Integrating Mindfulness in Early Care and Education

Region V
Leadership and Professional Development Conference

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National Center on Early Childhood Health & Wellness

Our Goal:
Fostering a Culture of Health and Wellness for Children, Families, Staff, and Communities

Our Foundation:
School Readiness Begins with Health!
Sound Management Systems

Applicable to Home Visits & Child Care Settings

Safety & Injury Prevention

Staff, Parent, and Community Engagement

Nutrition & Physical Activity

Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate

Mental Health

Positively Associated with Improvement in Learning

Health Literacy

Oral Health

National Center on Early Childhood Health & Wellness Partners

• American Academy of Pediatrics
• Education Development Center, Inc.
• Center for Child and Human Development at Georgetown University
• National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center at Georgetown University
• UCLA Health Care Institute at the UCLA Anderson School of Management
Shared Agreements

• Take care of yourself
• Suspend certainty
• Turn off or mute cell phones
• Go out on a limb
• Maintain confidentiality
• Demonstrate respect
• Be present, in the moment, engaged...

Overview

• Mindfulness defined
• The purpose of mindfulness
• The benefits of mindfulness
• Mindfulness strategies
• Mindfulness resources
When You Are Your Best ... When Things are Going Perfectly Well in Your Work

What does it look like?

What does it sound like?

What does it feel like?

Mindlessness

A Mindless Inventory- How Mindless are You?

• Multi-tasking
• Preoccupation with past or future
• Easily distracted – wandering mind
• Automatic pilot
What Really Matters?

Joys of Distraction
What is Mindfulness?  
Pair and Share

Mindfulness is...

• “Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat Zinn)

• Doing the things we usually do, like observing, interacting, eating, walking, sitting, but with more awareness
calm acceptance
non-judgment curiosity
patience awareness
non-striving
kindliness attention

Awareness Test
Mindfulness is...

• NOT a religious practice

• NOT an set lesson or curriculum

• NOT only about relaxation but also about actively engaging the body

• NOT about only positive thinking but also impacts executive function and other high-level brain capacities

Mindfulness in the Mainstream

• Business Schools – Harvard, NYU, Georgetown
• Corporations- Apple, Google, Facebook, Safeway, General Mills, XEROX
• Amazon - 82,405 titles
Mindfulness and Trauma

• Know yourself and your audience
• Adaptations may needed
• Never force something that feels uncomfortable
Taking Care of Ourselves: Let’s Practice Breathing

• Quiet mind and body—pay attention to your breath

• Counting breath

Why Mindfulness?

Improves mental and physical health
What the research shows

In ADULTS:
• It is used as effective intervention to:
  ° Reduce Blood pressure
  ° Manage pain
  ° Decrease stress & anxiety
  ° Treat clinical depression
  ° Support weight loss
  ° Increase impulse control
  ° Prevent substance abuse relapse

What the research shows

In CHILDREN:
• Reduced challenging behaviors
• Reduced aggression
• Reduced impact of toxic stress
• Reduced childhood obesity
Children Who Practice Mindfulness Have...

• Increased executive function skills including:
  - Focused attention
  - Enhanced cognition
  - Mental flexibility
  - Emotional literacy

• Increased Self regulation
  - Impulse control
  - Self-initiated behavior compliance
  - Persistence

Taking Care of Ourselves: Let’s Practice Breathing

• Ha Breathing
• Nose Breathing
Informal Mindfulness or Formal Meditation

• Effects are dose related
• Regularity helps

Mindful Walking

• Pay attention with curiosity
• Take a walk outside and feel your feet on the ground, listen for the sounds (the closest sound and the furthest sound)
• Notice smells, colors... use all senses
Let’s Practice - Body Scan

Let’s Practice - Mindful Eating
Tips for Introducing Mindfulness to Young Children

• Establish Your Own Practice
• Check Your Expectations
• Don’t Force It
• Never Make Mindfulness a Punishment/Discipline Strategy
• Approximately one minute per year of age (for meditation)

Elmo Likes to Breath to Calm Down
Learning about Breathing

Let’s Practice – Mindful Breathing
Let’s Practice – Mindful Breathing

See What the Children Have to Say
Another Body Scan

Finger Painting/Doing the Dishes

• Notice the colors
• Notice the smell
• Notice the feeling of the paint/soap on your fingers
• Notice your thoughts and feelings that may arise. Simply notice if your mind wanders and gently bring your focus back to the activity.
Modeling Mindful Practice with Young Children

• Be Present in the Moment

• Incorporate opportunities to practice mindfulness throughout the day for yourself and children

• When children experience stress, help them become aware of and focus on their breathing

• Share your experiences such as eating mindfully – smell, taste, feeling and texture, and encourage children to do the same

Yoga

Pretzel

Elephant

Airplane
Additional Strategies

• Listen to a bell
• Mindful nap ritual
• Sing calming songs together
• Glitter jar: fill a jar with water and glitter. Use it to help the child visualize emotions
  o When he/she is angry or upset, show how the bottle is shaken up

Mindful Movement
Let’s Practice: Mindful Appreciation

Friendly Wishes

1. Send a friendly wish to yourself.

1. Send a friendly wish to someone you know.
Creating a System to Intergrade Mindfulness in Your Program

- Get administrative support
- Evaluate outcomes
- Create or sustain the wellness team
- Implement action steps
- Collect data
- Develop a plan

Reflections from the Day
What Is Your Next Step?

References


To Continue the Discussion, Join MyPeers

Email health@ecetta.info and say “I’d like to join MyPeers”

MyPeers Staff Wellness Community
MyPeers Mental Health Consultation
Community

For More Information Please Contact:

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HEAD START HEALTH INSTITUTE ACTION PLAN

Program: ____________________________ (optional)

Objective: ____________________________

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Technical Assistance to Support Objective

The NCH will be hosting a follow-up call after the Health Institute to provide support around implementing your action plans and to learn more about how programs use the information from the Institute. We are most interested in learning which strategies or approaches are most effective and we will not be reporting the names of individual agencies or participants.
You probably know the feeling all too well: You arrive at the office with a clear plan for the day and then, in what feels like just a moment, you find yourself on your way back home. Nine or 10 hours have passed but you’ve accomplished only a few of your priorities. And, most likely, you can’t even remember exactly what you did all day. If this sounds familiar, don’t worry. You’re not alone. Research shows that people spend almost 47% of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they’re doing. In other words, many of us operate on autopilot.

Add to this that we have entered what many people are calling the “attention economy.” In the attention economy, the ability to maintain focus and concentration is every bit as important as technical or management skills. And because leaders need to absorb and synthesize a growing flood of information in order to make good decisions, they’re hit particularly hard by this emerging trend.
The good news is you can train your brain to focus better by incorporating mindfulness exercises throughout your day. Based on our experience with thousands of leaders in over 250 organizations, here are some guidelines for becoming a more focused and mindful leader.

First, start off your day right. Researchers have found that we release the most stress hormones within minutes after waking. Why? Because thinking of the day ahead triggers our fight-or-flight instinct and releases cortisol into our blood. Instead, try this: When you wake up, spend two minutes in your bed simply noticing your breath. As thoughts about the day pop into your mind, let them go and return to your breath.

Next, when you get to the office, take 10 minutes at your desk or in your car to boost your brain with a short mindfulness practice before you dive into activity. Close your eyes, relax, and sit upright. Place your full focus on your breath. Simply maintain an ongoing flow of attention on the experience of your breathing: inhale, exhale; inhale; exhale. To help your focus stay on your breathing, count silently at each exhalation. Any time you find your mind distracted, simply release the distraction by returning your focus to your breath. Most important, allow yourself to enjoy these minutes. Throughout the rest of the day, other people and competing urgencies will fight for your attention. But for these 10 minutes, your attention is all your own.

Once you finish this practice and get ready to start working, mindfulness can help increase your effectiveness. Two skills define a mindful mind: focus and awareness. More explicitly, focus is the ability to concentrate on what you’re doing in the moment, while awareness is the ability to recognize and release unnecessary distractions as they arise. Understand that mindfulness is not just a sedentary practice; mindfulness is about developing a sharp, clear mind. And mindfulness in action is a great alternative to the illusory practice of multitasking. Mindful working means applying focus and awareness to everything you do from the moment you enter the office. Focus on the task at hand and recognize and release internal and external distractions as they arise. In this way, mindfulness helps increase effectiveness, decrease mistakes, and even enhance creativity.
To better understand the power of focus and awareness, consider an affliction that touches nearly all of us: email addiction. Emails have a way of seducing our attention and redirecting it to lower-priority tasks because completing small, quickly accomplished tasks releases dopamine, a pleasurable hormone, in our brains. This release makes us addicted to email and compromises our concentration. Instead, apply mindfulness when opening your inbox. Focus on what is important and maintain awareness of what is merely noise. To get a better start to your day, avoid checking your email first thing in the morning. Doing so will help you sidestep an onslaught of distractions and short-term problems during a period of exceptional focus and creativity.

As the day moves on and the inevitable back-to-back meetings start, mindfulness can help you lead shorter, more effective meetings. To avoid entering a meeting with a wandering mind, take two minutes to practice mindfulness. You can do so while you’re walking to the meeting. Even better, let the first two minutes of the meeting be silent, allowing everybody to arrive both physically and mentally. Then, if possible, end the meeting five minutes before the hour in order to allow all participants a mindful transition to their next meeting.

As the day progresses and your brain starts to tire, mindfulness can help you stay sharp and avoid poor decisions. After lunch, set a timer on your phone to ring every hour. When the timer rings, cease your current activity and do one minute of mindfulness practice. These mindful performance breaks will help keep you from resorting to autopilot and lapsing into action addiction.

Finally, as the day comes to an end and you start your commute home, apply mindfulness. For at least 10 minutes of the commute, turn off your phone, shut off the radio, and simply be. Let go of any thoughts that arise. Attend to your breath. Doing so will allow you to let go of the stresses of the day so you can return home and be fully present with your family.

Mindfulness is not about living life in slow motion. It’s about enhancing focus and awareness both in work and in life. It’s about stripping away distractions and staying on track with individual, as well as organizational, goals. Take control of your own mindfulness: test these tips for 14 days and see what they do for you.
MINDLESSNESS INVENTORY

(Excerpted from the Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems, Ron Siegel)

1-Rarely   2-Sometimes   3-Often   4-Very Often   5-Most of the Time

Using this scale of 1 to 5, rate how often each of the following happens:

1. I break or spill things often ______
2. I run on automatic without much awareness of what I’m doing ______
3. I rush through things without much awareness of what I’m doing ______
4. I rush through things without being really attentive to them ______
5. I get so focused on goals that I lose touch with what I’m doing right now ______
6. I listen to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time ______
7. I become preoccupied with the future or the past ______
8. I snack without being aware that I’m eating ______
9. I get lost in my thoughts and feelings ______
10. My mind wanders off and I’m easily distracted ______
11. I drive on “automatic pilot” without paying attention to what I’m doing ______
12. I daydream or think of other things when doing chores such as cleaning or laundry (or caring for children) ______
13. I do several things at once rather than focusing on one thing at a time ______