

Mindfulness: (Re)Wiring the Brain for Resilience

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. (Mindful Schools)

"Mindfulness is the ability to know what's happening in your head at any given moment without getting carried away by it." -Dan Harris

Misconceptions about Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is NOT wearing specific clothing, using oils or incense.

Mindfulness is NOT associated with a specific religion or belief system.

Mindfulness is NOT something you're either "good at" or "not good at".

Mindfulness is NOT about changing who you are.

Mindfulness is NOT about emptying your brain of thoughts.

Mindfulness is NOT about escaping pain.

(Germer, 2009, p.55; Harris, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM2CP7A3HKk>)

Why Practice Mindfulness?

Practicing mindfulness has immediate benefits (Siegel) :

- De-stress by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps bring your body back into balance.
- Heart rate slows down, breathing slows down, muscles relax.
- Emotional Balance
- Mindfulness can help unlearn the response of fear to a trigger or stimulus (PTSD), by unraveling inner triggers.
- Mindfulness can transform your reactions to responses. With mindful awareness, you learn how to put a pause between the trigger and the reaction, which can help respond to a stimulus differently.

How Do You DO Mindfulness?

The work is to just keep doing it (Mindful).

All mindfulness exercises have three basic components:

- Stop: stop what you are doing, or at least slow down.
- Observe: (pay attention to your breath, or a part of your body, or a sound, or a taste.)
- Return (when you notice your attention has moved away, return it again and again.)

You can't be "good at" mindfulness. It's not difficult, but it takes practice. It takes doing it, and it takes being kind to yourself about it.

Routine for Beginning Mindfulness

- Devices/distractions away, earbuds out (for now)
- Sit with back against your chair
- Let your eyes close (alternative: let your gaze fall downward).

In order for us to practice, we need to maintain a safe, comfortable space*.

- I will always do the movements with you as I instruct you.
- We will focus on our own body and breath. This means not making comments about self or others, not touching others, and not distracting others from their experience.
- You always have a choice: my hope is that you try your best to participate at all times. However - participation may look different for each person. It might mean doing only the breathing part for as long as you need, until you choose to engage with the movement.
- *These suggested expectations are from *Teaching Transformative Life Skills to Students* (Bose et. al, 2017, p.30).

Mindfulness 101

Mindfulness practice begins and ends in the body. It involves taking the time to pay attention to where we are and what's going on, and that starts with being aware of our body. That very act can be calming, since our body has internal rhythms that help it relax if we give it a chance. We'll start with how to sit:

- Sit straight but not stiff. Your spine has a natural curve and you can just let it be there.
- Both feet touching the floor.
- Rest your hands where they are comfortable.
- Drop your chin a little and let your gaze fall downward. It's also okay to close your eyes but you don't have to.

- Breathe in and out. Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale.

Resources for Learning More About Mindfulness

Articles/Reports

Davis, T.S. (2012). Mindfulness-based approaches and their potential for educational psychology practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 28(1), 31-46. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/Davis-Mindfulness_Potential_on_Education_Psych.pdf

Frank, J.L., Kohler, K., Peal, A., Bose, B. (2017). Effectiveness of a school-based yoga program on adolescent mental health and school performance: Findings from a randomized controlled trial. *Mindfulness*, 8(3), 544-553. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-016-0628-3>

Pettway, A. (2017). Mindful of equity. *Teaching Tolerance*, 57. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2017/mindful-of-equity>

Books/Programs

Bose, B., Ancin, D., Frank, J., & Malik, A. (2017). *Teaching transformative life skills to students: A comprehensive dynamic mindfulness curriculum*. New York, NY: Norton & Co.

Germer, C.K. (2009). *The mindful path to self-compassion: Freeing yourself from destructive thoughts and emotions*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Greenland, S.K. (2016). *Mindful games*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Hanh, T.N., & Weare, K. (2017). *Happy teachers change the world: A guide for cultivating mindfulness in education*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Siegel, D.J. (2007). *The mindful brain: Reflection and attunement in the cultivation of well-being*. New York: Norton & Co.

Snel, E. (2013). *Sitting still like a frog: Mindfulness exercises for kids (and their parents)*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

The Hawm Foundation (2011). *The MindUp curriculum, Grades 6-8: Brain-focused strategies for learning - and living*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Websites

<http://www.mindfulschools.org/>

<http://www.mindful.org>

Holistic Life Foundation (working on mindfulness with Baltimore schools): <http://hlfinc.org>

Space Between: <http://www.spacebetween.community>

Video Resources

Stewart-Weeks, L. (2016). 1-Minute Mindfulness Exercises. Psych Central. Retrieved on July 24, 2017, from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2016/01/24/1-minute-mindfulness-exercises/>

[Happify, Sharon Salzberg]. (2016, Jan 19). *How mindfulness empowers us: An animation*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzKryaN44ss>

[Happify, Dan Harris]. (2015, Jun 24). *Meditation 101: A beginner's guide animation*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqoxYKtEWec>

[Happify]. (2015, Dec 7). *Why mindfulness is a superpower: An animation* [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>

[Happify]. (2015, Mar 27). *What do we have all wrong about meditation?* [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM2CP7A3HKk>

[Kelty Mental Health]. (2013, Mar 14). *Mindfulness: Youth voices*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk7lBwuhXWM>

[Mindful Schools]. (2015, Jan 26). *"Just breathe" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman (Wavecrest Films)*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>

[UCSF Osher]. (2017, Jan 5). [Video File]. *Cody - Pritzker mindfulness program*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voHDpqcXK6c>

[UCSF Osher]. (2017, May 24). [Video File]. *Eliza interview - Pritzker mindfulness program*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44YBFaRQGik>

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THE TRUTH ABOUT ACEs

WHAT ARE THEY?

ACEs are
ADVERSE
CHILDHOOD
EXPERIENCES

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Mother treated violently



Divorce



Incarcerated Relative



Substance Abuse

HOW PREVALENT ARE ACEs?

The ACE study* revealed the following estimates:

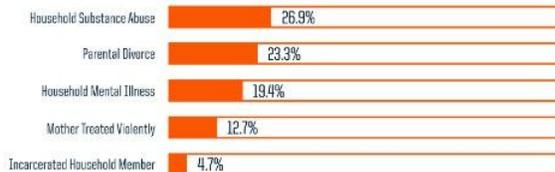
ABUSE



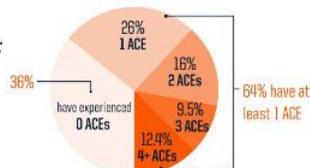
NEGLECT



HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

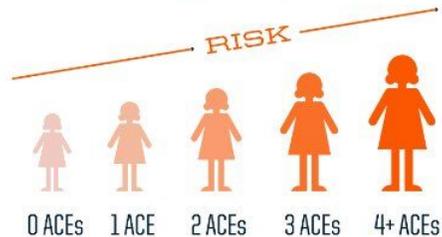


Of 17,000 ACE study participants:



WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



Possible Risk Outcomes:

BEHAVIOR



PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



Learn More about ACEs, Toxic Stress, and Resilience:

ACEs Too High. <https://acestoohigh.com/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). *From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

Porche, M.V., Zaff, J.F., Pan, J. (2017). *Barriers to success: Toward a deeper understanding of adversity's effects on adolescents*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance. Retrieved from <http://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/2017-03/FINALAdversityReport03.27.pdf>

Craig, S.E. (2016). *Trauma-sensitive schools: Learning communities transforming children's lives, K-5*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Souers, K., & Hall, P. (2016). *Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tough, P. (2016). *Helping children succeed: What works and why*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Van Dernoot Lipsky, L., & Burk, C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship: An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

ACEs are not the end of the story: Resilience Trumps ACEs (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pnhFmdz-ig>

Larissa Martinez valedictorian speech video (2016):
<http://www.wfaa.com/news/local/education/high-school-valedictorian-reveals-undocumented-status-in-speech/237807524>

Shift from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"
<http://raisingofamerica.org/trailer-wounded-places>

(8:11 - 9:30) How Childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime (Nadine Burke Harris, TED talk,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk>)