

# The Calming Power of Herbs

Grades 3-5 | 1 Class Period



## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will understand the definition of an herb and learn about 4 herbs that can help increase calm and focus. They will try a mindfulness activity using an herb to feel calm.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is an herb?
- How can herbs support our emotions?
- What are some ways to help reduce anxiety or stress with herbs?

## MA STATE FRAMEWORKS

### Mental and Emotional Health [3.2.MHI]

1. Identify different feelings and emotions (e.g., anger, fear, grief, sadness, anxiety, stress, hopelessness, gratitude, love, excitement, contentedness, hope, pride, happiness) that people may experience
2. Identify characteristics of and practices to support mental and emotional well-being within various cultures and diverse perspectives.
4. Apply self-monitoring strategies to regulate emotions (e.g., breathing techniques, appropriate sleep, proper nutrition).

## MATERIALS

- Herb samples (mint, lavender, chamomile, and lemon balm)
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Soft music (optional)

## PROCEDURE

### Warm Up

What Is an Herb?

Ask students if they have ever smelled or tasted an herb. If they need a hint, ask them about times they have smelled mint (often used to flavor toothpaste and gum) or eaten oregano or basil on pizza. They may have tried herbal tea such as chamomile or mint, had an herbal cough drop for a sore throat, or used herbs in a spray to keep bugs away.

Ask students what they think an herb is and collect their ideas. Tell students that an herb is a plant with leaves, flowers or stems often used to flavor foods, make medicine, or used in a product for the scent.

Herbs typically have a non-woody stem that dies back to the ground each year. For cooking, generally the leafy parts of herbs are used to add flavor to food. People have grown herbs for thousands of years to use in cooking, medicine, and even for keeping bugs away. Tell students that herbs are plants that people have used for a long time to help with health, including to regulate emotions. Some herbs can help us feel calm, sleepy, or even more focused.

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## **PROCEDURE, Cont.**

**Activity:** Calming Herbs

Ask students what they do when they feel stressed out, anxious or upset. Take some time to let them share their methods for calming themselves down. Ask if they have ever smelled a plant that helped them feel calmer or content. Tell students they will examine four herbs: mint, lavender, chamomile, and lemon balm, that can be used to help emotional well being.

Introduce each herb and pass them around to students to look at and smell. Ask students to describe what they see and smell. Write their ideas on a chart paper or whiteboard. After they have shared, tell students more about the herbs.

- Mint can help people feel more awake or focused.
- Lavender is considered to be calming and can be used to help people relax and sleep.
- Chamomile flowers are often used in tea to help people relax.
- Lemon balm can help calm nerves and cheer people up.

## **Closing**

Ask students to share which herb was their favorite and when they could use herbs like the four shared. Remind them that herbs can be used at bedtime, quiet time, when feeling anxious, when studying for a test, etc.)

## **EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS**

### **Make Herbal Sachet Bags**

Using rice and lavender oil, students can make small herbal sachet bags. Fill a small sandwich bag with white rice and add some drops of the oil. Remind students that a little oil goes a very long way! Close up the bags and let the rice sit for a few days. To make the sachet bags, cut 2 squares of fabric and sew them together inside out along the edges, leaving a 1.5 in opening, then flip the bag right-side out. Add the rice filling to the bag, then seal it by stitching the opening or tying it closed with a ribbon.

If you have a sunny windowsill in a classroom or a space in a school garden, try to grow these calming herbs. Because mint and lemon balm can takeover, make sure to grow them in a pot and not directly in a garden bed.