



# RAD

## Lesson 9: Teaching Companion

### Lesson Summary

Lesson 9 introduces the second part of the Taking Notice strategy: Taking Notice: Looking Around. Taking Notice: Looking In was introduced in lesson 8. Looking In teaches students to notice their inner world, including their thoughts, feelings, and sensations. In contrast, Looking Around helps them shift attention outward to the present moment.

RAD uses ideas that come from the theory behind Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Both RAD and ACT teach skills for noticing and accepting thoughts and feelings so we can respond in flexible, values-based ways. Looking Around is a form of grounding, a mindfulness skill that involves focusing on the here-and-now through the senses. Grounding helps anchor students in the present moment without trying to control or eliminate their internal experiences.

Looking Around has two simple steps. First, students pause and notice their breath. Second, they turn their attention to what they can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste in their environment. Grounding is not the same as distraction; the goal isn't to push away uncomfortable thoughts or feelings. Instead, grounding allows students' RoAD Blocks to exist while they stay connected to their surroundings and what they're doing. This ACT-aligned skill helps RoAD Blocks move into the background, giving students the freedom to choose RAD moves based on their values rather than letting their uncomfortable thoughts and feelings be in charge. Students can practice Looking Around during enjoyable activities, boring tasks, or difficult moments, but it is especially helpful when RoAD Blocks show up. The lesson also teaches that Looking Around is not permission to make notRAD moves; instead, Looking Around can help students notice when their actions drift away from their values and help them shift back toward what matters.

Lesson 9 also highlights that Looking In and Looking Around can work together. A student might first acknowledge an internal experience ("I'm noticing I'm having the thought that I'll mess this up"), then ground themselves by focusing on their breath and then noticing their current environment. This combination strengthens their ability to accept RoAD Blocks and still make choices guided by their values. Together, these strategies build psychological flexibility — the ability to notice, accept, and take action even when uncomfortable thoughts and feelings are present. Looking Around deepens students' capacity to Recognize, Accept, and Do, helping them stay present and continue moving toward the life they want to live.

### Extension Ideas

#### More Food Stuff!

A fun way to practice really paying attention to your current circumstances is to use chocolate or another small treat that dissolves slowly in your mouth. Have students place the treat on their tongue and Take Notice by Looking Around—focusing on the taste, texture, temperature, and how the sensations change over time. If their minds wander or distractions pop up, they simply guide their attention back to what they can taste, hear, see, or feel in that moment. The goal is not to stop thoughts, but to strengthen the skill of returning attention to the present. This activity helps students experience how grounding themselves in their senses can support making RAD moves, even when distractions or discomfort are present. You may choose to end with a brief discussion about how the phrase "I'm noticing I'm having the thought/feeling..." can also help students redirect attention gently when their minds pull them away.



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### Extension Ideas

#### Practicing Looking Around

In Lesson 9, we learned that Looking Around is a grounding strategy—it helps steady our attention by focusing on the present moment through our senses. A key part of Looking Around is taking a slow, intentional breath, and there are different ways to do this, such as box breathing or other patterned breathing techniques. Grounding simply means bringing ourselves back to the here and now, and Looking Around is one way to do that. In this activity, students will explore several grounding practices, starting with different breathing options and then trying grounding like the soles of the feet technique, as well as the 5-4-3-2-1 sensory method. Even though each method works a little differently, they all help train attention, build acceptance, and strengthen the ability to stay present so students can make RAD moves—even when RoAD Blocks show up.

One important note: Many grounding and breathing exercises are often taught as relaxation techniques, and they can help the body feel calmer — but in ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Theory), relaxation is not the goal. The purpose of these skills is to help us notice what's happening in the present moment, make room for uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, and stay connected to our values. If calmness happens, that's a bonus, not a requirement. What matters most is building the ability to stay present and flexible so we can choose RAD moves, even when our minds or bodies are uncomfortable.

A great video to discuss this is the video *The Five Mindfulness Myths* by Russ Harris: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-rY0XNSZE>. In my opinion, this video makes mindfulness much more accessible and also gives a great reason to practice it, a reason that goes beyond just feeling relaxed. You can decide if showing the video is helpful or if simply explaining the concepts to students in your own words is better. My main hesitation in the video is the end where he shows an image of a wine glass being filled to represent a full life. You can decide if it works for you or not, but I have included it as an FYI.

Below are links to some videos that are great ways to extend RAD's Taking Notice: Looking Around skills.

Box Breathing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6RbW2LtdFs>

Soles of the Feet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QYY-7tjQTg>

5-4-3-2-1: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY0Ldqwmz\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY0Ldqwmz_Q)



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### More Food Stuff!

What were your thoughts before the activity.

What were your thoughts while you were doing it, and at the end of it.

What do you think the RAD lesson is for this activity. What do you think this activity was trying to teach you?



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### Practicing Looking Around

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Soles of the Feet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QYY-7tjQTg>

5-4-3-2-1: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY0Ldqwmz\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY0Ldqwmz_Q)

#### Video Title:

#### Before watching

Based on the title of the video, what do you think it might be about?

#### After Watching

Reflect on the strategy: How do you do it? When do you do it? Why do you do it?

How is this similar to RAD's strategy "Taking Notice – Around"?

How might practicing this help you?