

# MINDFULNESS

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# MINDFULNESS IN ADULTS

Mindfulness. It suggests that the mind is fully attending to what's happening, to what you're doing, to the space you're moving through.

That might seem trivial, except for the annoying fact that we so often veer from the matter at hand. The fast-paced lifestyle of today's families, along with the ever-present use of electronic devices reduces our tendency toward mindful living. Instead, we feel overwhelmed. We feel bombarded with information.

Our mind takes flight, we lose touch with our body, and pretty soon we're engrossed in obsessive thoughts about something that just happened or fretting about the future. And that makes us anxious. And it makes it difficult to focus on one task at a time. It makes it difficult for us to be fully present, enjoying the people and events around us.

**Guess what? Our kids feel that way too!**



**YET NO MATTER HOW FAR WE DRIFT AWAY, MINDFULNESS IS  
RIGHT THERE TO SNAP US BACK TO WHERE WE ARE AND WHAT  
WE'RE DOING AND FEELING. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT  
MINDFULNESS IS, IT'S BEST TO TRY IT FOR A WHILE**





**MINDFULNESS  
DOESN'T HAVE TO  
LOOK LIKE THIS!**

HEALTHYP



# MINDFULNESS CAN BE:

- Putting our phone down
- Focusing on one thing at a time
- Taking a deep breath
- Being aware of the physical sensation in our bodies
- Noticing the world around us

# INCREASED MINDFULNESS WILL:

- Decrease Anxiety
- Increase Focus
- Increase Happiness
- Reduce Stress

**It's  
evidenced  
based!**



# FIVE CORE TRAITS

1- **Stay grounded:** Feel strong, focused, and confident

2- **Find calm:** Learn how to handle tricky situations

3- **Strengthen your mind:** Wake up your brain, build concentration, and sharpen sensory awareness

4- **Accept life with kindness:** Feel a sense of self-acceptance and connection to the world

5- **Rest and relax:** Reflect, relax and ease your busy mind



# ANXIETY AND STRESS IN CHILDREN

- What is pathological versus what is part of a normal, healthy, and protective system?
- Anxiety is an “alarm system”
  - But what if the alarm is blaring over something that should be minor?
  - What if the alarm is ringing all the time?
- Is all stress bad?
  - Weightlifting model



# THE STUFF OF LIFE...

- Things we like
- Things we can handle
- Emergencies



# MINDUP AS A MODEL FOR TEACHING MINDFULNESS

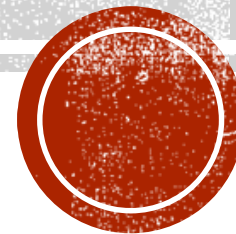
MindUP is a comprehensive, classroom-tested, evidence-based curriculum framed around lessons that fosters social and emotional awareness, enhances psychological well-being, and promote academic success

## Five Competency Areas:

- 1) **Self-Awareness**-assessing our feelings, values, strengths
- 2) **Self-Management**- regulating our emotions to handle stress and persevere in the face of obstacles
- 3) **Social Awareness**- understanding different perspectives and empathizing with others
- 4) **Relationship Skills**- Maintaining healthy relationships; managing conflict seeking help with needed; resisting inappropriate social pressure
- 5) **Responsible Decision Making**- Using a variety of considerations to make choices and decisions



# TEACHING STUDENTS TO BE MINDFUL





# Getting to Know and Love Your Brain

To react or to think it out ... that is the question. The way you use three key players in your brain determines how you'll respond to everything that happens around you. As you learn how to help your brain tell the difference between true emergencies and stressful situations, you'll get better at handling every situation and have more time to enjoy life!

## Prefrontal Cortex

(pre-FRŏn-tal KOR-tex)

The prefrontal cortex, or PFC, is your seat for making thoughtful decisions, doing careful calculations, taking through a problem, and staying focused on what you're doing. Inside the cortex, the PFC gets information and sends the amygdala a note. The PFC provides to the amygdala everything that is worth remembering.

## Amygdala

(ah-MIG-dah-lah)

The amygdala is responsible to keep you safe at all costs. It registers and issues information from going to your prefrontal cortex (PFC), so you can react in a flash. The problem is, it can't tell a stressful situation from a true emergency, and it can cause you to react without thinking. Thoughtful action can help keep the amygdala in check so that you can think clearly.

## Hippocampus

(hip-poh-KAMP-us)

What are your favorite memories? The ones you'll never forget? The hippocampus records, stores, and processes information from the PFC, sends it to the brain as working memory, gives you advice, and the long-term staff of memory-related research is based.

## Breathing

When to keep your amygdala in check, you can get through it! Breathe through. Breathe, but breathing with your amygdala and keep the head and remember clearly.

 SCHOLASTIC

## STEP ONE: UNDERSTANDING OUR BRAIN

### 3 CORE STRUCTURES:

Prefrontal Context (Wise Leader)

Amygdala (Security Guard)

Hippocampus (Saver of Memories)



# STEP TWO: KNOWING OUR BODIES, CALMING OUR MIND

- Controlling our breathing (Core Practice)
  - What does that look like?
- Increasing our sensory awareness
  - Mindful Smelling
  - Mindful Observing
  - Mindful Listening
  - Being Mindful of Body Sensations
  - Mindful Movement (Yoga)

*By mindfully observing their senses, students will become adept at sharpening their attention and using sensory experiences to enhance memory, problem solving, relationships, creativity, and physical performance, while also reducing anxiety.*



# GROUNDING

## Grounding Exercise

*For use during a panic attack,  
when you need to stay calm,  
or anytime you feel "disconnected" from your body.*

Look around you. Identify + name:

5 things you **see**

4 things you **feel**

3 things you **hear**

2 things you **smell**

1 thing you **taste**

[puzzlepeacecounseling.com](http://puzzlepeacecounseling.com)



# STEP THREE: CONTROLLING OUR ATTITUDE

- **Increasing perspective taking skills**
  - By looking at an event from different perspectives, students learn to mindfully consider viewpoints other than their own
- **Choosing optimism**
  - Students explore the meaning of optimism and pessimism and discover how these two attitudes affect our relationships and ability to learn
- **Appreciating happy experiences**
  - Students explore how recalling happy memories can help regulate emotions and maintain a positive mindset



# PERSPECTIVE TAKING

The ability to see situations and events from the viewpoint of another person. This allows us to more accurately interpret the behavior of those around us.

## **Why does it matter?**

- Children who are able to accept that classmates may behave or think differently than they do are much better equipped to tolerate and find ways to get along with peers
- Well developed perspective taking skills will decrease anxiety and help students exercise impulse control
- Well developed perspective taking skills increase problem solving skills

## **How can we teach this skill?**

- Bibliotherapy and video modeling
- Pointing out the emotions of others



# CHOOSING OPTIMISM AND KINDNESS

Optimism is a way of seeing life hopefully and having an expectation of success and well being.

## **Why does it matter?**

- Children who are generally optimistic enjoy better physical health, have more success, at school, flourish in relationships, and are more equipped to handle stress in their lives
- Socially, practicing optimism allows children to strengthen their perspective taking skills and accept viewpoints different from their own. This helps children better connect to others.

## **How can we teach this skill?**

- Positive self-talk
- Mantras



# APPRECIATING HAPPY EXPERIENCES

- Recalling a happy memory releases the “feel good” chemicals in the brain that flooded it at the time of the actual happy experience.

## **Why does it matter?**

- Children can learn to appreciate happy memories to help overcome specific negative feelings, such as sadness and insecurity.
- Remembering “I did” is a great way to fight off “I can’t”

## **How can we teach this skill?**

- Practice mindfully recalling a happy memory (happy memory movie)
- Integrate the concept into your teaching. Create learning experiences that are engaging and involve positive interactions and laughter when possible.



# EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Gratitude is the feeling of thankfulness and joy we feel in response to something we have receive, whether it is tangible (a gift) or intangible (encouragement or the view of a sunset).

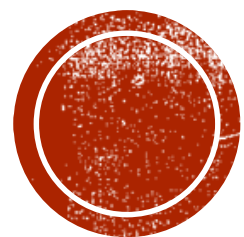
## **Why does it matter?**

- Simply focusing for a minute on the experiences in our lives which we are grateful for shifts our thinking to a calmer, more content perspective, which can immediately uplift and comfort us.
- Gratitude increases alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness, and energy

## **How can we teach this skill?**

- Make a daily written list or mental tally of things we are thankful for





**QUESTIONS?**