



Mindful Kids

Mindfulness Practice with Children

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The Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

By practicing mindful awareness through sitting meditation we learn to cultivate the following attitudes towards our life experience.

Non-judging: Impartial witnessing of thoughts and feelings; with kindness and intentionality, resisting the inclination to judge and criticize our experience.

Patience: Resting in the wisdom that things need to unfold in their own time and allowing for this process to happen.

Beginners mind: The ability to see things as if for the first time with a sense of curiosity and genuine interest. Allowing for preconceived ideas to not influence our direct experience of the present moment.

Trust: Recognizing our own inner wisdom and ability to guide ourselves in the practice of knowing our minds.

Non-striving: Allowing oneself to be on the path with direction but also being in the present moment each step of the way.

Acceptance: Permitting that whatever arises in your experience to be fully present, no matter what your reaction may be, including resistance.

Letting go: Recognizing the inclination to hold onto experiences, whether positive or negative, and allowing oneself to let go of what is not needed or helpful.

Connected to each of these attitudinal foundations is: **COMPASSION**

Suggestion for Reflection: How might the application of these attitudinal foundations be beneficial in your role as an educator?



Some Considerations for Practicing Mindfulness with Children

- ❖ Planting seeds (they will absorb it in their own way)
- ❖ Embodied teaching- only ask children to do something you have experienced yourself
- ❖ Follow children's lead
- ❖ Teacher's role is of co-learner & guide
- ❖ Invitation vs. behaviour management tool
- ❖ Age considerations – 1 minute of 'meditation' per year of age
- ❖ Collaborative rather than competitive activities
- ❖ Parental engagement
- ❖ Use movement... lots of movement
- ❖ Be creative and have fun...

Mindfulness with Children in the Classroom

What can it look like?

- ❖ Daily routine
- ❖ 8 or 10 week mindfulness course
- ❖ Integrated into the curriculum
- ❖ Teacher practice and create a routine of using it for particular situations (i.e. prior to tests, presentations, etc.)
- ❖ Peace corner / Breathing Room
- ❖ Other ideas that may work for your classrooms...

Teaching Mindfulness to Children... How to get started...

- ❖ Cultivate / continue your own mindfulness practice
- ❖ Attend workshops trainings specifically on how to teach mindfulness to children
- ❖ Experience and practice any mindfulness activities before bringing them to children
- ❖ Practice leading exercises with other mindfulness practitioners and get feedback
- ❖ Read – learn from people who have been doing this for a long time
- ❖ Be open to feedback from the children
- ❖ Again...continue your own mindfulness practice... attend retreats when you are able

Curricula & Ongoing Training

- ❖ Mindful Schools – See 'Adult training' on website
- ❖ Inner Kids – Susan Kaiser-Greenland
- ❖ The Inner Resilience in the Project – Linda Lantieri
- ❖ Mindfulness & Yoga for Children Teacher Training with Danieal Rechtschaffen & Jennifer Cohen, Omega Centre
- ❖ Still Quiet Place (online training available) – Amy Saltzman
- ❖ MBSR – T - Gina Biegel
- ❖ Yoga4 Kids – Sheri LeBlanc
- ❖ Inter-professional certificate in Applied Mindfulness Meditation (University of Toronto Con.- Ed) – Mindfulness with Caregivers & Children - Sara Marlowe & Rachael Frankford



Sample Practices for Children

Mindful Elements...

(Adapted from Daniel Rechtschaffen & Jennifer Cohen)

Sitting tall and proud while letting your body come into a comfortable position.

Letting any tension just float away.

Gently closing eyes close or softening their gaze downward to a spot on the floor.

Bringing awareness to your breath, noticing every in breath and out breath.

Bringing to mind the image of a mountain and feeling what it is like to be a mountain.

Perhaps feeling as if you were strong and solid like a mountain.

With every breath you can feel more and more solid on the earth, feeling the earth elements in your body.

Then, bringing to mind the image of a still lake and feeling as if you were calm and flowing like a lake.

With every breath, imagining yourself calm and serene like the water element.

Then bringing to mind an image of the sun and feeling as if your body was shining in all directions.

With every breath, feeling as if your body was shimmering like the element of fire.

Then bringing to mind the image of leaves shaking in the wind and noticing all the different sensations moving around your body.

With every breath, noticing the constantly shifting sensations of the wind element.

Finally, imagine you were floating in outer space and feeling that there was nothing around you, totally spacious.

With every breath, feeling as if you were floating and feeling the element of space.

Then, with the sound of the bell, slowly opening your eyes or raising your gaze and bringing your awareness back into the room.

Reflecting on the practice:

What did you notice when you were feeling these elements?

Were some elements easier or harder to feel?

Home assignment:

Find a quiet place in nature, or even next to a plant, and sit silently. Open your senses and interest to what the natural world has to say.

Awareness of Thoughts

For younger children:

1. Write an “unhelpful” or “unkind” thought you have had on a balloon and then on the count of three, let them go together.
2. Blow “unhelpful” or “unkind” thoughts into bubbles and watch them drift away.
3. Peaceful Piggy Meditation by Kerry Maclean
4. Make ‘mind in a jar’ – instructions in Peaceful Piggy Meditation book



For teens:

Train of thoughts (Adapted from the Stress reduction workbook for teens by Gina Biegel)

People spend a lot of time in their heads, thinking. When you spend so much time thinking, how much time are living your life right now?

When Bailey went to bed at night, she had a very hard time falling asleep. Her to-do list would pop up, and it would take her a long time to get it to go away. When she got up in the morning, she was often really tired.

Learning to observe your thoughts as they arise – without adding to them or trying to push them away – can reduce your stress. This activity can help; you can also use this technique any time you find yourself distracted by your thoughts.

Seated in a comfortable position, imagine yourself sitting on top of a hill. Once you have this image in your mind, look down at the bottom of the hill and see a train track. Picture a train starting to pass. As you see each car go by, think of it as one of your thoughts. If you find that one thought keeps popping back up, just notice it. You can say, “Oh, this is what I am thinking about right now” “here’s another thought”, “thinking” and move on. When you notice you have jumped on the train and are caught up in the content of the thought, gently get back to the top of the hill.

Bailey tried this exercise. She found that when she just noticed her thoughts without telling herself, “I need to stop thinking about this or I’ll be tired tomorrow,” and said “okay, I’m not thinking about this,” and just noticed it, it helped her fall asleep without getting stuck in the a cycle of thinking on and on.

You could invite teens to create a visual image where they creatively list particularly “sticky” thoughts that they would like to observe passing by them on the train.

Working with difficult emotions ‘for kids’

Sample lesson plan (Scaffolding):

- ❖ Session 6 (out of an 8 week group)
- ❖ Feelings check in – to give vocabulary
- ❖ Feelings charades
- ❖ Mindfulness awareness of emotions meditation practice (adapted from Amy Saltzman, Still Quiet Place)
- ❖ Silly Billy by Anthony Browne
- ❖ Worry Dolls art activity
- ❖ Time for discussion – over a snack



Gratitude Practice for Children

Each day, think about and even record three things that you feel grateful for - things that make you happy.

They could be happy events that happened that day like fun game at school, or special people in your life, something you did that you are proud of, a pet, whatever brings you a feeling of gratitude. You might even consider starting your own gratitude journal and add to it each day.

Note to educators and / or about gratitude practice. Children can benefit from being encouraged to take a moment to pause and reflect on what went well that day and some things that make them happy. This practice is a way to nourish well-being, contentment and inner peace (Hanson, 2009).

What are three things that you feel grateful for today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

With older children and teens, you could also ask them to reflect on why they might have happened.

Lovingkindness Practice for Caregivers / Educators

Lovingkindness is a practice of cultivating compassion, both for ourselves and others. It can be easy to feel love and compassion when people are doing things we like or acting in ways that we want them to. But this can be challenging during those times when people aren't necessarily acting how we would like them to or when we are faced with aspects of ourselves that we find hard to accept.

Just like we practice the cultivation of mindfulness, / present-moment awareness, we can also engage in practice to cultivate compassion, patience and acceptance for ourselves and others. This practice is known as Metta, or lovingkindness practice.

It involves the repetition of phrases, and tapping into the intention behind them.

With this practice, it is also important to notice if an attachment to an outcome arises; to notice that and let it be. The purpose of the practice is to support us in developing compassion for ourselves and for others, rather than expecting others to change as a result of our practice.

Below is a sample of lovingkindness phrases that you might use. It is not the actual words or phrases that are most important, but rather the intention behind them, so please feel free to use phrases that resonate most with you. You can do the entire practice in one sitting or perhaps choose to focus on a specific section if that feels most relevant.

May I / you / we be happy and live with joy
 May I / you / we be healthy and strong
 May I / you / we be safe and protected
 May I / you / we be at peace and live with ease



For the first part of this practice, bringing into your mind's eye, the image of your child or a student during a time in which you felt very connected to them. Perhaps it was a pleasant experience that you shared, or maybe a moment when you felt very proud of them... a time when you felt a lot of love - positive feelings towards your child. While holding this image of your child in your mind, repeat silently the phrases of lovingkindness.

May you be happy and live with joy
 May you be healthy and strong
 May you be safe and protected
 May you be at peace and live with ease

When you are ready, invite an image of the same child during a difficult time. Perhaps you are feeling angry or disappointed or frightened with something that they have said or done – or saddened by a choice they have made. Perhaps it was a time of conflict between the two of you. While holding this image of your child in your mind, again repeat the same phrases of lovingkindness. See if you can invite yourself to generate a sense of compassion, even in the midst of a challenging time.

Notice if any struggles arise in the mind, or in the body, when saying these phrases. Perhaps feelings of righteousness or a reluctance to let go. See if you might invite yourself back to the phrases. Practicing holding on to compassion, amidst the difficult times, which are bound to happen.

Now, bringing an image of yourself, as a parent or caregiver into your mind's eye during a time when you felt very positive about yourself as a parent or caregiver. Perhaps at a time when you were feeling connected, responsive, attuned to your child... pleased with yourself in your role as parent/caregiver. While holding this image of yourself in your mind, repeat the phrases of lovingkindness.

May I be happy and live with joy
 May I be healthy and strong
 May I be safe and protected
 May I be at peace and live with ease

If you don't remember the exact words, that is okay, again, it is the intention behind the repetition of the phrases that is the goal.

Now, bringing into your mind's eye an image of yourself as a parent/educator during a time when you were not so pleased with yourself in a situation. Perhaps this is a time that you 'flipped your lid,' when you responded to your child in a way that you wish you hadn't. We can often be very hard on ourselves in such moments, very judgmental, and forget that in these situations, we are doing the best that we can. We may see another parent in a challenging situation, and our heart goes out to them. Yet, when we find ourselves in a similar situation, we may be very hard on ourselves. Seeing what it might be like to bring compassion to ourselves even during those times when we may be stressed, maxed out, not necessarily at our best. Not only reserving kindness and compassion for those times when we are "on," being kind and gentle and forgiving with ourselves when we may be having a hard time.

Repeating the same lovingkindness phrases while holding onto this image of ourselves.

If you find this very challenging, and notice judgement creeping in, perhaps bring into your mind's eye is slightly less difficult or 'loaded' situation and see if that might support the cultivation of compassion towards yourself.



Now, bringing in image of your entire family / class / school together. Repeating the lovingkindness phrases, sending love and compassion to yourself and your family / class / school together.

May we be happy and live with joy
 May we be healthy and strong
 May we be safe and protected
 May we be at peace and live with ease

Resources

Mindful Parenting Books: (lots of great ideas & activities applicable to educators)

- *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Jon Kabat-Zinn & Myla Kabat-Zinn.
- *The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* by Dan Siegel
- *Parenting Your Anxious Child with Mindfulness and Acceptance* by Christopher McCurry.
- *Parenting from the Inside-Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding can Help you Raise Children Who Thrive* by Daniel Siegel & Mary Hartzell.
- *The Joy of Parenting: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* by Kelly Wilson, Lisa Coyne & Amy Murrel.

Related Parenting Books:

- *Baby Hearts: A Guide to giving your child an emotional head start in the early years* by Linda Acredol & Susan Goodwyn
- *Bright from the Start: The Simple, Science-Backed Way to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind from Birth to Age 3* by Jill Stamm

Mindfulness for Children / Teens Books

- *The Mindful Child* by Susan Kaiser-Greenland
- *Planting Seeds: Mindfulness Practice with Children* by Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village Community
- *Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal With Stress* by Gina Biegel
- *Child's Mind: mindfulness practices to help our children be more focused, calm, and relaxed* by Christopher Willard
- *The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids* by Lawrence Shapiro & Robin Sprague
- *Acceptance and mindfulness treatments for children and adolescents: A practitioners guide* by Thomas H. Ollendick, Steven Hayes and Laurie Greco
- *101 Relaxation Games for Children* by Allison Bartl
- *The Yoga Adventure for Children* by Helen Purperhart

Mindfulness Books for Educators:

- *Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children* by Lina Lantieri
- *Mindful Teaching & Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone who Teaches Anything* by Deborah Schoeberlain
- *The Mindful Teacher* by Elizabeth MacDonald
- *How to Talk so Kids Can Learn* by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish (not mindfulness per se, but great!)



Mindfulness Books:

- *Coming to Our Senses* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* by Daniel Siegel

Children's Storybooks:

- *A Quiet Place* by Douglas Wood and Dan Andraesen
- *No Ordinary Apple* by Sara Marlowe (Available Spring 2013)
- *A Boy & a Bear* by Lori Lite
- *The Three Questions & Zen Shorts* by Jon J Muth
- *Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids* by Maud Roegiers
- *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers
- *Westlandia* by Paul Fleischman
- *The Kid's Yoga Book of Feelings* by Mary Humphrey
- *Oh the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss
- *Oh, The Things you can think* by Dr. Seuss
- *My Many Coloured days* by Dr. Seuss
- *Silly Billy* by Anthony Browne
- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation, Moody Cow Meditates & Peaceful Piggy Yoga* by Kerry Lee MacLean
- *Is There Really a Human Race* by Jamie Lee Curtis & Laura Cornell

Practice CDs:

- *Still Quiet Place: mindfulness for young children* by Amy Saltzman
- *Still Quiet Place: mindfulness for teens* by Amy Saltzman
- *Mindfulness for Teens: Meditation Practices to Reduce Stress and Promote Well-Being* by Gina Biegel
- *Practice CD included with the book Building Emotional Intelligence* by Lina Lantieri
- *Practice CD included with the book Planting Seeds:* by Thich Nhat Hanh

Web Sites: (Here are a few.... But there are now Many!)

www.mindfuled.org www.mindfulschools.org www.innerresilience-tidescenter.org www.plantingseedsbook.org www.susankaisergreenland.com www.seedsofcompassion.org www.mindfulparentscommunity.com	www.mindfulfamilies.ca www.stressfreekids.com www.stillquietplace.com www.springrainsangha.com www.dharma.org www.eomega.org www.garrisoninstitute.org
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KEY Take Home Messages:

1. Teach what you know from direct experience
2. Teaching Mindfulness to children can be PLAYFUL

“The most precious gift we can offer is our presence...”

--Thich Nhat Hanh

