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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *50+ Tech Tools for School Counselors* by Angela Cleveland and Stephen Sharp. The authors recommend three apps (available for iOS & Android) that promote mindfulness and meditation.

**LEARN MORE** about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.

# STOP, BREATHE, THINK

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	EASY	MODERATE	A LITTLE MORE ADVANCED
COST	FREE	FREE TO USE PAY TO UPGRADE	FREE TRIAL PAY TO ACCESS

Stop, Breathe, Think (SBT) is an app available for iOS, Android, and as a web app for FREE download. The app provides a guide to meditation and mindfulness training used to shift attention and develop focus, kindness, gratitude, and compassion. With guided meditation, self-assessment, measurement tools, and reminders, SBT is useful, helping users develop and support a mindfulness routine.

Getting started is as simple as downloading the app from the app store. Although you don't have to register to explore and sample the app and its services, registration with name, date of birth, email, and password is required to access most of the features of the free service.

Users can begin with a Check-in, "How are you?" The app guides the user to pause and survey themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. From there, SBT will recommend several guided meditations that may be beneficial. Clicking on pre-selected meditation such as Joy or Gratitude allows the user to listen to soothing voices and be taken through an exploration of the concepts of the title. The guided meditations last between 1 and 15 minutes depending on the concept. After finishing, users can *favorite* or *share* the meditation, check in to monitor emotional or mental change, view their progress, or pick another track. Completion of meditation earns users stickers to celebrate the gains and milestones as they grow their mindfulness practice.

If the user clicks the Explore button, they can now access the extensive library of meditations. Breathing exercises, yoga, and mindfulness walking can be viewed. Users can also view the premium features, which are locked. Premium has a fee but offers exclusive and extended content for meditation.

Users can also check out the Feed, a chatbot that provides motivation and shares new content to engage the user. The content can include the Practice of the Day, motivational posters, and setup for reminders and prompts. Users can monitor their Progress (from the number of days of successive meditation *streaks*), track Settledness (the progress of inventoried emotions), view the top emotions identified, and see which meditations are the favorite.

Basic guides on how to meditate and information on the basic impacts of meditation in the brain are also available in the app in the More section. Additional information on beginning and maintaining a mindfulness practice can also be found in More. The app can be synched with the Apple Health app to provide more feedback on the gains made through mindfulness and notifications to continue with the practice.

SBT is an accessible entry into building and maintaining a mindfulness practice. The content is both warm and engaging, with a library that doesn't seem repetitive. The library is extensive enough that there's a satisfying user experience without paid content.

The content is so good there's even a children's app.

## Stop, Breathe, Think Kids

Stop, Breathe, Think (SBT) Kids is the kids' version of the popular mindfulness app for adults. The velvet smooth-voiced guided meditation of the adult app is traded out for thoughtful and engaging children's videos to guide young children through age-appropriate meditation and brain breaks. The app is available for iOS or as a web app at [kidsapp.stopbreathethink.com](http://kidsapp.stopbreathethink.com).

After download or when accessing the web app, users will be asked to immediately register. An email is all that is required. An email will be sent containing a PIN. The PIN will be used to register and then create an eight-character password. Up to five kids can be added to the account. Once names have been added, you're ready to begin; click Start in the lower right-hand corner.

Starting with Find a Mission will have children Check-in, reflecting on their emotions using a series of emojis. Missions replace the adult meditations. Each emoji reveals up to four corresponding emotions for a child to select. Once up to three emotions have been selected, users can click Launch in the lower right-hand corner.

A soft voice narrates brief stories and meditations to accompanying animation. Children will be asked to shift attention, explore emotions, or focus their breathing. After completion of the 2- to 6-minute videos, young meditators (or their adult helpers) click Complete and are asked to reassess up to three emotions again. Kids are rewarded with stickers, similar to the adult version. Children can continue with additional missions or return to the home screen.

Like the cough-syrup bottle of apps, the Settings for the SBT Kids are virtually child-proof on the app and cannot be easily changed due to the unique security feature: MULTIPLICATION TABLES. The secured adult features include background information on the app and its content.

The library of material is limited to about two dozen videos, with additional videos available for purchase as premium content. The fee for a single SBT Kids annual subscription is approximately the same as the fee for both adult and kids services combined.

Counselors can use the app to provide an introduction to these essential skills in attention, focus, and regulation. The data and scaling can provide excellent insights to monitor progress and guide feedback. The app can be great to start or complement instruction for a mindfulness practice.

Like the adult version, Stop, Breathe, Think Kids is an easy and accessible guide to develop a mindfulness practice. Adult set-up is necessary, and children should collaborate with adults for their first few missions. The missions are inviting and thoughtful and can provide children with valuable lifelong skills.

**Other mindfulness apps for kids include:**

- Breathe, Think, Do Sesame
- CALM
- DreamyKid
- Kids Yoga Deck
- Mindful Powers
- Mind Yeti
- Smiling Mind



*Sesame Street has created an app (available in both English and Spanish) called “Breathe” where they state, “Little Children, Big Challenges.” The app targets preschool-aged children and gives them real-life scenarios where they may find themselves feeling frustrated. Children learn the value of “belly breaths” to feel more calm, and how to think of a plan to solve the presenting problem. The app is beneficial as it takes children through the calming and problem-solving steps in a fun and developmentally appropriate manner. Children as young as 3 have repeated the steps, “Breathe, think, and do” to use in times of frustration.*

—Vanessa De Jesus Guzman, MA, LAC, NCC, is a middle school counselor and licensed therapist with 15 years’ experience working with children ages 3 to 13.

# HEADSPACE

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	EASY	MODERATE	A LITTLE MORE ADVANCED
COST	FREE	FREE TO USE PAY TO UPGRADE	FREE TRIAL PAY TO ACCESS

Timeless, one of the earliest incarnations and standards of the mindfulness app genre, and distinctly British, Headspace is the Doctor Who of meditation apps. The fan base for Headspace in the world of mindfulness and meditation is comparable to the following of Time Lords in science fiction. The storied beginnings of Headspace find a former Buddhist monk leaving the Tibetan monastery to share fruits of meditation with the world. Fortunately, guided meditation is significantly easier to learn and understand than the history of a BBC television show.

The Headspace app is available for download for either iOS or Android platform or can be accessed by using the web app at [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com). Getting started is easy with an email address, Facebook, or Spotify account. The app will ask your level of experience from None to A Little to A Lot, with the amount of prior experience changing the duration of the initial meditation times. To customize the experience, Headspace asks about why you're using the app: to improve sleep, ease anxiety, manage stress, find calm, and other experiences. The app will then try to find the best time to build a mindfulness routine.

You're ready to get started! There's a nice introductory video discussing the basics to meditation and building a routine, "getting some headspace." The app is intended to help build a 10-day mindfulness routine and learn the basics of meditation.

The guided meditations are narrated by TED Talks MVP Andy Puddicombe, who lulls users in mindful engagement with the warmth of English charm. Although geared for a 10-day practice, the allure of the British accent makes each session seem more timeless than trips through time and space on a TARDIS.

The educational videos are fun, complemented by humorous animation. Each of the animations serves as great educational tools and illustration to the concepts. Users can explore more of the animation through the animation library. In addition to the 10-day routine, there are other concepts of wellness and mindfulness that can be explored through Discover. This is where the application becomes more limited. The quality of each guided meditation is very good and consistent, but outside the initial 10-day basics, the library is limited and requires a subscription to access most content. Subscriptions are available for a fee and include additional packs, other guided meditations themes, minis (short meditations), meditations for kids, and the rest of the animation library.

Under the Profile menu, users can view their stats and review previous meditations under My Journey. Friends and companions can be invited to join via email under Buddies. Users can also manage their privacy and notifications under Setting found in the Profile section and receive feedback on common obstacles for both meditations practice and technical support.



# INSIGHT TIMER

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	EASY	MODERATE	A LITTLE MORE ADVANCED
COST	FREE	FREE TO USE PAY TO UPGRADE	FREE TRIAL PAY TO ACCESS

Insight Timer is a popular meditation app available on iOS and Android devices. It is also available as a web app at [insighttimer.com](http://insighttimer.com). The app states they offer the “largest free library of meditations on earth.” The immense and diverse content includes guided meditations, ambient noise, music, lectures, and spoken word.

New users can log in with an email or Facebook account. Insight Timer will ask your experience with meditation, to better customize the experience. The app feels like a social media experience through the lens of meditation. The home menu Today provides a feed of all the recent activity across the platform. Users can enter a location under Nearby to see who is using the app locally, and friends can be added by typing in a specific user’s name or email (friends are not automatically added from a Facebook registration).

The platform touts over 10,000 meditations and a growing library. The meditations are grouped by categories: meditations, music, popular, teachers, talks, and playlists. Each meditation is also tagged, so themes, styles, and topics can be sorted and searched for easily. There are playlists for users to be guided through several meditations. Users can also participate in discussion groups to further explore topics and connect or support each other as they develop a mindfulness practice.

There is also the central feature and namesake of the app: the timer. The timer lets users meditate for a set period time to the tones of Tibetan meditation bowls or ambient noise. Users can customize the timer’s duration and tones and save them as Presets.

Although most of Insight Timer’s contents are free, users can purchase Courses. Courses are a series of talks, guided meditations, or instructional lessons that can be purchased for a single use at a lesser fee or unlimited use at a higher cost. By clicking Profile, users can adjust privacy settings, contact support, connect to Apple Health, and/or monitor their stats and progress.

There is a rise in the number of online meditation services available with most costing a fee for expanded content. Insight Timer stands out with the sheer volume of free content. Counselors should have no problem finding a meditation for themselves or to complement a group or activity. The app’s vibrant social experiences also make the platform feel like the most connected of the mindfulness apps available. The connectedness not only promotes engagement but also is one of the most compelling tools to begin and maintain a mindfulness practice.

