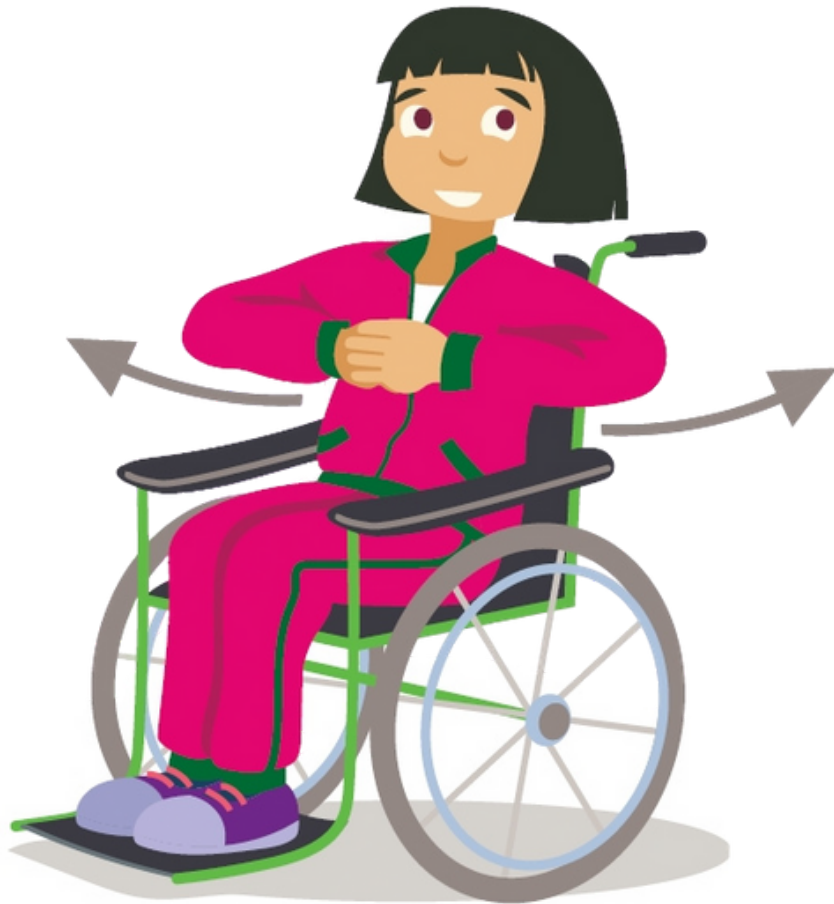


2. Heart Circles

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
 2. Bring the palms of your hands together with thumbs at heart centre (chest).
 3. **Breathing in**, keeping your hands together, reach both hands upwards until the arms are straight and making the shape of a triangle.
 4. **Breathing out**, turn the palms out and slowly move the arms out and down, with hands coming together at the front. Ending the circle in the start position.
 5. Now we will go in the opposite direction, moving the arms back the way they came. **Breathing in**, slowly move the arms back down and out, separating the hands, turning the palms outwards, arms lifting upwards until hands meet over the head (all on the in breath).
 6. **Breathing out**, keeping hands together, bring them down in front of the face and back to the heart centre.
- Repeat this sequence (a complete circle in each direction) a total of 3 times.**
7. Coming back to Standing Mountain... pause, breathe normally and smile.



3. Mini Heart Sweepers

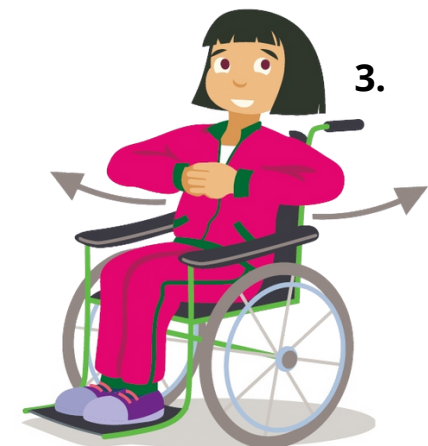
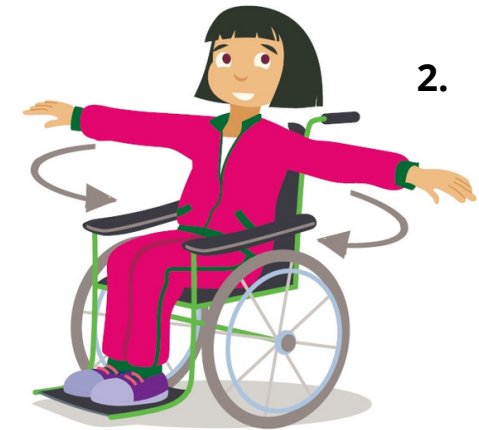


3. Mini Heart Sweepers

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, bring arms straight out to the sides like an airplane, stretching through the fingertips.
3. **Breathing out**, bend the elbows and sweep the lower arms in, crossing left hand over right hand, at the heart (chest).
4. **Breathing in**, arms go back out to the sides again like wings, reaching out through the fingertips.
5. **Breathing out**, sweeping the lower arms back in, this time crossing right hand over left hand, at the heart.

Repeat the steps above for a total of 3 rounds (one round = arms out and in twice with different hand crossed on top each time)

6. Coming back to Standing Mountain, pause, breathe normally and smile.

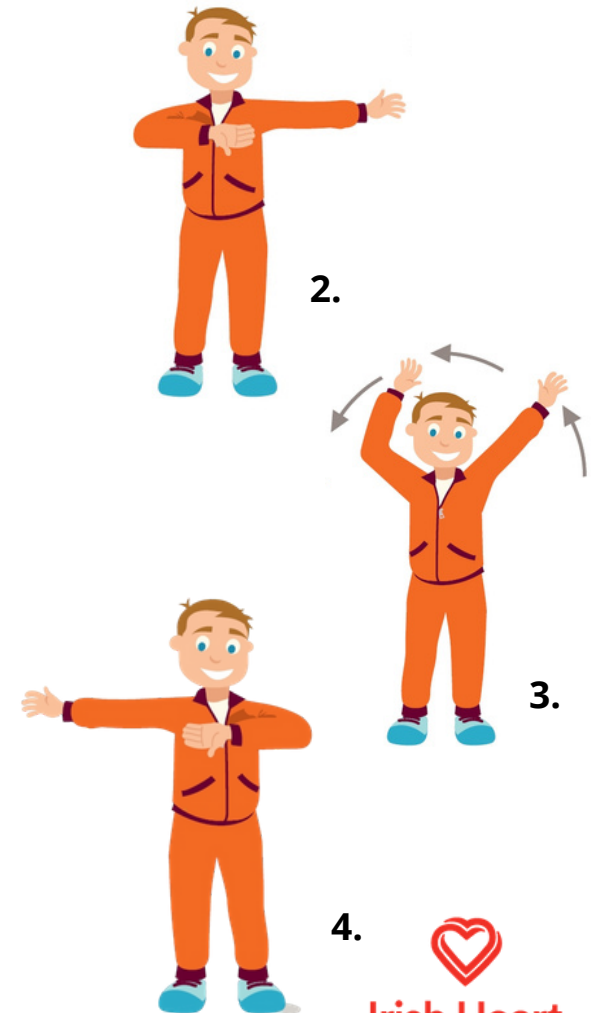


4. Huge Heart Sweepers



4. Huge Heart Sweepers

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
 2. With palms facing forward, stretch both arms out to the left, with left arm straight and right elbow bent, right hand across the heart. Stretch through the fingertips while keeping the body and face straight ahead.
 3. **Breathing in**, move both arms up and over the head, like your arms are windscreen wipers on a car.
 4. **Breathing out**, the arms sweep like wipers across and down to the right side.
 5. **Breathing in**, sweep arms back over the head.
 6. **Breathing out**, move arms back down to the left side again, with the right arm across the heart.
- Repeat the steps above for a total of 3 rounds (one round = arms sweep from left, to right and back to left)*
7. Coming back to Standing Mountain, pause, breathe normally and smile.



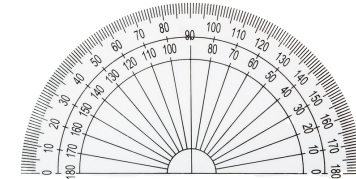
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5. Heart Hoops



5. Heart Hoops

In this movement, you will move your upper body in a semicircle shape.



1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, place hands on the hips, move the feet apart nice and wide. Try to keep your weight in the back of your heels as best you can.
3. Now let's make our semicircle to the back. **Breathing out**, lean the upper body to the left, swoop it across the back and to the right, **breathing in** as you come round to the front and return to the start position, standing upright.
4. Now let's go back in the opposite direction. **Breathing in**, keep the body still. **Breathing out**, lean the upper body to the right, swoop it across the back to the left, breathing in as you move back to the front and back to start position.

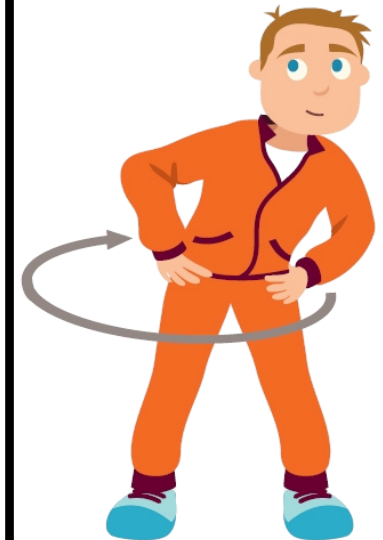
Optional extension or progression (full circle)

Now let's make a full circle. **Breathing out**, lean the upper body to the left, swoop it in front of the left knee, then right knee and across to lean to the right side.

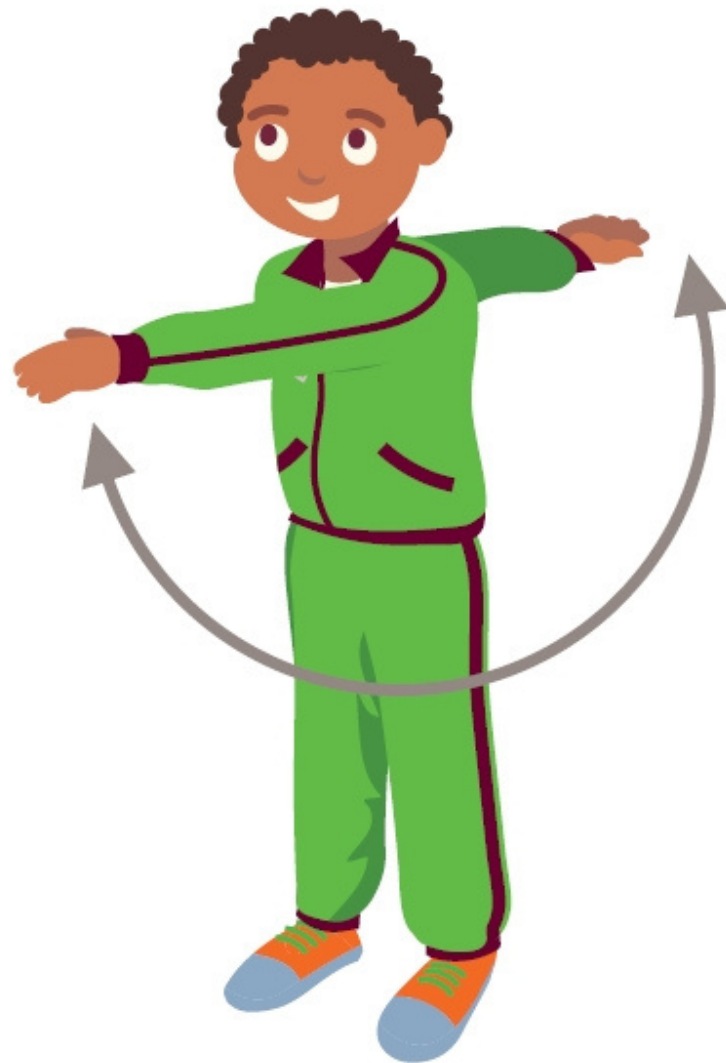
Breathing in, complete the circle by continuing to swoop the upper body around the back and left, all the way around to the front and return to start position.

Repeat the sequence (semi-circle or full circle to the left, then the right) 3 times.

Then finish with: Coming back to Standing Mountain, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



6. Heart Skaters



6. Heart Skaters

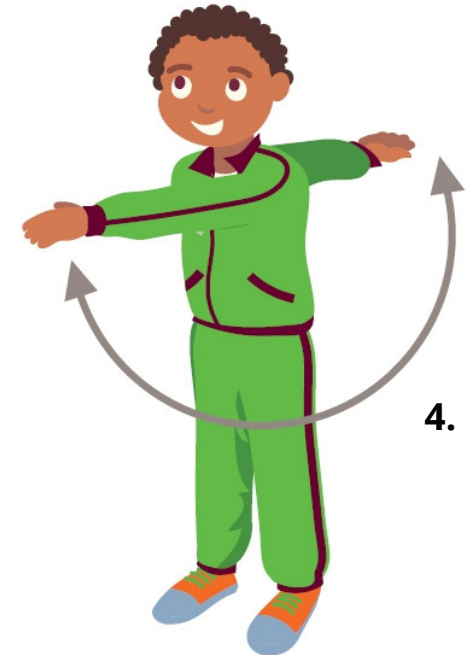
1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, the right arm comes up front to shoulder height, with hand pointing forward. At the same time, the left arm goes out behind you with hand pointing back.
3. **Breathing out**, arms swing slowly back to centre.
4. **Breathing in**, bring left arm out in front and right arm to the back.
5. **Breathing out**, arms come back to centre.

Optional extension or progression

6. **Breathing in**, this time, bend the right elbow so right hand touches the heart, with left arm straight out behind.
7. **Breathing out**, arms come back to the centre.
8. **Breathing in**, now bend the left elbow so left hand touches the heart, with right arm straight behind.
9. **Breathing out**, arms come back to the centre.

Steps 2-5 (or 6-9) are 1 round. Complete either or both for 3 rounds.

Then finish with: Coming back to Standing Mountain, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



In this optional progression movement, your arms will move like you're skating.

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7. Eagle Heart



7. Eagle Heart

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, shift your weight (lean) onto your left leg so the right leg feels light and free.
3. **Breathing out**, lift the right leg slowly, and use both hands together to hold front of the leg below the knee. Lift the leg up only as far as is comfortable (you could also hold the leg under the thigh if lifting the knee up high is not possible).
4. **Breathing in**, gently bring the leg back down and stand on two feet.
5. **Breathing out**, allow the arms to return to your sides, then smile.
6. **Breathing in**, this time shift your weight (lean) onto your right leg.
7. **Breathing out**, lift the left leg slowly, and use both hands together to hold the left leg (under the front of the knee with knee close to chest, or under thigh with leg lower).
8. **Breathing in**, gently bring the leg back down and stand on two feet. **Breathing out**, allow the arms to return to your sides and smile.

Repeat this sequence (holding on right side and releasing, then left leg and releasing) 3 times.

9. Coming back to Standing Mountain now, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



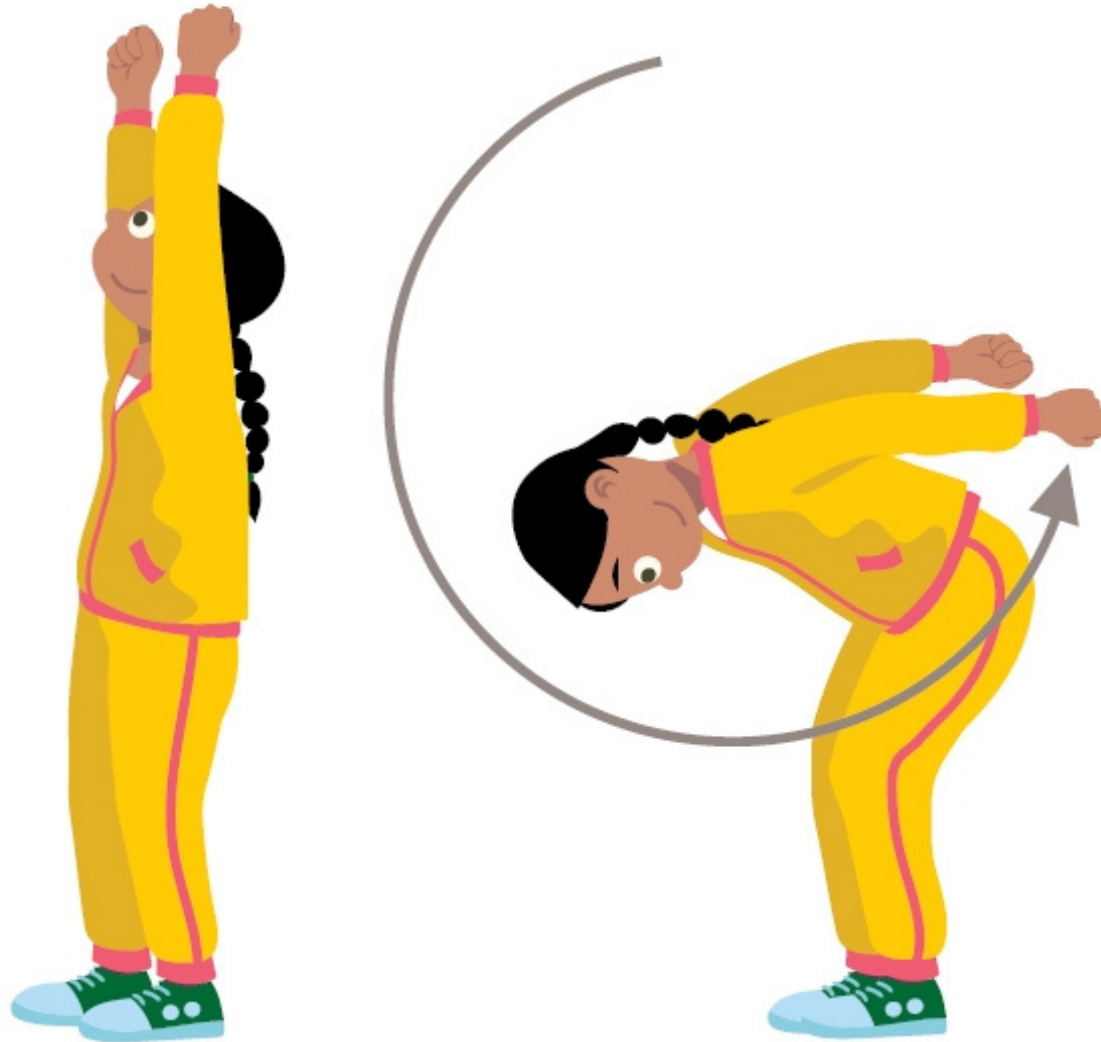
3.

Seated alternative

- **Breathing in**, lift right arm across the heart (chest), bending at the elbow.
- Bring the left hand under to hold the right elbow. Hold for a moment.
- **Breathe out** and release the arms.
- Repeat on the other side. Complete the sequence 3 times.



8. Heart Ski



8. Heart Ski



In this mindful movement, you will move your arms like you are holding ski poles. Pretend you are holding handles of poles, keeping fists nice and soft (not clenched).



1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, swing the arms up above the head, with nice soft fists (not clenched).
3. **Breathing out**, swing the arms down and back, up high behind you, while you bend your knees and fold your upper body forward.
4. From this position, **breathe in** as you swivel your feet to point slightly left (about 45 degrees) and swing back up on the left side, straightening the legs.
5. **Breathing out**, swing downwards again, back the way you came.
6. **Breathe in** as you swivel your feet slightly to the right side (45 degrees) and swing the body back up on the right side straightening the legs.
7. **Breathing out**, swing back down the way you came. **Breathing in**, come back up to centre.

Repeat the sequence (full swing forward + full swing left + full swing right) 3 times.

8. Coming back to Standing Mountain, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



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9. Heartful Bear



9. Heartful Bear

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
2. **Breathing in**, bring your hands together at heart centre, move feet apart nice and wide and swivel the feet so the toes face slightly outward (45 degrees).
3. **Breathing out**, slowly bend the knees outwards in the direction of the feet and sink bum down and back like, sitting into a chair. Lean slightly forward, and press into your heels for balance.

Optional for step 3

If flexibility allows, pupils can bend the knees further and sink the bum down so that it is close to the floor (full squat), then rest the elbows against the inside of the knees. Keeping the back straight (if you can) and weight firmly in the heels.

4. Looking straight ahead, take a moment to feel strong like a big brown bear and smile. Take a slow **deep breath in and out** while holding this position.
5. **Breathing in**, straighten the knees to stand back up slowly (keeping the weight in the heels).

Repeat the sequence (slowly squatting down then carefully standing up) 3 times.

6. Coming back to Standing Mountain, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



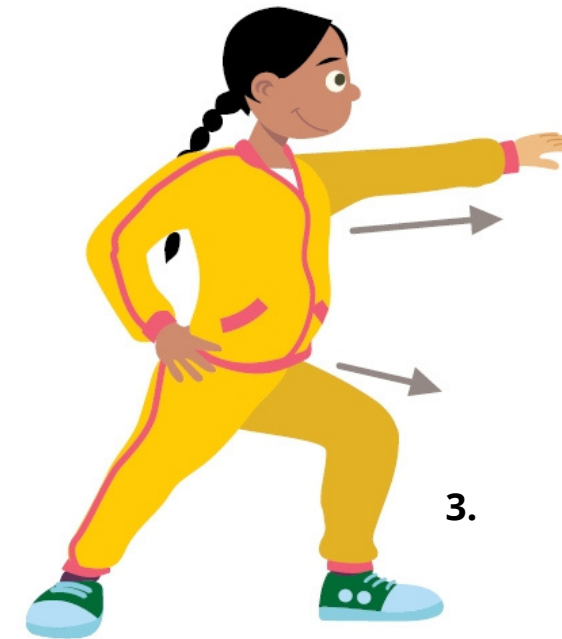
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10. Heartful Warrior



10. Heartful Warrior

1. Let's begin in Standing Mountain, with feet slightly apart and arms by sides.
 2. Place left hand over your heart and right hand on your hip. Move the feet apart nice and wide and turn the left foot so that toes point to the left (90 degrees). Swivel the right foot around to point slightly to the left (45 degrees).
 3. **Breathing in**, slowly bend the left knee forward. Reach your left arm out straight (parallel to the floor). Turn your head to look in the same direction as the left hand, left knee and toes. Stretch through the fingertips of the left hand.
 4. **Breathing out**, slowly straighten the left leg and return the left hand back across the heart. Turn feet, keeping them wide apart and face forward, with hands down by the sides.
 5. Now let's repeat on the other side: This time, place the right hand across the heart and left hand on the hip. Turn right leg out, toes pointing to the right (90 degrees). Swivel left foot around to point slightly to the right (45 degrees).
 6. **Breathing in**, slowly bend the right knee. Reach right arm out straight (parallel to the floor). Turn your head to look in the same direction as the right hand, right knee and toes. Stretch through the fingertips of the right hand.
 7. **Breathing out**, slowly straighten the right leg and bring right hand back to heart so you are facing forward.
- Repeat the sequence (left side, then right side) 3 times.*
8. Coming back to Standing Mountain, we pause, breathe normally and smile.



Optional Progression

Instead of keeping one hand on hip, stretch the arm backwards as the front arm reaches forward (both arms in a straight line at shoulder height).

