Mindfulness in the Classroom

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Grounding Activity

Brings our awareness to the body physically
Can help to release stress and tension
Increases awareness to our own physical responses and guide our reactions appropriately
Can be used to help calm and focus in a classroom
Can be done several times over the day to help with calming

Check in

• Start with gratitude or positive
• One distraction
• Finish with “I am in.”

Allows you to get a “pulse” on the classroom. Allows distractions to be verbalized and then set aside for the time being.
Classroom Connections

- Allows students to share their thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the day.
- Use a question or leave it open ended.
- Helps keep a "pulse" on the classroom.
- Creates a classroom affiliation of safety and security.
- Helps students get to know one another.
- Teaches active listening.
- Increases self-awareness.
- You may delegate an adult in the school for regular check-in.

Start with Why

"Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" Simon Sinek

Effects of Stress

- Toxic stress can impair the connection of brain circuits and, in the extreme, result in the development of a smaller brain.
- Brain circuits are especially vulnerable as they are developing during early childhood.
- Toxic stress can disrupt the development of these circuits. This can cause an individual to develop a low threshold for stress, thereby becoming overly reactive to adverse experiences throughout life.
High levels of stress hormones, including cortisol, can suppress the body’s immune response.

Sustained high levels of cortisol can damage the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for learning and memory. These cognitive deficits can continue into adulthood.

Middlebrooks JS, Audage NC. The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2008.

“Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose with a non-judgemental attitude.”
-Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness can...

- Take us out of autopilot
- Allows us to "tune in" to our reactions and body signals. This allows us to listen to our bodies rather than ignoring or pushing through.
- When we develop greater self awareness, we develop greater awareness of others and can socially engage more effectively.
How the Brain Works

Prefrontal Cortex: "Quarterback"/Coach
- Executive function, planning complex cognitive behaviors, personality, decision-making, social behavior

Amygdala: "Security guard"
- FIGHT, FLIGHT OF FREEZE
- Encodes emotional message for long term storage

Hippocampus: Saver of memories
- Compares new learning to past learning
- Working memory to long-term storage

My Stroke of Insight
- Jill Bolte Taylor

Please be responsible for the energy you bring to this space.
Attuning with Others

• Get to the same physical level or slightly lower
• Lean in
• Tilt chin towards your partner
• Open posture
• Relaxed muscle tone
• Slow rate of speech
• Lower tone of voice (take a breath, gently hum or sigh to release)
• Mirror gestures and expressions

Compassion, Empathy and Boundaries

• Brene Brown

Balanced Approach to BIG conversations

Top hand
BOUNDARIES
CLEAR EXPECTATIONS
CHOICES

Bottom hand
NURTURING
EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE
“I UNDERSTAND”
GENEROSITY
Mindful Listening

Mindful Listening Activities

• Guess that sound
• Sound memory game
  • Mom and baby game
  • Pass a sound
  • Listen to a story and focus on a certain word or sound

• Mindful School lesson

Mindful Listening

• Listening without interrupting
• Waiting to respond until the person is finished talking
• Asking a question to clarify what a person meant or if you
  need instructions repeated.
• What does mindful listening look like?
• What does it feel like when someone is listening mindfully
  to you?
Mindful Observation

• Observation as a learning tool – what do I do in this situation? Link to expected behaviours
• Observing without reacting
• Microexpressions

Mindful Watching Activities

- Memory games
- Noticing your surroundings
- Noticing facial expressions
- I spy Games
- Silent ball
- Charades
- Calming jar

Observations
Mindful Observation

• Kids are tuned in and notice changes
• Connect with body language and facial expressions
• Can describe or imitate what others are doing?
• Can follow visual demonstrations.
• Visual supports for calming

Mindful Scent

• Scent and the amygdala
• Scent and memory
• Scent and emotional memory

Teach associations in the brain

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calming</th>
<th>Alerting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vanilla</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Grapefruit</td>
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<td>Sandalwood</td>
<td>Citrus</td>
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<td>Valour</td>
<td>Spearmint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
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Mindful Movement

- Create a yoga pose
- What does your body/heart need?
- Mindful walk

Mindful Touch

- Sculptor game
- Provide mindful feedback
- Explore object using only touch

Perspective Taking

- Ask ‘why’ questions in books
- Role playing
- Reflect on memories and how they influence perspectives
Signs of Dysregulation

- Tight muscles
- Tense voice or raised pitch
- Leaning back
- Moving backward
- Wide eyes, dilated or pinpoint pupils
- Shifting eye gaze
- Raised eyebrows
- Wrinkled nose
- Touching face or hair
- Bringing hands to midline (mouth, nose or genitals)
- Microexpressions
- Fidgetting
- Yawning

Gratitude

- Gratitude game
- Journalling
- Close every day with gratefulness

We may not remember everything you said but we will remember how special you made us feel.
Thank you.
Take Aways

• What is one mindfulness tool that you are excited to bring to your students?

• What is one mindfulness tool that you are excited to bring into your own life?

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