Infusing Mindfulness into your Classroom

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Objectives

We hope that participants will:

1) have a better understanding of mindfulness and how it can support children’s development and classroom learning,

2) become familiar with a variety of examples of how teachers can incorporate mindfulness into classrooms based on our work with educators,

3) be more comfortable with simple mindfulness-based activities that they can implement in their classrooms
Our Background
Your Background

- Developmental period?
  - Elementary school?
  - Middle School?
  - High School?
- Prior experience with yoga/meditation?
- Have personal practice?
- Received training on bringing practices to children or youth?
- Currently use practices in classroom?
“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgementally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994)
We can be very disconnected from our bodies, emotions, and thoughts – in other words, we just go through the motions/routines

- Do you do anything like this?
- Simplest of all mindfulness practices: BODY AWARENESS

Connect with our Body
Focused Awareness

- Feeling my feet – mindful games book
Mindfulness Changes the Brain

- **Limbic system** – feeling and reacting brain
  - **Amygdala** – regulates emotional state; “security guard”
  - **Hippocampus** – makes and stores memories
- **PFC** – thinking brain

Brain Basics
Increased brain connectivity - especially those areas associated with attention and auditory and visual processing.
To succeed in life - our children need better self-regulation—a way to understand and manage their stress and energy.  
(Shanker, 2016)

Mindfulness practices foster self-regulation
1. Sharpen attention and focus
2. Build emotion regulation skills
3. Gain self-knowledge

3 Common Goals
Recent meta-analyses indicate promise
- cognitive performance
- psychological symptoms
- resilience to stress

Success Stories: Meditation in San Francisco Middle Schools

Since starting the Quiet Time intervention, this school has achieved the following:

**BEHAVIOR**
- 50% reduction in suspensions
- 65% reduction in truancy

**ACADEMICS**
- .5% increase in overall GPA

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**Evidence that Mindful Meditation in Schools Works**
• Roberts Elementary School (preK) – YogaKids-inspired program by teacher
• Ed Smith (6th graders) – Kripalu Yoga in The Schools during 10-week Physical Education session
• Learning to BREATHE pilot – Henninger High School
• Mind Life School Weekly Wellness – Meachem Elementary
• Communication, Mindfulness and Social Justice” course (CRS 360) work with first graders at Frazier Elementary
• McKinley-Brighton Yoga and Mindfulness
  - https://vimeo.com/209375249
Video: ELA Class
Add mindfulness to your day
in only 10-15 minutes

Here are 4 ways to add mindfulness to your schedule, each way only takes 10-15 minutes of your time:

*Remember, consistency is key.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Yoga Activity</th>
<th>Length/time</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Yoga Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Yoga at community opening</td>
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<td>Take 5</td>
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<td>11/5/12</td>
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<td>Mountain pose</td>
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<td>Warrior</td>
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<td>cat and cow, flamingo, and elephant again!!!</td>
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<td>Bunny breath</td>
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<td>From Head to Toe by Eric Carle RCAWY</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>11/6/12</td>
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<td>From Head To Toe story and yoga poses</td>
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Grounding exercises are designed to help you focus your attention on the present moment.

There are a variety of exercises that have been developed and different exercises can be used to target different situations.

Example:
- 3 things I hear, 3 things I see, 3 things I feel (tactile), how do I feel in this present moment (emotion).
How to Get Started

- Add short practice at the beginning of class or around transitions
- Try simple practices with props
  - Breathing ball
  - Chime bar
  - Singing bowl
  - Drums, rain sticks
  - Pass the cup game
  - Coloring pages, art materials
- Tap existing resources (meditations, yoga)
  - Websites/apps
  - Books
  - Card decks
  - Music
- Explore programs/curriculum
  - Implement lessons
  - Connect to math, reading, science, SEL
- Mindful smelling
  - Mystery scents in containers
    - Details I notice; what it reminds me of; my guess
- Mindful listening
  - Mystery sounds or sounds in the environment
- Mindful tasting
  - Raisin meditation: links to science, gratitude
- Mindful seeing
  - Describe object
- Mindful movement
  - Balancing exercises
Lesson Opener

Mindful Listening

The targeted curriculum area is defined and placed in context for the teacher.

Experience of MindUP users attests to the effectiveness of the specific practice or lesson.

Brain research related to lesson exploration is laid out for instructor, along with supporting illustration.

Language and modeling help instructor make the brain research link understandable to students.

Getting Ready

The core lesson begins with wider self management and awareness skills. Materials used are basic and usually already available in the classroom or as reproducible pages.

Suggestions for managing classroom, supporting brain-based learning, and helping second language learners address common obstacles to attentiveness and full engagement with learning.

Before each core lesson, a simple preparatory activity helps both teacher and student know what to expect from the lesson and think in advance about how it may be useful in a broader context of learning.
Leading the Lesson

Each lesson routine includes an introduction with scripting to prime students for the exploration and perspective at the core of the teaching.

Core activity of each lesson includes suggested language and procedures to maximize student absorption of the ideas and experience.

At each stage of the lesson, we point out the usefulness of the activity or provide a link to other curriculum areas in which lesson ideas can be implemented.

Lesson focus is extended into its application in the workplace, encouraging students to link learning to the world outside the classroom.

Suggestions for the teacher to incorporate mindful awareness into his or her everyday interactions with colleagues and students.

Connecting to the Curriculum

The main lesson is linked to other aspects of students’ academic experience: content areas, literature, and writing.

Students are given several prompts for writing and/or drawing in response to the lesson and its target exploration.

Lesson is expanded and extended into three curricular areas and social emotional learning, connections that can be ongoing as subject area learning goes on over the course of the school year.

Four literature selections that relate to the lesson focus are recommended for extending the learning.
• Through books/cards
  ◦ Children easily pick up animal/nature poses
  ◦ Youth enjoy strong warrior poses
  ◦ Make up their own as well as traditional ones
  ◦ MindUP lists: brain, awareness, gratitude, happiness, listening, movement, optimism, perspective-taking, tasting, world

• Using chairs
  • [Link](http://littlefloweryoga.com/blog/chair-yoga-exercises-for-the-feet-and-toes)

• GoNoodle

• YogaKids newsletters (pose of week): [Link](http://mailchi.mp/yogakids/smok3f5kd7-569269)
Compassion & Kindness
- Ways we do and do not take care of ourselves
- Loving-kindness meditation
- Friendly wishes

Gratitude
- Journals – text and/pictures
- Thank you exercises

May I be filled with loving kindness,
May I be well.
May I be peaceful and at ease,
May I be happy.

May you be filled with loving kindness,
May you be well.
May you be peaceful and at ease,
May you be happy.

www.placeofserenity.co.uk
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Philadelphia City Schools

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Health Foundation of Western and Central New York
Selected Findings
Inhibitory Control

Lack of Attentional Impulsivity

Razza, Bergen-Cico, & Raymond, 2015

Program Impact: PreK
↑ Self-regulation among 6th graders

**Program Impact: 6th Grade ELA**

Bergen-Cico, Razza, & Timmins, 2015
Some students noticed a difference on days when they did not do yoga; one student wrote:

- "the days we didn’t do yoga and meditation it was hard to focus."

Some of the positive remarks from students indicated a recognition the physical as well as cognitive benefits of practice:

- “I felt like having yoga was very helpful because it made me focus more in class and it stopped my headaches”

- “the yoga helped me get my energy out, and the meditation helped me relax more before class started.”
“I am more calm and collected . . . I am able to stay focused and energized throughout the day.”

“My classroom does feel more serene this year and I think that our yoga and meditation practice has helped to create that atmosphere. It may just be my own level of calm that has made the difference.”

“I am not so apt to push through assignments because we have a “schedule” to keep. My pace is slower and my decisions to move forward are more mindful.”

“I feel that I pay more attention to my students needs as learners and as people.”