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THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

MINDFUL CLASSROOMS

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taking time for what matters

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THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

MINDFUL CLASSROOMS

Creating a safe place for our kids to learn
might begin with creating some space for
them to breathe.

By: Caren Osten Gerszberg

O N A COLD MARCH AFTERNOON, THE hallways were abuzz with chatter and giggles at Chatsworth Elementary School in Larchmont, New York. As the kindergarteners from Liz Slade's class ambled into their classroom from lunch and recess and put their jackets and lunch boxes into their cubbies, Slade asked, "Can today's mindful leader please come up front and begin?"

Isabella, a 6-year-old wearing a heart-clad gray shirt and polka-dot leggings, quietly took a cross-legged seat on the classroom rug facing her peers. With her palms facing up and resting on each knee, she began to tap her thumbs on each of her fingers, simultaneously repeating the words "I-am-calm-now" with each tap. Without hesitation, each of Isabella's classmates, along with their teacher, followed their mindful leader, tapping their thumbs and saying "I am calm now," gently lowering their voices after each



Photo by Crim

repetition until the room grew quiet. Slade then asked her students to slowly make their way to their tables and take out their “feelings” journal.

“They are learning the experience of settling their body,” said Slade. “What used to be a wild time now becomes a charming, sweet moment when we all take a pause and come back to being present.”

Chatsworth is one of thousands of schools across the country that is bringing mindfulness into the classroom. Growing numbers of teachers, parents, and children are reaping the benefits that learning mindfulness—defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally”—can bring, including reduced levels of [stress and anxiety](#), increased [focus](#) and self-regulation, and [improved academic performance](#) and sleep, among others.

With heightened academic pressure trickling down to kids as early as kindergarten, resulting in less time for play and the arts, children today are faced with an [unprecedented amount](#) of stress and anxiety—25% of 13- to 18-year-olds will experience an anxiety disorder according to the National Institutes of Mental Health. Such early stress levels can negatively impact learning, memory, behavior, and both physical and mental health, according to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). Escalating stress and pressure continue into middle and high school—a [survey](#) of 22,000 high school students conducted by the [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#) found that, on average, students reported feeling

negative emotions, such as stress, fatigue, and boredom, 75 % of the time. An antidote to all this stress has never been needed more. Enter mindfulness.

THE RESEARCH ON MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS

While the implementation of school-based mindfulness programs for children in grades K through 12—such as [Inner Resilience](#), [Mindful Schools](#), [Learning to Breathe](#), and [MindUp](#) to name just a few—is becoming more popular, empirical research proving the benefits of mindfulness is only beginning to emerge and more rigorous research will be needed over the coming decades. “We know very little about which programs work and what works for whom and under what conditions,” said Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Ph.D., co-author with Robert Roeser of the recently published *Handbook of Mindfulness in Education: Integrating Theory and Research into Practice*, and a professor and researcher at the University of British Columbia. A 2015 [study](#) by Schonert-Reichl looked at the effectiveness of a 12-week social and emotional learning (SEL) program that included mindfulness training. Ninety-nine 4th and 5th graders were divided into two groups: one received MindUp’s weekly SEL curriculum and the other a social responsibility program already used in Canadian public schools. After analyzing measures, which included behavioral assessments, cortisol levels, feedback from their peers regarding sociability, and academic scores of math grades, the results revealed dramatic differences. Compared to the students who learned the social responsibility program, those trained in mindfulness scored higher in math, had 24% more social behaviors, and were 20% less aggressive. The group trained in mindfulness excelled above the other group in the areas of attention, memory, emotional regulation, optimism, stress levels, mindfulness, and empathy.

Although in its early stages, research on the effects of school-based mindfulness programs is being fueled by three decades of studies on adults, which shows promise for its psychological and physiological benefits. Researchers are turning their focus to children and teens to figure out what, when, how much, and from whom the teaching of mindfulness works best. “We don’t have conclusive evidence at this point about the benefits or impacts of mindfulness on youth,” said Lisa Flook, Ph.D., associate scientist at the Center for Healthy Minds, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. “We do see the promise of interventions and trainings on outcomes related to grades, wellbeing, and emotional regulation.” In other words, the research looking at the benefits of mindfulness in education is pointing toward the positive.

“Mindfulness strengthens some underlying development processes—such as focus, resilience, and self-soothing—that will help kids in the long run.”

“Mindfulness is a powerful tool that supports children in calming themselves, focusing their attention, and interacting effectively with others, all critical skills for functioning well in school and in life,” said Amy Saltzman, M.D., director of the Association for Mindfulness in Education, and director of [Still Quiet Place](https://www.stillquietplace.org/). “Incorporating mindfulness into education has been linked to improving academic

and social and emotional learning. Also, mindfulness strengthens some underlying development processes—such as focus, resilience, and self-soothing—that will help kids in the long run.”

WHAT DOES A MINDFUL CLASSROOM LOOK LIKE?

No one sees the value of a child’s impulse control and focused awareness as clearly as a teacher. Liz Slade, who’s been integrating mindfulness into her classroom for the last eight years, once observed a student walk up to a tall structure of blocks being built by a few of her classmates. “I watched this little girl raise her foot to kick the blocks, take a breath and then walk away,” she said. “The kids can learn to notice distraction, self-regulate, and ask themselves, ‘What do I need?’”

Slade came to mindfulness on her own about 10 years ago, and after seeing the benefits in her own life, she started experimenting in the classroom with practices that used breathing and mindful listening. “As I became more knowledgeable, experimenting and seeing what was working, I was really impressed,” she said. “The kids verbalized to me that they felt they had tools to use to handle stressful situations, which was very moving to me.”

Recognizing the impact of her own practice and the positive effects in her classroom—and with the support of her school’s principal, a critical component—Slade went on to apply for a grant for her school to bring in a formal training program called [Inner Resilience](#), created by Linda Lantieri, who is also a founding member of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). From there, the support and enthusiasm spread throughout the Mamaroneck School District among teachers, parents, and the administration, with the Inner Resilience training program now offered to teachers and support



Photo by Crim

staff at all six of its schools, which serve 5,200 students. “The best way to implement mindfulness is in an integrated way with social and emotional learning,” said Lantieri. “If we are going to be in schools we need to make sure we are helping kids learn better, and if mindfulness can help with that, great.”

Most experts feel that the best implementation of mindfulness involves a teacher having her own mindfulness practice, or at least an understanding. “It is how

they teach, not just what they teach, and if a teacher is mindful in a classroom, the kids learn to be mindful,” said Tish Jennings, M.Ed., Ph.D., associate professor at the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, who started a program called [CARE \(Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education\)](#) for Teachers. “Teachers are really under a lot of stress and we know their stress affects our kids, so supporting them is a win-win,” said Jennings. Her [recent research](#) found that teachers trained in the CARE for Teachers program felt less time urgency and were more positive and more sensitive. In addition, children were more engaged and productive.

For Rosalie Choniuk, a teacher at P.S. 94 in the Bronx, New York, learning mindfulness through the CARE for Teachers program has been life changing. “I am a completely different person since learning mindfulness—mentally, physically, and emotionally,”

said Choniuk. As an ENL (English as a New Language) teacher, Choniuk wears several hats in her school, often providing coverage for teachers when they need to be out of the classroom. Before developing her mindfulness practice, Choniuk grew anxious every time she was to report to a particular fifth grade classroom, where kids were unruly and fights often broke out. “Now when I go, instead of having anxiety, I set an intention to be calm and deal with them in a positive manner,” said Choniuk. “I see the changes in the kids, who are less reactive, and the changes in myself, and now I look forward to being in their class.”

“When they see the possibility of helping students thrive and have healthy coping skills for relatively low cost, it’s an easy conversation to have.”

SUPPORTING STRESSED-OUT TEACHERS

Bringing mindfulness into any school requires support and cooperation from the administration, the teachers, and the parent community. “Teachers want a curriculum that’s cut and dried, and mindfulness programs demand more from them,” said Randy J. Semple, Ph.D., assistant professor at the University of Southern

California in Los Angeles. “There’s a conundrum: teachers may feel too stressed out to learn a stress management strategy.”

While bringing mindfulness into schools has its challenges, such as teacher burnout and lack of administrative support, there are other—potentially less taxing—ways to implement its lessons. Some programs use guided recordings to teach mindfulness, and others offer trainings so volunteers or outside instructors can bring teachings into the classroom, though it remains to be seen if the latter model can sustain itself over time.



Photo by Crim

Clutching a cardboard boat with an anchor attached by a string, Cheryl Brause, a mindfulness instructor completing her yearlong training with the Mindful Schools program, asked a gaggle of fidgety first graders at the Daniel Warren Elementary School in Rye Neck, New York, if they know what an anchor does. With the classroom teacher observing, Brause guided the children in a lesson on mindful breathing, asking them to notice the rising and falling sensations as they placed their hands on their

belly and chest. “When our mind wanders away from our breath, we can notice it and bring it back to our anchor,” she told them.

As part of her yearlong certification training, Brause led eight weeks of classroom lessons, as well as presentations

for administrators, parents, and teachers. “It takes a lot of commitment on the teachers’ part and their levels of comfort vary so I do demo lessons for them,” says Brause. “For administrators, when they see the possibility of helping students thrive and have healthy coping skills for relatively low cost, it’s an easy conversation to have.”

The parent community is also invited to learn about the school-based mindfulness instruction, and in some cases, parents are getting a second dose at home from the kids themselves. “One second grader told me that before going to bed, he and his mom decided to listen to the sounds in the room and noticed what silence sounds like,” said Brause. “In our world, it’s so rare to give families an opportunity to have silence and stillness together, and the kids recognize that.”

CREATING A CULTURE OF MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS

If a classroom teacher is not able to provide mindfulness lessons to their class, schools often bring instructors in from outside the school. But long-term mindfulness programs can be difficult to maintain in the classroom with this model. “With an outside person, programs can work insofar as they can train teachers to keep it up,” said Trish Broderick, Ph.D., founder of the Learning to Breathe program and a research associate at the Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State University. “The advantage of bringing in a program to teach mindfulness is that it can be replicated and used effectively when taught by teachers or school staff who already have a relationship with the kids.”

The Mindful Schools program prefers to call its approach an adoption—where mindfulness begins at the individual teacher level—versus a rollout, or top-down decision made by leadership

to implement a new program. “We don’t mandate this for all the teachers; we let it grow organically,” said Camille Whitney, former head of research at Mindful Schools. “We encourage any number of people to take the course voluntarily, and encourage it as a group so they can practice and build a program together.”

Integrating mindfulness into a health and wellness curriculum is another alternative for implementation. “Rather than adding on, a program can be supplemented into an existing program,” said Broderick, whose Learning to Breathe program is often used as part of a middle or high school’s health curriculum.

“ We encourage any number of people to take the course voluntarily, and encourage it as a group so they can practice and build a program together.”

Last winter, Annie Ward, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the Mamaroneck Union Free School District, wandered into a high school health class during a school visit. Ward was struck to see the students sitting quietly with their eyes closed and feet on the floor, as they listened to a guided meditation the teacher was playing on a CD. “It was great to see this meditation happen with no fanfare, watching the kids settle right into it and seeing that it was clearly a ritual,” said Ward.

When teaching mindfulness is accepted and embraced, it can change the tone and tenor of an entire school, or district. In 2008, the South Burlington, Vermont, school district began an effort to train teachers and students, using the Inner Resilience program for younger grades, and the Learning to Breathe program for older ones. For two years, almost 130 teachers volunteered to take the mindfulness training, and the program continued to grow and expand more deliberately to include cafeteria staff and bus drivers, totaling 170 trainees.



Photo by Crim

On top of the school-wide effort, they also invited parents to participate by offering evening mindfulness classes and lectures by local experts and visiting instructors, and in some cases, regular updates from teachers on mindfulness activities in the classroom. Training the teachers before the children and parental

involvement were two components integral to the success of the South Burlington district's efforts, according to Marilyn Neagley, former director of Talk About Wellness, an initiative dedicated to funding and developing programs for youth and family wellness.

Including parents when a program is introduced is a way to expose them to what mindfulness is and is not. And then there's the questionable [connection to religion](#), which can, in some communities, be a hot topic. "One of the most important things we learned from public meetings with parents and the community was to be sure the training is completely secular with no religiosity at all," said Neagley. The teaching is based entirely on emerging neuroscience and keeping all references to Buddhism, and words commonly used during yoga, such as *namaste*, out of the school vernacular is critical. In some schools, the word yoga has been replaced with "mindful movement" so there is no confusion about the ways in which mindfulness is being taught. "What we are teaching is how to pay attention and be more aware, and how to implement that awareness in our lives," said Lantieri. "What we are teaching we teach in a secular context."

For systemic change to take place in a district—such as it did in [South Burlington](#)—administration and teachers need to figure out where mindfulness can fit, how it will work, and what is needed to bring it in. And there needs to be a point person who can move it forward. "Any district I'm working with has a superintendent or assistant superintendent who is thinking five years out, not just about one classroom," said Lantieri. "That's how SEL started, with one teacher who got excited."

After journaling time was over, Liz Slade's kindergarteners gathered again on the rug to do some imagination breaths. Going around the circle, each child paired a breath with a made-up

hand movement and named it—a snowflake breath, a jellyfish breath, a clamshell breath—and the rest of the class mimicked the movement. After a while, when the kids got antsy, Slade asked them to get up and jump around. There were wiggles and tumblers and twists and then she said, “Now make a mindful statue.” The children froze in place, and all you could hear was the sound of their breath. **m**



CAREN OSTEN GERSZBERG is a writer and certified positive psychology life coach. She works with individuals and groups, helping clients find balance, resilience, and positivity during transitions and challenging times. A contributor to publications, such as The New York Times, Psychology Today, and Mindful, Caren’s articles cover health and wellbeing, mindfulness and education. Learn more about her work at carenosten.com.

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Five Profiles of Mindful Educators

By: Caren Osten Gerszberg



ALAN BROWN

High School Dean and Director
of Integrative & Co-curricular
Learning
Grace Church School
New York, New York

AS THE 12TH GRADE DEAN AT THE Grace Church School in Manhattan, Alan Brown sees his share of stress among students. And as a teacher with mindful education training, he has the methods to help alleviate it. “There’s a lot of difficult conversation that comes through my office, and to be the non-reactive, compassionate presence in the room with students, parents, and colleagues who are worried or sad has been a real game changer.”

Brown has brought mindfulness into his school on multiple levels, including a semester-long elective that meets twice a week for 10th, 11th, and 12th graders (and fulfills an academic requirement), an intensive eight-week course, a mindful movement class, parent workshops, and soon, a faculty cohort. “As a dean, my priority is to provide kids with a tool box,” said Brown. “I know what challenges are coming, like the ones they’ll face in the fall of their senior year, and I want them to have the tools when they get there.”

“When you work with children, it’s really easy to ignore our own needs,” said Brown. “Mindfulness has given me a greater sense of balance and calm, which is a benefit to the other people around me.”



DOUG ALLEN

Principal
Bessie Nichols School (K-9)
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

“PRACTICING AND TEACHING mindfulness to kids is the best job-embedded professional development one could ever have,” said Doug Allen, a school principal who completed a mindful educator certification program in 2015. Within two years, Allen has implemented a school-wide mindfulness program—consisting of 16 lessons over 8 weeks—to three-quarters of the school’s 1,100 students, and the remaining quarter will go through the program by the end of May. His enthusiasm quickly caught on, and 30 teachers have followed suit, taking mindfulness courses or both their benefit and that of their students.

Although Allen previously had his own meditation practice for many years, teaching mindfulness to kids took it to another level. “It changed my relationship with my students and my work, and I really came to believe I was doing something more lasting and meaningful than I had before.”

In addition to teaching mindfulness in the middle school, Allen gets to see the benefits all around the school building. One ninth grader told him she was going to do mindful breathing before taking her driving test (she did and she passed), and on another occasion, a teacher reported that while two girls were explaining their sides of a heated argument, one said she needed to practice her breathing so she could calm down and give her explanation. “I’ve been teaching for 27 years,” said Allen, “and mindfulness has really provided me with a greater sense of purpose in what I do.”



ROSIE WAUGH

Math Teacher & Mindfulness
Coordinator
McLean School
McLean, Virginia

RECENTLY RETIRED AFTER 30 YEARS as a math teacher, Rosie Waugh continues teaching parttime in her role as Mindfulness Coordinator at the McLean School. Last summer, she completed her mindful educator certification, and has been part of a team of McLean School teachers and administrators who have implemented a school-wide mindfulness program. In addition to structured lessons, every six to eight weeks the school features a theme—such as heartfulness, emotions, or listening—and the entire school participates, decorating bulletin boards and posting cards around classrooms.

“It all started about four years ago with one parent who introduced mindfulness to us teachers,” said Waugh, “and it helps having the head of our school so committed.” In her new role, Waugh also runs a mindfulness club and sometimes brings some of the 7th grade boys to speak about mindfulness with the elementary school students, and explain how to use a glitter jar. “Engaging the kids really keeps it vibrant, interesting, and fun,” she said.

“My practice is always evolving, and the kids I work with know that sometimes I need to stop and take a minute for myself,” said Waugh. While it’s a little trickier teaching high school kids, Waugh says they are respectful and know they don’t have to participate but they need to cooperate. “They’ll tell me they know it helps them, on the sports field or remembering lines in a play, and I’m glad they have a skill for when they just want to have a little space.”



CHERYL BRAUSE

Mindfulness Instructor
Daniel Warren School
Rye Neck, New York

ON A RECENT VISIT TO THE DANIEL Warren School, where she's a visiting mindfulness instructor, Cheryl Brause entered a second-grade classroom, sat down, and made eye contact with the children who settled on the floor in front of her. "Instead of feeling the need to tell them what to do, I could simply acknowledge them one by one, silently welcoming them into our time together, and this let them know that I am here to listen and to be present with them as we explore mindfulness together," said Brause. As her own practice and knowledge deepened through a yearlong mindful educator certification that she completed last summer, Brause recognizes the changes in her experience. "I'm much less distracted while teaching, thinking less about what I need to accomplish, and more present and focused on the kids, allowing the lesson to flow from there."

Brause came to mindfulness as a means to slow down and be more present in her own life. It began with a yoga practice, and after trying a variety of types of meditation, it was an MBSR class that exposed her to mindfulness. "I realized how quickly mindfulness resonated with me and made a real difference in my everyday life," said Brause. "It made me realize how distracted I had been and how little time I spent being fully present."



JOANIE TERRIZZI

School Librarian
P.S. 10
Brooklyn, New York

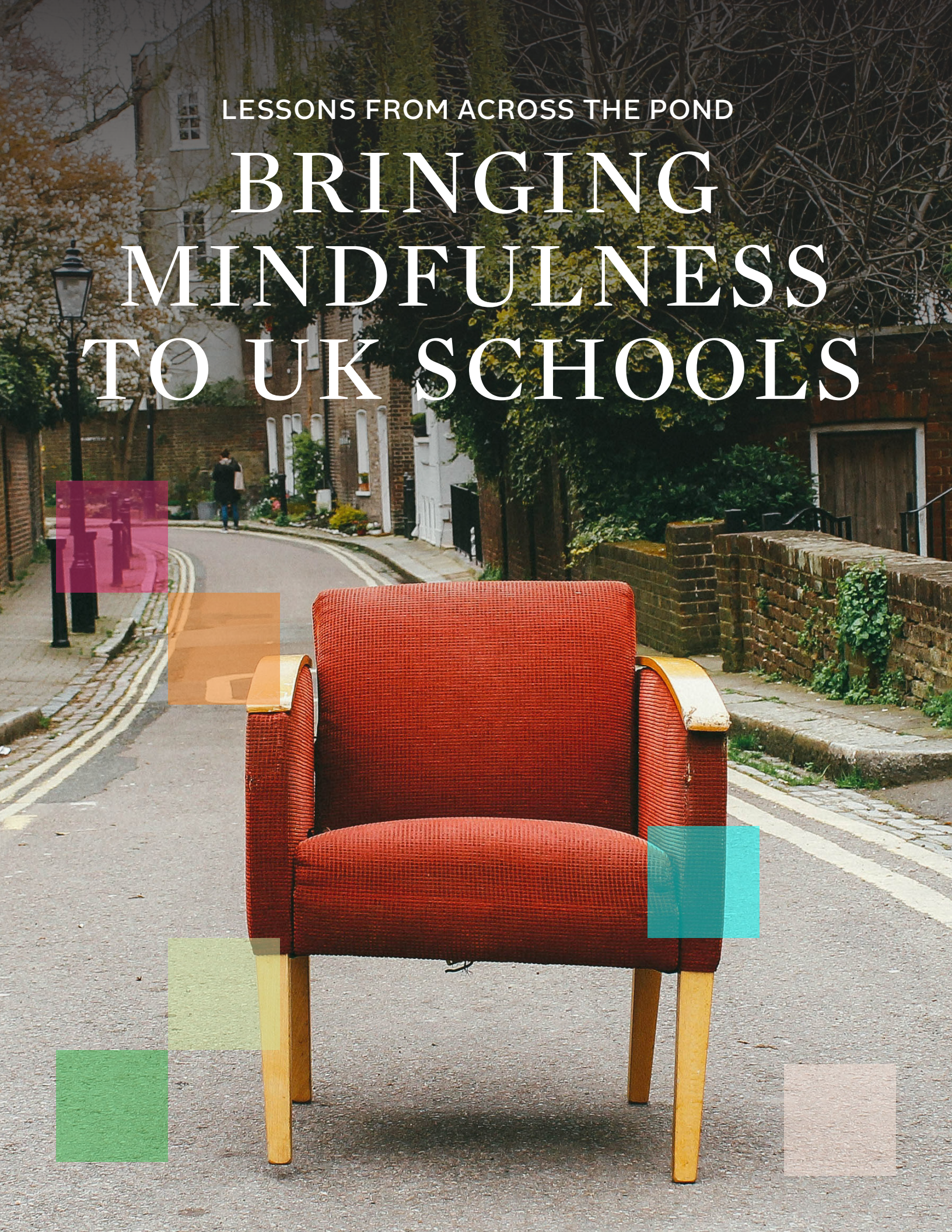
ACCORDING TO JOANIE TERRIZZI, a school librarian, mindfulness hasn't changed her life—it's changed the way she approaches it. "I see up to 200 kids a day, and mindfulness has helped me navigate distractions and demands so I can give kids the rare gift of my full attention," said Terrizzi. "I knew my practice was having an effect when a student was doing something I didn't want him to do, and I turned to open my mouth and instead of my stricter teacher voice, something very soft and calm came out."

Once she completed her yearlong mindful educator certification in 2014, Terrizzi began to incorporate mindfulness into the library curriculum. Each week when the teachers dropped off their students at the library, Terrizzi would teach a mindfulness lesson, routinely beginning the library class with ringing a chime and mindful listening. "I expected the kids to be resistant but they weren't and it slowly began to change the tone of the whole school," she said.

Terrizzi collects quotes from the children who share their experiences with mindfulness, and hopes to turn them into a book one day. "Before I started the mindfulness training, I had severe burnout and was completely drained," said Terrizzi. "The content and perspectives I learned changed everything, and re-enlivened my approach to children and education." **m**

LESSONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

BRINGING MINDFULNESS TO UK SCHOOLS





Designing and instituting a program for mindfulness in schools is fraught with potential problems. Here's how to avoid having a poorly designed program.

By Jamie Bristow

IN THE UK, **IT WAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED** THAT the national government will put public money into mindfulness in education for the first time. One hundred and fifty schools will take part in a trial training program as part of a wider piece of research into mental health and wellbeing programs. This new level of interest is welcome, but it does bring to light some critical tensions that could arise when designing and implementing programs in schools with tight resources. There are a number of things that must be made clear in order to avoid problems.

In my role as director of the [Mindfulness Initiative](#), a policy institute that provides the research and administrative support to the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness, I'm helping MPs engage with the Department for Education on mindfulness and offering a number of suggestions for their consideration. These suggestions could be helpful for anyone thinking of bringing mindfulness training into schools.

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on Unsplash

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4

POTENTIAL OBSTACLES AND HOW TO FIX THEM

1. Know the difference between focused awareness and mindful awareness

Firstly, we emphasize that mindfulness is more than just calm and concentration. If mindfulness training is to be distinguishable from relaxation or attention training, children need to learn about the mind and develop certain qualities of awareness—like openness, curiosity, and care.

After stilling the mind using a narrow focus, the aim is to then develop an allowing receptivity to all experience, and particularly to thoughts and emotions. These qualities are thought to underpin many of the protective and therapeutic effects of mindfulness training. We recommend that a curriculum should either integrate appropriate learning content that develops mindful attitudes or that it not be called mindfulness practice. Otherwise, commissioners leave themselves open to the accusation of deploying “McMindfulness,” and if superficial programs are perceived by teachers as having limited benefits, this may hinder later attempts to implement deeper training that has more profound implications.

As an example, although the MindUp curriculum introduces elementary school children to the concept of mindfulness, the exercises they introduce are not described as mindfulness



meditation. Instead they are skillfully called “brain breaks” for the purpose of developing focused awareness, which is valuable in itself and is the foundation from which mindfulness can then later be developed.

2. Put on your own oxygen mask first

If teachers are to guide practices for children, it's very important that they embody mindfulness themselves and have high levels of personal motivation. It is widely held that mindfulness training

cannot be delivered from a script, much like you wouldn't ask a teacher who can't swim to teach a swimming class from a textbook. If a program cannot involve extensive teacher training (often six months of committed personal practice and then a 4- or 5-day training) we recommend that it relies heavily on [high-quality audio](#) and video content, which teacher and pupils could follow together, perhaps leading to facilitated class discussion.



Photo by Megan Soule on Unsplash

It is possible to thread learning points progressively through a program of guided mindfulness practices, as is the case in popular consumer apps that use short animations to communicate core principles but then don't separate teaching content from practice guidance. One alternative is to parachute in an external mindfulness teacher, but be aware in doing so that teaching kids is different from teaching adults—and this person must be properly trained to work with young people. The downside of bringing in

external teachers, in addition to cost, is that mindful attitudes are not then integrated into staff culture. If mindfulness is not modeled for children, it's less likely to be seen as important and adopted.

3. **Avoid top-down implementation**

Although the Mindfulness Initiative has been speaking to government ministers for a number of years now about how they can catalyze all the interest in mindfulness bubbling up at a school level, we'd suggest that it's probably never a good idea to mandate training in a curriculum. At least, not unless mindfulness becomes as "mainstream" as physical exercise and schools have the resources to hire dedicated staff. Because critically, if a school were compelled to teach mindfulness *without* staff who have a level of knowledge and interest, the likely outcomes are resistance, misunderstanding, and dilution.

Mindfulness requires personal intention and you cannot command someone to be mindful. If teachers are being asked to deliver content themselves, robust practice and voluntary dedication must exist first. Across sectors, the spread of *quality* training won't be top-down—the how and where of mindfulness teaching is largely in the hands of grassroots advocates. It therefore requires patience to establish a program with integrity.

How to avoid top-down mindfulness implementation:

- 1 First find a local qualified mindfulness teacher to hold a taster session for teachers and staff, so that they can get a sense for what it's all about.
- 2 Then, for those who are interested, we'd suggest providing an eight-week course for teachers derived from MBSR or MBCT or another evidence-based program.

- 3 Once a cohort of teachers have taken a mindfulness course themselves, perhaps support them to continue with personal practice by organizing half an hour once a week for sitting together—and/or provide access to apps and other support materials.
- 4 Then, if they are inspired to do so, they could undertake teacher training, to learn how to introduce mindfulness to children. Most mindfulness teacher training programs, in the UK at least, require six months of practice.
- 5 Training staff has many benefits in its own right, and research is currently taking place into the impact of teachers' own mindfulness practice on general teaching quality. If you need help justifying staff training to stakeholders, our recent publication [Building the Case for Mindfulness in the Workplace](#) offers detailed advice.

4. Get buy-in at every level

In addition to cultivating interest at a grassroots level, it's also key to identify both a senior sponsor, ideally the principal or head teacher, and a lead champion to oversee program development. A program driven by a lone champion without senior support is likely to collapse once that evangelist leaves the organization. Too much push from one person without buy-in from other stakeholders, like parents or administrators, can also create resistance from colleagues. Similarly, the enthusiasm of a senior figure without the time and resources to work on the detail or inspire others can lead to half-hearted implementation, and then to erosion when their attention is drawn elsewhere.

The [\\$8 million Wellcome Trust-funded research program](#) into mindfulness in schools, led by teams at Oxford, Cambridge, and University College London, has examined existing implementation

of mindfulness in school as an early phase of the work. In common with innovative schools programs more generally, anecdotal evidence suggests that mindfulness training tends to operate in stops and starts, with only those schools that are already running effectively being able to find the resources to properly embed mindfulness into school life.



Photo by Crim

This new initiative from the Department for Education in the UK is a welcome response to the rising tide of mental ill health and poor wellbeing among children in our schools. But in giving young people the skills to train their own minds; in helping them to be more aware of their experience, the better to learn and grow in each moment; in providing the space for natural discernment

to arise and lead to actions that are more in line with values... perhaps a yet greater prize waits to be recognized.

Two ways to build a thriving mindful school community

- 1 Provide a mentor structure.** One way to help embed mindfulness into school culture is to bring the expertise for providing mindfulness courses inhouse. In this model a teacher or member of the support staff who has an established personal practice would train to teach courses for adults, and offer drop-in sessions to maintain practice amongst teachers. They could also offer mindfulness courses to teachers from other schools, which as well as contributing to consistent delivery and knowledge sharing, could help fund the program.

- 2 Clearly define the purpose of the program.** Before mindfulness training can truly flourish in the education system, it might first be necessary to take a deep look at the purpose of the system itself. Could capacities that help us to navigate the world like resilience, openness, curiosity, empathy, meta-cognition, and the ability to focus be as important to human development as knowledge about how that world works? Popular psychologist Daniel Goleman, for instance, [is a great exponent of research](#) showing that self-regulation capabilities are the biggest single determinant of life outcomes. In a world where the only thing we can count on is constant change and the shape of work is likely to be very different in 20 years, [leading thinkers have suggested](#) that future success will depend as much on understanding the minds of others as on understanding technology (giving rise to the term “STEMpathy”). **m**

The large research trial being run at the University of Oxford as part of the Wellcome project is still recruiting UK schools to take part. If you work in a mainstream secondary school and would like to find out more about the opportunity, visit www.myriadproject.org

A Guide for Bringing Mindfulness into Your School

By: Caren Osten Gerszberg

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BRING MINDFULNESS into your child's school? What are the best strategies, practices, and resources to implement a mindfulness program? Implementing a school-wide mindfulness program can take several years, so create a well-thought-out plan that includes presenting programming to parents and faculty. Be patient—making changes in schools can be a lengthy process. Here are a few things to consider:

WHY TEACH MINDFULNESS?

KIDS ARE STRESSED.

1 in 8 children in the United States suffers from Anxiety Disorders. ([National Institutes of Health](#))

1 in 5 children suffers from a mental health or learning disorder, and 80% of chronic mental disorders begin in childhood. ([Child Mind Institute](#))

TEACHERS ARE STRESSED.

According to research, most teachers experience job stress at least two to four times a day, with more than 75 % of teachers' health problems attributed to stress. ([National Education Association](#))

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Studies show that the benefits of mindfulness may include:

Increased focus, attention, self-control, classroom participation, compassion

Improved academic performance, ability to resolve conflict, overall well-being

Decreased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior

STEPS TO BRING MINDFULNESS INTO SCHOOLS

- 1 START WITH TEACHERS.** Teachers are the vehicle for integrating change into a school's culture. Is there a teacher who already has a mindfulness practice, and is willing to champion the effort to bring mindfulness into your child's school? If not, are there teachers willing to learn more about the benefits of mindfulness for themselves, as well as their students?
- 2 KNOW THE SCIENCE.** The research on teaching mindfulness to children is only in its beginning stages, yet there are studies that show its impact on both the body and the brain. Scientific evidence is an important component for bringing administrators and faculty to embrace your plan.
A few key studies:
 - A 2016 study in [Frontiers in Psychology](#) measured emotional well-being of 7- to 9-year-olds and found that a school-based mindfulness program improves higher-order thinking, and helps students become more engaged, positive learners.

- A randomized controlled study in the [Journal of School Psychology](#) on more than 100 sixth-grade students found those who completed classroom-based, teacher-implemented mindfulness meditation were significantly less likely to develop suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm than the control groups.
- A study of 4th and 5th graders published in [Developmental Psychology](#) found that students who received mindfulness training improved their cognitive ability and stress physiology, reported greater empathy, perspective-taking, emotional control, and optimism, showed greater decreases in self-reported symptoms of depression and peer-rated aggression, and were more popular.

3 ENGAGE FACULTY, ADMINISTRATORS, AND PARENTS.

Including parents and school staff—and ideally support staff, such as aides, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers—will provide the basis for the most effective implementation of a school-based mindfulness program. If there is hesitation or resistance to mindfulness, take the time to offer the facts, benefits, and science, and emphasize the importance of teaching mindfulness in school in an entirely secular way.

4 LOOK FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

PRACTICES. Mindfulness in schools comes in different shapes and sizes—just like the kids—so research the programs that fit specifically with the ages in your school. There are some designed for the youngest ages, which differ in style and content from those designed for older grades.

WHICH MINDFULNESS PROGRAM IS RIGHT FOR YOUR TEACHERS?

There are a variety of programs you can consider recommending to teachers and administrators, or for your own training. Some are online, some use recordings, and some may require in-person training. Here are a few to consider:

[Association for Mindfulness in Education](#)

[Calmer Choice](#)

[CARE for Teachers](#)

[Compassionate Schools Project](#)

[Inner Explorer](#)

[Inner Kids](#)

[Inner Resilience](#)

[Inward Bound Mindfulness Education](#)

[Learning to Breathe \(adolescents\)](#)

[Mindful Life Project](#)

[Mindful Schools](#)

[Mindfulness Everyday](#)

[Mindfulness in Schools Project](#)

[MindUP](#)

[Peace in Schools](#)

[Resilient Kids](#)

[Still Quiet Place](#)

[Stressed Teens](#)

[The Kindness Curriculum](#)



A MINDFUL SCHOOL CASE STUDY

A school in Texas that's been incorporating mindfulness into their curriculum for 20 years and tracking the results

By: Michelle Kinder

FOUR-YEAR-OLD **FAITH** ALREADY BELIEVES IN the power of breathing to help her do her best learning. “I was trying to match some letters and I got really frustrated,” says Faith. “And I needed to take a deep breath and I almost got it. I almost got it by myself and I felt just a little happy.”

Faith knows that the simple act of breathing can help her focus to complete the task at hand. She attends the [Momentous School](#), a program of the Momentous Institute, a 97-year-old organization devoted to the social emotional health of kids and families. The school has been tracking kids' progress for almost 20 years and has accumulated significant data showing the positive effects of incorporating mindfulness into education. Faith and her classmates are learning essential skills that research shows may give children lifelong protection against one of the most serious and quickly growing threats to child well-being in America today: toxic stress.

HOW TOXIC STRESS IMPEDES HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT IN KIDS

Toxic stress is a prolonged activation of the stress response—without the buffer of safe relationships. It, along with “[adverse childhood experiences](#)” (ACES)—such as poverty, abuse, domestic violence, and more—is on the rise. [Dr. Robert Block](#), former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, feels that ACES “are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today.”

Cover photo by
[pexels-photo](#)

A growing body of science, including the work of [Harvard University's Center for the Developing Child](#), has found that toxic stress can impede healthy development, literally changing children's brains and affecting their capacity to absorb even the best instruction. Mindfulness is a much-needed life preserver in this otherwise troubling picture.

While childhood trauma is sadly nothing new, science now better understands its impact on brain function. During stressful experiences, the [amygdala essentially hijacks](#) the pre-frontal cortex, impeding its ability to come online. In other words, the part of our brain responsible for the fight, flight or freeze response takes over and blocks the part of our brain which processes complex thoughts, anticipates consequences, and inhibits behavior.

To state the obvious, we must intervene upstream to prevent ACES in the first place. In fact, a [recent study](#) examining the long-term cost savings of social emotional health programs in elementary schools estimated a benefit-to-cost ratio of 11:1, meaning every dollar invested in the programs had an average return of \$11 in benefits.

“ Toxic stress can impede healthy development, literally changing children’s brains and affecting their capacity to absorb even the best instruction.”

MINDFULNESS CAN HELP KIDS MANAGE THEIR INTERNAL WORLDS

Moving stress from *toxic* to *tolerable* involves increasing the number of protective relationships in children's lives and helping them learn how to regulate their nervous system, which is where mindfulness comes in. This skill allows children to manage their internal world regardless of what comes at them externally, which is a concept that even young children like Faith can understand.

At Momentous Institute, they use the analogy of a glitter ball or snow globe to convey the concept, explaining that the brain under stress is like a shaken snow globe—[with the glitter swirling](#), they cannot see clearly. Breathing and other mindfulness techniques, which the children practice several times each day, help them “[settle their glitter](#)” so they can do their best thinking. We teach them that mindfulness and social emotional health can help them understand and manage their feelings, reactions, and relationships. As Susan Kaiser Greenland illustrates in her [books](#), *The Mindful Child* and *Mindful Games*, mindfulness practices can be right-sized for kids as young as Faith.

HOW MINDFULNESS TRANSLATES INTO IMPROVED ACADEMICS

Science tells us why this works. [Research shows](#) mindfulness shrinks the amygdala and thickens the pre-frontal cortex. According to [Dr. Richie Davidson](#), mindfulness strengthens connectivity between areas of the brain that support attention and concentration, thus weakening the amygdala's capacity to hijack the thinking parts of the brain.

With this understanding, it is easy to see how mindfulness and self-regulation can translate into improved academics. This is true for all kids, but especially important for our most vulnerable kids coping with multiple ACES.

In kindergarten, those in the mindfulness group scored higher on a standardized vocabulary/literacy assessment than those in the control group.



There is a scarcity of [large-scale research](#) confirming that mindfulness improves children's life trajectories. However, there is a robust body of evidence about the benefits of mindfulness for adults. We hope it is only a matter of time before a large body of research about the impact of mindfulness on children becomes available.

Momentous Institute published [one](#) of [two](#) existing studies examining the impact of mindfulness practices on prekindergarten students' self-regulation and academic performance. This study indicated that prekindergarten students who received a yearlong mindfulness curriculum showed greater improvements in their working memory and capacity to plan and organize than students in a control group. In kindergarten, those in the mindfulness group scored higher on a standardized vocabulary/literacy assessment than those in the control group.

Other [research](#) at Momentous School has shown that after three years of participating in mindfulness practices, 5th grade students'

Photo by
pexels-photo

levels of empathy predicted their scores on standardized reading and math assessments. This indicates that Faith was right when she said breathing helped her figure out her letters. Mindfulness does not just help her feel better or calm down; it increases her capacity for academic performance.

MINDFULNESS FOR KIDS IS NOT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL

Without question, there are no silver bullets when dealing with complex topics like education and trauma. Mindfulness can only thrive in schools where positive climate is a priority. In addition, mindfulness can never be reduced to a curriculum. This work only takes root in a sustainable way if the system adopts a commitment to consistent practice and the well-being of all involved—children and adults alike.

Embedding mindfulness in education is one important step. That alone, however, will never be sufficient in addressing toxic stress and ACES. The systemic issues *behind* the rising stress levels – poverty, racism, sexism, violence and inequity—must be attended to with courage and conviction.

By prioritizing these systemic shifts along with a true integration of mindfulness, we can provide children a sense of control and the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We believe the same breathing that helped Faith learn the alphabet can spell long-term thriving for our children and our society. **m**

Two Simple Mindfulness Practices For Back-To-School

Teachers and parents can help kids regulate, shift, and stabilize their energy and mood, allowing for a little more silence and a little more focus.

By: Christopher Willard, PsyD

FOR KIDS, PRACTICING MINDFULNESS MIGHT JUST look like a little more silence, a little more slowing down, and more one-thing-at-a-time built into the day's routines. While there are dozens of practices that take a minute or less, here are two practices that work great for school:

1 THE SILENT SIGH

A sigh can mean many things—relief, exasperation, pleasure, exhaustion, even sadness. Physiologically, sighing regulates and resets our breathing rate. Kids and adults sigh unconsciously, and we can unintentionally offend others when we do so. The Silent Sigh is a deliberate and respectful way of sighing. I learned it from educator Irene McHenry.

This practice allows us to let out excess emotion and reset our body and breath. For that reason, it can be good for settling back into the present moment during transition times.

Take a deep breath in. Then let out a sigh as slowly and silently as possible, so that no one even knows you are doing it.

Follow along with all the sensations in your body as you breathe out to the last bit of air in your body. Then check in with how your mind and body feel. Decide if you need another silent sigh, or just let your breath return to normal.

I like to start by inviting kids to try a loud regular sigh to demonstrate how it feels to let out their emotions in a sigh (and to have some fun). Then I shift to the Silent Sigh and explain that there are situations when it might be more appropriate than a regular sigh, such as in a classroom or when we do not want to offend people by sighing at them.

Resetting the breath with a deliberate practice can regulate, shift, and stabilize energy and mood.

2 THE 7-11 BREATH

Another short, sweet, easy-to-remember practice is the 7-11 Breath. I learned it at a training with the [Mindfulness in Schools Project](#), a charity whose aim is to encourage, support, and research the teaching of secular mindfulness in schools. The practice is part of a very widely used .b curriculum (pronounced [dot-be]), stands for 'Stop, Breathe and Be!' created by the Mindfulness in Schools Project, and since then I have read that first responders use it to keep themselves and others calm in emergencies. What else I like about the 7-11 Breath is it can really stop panic in its tracks, and often I'll suggest to older teens that even if they don't have panic attacks, they might have friends who are struggling, and can use practices like this to help a friend as psychological first aid.

The directions are simple:

Breathe *in* for a count of seven.

Breathe *out* for a count of eleven.

The 7–11 Breath can be done five breaths at a time when kids are learning it, and then longer, depending on how much time you have.

The counting also forces kids (and adults) to focus more and to slow their breathing down—before I knew some of these practices, I'd suggest kids “breathe deep” and I'd get kids breathing really deep, but also really fast. Often, what we really mean is *slow* breathing, not deep breathing. Making the exhale longer than the inhale relaxes the nervous system and allows us to make contact with the present when we might otherwise be rushing past it.

And the opposite is also true: making the inhale longer than the exhale jump-starts the nervous system and speeds us up. In low-energy situations—when we find ourselves feeling worn out, sluggish, or a little depressed, and want to raise our energy to meet the present moment—try an 11–7 Breath: the opposite ratio.

My friend [Adria Kennedy](#), who teaches mindfulness to kids, adapts this practice for younger kids by asking them to breathe words or phrases in and out. For example, try breathing in for the length of the word *Maine* and breathing out *Massachusetts*, or breathe in *bird* and breathe out *brontosaurus*.

This article was adapted from Dr. Christopher Willard's book [Growing Up Mindful](#).

THE LEAD CRISIS IN FLINT, MICHIGAN

WHERE MINDFULNESS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEET



There's a large-scale community mindfulness effort underway in Flint, MI, to combat a health crisis: Flint area children may have suffered irreversible damage due to lead-contaminated water.

By B Grace Bullock, Ph.D.

I **MAGINE DISCOVERING THAT YOUR HOME'S WATER** supply is tainted with toxic amounts of lead. That has been the reality for the hundreds of thousands of residents of Greater Flint, Michigan since September 2015. Now the community is desperately seeking solutions to cope with a massive public health crisis. That quest has brought them to mindfulness.

THE EXTENT OF THE LEAD PROBLEM IN GREATER FLINT

Greater Flint has felt its share of strife. Once a booming auto manufacturing center, the region of nearly 500,000 inhabitants, roughly 70 miles northwest of Detroit, has struggled mightily to overcome the severe economic downturn, and high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime that followed in the wake of the close of General Motors plants in the 1980's and 1990's. The once-thriving city is now riddled with boarded-up abandoned buildings, and its streets are devoid of grocery stores and safe public spaces.

The official announcement of lead in the water supply was a long time in coming. Locals repeatedly complained of a bad smell, brown water, rashes, and hair loss soon after their area water source was switched to the Flint River. But officials remained

*Cover photo by
Eike Klingspohn
on Unsplash*

steadfast in their denial that there was a problem, insisting “[the quality of water being put out meets all of our drinking water standards and Flint water is safe to drink.](#)”

Thanks to a team of researchers from Virginia Tech University, the truth of Flint’s water supply was finally revealed. Their independent assessment of the water in 252 area homes [detected lead levels of 13,200 ppb](#), far greater than the 5,000 ppb level at which water is declared *hazardous waste*. Shortly thereafter, a study released by Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha and colleagues at the local Hurley Medical Center showed [large numbers of area children ages 5 and under with significantly elevated blood lead levels](#). This news launched a firestorm of controversy, and a rising tide of fear that Flint area children may have suffered irreversible damage due to nearly 18 months of exposure to contaminated water.

HOW LEAD NEGATIVELY IMPACTS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Lead is a neurotoxin known to [significantly impact child development](#). Decades of research show that lead exposure early in life may lead to deficits in intelligence, impaired neuropsychological functioning, behavioral problems, and poor achievement [across the lifespan](#). Lead-tainted water is [particularly damaging to developmentally vulnerable children](#) because they absorb considerably higher proportions of water-soluble lead when ingested orally compared to adults. This hazard is even greater for unborn children of lead-exposed mothers, and infants consuming either breast milk or reconstituted formula.

With thousands of children affected, Greater Flint now faces a colossal public health crisis. But lead’s impact is not easy to disentangle. The area’s children already face many obstacles to

healthy development including poverty, poor nutrition, housing instability, parenting stress, and exposure to crime and violence. In addition, while the half-life of lead in blood is approximately 35 days, it can remain [in the brain for 2 years, and in bone for decades](#).

“Volume loss in these brain regions is consistent with the cognitive and behavioral problems witnessed in children with a history of lead exposure.”

Although there is little research examining the long-term neurological influence of lead exposure early in life, [one longitudinal study](#) suggests that it may have a long-term impact on the brain's prefrontal cortex, the “executive control system” that governs attention, problem solving, emotion regulation, planning and decision-making. The study included a subsample of adults from the *Cincinnati Lead Study (CLS)*: an urban, inner-city cohort of pregnant women living in neighborhoods with high rates of childhood lead poisoning. Their children were assessed beginning, at birth and repeatedly until age 17.

A total of 157 of these children agreed to undergo brain imaging as young adults (ages 19-24). Scans showed a significant, direct relationship between prenatal and postnatal blood lead concentrations, and marked decreases in gray matter volume in

several key regions of the prefrontal cortex. Volume loss in these brain regions is consistent with, and potentially explanatory of, the cognitive and behavioral problems witnessed in children with a history of lead exposure.

WHY DID THE FLINT FOUNDATION TURN TO MINDFULNESS FOR HELP?

The Greater Flint community faces not only the task of supporting its youngest members in this time of crisis, but of remaining resilient in spite of it. In Fall of 2016 one local non-profit organization, the Crim Fitness Foundation, launched an ambitious initiative to bring mindfulness education to all of the Flint Community Schools and beyond.

“The Crim”, (as it is known in Flint) has a lengthy history of providing school- and community-based health and wellness programs to children and their families. Their ongoing focus on mindfulness stems from a fervent belief that mindfulness-based skills hold promise for increasing key cognitive, behavioral, and social competencies that children will need to counter the effects of lead exposure. They may be right. Evidence from the emerging field of contemplative science points to mindfulness practices like meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises as potentially impacting the brain systems and related cognitive and behavioral abilities shown to be most impacted by lead exposure.

A 2014 systematic review and meta-analysis of published neuroimaging research found that [regular meditators have differential activation in several regions of the prefrontal cortex](#), suggesting an increased capacity for attention, self-regulation, learning, memory, and self-awareness. Other studies link mindfulness practices with [changes in the amygdala](#), a key part of the brain’s limbic system that [processes emotion](#). Specifically,

regular meditation may be related to changes in amygdala volume and function, possibly decreasing emotional reactivity and anxiety, and increasing stress resilience.

The default mode network (DMN) is another system within the brain that is [potentially impacted by meditation practice](#)—this is the process within the brain associated with [mind wandering](#). The DMN is made up of a number of highly interconnected structures including those in the prefrontal cortex and limbic system. This network is vulnerable to fear and stress, and plays an important role in depression, chronic pain, schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders, and Alzheimer’s disease. [A meta-analysis](#) of 24 neuroimaging experiments showed that meditation is linked to changes in executive attention function, including functional alterations in the default mode network.

“ Impact of mindfulness-based trainings for youths identified significant improvements in cognitive performance, resilience, stress reduction, and emotional problems. ”

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Based on the mounting research on the benefits of meditation, mindfulness-based programs are becoming more commonplace in the nation's schools, with initial studies offering promising results. [A 2016 systematic review and meta-analysis](#) of the existing published and unpublished research assessing the impact of mindfulness-based trainings for elementary, middle school, and high school youths identified significant improvements in cognitive performance, resilience, stress reduction, and emotional problems.

Flint is [not the only city](#) in this country with a lead problem. A recent report by the Natural Resources Defense Council found that [18 million people](#) across the US were served by water systems with lead violations. With this growing recognition of the prevalence of lead in North American communities, we are likely to witness its impact on the nation's children well into the future. The Crim Fitness Foundation and its mindfulness programming efforts are poised to teach us a great deal about the potential for mindfulness-based education to alleviate some of lead's deleterious developmental and biopsychosocial effects.

For Flint, the impact of the Water Crisis is vast and complex. Those of us working in the community recognize that mindfulness education addresses just one small piece of a multifaceted puzzle. But we are optimistic that these steps will enhance resilience, strengthen cognitive and behavioral capacities, and promote kindness and compassion, which will benefit the community immensely over the decades of healing to come. **m**

An Appreciation Practice for Kids

Building thankfulness and appreciation into the fabric of your family is a gift your kids can rely on when they are faced with pain and hardship.

By Susan Kaiser Greenland



Photo by
Patricia Prudente
on Unsplash

WHEN CHILDREN and teens practice appreciation, painful thoughts and emotions sometimes show up. As parents we often want to ease our children's pain, but children can easily misinterpret guidance to be thankful as an indication that we're minimizing their challenges, even when that's not the case. So how should we help when painful emotions do come up? We should encourage kids

to view how they feel through a wide lens, [not to gloss over their feelings or push them aside](#). When kids acknowledge their hurt feelings *and* [remember the good things](#) in their lives, they embody an open mind. There's a practice I like to do called *Three Good Things* that gives children a chance to practice this holistic mind-set when they're upset and they need it the most.

APPRECIATION PRACTICE:

Three Good Things

When faced with a disappointment, we acknowledge our feelings, and then we think of three good things in our lives, too.

LEADING THE GAME:

- 1 Ask your child: "Do you ever feel disappointed by something or someone?" *Listen to children's stories.*
- 2 Ask: "How did that make you feel? " *Acknowledge children's feelings and, if appropriate, talk about them.*
- 3 Say something like: "I bet even when you're feeling disappointed there are good things happening in your life too. Let's name three good things together."

TIPS FOR NAMING THREE GOOD THINGS:

- 1 Remind children that the point of this game *isn't to pretend they're not upset when they feel upset*. It's to remember that they can feel two

things at once: they can feel grateful for good things while feeling sad, hurt, or disappointed by challenges.

- 2 If children or teens have trouble thinking of three good things on their own, brainstorm and help them discover some.
- 3 When kids understand that this game is not about sweeping their feelings under the rug, the phrase "three good things" can become a playful and humorous response to the minor gripes that show up in family life. For instance, if a young child spills a glass of apple juice and looks like he's going to cry, you can respond with something like, "Ahhh, that can be frustrating. Can you name *Three Good Things* while we wipe the counter?"
- 4 Parents can encourage kids to remind them to name *Three Good Things* when they're stuck on a trivial disappointment or minor annoyance, too.
- 5 To develop a habit of thankfulness, play *Three Good Things* around the dinner table, before bedtime, and at other times when the family is together (and no one is upset).

The more families carve out time to practice appreciation when life is good, the easier it is for parents and children to be thankful for the good things in life when times are hard.

At first, appreciation and thankfulness may feel like a mere intellectual exercise. Yet the more families carve out time to practice appreciation when life is good, the easier it is for parents and children to be thankful for the good things in life when times are hard. When that shift happens, appreciation becomes an integral part of a family's worldview and is no longer just an intellectual exercise. [m](#)

This article was excerpted from Mindful Games by Susan Kaiser Greenland © 2016

Further Reading

10 MINDFUL BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom, by Patricia A. Jennings.

Teach, Breathe, Learn: Mindfulness In and Out of the Classroom, by Meena Srinivasan.

The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate, Susan Kaiser Greenland.

Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance, by Patricia C. Broderick.

A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions, by Amy Saltzman, MD

Growing Up Mindful: Essential Practices to Help Children, Teens, and Families Find Balance, Calm, and Resilience, by Christopher Willard Psy D

The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress by Gina M. Biegel

Mindfulness for the Next Generation: Helping Emerging Adults Manage Stress and Lead Healthier Lives Paperback by Holly Rogers, MD, and Margaret Maytan, MD

Teaching Mindfulness Skills to Kids and Teens by Christopher Willard, PsyD and Amy Saltzman, MD

Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain, by Daniel J. Siegel, MD

8 MINDFUL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

Visiting Feelings, by Lauren Rubenstein

Peaceful Piggy Meditation by Kerry Lee Maclean

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents), by Eline Snel.

Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids, by Maud Roegiers

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? By Carol McCloud

Lemonade Hurricane, by Licia Morelli and Jennifer Morris

What does it mean to be Present? By Rana DiOrio and Eliza Wheeler

Anh's Anger, by Gail Silver m