



Centre of Excellence for
MENTAL HEALTH

To: Our colleagues throughout Quebec From: The Centre of Excellence for Mental Health



Mindfulness...A Mental Health Resource for Students and Educators

Mindfulness is increasingly practiced in a host of settings including schools. How can mindfulness be beneficial to students? As educators, can mindfulness be a lifestyle habit that we embrace?

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment. It’s about knowing what is on your mind” (Kabat-Zinn).

What Mindfulness Isn't

- A panacea or quick fix; sometimes a combination of several strategies may be needed to decrease stress or anxiety.
- A relaxation exercise (Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003). Although it can make you feel relaxed, it is not the goal of mindfulness.
- A behavioral strategy to elicit desirable behaviors in students.



For a great video clip on mindfulness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWaK2ml_rZw

The Value of Mindfulness for Students

- Decreasing stress and breaking the cycle of worry, where fear snowballs into full-blown anxiety
- Teaching students to identify, become aware of and accept emotions and thought patterns
- Allowing students to practice awareness and acceptance without judgment
- Improving memory simply by improving the ability to pay attention
- Enhancing students' ability to focus and learn

Teaching Mindfulness Starts With Me

Teaching mindfulness to students is more effective when it stems from a base of personal practice. In fact, most training programs in mindfulness require that teachers establish their own personal practice before teaching others. This may include:

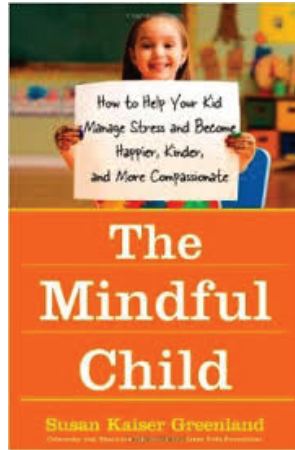
- Seeking guidance through videos, computer applications or online communities
- Participating in a yoga class that incorporates a mindfulness component
- Attending a course such as the 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course developed at the University of Massachusetts



Guiding Students Through a Mindfulness Activity

Mindfulness can be practiced in a classroom, group context or used to support individual students. It is recommended that we begin by creating a supportive climate where students feel safe to experience mindfulness without expectation of what it is supposed to feel or look like. Mindfulness can be explained to students as a way of exploring the world with a fresh set of eyes.

Susan Kaiser-Greenland proposes creative ways to introduce the concept of mindfulness in her book, *The Mindful Child* and in this clip
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GU38LSRvu10>



The Spotlight Strategy... Building an Attention Muscle

The spotlight strategy can be used individually or in the classroom. Sometimes negative thoughts and feelings can become too much to handle, making it difficult to focus. With the spotlight strategy, you can turn your attention, like a spotlight away from worry and negative thoughts, and onto things like the physical feeling of your body, sounds around you, or the feeling of your breath going in and out. Taking control of the spotlight is like building an attention muscle. It takes practice! (StressOFF Strategies, Health Research Team, McGill University)

(Hooker & Fodor, 2008): For a more in-depth read:
<http://www.gisc.org/gestaltreview/documents/teachingmindfulnesschildren.pdf>



For a great video clip on the importance of mindfulness in education:

<http://www.mindfulnessinstitute.ca/mindfulness-in-education/>

A Mindfulness Toolkit

For a wonderful video clip on the practice of mindfulness in the classroom:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMK481p5wWM&noindex=1>

For more fun activities on mindfulness in the classroom:
<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-18136/7-fun-ways-to-teach-your-kids-mindfulness.html>

For more ideas on teaching mindfulness to children and teens:
<http://www.mindfulschools.org/resources/explore-mindful-resources/>

For more general information, visit the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society: <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress-reduction/history-of-mbsr/>

If you have found this postcard to be helpful and informative, please share it with colleagues. Dissemination of information about mental health is the first step toward promoting better mental health!

For more information: Gerry Weintraub, Ph.D., OPQ
Psychologist-Coordinator, Centre of Excellence for Mental Health,
514-422-3000 ext. 32468, gweintraub@lbpsb.qc.ca