

## *Mindful Moments in the K-5 Classroom*

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### **What is Mindfulness?**

*Student Definition:* Mindfulness is noticing what's happening right now

- Helps you have more fun because you better enjoy each moment, activity, place, person's company...
- Mini vacation for your brain
- Helps you figure out emotions
- Can help you anywhere at any time

*Adult Definitions:*

**Jon Kabat-Zinn:** Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally

**Shinzen Young:** Mindfulness is a threefold skill set working together:

- Concentration Power
- Sensory Clarity
- Equanimity (an evenness of the mind/temper, mental calmness)

Mindfulness is bringing awareness to our experiences.

Mindfulness can be applied to our senses, thoughts and emotions by using sustained attention and noticing experience without over-identifying or with an emotional charge.

Mindfulness is the quality of paying attention in an open, balanced and *curious* way. Mindfulness can be applied to all sensory experience, thoughts and emotions.

- Mindful Schools

What mindfulness is not:

- All about meditation
- About being calm
- A means for discipline
- A silver bullet
- Religious
- Absence of thought

***Mindfulness is just the opposite of what some people think.***

Mindfulness helps us find peace of mind.

It is not a trance like state and it is not zoning out.

It also does not take away the time and the place for imagination, creativity, spontaneity and daydreaming! In some ways, it cultivates it as our senses are heightened.



### ***Mindfulness vs. Meditation***

- Meditation and mindfulness overlap as well as complement each other
- Mindfulness is part of meditation, but meditation is a larger practice that includes many other techniques and practices

Mindfulness is a sensory experience with equanimity.

It is training our awareness and can be done through both formal and informal training.

### **Goals of mindfulness:**

- Self-awareness
- Emotion regulation
- Impulse control
- Attentional stability

### ***What are the benefits of being more mindful?***

Decades of research tells us that adults who practice mindfulness have:

- Decreased or better management of stress
- Increased ability to relax
- More energy
- Less chronic pain
- Improved emotional/mental well-being
- Improvements in self esteem
- Better brain health

### ***What are the student benefits?***

Research is just beginning. Early studies show students can improve:

- Attention
- Emotion Regulation
- Impulse Control
- Behavior in School
- Executive Functioning
- Empathy
- Social Skills
- Test Anxiety and Stress
- Skillful responses to difficult situations

Students may improve academic achievement, mental health and inter- and intra- personal relationships.      *-Mindful Schools*

## Formal Mindfulness Practice

Things to remember:

- Formal sessions last approximately 15 minutes
- Highlight mindful opportunities throughout the day for informal practice
- Every word has a purpose
- Be creative based on your own personal experiences and practice
- Share your own mindful “a-ha” moments
- Keep explanations simple. K-2 (less front loading) vs. 3-5 (a little more explanation of how this is relevant)
- Do not move on until children understand the specialness of this time and how to set up
- Teaching children to mindful sit and be still, breathing, for one minute is the place to start

## Talking Points about Mindfulness for Children

- Paying attention to the present moment
- Can calm us down when we are angry, sad, frustrated or stressed
- Can help us feel happy
- Can help us focus on work and play

## Establish the Container

- Make the physical space comfortable (seating, lighting)
- Make community agreements and setting expectations
- Establish relevance (tailor to your age group, find a good “hook”)
- Create a routine (shift and settle)
- Know that not everything will work for everyone and not everyone will participate 100% - do not take it personally
- Model - they will imitate you, respond to your soft voice, attune to your feelings through your eye contact, body language and tone/volume/verbiage
- Revisit all of these as needed

## What is a mindful body?

- Seated in a chair
- Cross legged on the floor
- Some occasions:
  - lying on the floor
  - sitting outside

*Use Images...*

- Be still like a mountain
- Sit tall like a redwood tree
- Let your body reach to the sun like a flower
- Let your head gently float on top of your tall body
- Zip yourself up from your hips to your shoulders.



The Breath

Mindful Awareness through Our Senses and Experiences

Body Awareness

Taking Pause

Compassion and Kindness toward Ourselves and Others

Gratitude

Empathy

Revisit and Informal Practice