

Social Emotional Learning

# Breathwork, Tapping & Mindfulness

*A Practitioner's Guide for Faculty & Therapists: Jacqueline Penhos, HHP, MA, SEL*

Honoring the Land

# Land Acknowledgement

*I reside on the sacred, unceded ancestral land of the  
Ipai and Kumeyaay people, known today as San  
Diego.*



# Today's Agenda

*What we'll explore together*

**01**

Understanding SEL & the Nervous System

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The Science of Breathwork

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# What is Social Emotional Learning?

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## Self-Awareness

Recognizing emotions, thoughts, and how they influence behavior

## Self-Management

Regulating emotions, managing stress, setting and achieving goals

## Social Awareness

Empathy, perspective-taking, appreciating diversity

## Relationship Skills

Communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, boundaries

## Responsible Decision-Making

Making ethical, constructive choices about behavior and interactions

# SEL & the Nervous System

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## Sympathetic (Fight/Flight/Freeze)

- Increased heart rate & cortisol
- Narrowed attention & focus
- Impaired prefrontal cortex access
- Reactive emotional responses
- Reduced learning capacity

## Parasympathetic (Rest/Digest/Connect)

- Calm, regulated heart rate
- Expanded awareness & curiosity
- Full prefrontal cortex engagement
- Thoughtful emotional responses
- Optimal learning state

*Breathwork • Tapping • Mindfulness → activate the parasympathetic response*

# The Science of Breathwork

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*Breath is the only autonomic function we can consciously control — making it a direct gateway to emotional regulation.*

## 0.1 Hz

Resonance frequency breathing optimizes heart rate variability (HRV)

## 6 sec

Exhale activates the vagus nerve, triggering parasympathetic response

## 400%

Increase in HRV with slow paced breathing vs. normal breathing patterns

## 21 days

Consistent breathwork practice to create measurable neurological change

# Breathwork Techniques

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## Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)

All ages | Stress reduction

Inhale 4 sec → Hold 4 sec → Exhale 4 sec → Hold 4 sec. Used by Navy SEALs and first responders for acute stress.

## 4-7-8 Breathing

Teens & Adults | Anxiety & Sleep

Inhale 4 sec → Hold 7 sec → Exhale 8 sec. Activates parasympathetic nervous system rapidly.

## Resonance Breathing

Adults | HRV & Regulation

5-6 breaths per minute (inhale 5 sec, exhale 5 sec). Synchronizes heart rhythms for optimal regulation.

## Belly / Diaphragmatic

All ages | Foundation skill

Hand on belly rises on inhale. Activates the diaphragm, reducing shallow chest breathing patterns.

# Introduction to Tapping (EFT)

*Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) combines cognitive exposure with somatic stimulation of acupuncture meridian points.*

## What It Is

EFT uses gentle fingertip tapping on specific meridian points while focusing on a distressing thought or emotion, disrupting the stress response.

## Research Base

Over 100 peer-reviewed studies. Shown to reduce cortisol by 43% (Church et al., 2012), PTSD symptoms, anxiety, and phobias.

## Key Tapping Points

1. Karate Chop (KC) — side of hand
2. Top of Head (TH)
3. Eyebrow (EB) — inner edge
4. Side of Eye (SE)
5. Under Eye (UE)
6. Under Nose (UN)
7. Chin (CH)
8. Collarbone (CB)
9. Under Arm (UA)

# EFT Tapping Protocol

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## 1 Identify the Issue

Name the specific problem, emotion, or memory. Be precise (e.g., "anxiety about presenting to the class").

## 2 Rate Intensity (SUD)

Use the Subjective Units of Distress Scale (0–10). This provides a measurable baseline before tapping.

## 3 Create the Setup Statement

"Even though I have [problem], I deeply and completely accept myself." Tap karate chop while repeating 3 times.

## 4 Tap the Sequence

Tap 5–7 times on each meridian point while repeating a brief reminder phrase. Complete 1–3 rounds.

## 5 Re-rate & Adjust

Re-assess SUD score. If above 3, continue with modified statements. Aim for 0–2 before closing.

*Clinical Note: EFT can be adapted for groups, individuals, and self-application. Always co-regulate before asking clients to tap alone.*

# Tapping Applications in School & Clinical Settings

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## Classroom

- Morning regulation check-ins
- Pre-test anxiety reduction
- Conflict de-escalation
- Transition support between subjects
- Group tapping for collective stress

## Therapeutic

- PTSD & trauma processing
- Phobia and panic reduction
- Grief and loss
- Performance anxiety
- Self-critical thought patterns

## Faculty Use

- Burnout and compassion fatigue
- Difficult family conversations
- Classroom management stress
- Personal resilience building
- Staff meeting openers

# Mindfulness Foundations

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*"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."*

*— Jon Kabat-Zinn*

## Attention

Training focused, sustained awareness on present-moment experience (breath, body, sensation).

## Intention

Purposeful, motivated practice. Why we practice shapes the quality and direction of attention.

## Attitude

Non-judgment, curiosity, and compassion are the orientation — not goals to achieve.

## Awareness

Meta-cognitive capacity to notice thoughts and feelings without being fused with them.

# Research Evidence

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**38%**

Reduction in anxiety symptoms after 8-week MBSR program

*Hofmann et al., 2010*

**43%**

Drop in cortisol levels with EFT tapping in randomized trials

*Church et al., 2012*

**11%**

Academic achievement gains with SEL programming

*CASEL Meta-Analysis, 2017*

**58%**

Decrease in PTSD symptoms using combined EFT & breathwork

*Feinstein, 2019*

**23%**

Improvement in classroom behavior and attention

*Mindfulness in Schools Project, 2021*

**6 wks**

Minimum program length for measurable neurological change

*Davidson & Lutz, 2008*

# Mindfulness in Practice



## Classroom Practices

### Morning Anchoring

2–3 minutes of breath focus to transition students into learning mode.

### Body Scan

Systematic awareness scan from feet to head; builds interoception.

### Mindful Listening

Listen to a bell or music with full attention — develops focus.

### STOP Practice

Stop • Take a breath • Observe • Proceed — micro mindfulness pause.

### Gratitude Journaling

Brief daily reflection that shifts attention toward positive emotion.



## Therapeutic Practices

### Mindfulness-Based CBT

Integrate present-moment awareness with cognitive restructuring techniques.

### Urge Surfing

Observe cravings or impulses as waves without acting — builds distress tolerance.

### Leaves on a Stream

ACT technique: observe thoughts as leaves floating by; reduce fusion.

### Compassion Meditation

Loving-kindness practice (metta) — builds self-compassion and reduces shame.

### Trauma-Sensitive Practice

Emphasize agency, grounding, and co-regulation before internal awareness.

# Integrating All Three Practices

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## Breathwork

*Physiological regulation*

## Tapping (EFT)

*Cognitive + somatic release*

## Mindfulness

*Present-moment awareness*

## Together: Full-Spectrum Emotional Regulation

**2 min**

Box breathing to calm the nervous system

**5 min**

Brief tapping round on the presenting concern

**5 min**

Mindfulness body scan or anchoring practice

# Implementation Guide

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## Phase 1: Foundation (Weeks 1-2)

- Introduce breath awareness and belly breathing daily
- Model tapping on yourself in front of students/clients
- Begin with 2-minute mindfulness anchors each session

## Phase 2: Practice (Weeks 3-6)

- Introduce box breathing and 4-7-8 techniques
- Teach full EFT sequence with setup statements
- Extend mindfulness to 5–10 minutes; add body scans

## Phase 3: Integration (Weeks 7+)

- Student/client-led practice and peer teaching
- Combine all three in a cohesive 12-minute daily sequence
- Build school/clinic-wide rituals and trauma-informed culture

*Start small, be consistent, and practice yourself first — your regulated nervous system is the most powerful teaching tool.*

# Trauma-Informed Considerations

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*These practices are powerful — and must be offered with care. Internal focus can activate trauma responses in some individuals.*

## Offer Choice

Always make participation optional. "You may close your eyes or keep a soft gaze downward." Agency is therapeutic.

## Watch for Dysregulation

Signs include dissociation, increased agitation, withdrawal. Stop the practice and co-regulate with presence and breath.

## Co-Regulate First

Your calm presence is prerequisite. Regulate yourself before guiding others into regulated states.

## Lead with External Anchors

Start with sensory grounding (5-4-3-2-1) before internal body awareness with trauma-exposed populations.

## Go Slow with Tapping

EFT can surface buried material rapidly. Proceed gently; have tissues, time, and a clear closing ritual.

## Refer When Needed

These are tools, not treatment. Know your scope of practice and collaborate with licensed mental health providers.

# Next Steps & Resources

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## Your Next 30 Days

- 1 Practice one technique daily for yourself before introducing to others
- 2 Select ONE practice to pilot with your group or caseload next week
- 3 Partner with a colleague for accountability and peer support
- 4 Track outcomes using SUD scores, self-report, or behavior data
- 5 Join a community of practice or seek additional training (MBSR, EFT, SEL)

## Recommended Resources

- [The Tapping Solution](#) — Nick Ortner
- [Full Catastrophe Living](#) — Jon Kabat-Zinn
- [The Body Keeps the Score](#) — Bessel van der Kolk
- [Breath](#) — James Nestor
- [CASEL.org](#) — SEL frameworks
- [EFTuniverse.com](#) — Research hub
- [MindfulSchools.org](#) — Curricula

## *Questions/Thoughts*

*Grateful for your time and presence this morning.  
I made this handout for you and your students to  
use.*

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*Questions & Practice Time*