



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®
education that transforms lives



WISE TEACHER, NEW SPIRIT

Mindful Blossoming
Activity Cards



“We observe that a child occupied with matters that awaken his interest seems to blossom, to expand, evincing undreamed of character traits; his abilities give him great satisfaction, and he smiles with a sweet and joyous smile.”

Maria Montessori
"Citizen of the World," p. 96



You are invited to explore the following practices and integrate them into your regular mindfulness. We've offered three models for this practice: one to support an individual, daily practice; one to support a regular, weekly or monthly practice; and one to support a large group experience. We invite you to adjust them as they best serve your needs and to share your community bouquets with us.



A Handful of Flowers: A Mindful Blossoming Individual Daily Practice

Materials:

- 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 index cards with at least one side unlined
- Watercolor paints
- Brush
- Water
- Thin permanent marker
- A card box to hold your completed and blank cards

Directions

- Before you begin this practice: Ask yourself, "When can I integrate a daily practice of 5 – 6 minutes of mindfulness?" You might set aside a few minutes at the beginning of each day before the children arrive or plan to take a few minutes to yourself before or after you clean up each afternoon. Because this practice is connected to your school environment, we encourage you to identify time you can set aside during the school day and in the space in which you spend the most time.

- Set up your materials. Find or secure a space where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Prepare a small jar of water, your paintbrush and paint palette, a marker, and one index card. You might choose to prepare a tray you'll use regularly or use an art mat from your classroom or, if you want a simpler practice, simply place these items on a table.

- Breathe. Offer your body a few attentive breaths. Throughout this practice, breathe slowly and explore silence.

- For this practice, you will first create an abstract flower or collection of flowers with watercolor paint on your card.



Ayana Crawford, AMS School Accreditation Manager



Melina Papadimitriou, AMS Director of Teacher Education

A Handful of Flowers: A Mindful Blossoming Individual Daily Practice

Directions continued:

- Select whatever color paint attracts you today. On the unlined side of your index card, add a few strokes of color. Watch your fingers as you do so. Pay attention to how you're holding your brush, how the paint moves across the card, and how the color appears more concentrated when the brush first touches the card and less so as it moves across the card.
 - Add your gratitude. Using the permanent marker, "frame" your flowers by writing one word or phrase for each of your three gratitudes along the left, top, and right edges of the card.
 - Date your bouquet. Using the permanent marker, add today's date to the bottom of the card.
 - Add your card to your index box. You can use your completed cards as a visual history of your mindfulness practice or to remind yourself of the many things for which you are grateful for at school. Let us know how you've chosen to use your growing set of blossoming cards.
- Decide whether you'd like to add another color. If so, clean your brush and explore another color on the card.
 - Add additional colors as you feel motivated to do so.
 - Decide whether you'd like to add a stem or leaves.
 - When you are finished adding color and painted details, rinse your brush and place it out of your hands.
 - Observe your watercolor bouquet. What surprises you about today's creation? What do you notice? As you are observing your watercolor, reflect on three things for which you feel grateful today.



Jimmy Doussi, AMS Registrar of Credentials & Professional Development



Marcos Miller, AMS Registration and Credential Services Coordinator





Tending Our Own Gardens: A Mindful Blossoming Regular Practice

Materials:

- 8 x 11 watercolor paper
- Watercolor paints
- Brush
- Water
- Scissors
- 18 x 24 paper
- Removeable, restickable gluestick

Directions

- Before you begin this practice, consider when you will integrate it regularly. Will this be a weekly or monthly practice? Do you want to practice in company or on your own?

- Set up your materials. Find or secure a space where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Prepare a small jar of water, your paintbrush and paint palette, and one sheet of 8 x 11 watercolor paper. You might choose to prepare a tray you'll use regularly or use an art mat from your classroom or, if you want a simpler practice, simply place these items on a table.

- Breathe. Offer your body a few attentive breaths. Throughout this practice, breathe slowly and explore silence.

- For this practice, you will create a large blossom that represents how you are feeling. If you are practicing with company, feel free to chat or connect with each other as you each create your own image.



Kaja Warner, AMS Teacher Education Associate

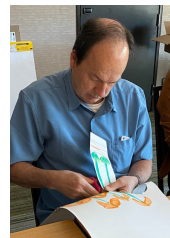


Kelsey O'Hara, AMS Events Manager

Tending Our Own Gardens: A Mindful Blossoming Regular Practice

Directions continued:

- Select whatever color paint attracts you today. Fill up as much of the page as you choose with large swatches of color. Watch your fingers as you do so. Pay attention to how you're holding your brush, how the paint moves across the card, and how the color appears more concentrated when the brush first touches the card and less so as it moves across the card.
 - Decide whether you'd like to add another color. If so, clean your brush and explore another color on the page.
 - Add additional colors as you feel motivated to do so. You should try to fill as much of the page as possible with color.
 - When you are finished adding color, rinse your brush and place it out of your hands.
 - Observe your watercolor. What surprises you about today's creation? What do you notice? As you are observing your watercolor, connect to the way you are feeling today. Does your choice of color evoke any particular emotion? If you are practicing with company, you may choose to share your observations.
- Cut out a blossom from today's colors. Using your scissors, cut a "blossom" of any shape, size, or type from your page. You might make your blossom today very large or very small. You might cut it freehand or have a particular shape in mind. Write today's date on the back of your blossom.
 - Add your blossom to your bouquet. Using a restickable gluestick, adhere your blossom to the larger paper. If this is your first experience with this practice, place it wherever you'd like. If there are other blossoms already on the page, you can remove and replace them to "arrange" your mindful blossoms.
 - Continue to add blossoms each time you use this practice. Over time, you can build a bouquet as robust as you choose. If your bouquet becomes too full, you can add additional pages to make multiple bouquets or move your "garden" to a larger bouquet. Keep your bouquet someplace visible to you in your classroom to evoke conversation with the children about your own self-care and to remind yourself of the evolving and changing qualities of our spirits over the year.



Jim Timmerman, AMS Videographer



Maribeth Slagle, AMS Membership Services Specialist





The Garden Party: A Mindful Blossoming Group Practice

Materials:

- 18 x 24 watercolor paper, one for each participant
- 6 x 24 strips of watercolor paper, cut so that the long edge of each strip is wavy. One for each participant
- 2 x 24 strips of green paper. One for each participant
- Watercolor paints for each participant
- Brush for each participant
- Water for each participant
- Scissors for each participant
- Green, black, or brown permanent markers. One for each participant
- Large canvas painted light blue
- Decoupage glue and brushes dedicated to decoupage

Directions

- Before you begin this practice: Consider when you will invite your large group to participate. Will it be a beginning-of-the-year communal art practice? A way to offer companionship at midyear? A celebration for the end of the year? Choose a time when your community's need for self and community care is matched to a joyful art installation like this.
- Set up your materials. Invite your participants to sit at tables in the same room. At each seat, provide a set of the materials "for each participant" listed above: large paper, paper strips, watercolors, brushes, water, scissors, and markers.



Maria Walford, AMS Director of Equity & Engagement



Melanie Thiesse, AMS Senior Director of Membership & School Accreditation

The Garden Party: A Mindful Blossoming Group Practice

Directions continued:

- Settle. Gather your group together. Invite participants to take a moment to silence distractions, close their eyes if they feel comfortable to do so, and settle into the space. After time for a few breaths, invite the group to attend together.
 - Invite participants to discuss, at their tables or in a full group, what kinds of flowers they prefer most. Invite them to imagine that their school community is a garden. If each of them were flowers, what qualities would they need in the soil to be able to thrive? Ideas might include, "a collaborative community," or "freedom to make mistakes," or "mentorship." Invite participants to discuss each of their own needs.
 - When participants have each identified a quality, invite them each to write their quality on the curvy long strips, using the brown, green, or black markers. Encourage participants to use most of the space on each strip so that their words or phrases fill the complete length.
- Invite participants to turn their attention to the 18 x 24 sheets of watercolor paper. Invite participants to select whatever color paint attracts each of them today. Encourage them to, "fill up as much of the page as you choose with large swatches of color. Watch your fingers as you do so. Pay attention to how you're holding your brush, how the paint moves across the card, and how the color appears more concentrated when the brush first touches the card and less so as it moves across the card." Give time for participants to paint.
 - Invite participants to decide whether they'd like to add another color. If so, invite them to clean their brushes and explore another color on the page.
 - Invite participants to add additional colors as they feel motivated to do so. They should try to fill as much of the page as possible with color.



Cynthia Barraza, AMS School Quality Manager



Jazlyn Gattler, AMS School Accreditation Service Specialist



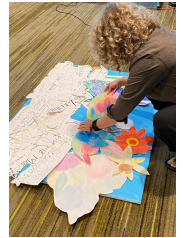
The Garden Party: A Mindful Blossoming Group Practice

Directions continued:

- When participants are finished adding color, invite them to “rinse your brushes and place them out of your hands.” Invite them to reflect on the color choices they made, and discuss with their table groups or with the whole group. You might ask, “What surprises you about today’s creation? What do you notice? As you are observing your watercolor, connect to the way you are feeling today. Does your choice of color evoke any particular emotion?”
- Invite participants to think back to their previous conversation about the kinds of bouquets they like best. Encourage them to cut out a blossom from the pages they’ve painted. You might say, “Using your scissors, cut a “blossom” of any shape, size, or type from your page. You might make your blossom very large or very small. You might cut it freehand or have a particular shape in mind. Write today’s date and your name on the back of your blossom.”
- Invite participants to join you at the large easel. Ask participants to bring their long strips with them. If time allows, invite each participant to acknowledge what the quality they most need from this community to thrive is, then adhere their strip along the bottom edge of the canvas using the restickable glue stick. Try to keep the strips near the bottom of the canvas, creating a word soil along the bottom long edge. The strips may overlap.
- Invite them to each add their blossom to the canvas, creating a visual bouquet. Invite participants to choose a green stem and glue it to their blossom. Using a restickable gluestick, adhere each blossom to the canvas. Encourage participants to collaborate to decide how they want their blossoms to be arranged and to move blossoms about until they have a finished arrangement.



Andrew Holland, AMS Director of Information Technology



Gina Lofquist, AMS Senior Director of Education & Strategic Initiatives



