

## Pause Breathe Smile Enrichment / Follow-On Activity

# SIFT

This activity is geared toward children Years 5 to 8. It is drawn from Dan Seigel's work and his book **Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain** (2013).

### Script:

Archaeologists who are exploring an archaeological site, digging for historic or even prehistoric artifacts, have a lot of dirt they must sort through. Most of a site of interest is made up of things that actually aren't very interesting at all, things that tell us very little about the past. Especially if the things the archaeologists are searching for are quite small, like pieces of pottery or fragments of fossils, this can make examining the site take some time and requires lots of focused attention.

People doing this work may say they are "sifting" through the evidence found at that site. Who knows what it means to "sift" through something? (allow ākongā time to discuss the meaning of the word "sift" and their encounters or experiences with it: perhaps they've sifted sand at the beach or dirt looking for "gold". Maybe they've sifted flour to get clumps out while baking bread or a cake.)

What might sifting an archaeological site or sifting flour in the kitchen have to do with our wellbeing?

Well, sifting is a valuable image to us when we are developing our ability to navigate our inner worlds. There is a ton of information around us and lots happening inside us at any given moment in time! Not all of it is helpful, important, or even that interesting. So, one thing we can learn to do, and practice doing, is hone our insight, by SIFTing through our own mind and body. Each letter of the word SIFT reminds you what to do.

### Here's how:

Close your eyes and ask yourself, what am I sensing in my body right now? You might notice tingling or tension, soreness or lightness. Just allow the sensing to happen.

Now, what images come up within your mind? These might be visual, like a person or a place or a thing, or they might be a hope for the future. It's perfectly fine if you can't put them into descriptive words. Just be with the images.

Now can you notice what feelings are inside you? Emotions are in your body and they also are connected to your thoughts, memories, and perceptions. Emotions have an energy to them. Even if you can't name the feeling you're having, just become aware of what is there.

Last, what thoughts are flowing through your brain? Don't try to catch them or control them. Let them be there, as they are.

Anytime, anywhere, you can SIFT through your inner world like this. Often you may find just the experience of checking in with yourself like this, through sense, image, feeling, and thought, will give you insight into something that wasn't clear before. Just like archaeologists sifting through a dig, you can carefully and kindly put your attention on certain things to find valuable and important nuggets inside yourself.