



New England (HHS Region 1)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Mindfulness Practices in Schools

Primary and Secondary Strategies for Implementation of
Mindfulness & Heart Centered Learning

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CEI Associate Director, Heart Centered Learning

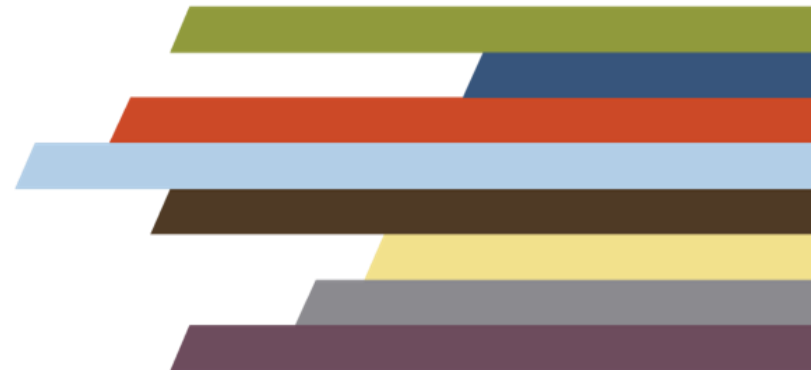
&

Kate Retzel, Principal, Lee Elementary School, Lee, MA

Presentation Date/Time:

June 5, 2019

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm



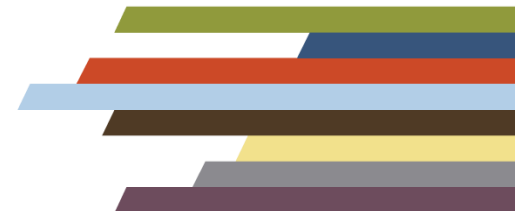
Intentions (Goals) ... Meaningful, Purposeful Practice of ...

Mindfulness, including understanding neurobiology and

- How mindfulness, compassion and heart centered learning (HCL) help combat trauma and stress for students, teachers, & school communities as a whole.
- Strategies/philosophies used at Lee Elementary School (Lee, MA) in building a “compassionate community.”
- Challenges unique to secondary level implementation.



Photo copyright: © 2017 Lotti Andersson

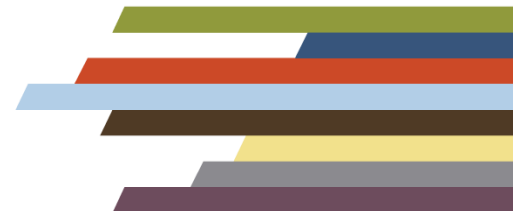


What is Mindfulness?



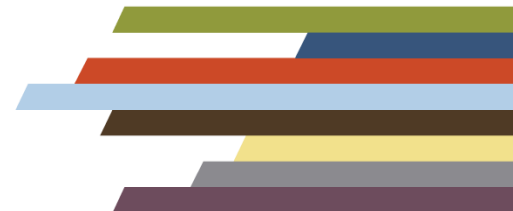
Meet Jon Kabat-Zinn

Video copyright: © 2013 Persona Film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qm-gnkclUyE>



What is Mindfulness?

- Cultivating an environment where we are mindful... where teachers develop a keen awareness of the factors that affect themselves and their students inside and outside of school.
(Mason, Rivers Murphy, Jackson, 2018)
- Such an awareness emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 2003)



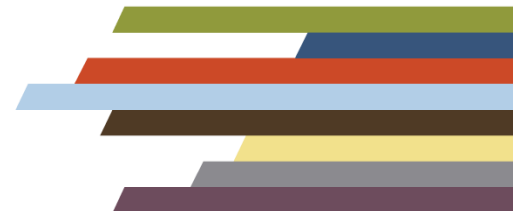
Mindfulness...

Significant for Health and Healing

Mindfulness can help the brain connect with positive emotional and social experiences through stimulating the prefrontal cortex area of the brain associated with reflective awareness, slowing down reactivity and increasing the sense of the body as a whole. (Siegel, 2010).



Photo credit: iStock, 2016



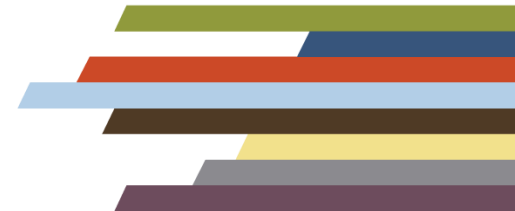
Mindfulness: Begin with simple breath work...

Breath work is essential to balancing the brain returning the nervous system back to its ready emotional state, and regulating one's emotional state of mind, health, and well-being.



"Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths."

~ Etty Hillesum

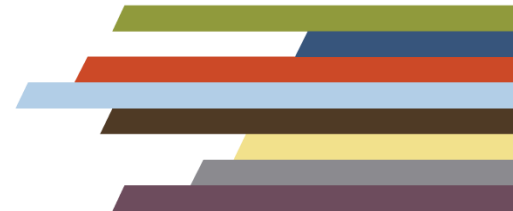


Mindfulness, begin with simple breath work...



Breath awareness is falling into the **simple and natural rhythm** of our breathing

Video credit: Mindful Schools, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3jBjSs_cpk

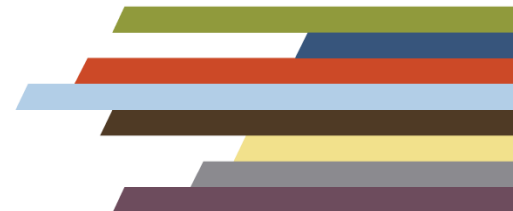


Introducing 1-2 Minutes of Deep Breathing

Mindful Breathing with Music and Images



Photo credit: The Berkshire Eagle, 2015



Poll Question

Rate your degree of comfort with practicing long-deep yogic breathing (scale of 1-5), with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest rating.

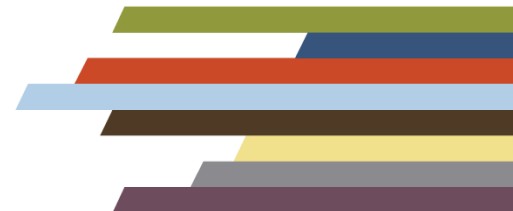
1

2

3

4

5



Why Compassion and Mindfulness Practices are Needed in School Communities

- In this fast pace world, life is moving fast, it's more stressful, there are many distractions... children are especially susceptible.
- Teachers can benefit, practicing right alongside their students.
- Mindfulness school communities, as a whole, have the greatest benefits.

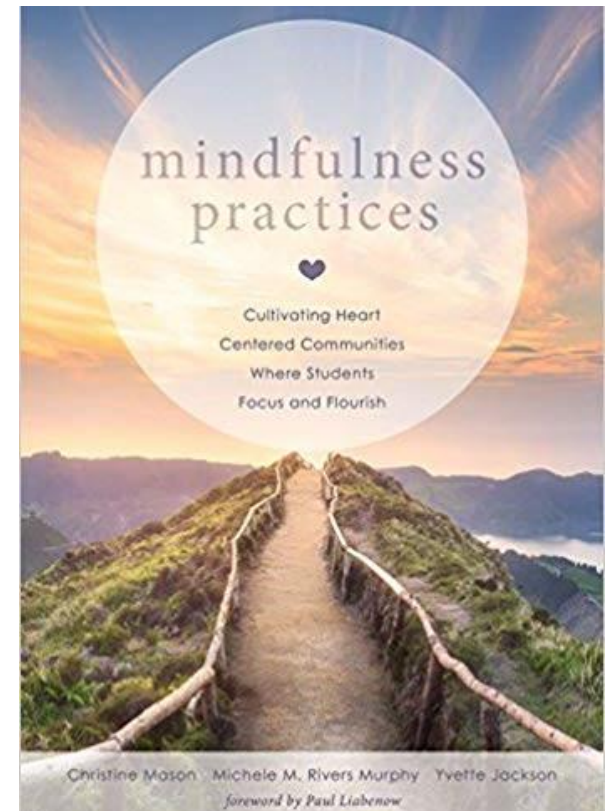
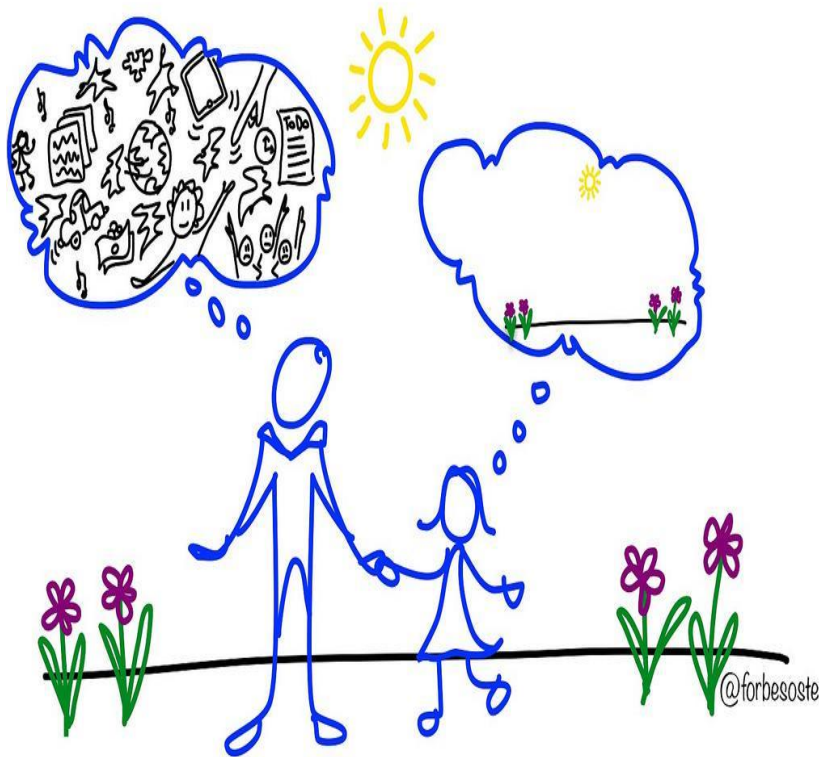


Photo credit: Corwin Press, Inc., 2018

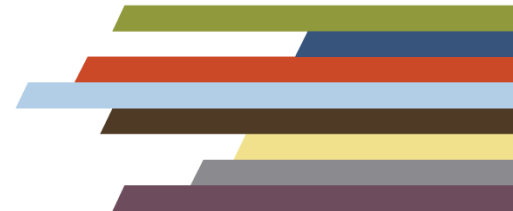
Mind Full or Mindful? The Journey towards Health and Well-being...

Mind Full, or Mindful?



- Understanding the state of the school culture (conscious awareness)
- Difference between your mind being full and being mindful...

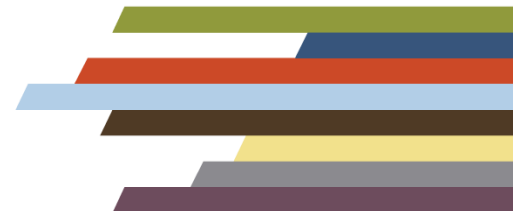
Step 1: Stop just doing and start just being... *present* - i.e. Having the courage to take action



Primary Level Challenges that Ultimately Called for Action: Lee Elementary School



- Increased incidences where extreme emotional dysregulation of students took inordinate amounts of time away from teaching and learning.
- Fears for general safety of staff and students in proximity of repeated incidences.
- Limitations of behavioral expectation-based models of discipline and consistent follow through.



Themes and Considerations at Lee Elementary School

Graphic Cues



Themes

On Board/Train

Considerations

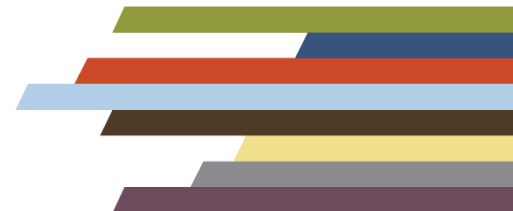
- Use of academic data



Themes

Make Lemonade Out of Lemons

- Beginning of town's economic woes
- Still only academic intro of RTI



Themes and Considerations at Lee Elementary School

Graphic Cues



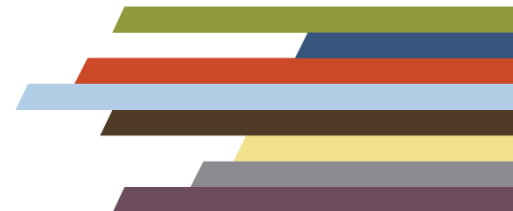
Themes

All Hands on Deck

Just Keep
Swimming

Considerations

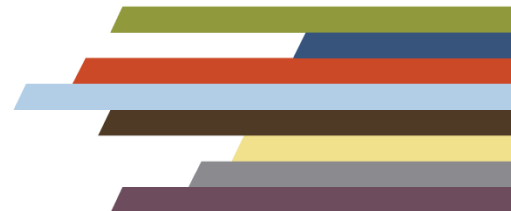
- Shared Responsibility (All kids are “ours” and not just “mine”)
- Limited admin/office staff intervening regularly for response to extreme emotional dysregulation
- Social emotional RTI an option for some students
- “Get through it...” Mentality
- “Stay withitness”...Keep doing what you are doing



Primary Level Challenges that Ultimately Called for Action: Lee Elementary School

- “All Hands on Deck” Approaches; i.e., Staffing not sufficient to handle all calls; much more falling on teachers; triage, of a sort.
- Fewer global readiness skills among incoming students.
- Lower achievement among students.
- Vicarious trauma of staff.
- Shared frustrations of both school staff and and clinicians - e.g. Berkshire Health Systems, Massachusetts Department for Children and Families.

Step 1: Call for Action



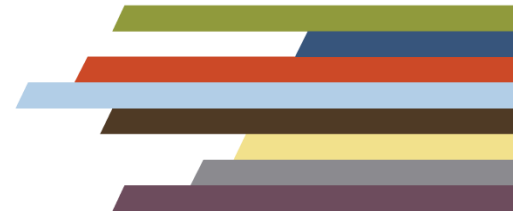
Implementing Mindfulness, Compassionate Practices in Classrooms and Schoolwide



Center for Educational Improvement (CEI) HCL Pilot

Lee Elementary School (whole staff) participated in an initial study of HCL implementation.

Step 2: Establish a Core Learning Team (CLT)

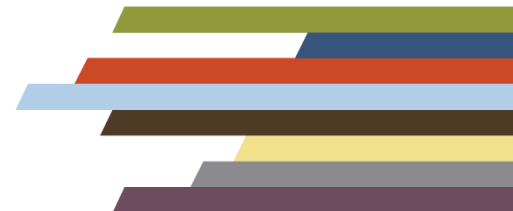


CLT at Lee Elementary School

- 3 paraprofessionals
- 3 teachers
- A program director - e.g. School adjustment counselor
- Principal
- CEI Faculty: Dr. Rivers Murphy led the schoolwide evaluation of Lee's school culture using S-CCATE and beginning with **consciousness & compassion**



Photo credit: Center for Educational Improvement, 2015



School Compassionate Culture Analytic Tool for Educators (S-CCATE)

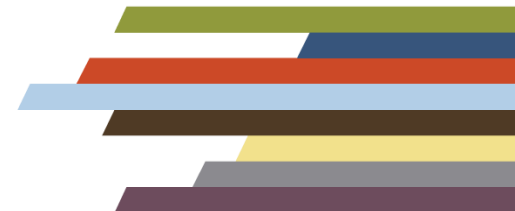
Step 3: Guidance to teachers in reflecting on how grade level teams might choose to implement HCL.

Critical to the envisioning process

- Provided a way to:
 - **Assess** areas of strengths and challenges.
 - **Share** concrete examples with other grade levels (what was working/mutual exchange of ideas).

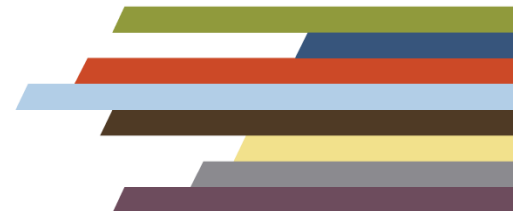


Photo credit: Center for Educational Improvement, 2018



S-CCATE Sample Screen

	Level 1: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Emerging	Level 3: Proficient	Level 4: Exemplary
Teachers and administrators consistently enforce anti-bullying policies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are given opportunities to think about their beliefs about violence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic and support staff are provided training and resources to carry out the school's approaches to consciousness and compassion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

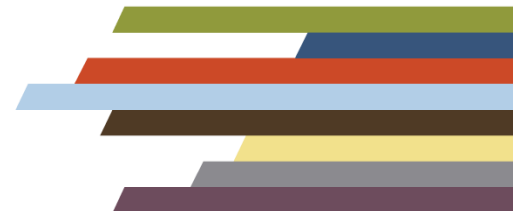


Step 4: Continuity of Training

- Whole year was connected; ongoing training was provided, i.e. Staff working on what was learned between professional development sessions.

Training Examples

- Morning staff meetings
 - School gatherings
 - Classroom visits and observations
-
- Ongoing training supports the “envisioning” process and helps with directly addressing school culture and how to meet the needs of the whole child.
 - Neurobiology/science, health, well-being.

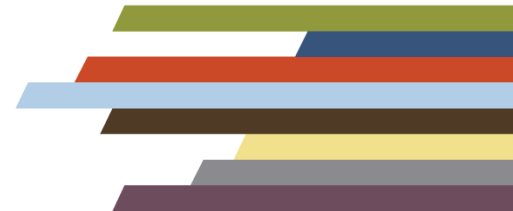


Whole School Community Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

Integration of mindfulness throughout:

- Curriculum
- Professional development
- Disciplinary practices and policies
- Leadership practice

These practices should permeate throughout the school - from playground, lunchroom, and bus rides to classrooms and beyond...



Mindfulness/Heart Centered Process

Step 1: Call for Action

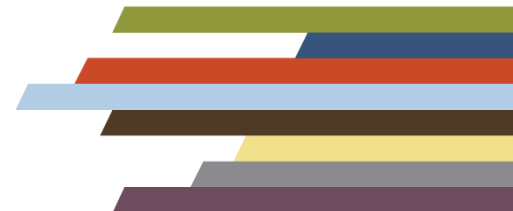
Step 2: Core Learning Team established

Step 3: S-CCATE instrument, focus on **consciousness**

Step 4: Continuity of Training in:

- **Neurobiology of trauma** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)
- **Neuroscience/psychology of emotions (amygdala)**, memory (hippocampus) and **executive functions (prefrontal cortex)**
- **Healthy child development** through the **body-mind connections** and interweaving of emotions and cognition

Step 5: Data = Actionable Intentions (New Vision)



Opening doors: Share Best Practices in Behavioral Approaches



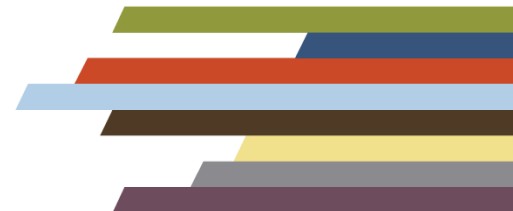
Photo credit: Pickit, 2019

Times they are a changin'

- Openness about Social Emotional Issues
- Access to Curriculum Teams
- Outreach to Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) and CEI

Create an oasis and roll with the tide

- Continued efforts to realize a caring, compassionate school culture

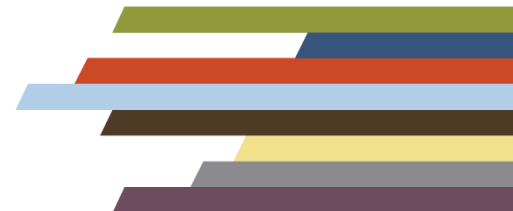


Where compassion took us and what has endured

***Staff feedback on their contributions to our “Oasis” concept are in parentheses.**

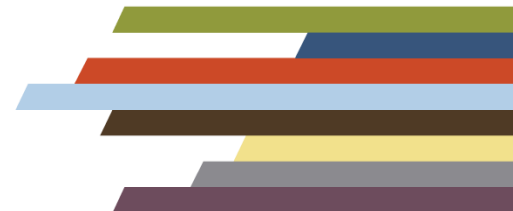
- 5 Point Scale & “Safe People” (9)
- Movement and Mindfulness Breaks (10)
- Journaling
- Alternative Seating Options
- Facilitated Play Periods
- Project-Based Learning: Food Security (4)
- Positive Behavioral Support (7)
- Greeting and Sending Off students (13)

= CONNECTIONS!



Healthy Minds = Healthy Bodies and Healthy Development

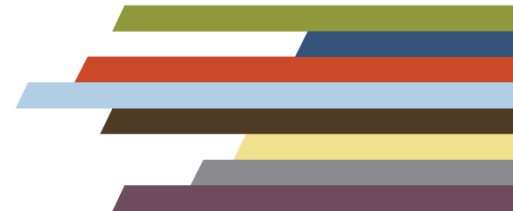
- Helping teachers understand their own experiences of high stress and trauma.
- Developing fundamental developmental tasks, such as relationships, coping with stress, self-regulation, and focused attention.
- Incorporating **mindfulness practices/strategies**, mind and body connection (neurobiology) and the significance of body, breath, attention, emotions and surrounding.
- Utilizing mindfulness to help quiet and calm the mind, and improve executive functions, growth and development.



Poll Question

Is your district implementing mindfulness:

- A. At the elementary level
- B. At the secondary level
- C. At both levels
- D. At the planning phase
- E. Not yet implementing



Recommendations to Infuse Mindfulness Primary and Secondary Level

Primary

30-45 minutes
mindfulness teaching
sessions

Educational info/material,
class discussion, active
listening

5-10 minutes meditation
infused throughout the
day

4-5 x's a week

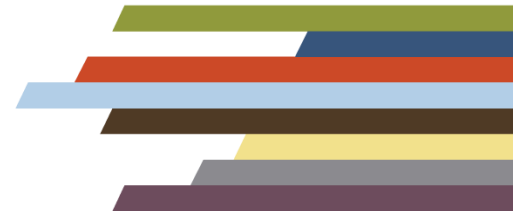
Secondary

24-60 minutes
mindfulness teaching
sessions

Educational info/materials,
class discussion, active
listening

10-20 minutes meditation
practice infused
throughout day

4-5 x's a week

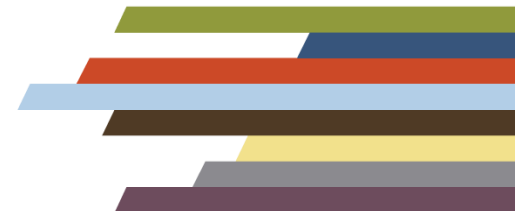


Secondary Level Mindfulness Practices: Unique Challenges/Opportunities

Know your audience... teens report: “can’t sit still and do nothing, “distracted,” “minds wander too much...”

Messaging...

- Like any training, our minds needs to be exercised much like a muscle or otherwise it will wither and not be at its strongest.
- Some days are easier than other days.
- Being distracted is part of the process that we are working on.
- Introduce the mindfulness concept of self-compassion, i.e. be kind to yourself like you are to a friend (be your best friend).
- No judgment of self, i.e. regarding how good or bad something is/we are Embracing where we are in the moment.



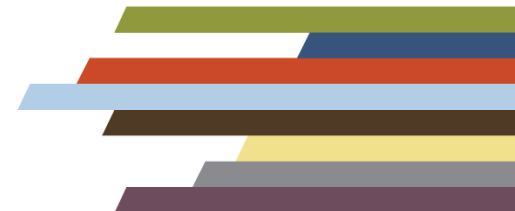
User Friendly Teen Mindfulness Practice

Use metaphors, comparing abstract concepts to concrete, real-world items, examples:

- Instruct students to picture their thoughts and feelings as bubbles floating past...
- Get students to create [mindfulness glitter jars](#) to help them understand what happens when their thoughts and emotions get all stirred up.
- **Focus/Self-awareness**... journey of focusing on body - physical and emotional awareness and how you are feeling in the moment - helps one to focus on the present i.e. just like playing a sport. (Hanson-Peterson, 2009)



Photo credit: FunA-Day.com, 2016



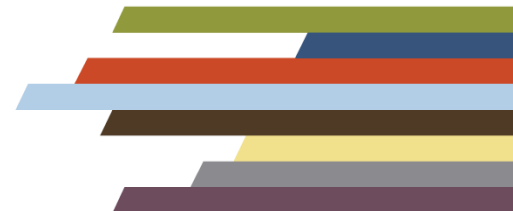
Secondary Level Mindfulness: Practical Application

Use breath work and breathing exercises in a variety of ways with classes, groups or whole school community

Calm and Quiet Maintenance is the main intention...

- Anger Management
- Exam or Speaking Anxiety
- Student in Distress
- Disruptive Classrooms

p. 69, Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish



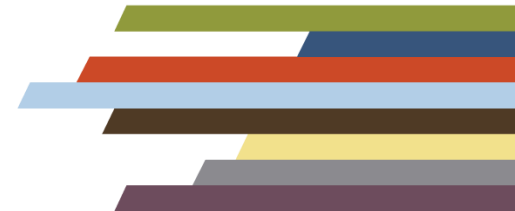
Set the Scene: Unrest vs. Calm

Anxiety unrest...leads to:

- ☐ Test/performance pressure trigger: stress/anxiety.
- ☐ Hectic/over-stimulating world.
- ☐ Arguments with people they are close to occur- they take to heart.
- ☐ Teens love to learn about the brain.
- ☐ **Video Resource:**
[mindfulness can help their brain harness feelings and thoughts](#)

Mindfulness calms...helps teens:

- ☐ Relax, pick up on patterns of negative self-talk, refocus attention.
- ☐ Slow things down, spend time be quiet, without distractions; learn to be more comfortable in their own skin and better understand their strengths and passions/interests.
- ☐ Experience things more lightly, view them as temporary and let go more easily.



Mindfulness hooks to engage teens: “The practice itself”

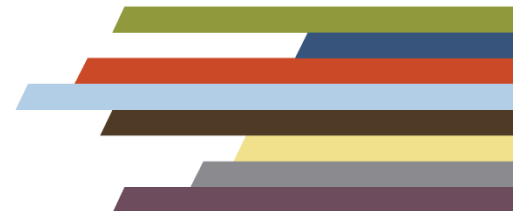
[Reachout Breathe](#) – an app that reduces the physical symptoms of stress and anxiety by helping the user control their breathing and heart rate.

[Music e-scape](#) – an app that uses the user’s music library to help them reach their desired mood.

[Smiling mind](#) – an app for young people that makes meditation more accessible.

[Guided meditations](#) – a range of guided meditation recordings for teens.

The best hook is to experience mindfulness practice itself...



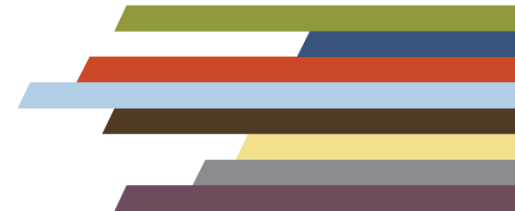
Mindful Moment Rooms (MMR)... an Oasis of Calm... and Respite from Storm

- Meditation instead of detention...
- Self-refer
- Teacher refer if distressed or disruptive
- Needed self-regulation
- Average time spent in MMR: 15-20 minutes
 - 5 min. discussion
 - 10-15 min. mindful practice



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpjWb9teKSY>

Video Credit: CBS News, 2016

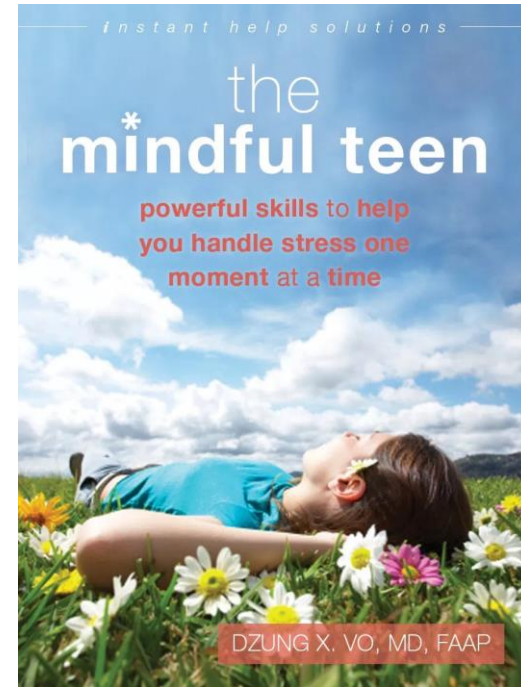


Resources to Draw from for Teens

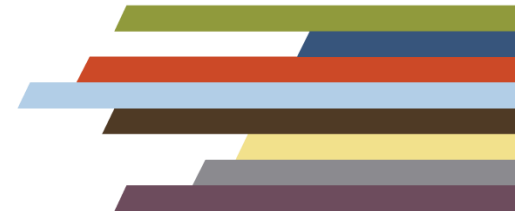
Mindfulness book for teens:
mindfulness instructions,
guided meditations,
examples, and youth voices.

***The Mindful Teen:
Powerful Skills to Help You
Handle Stress One
Moment at a Time***

(Dzung Vo, 2015)



[http://mindfulnessfor
teens.com/](http://mindfulnessfor teens.com/)

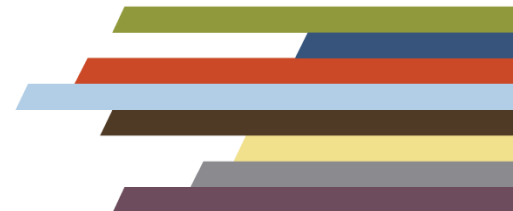




Through cultivating mindfulness and compassionate practices, comes restorative healing and relationships, educators can be:

- Nurturers of environment
- Anchors of support
- Catalysts for healing

healthy minds = healthy bodies





Center for Educational Improvement

Heart Centered 21st Century Learning

“KIDS FIRST”

CEI Associate Director, Heart Centered Learning

**Be Well. Be Happy.
Thank You!**

Contact

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