

Nurturing Mindfulness in Children, Youth and Families



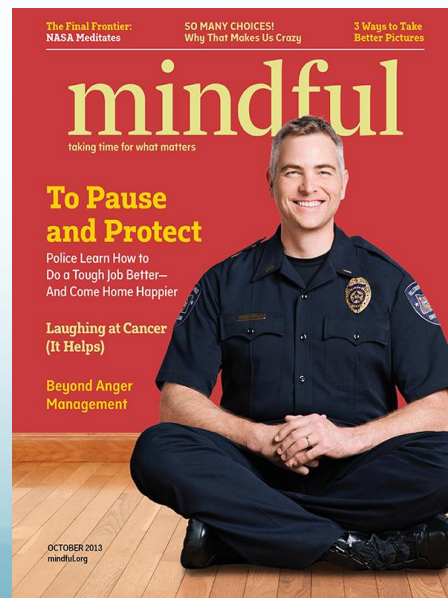
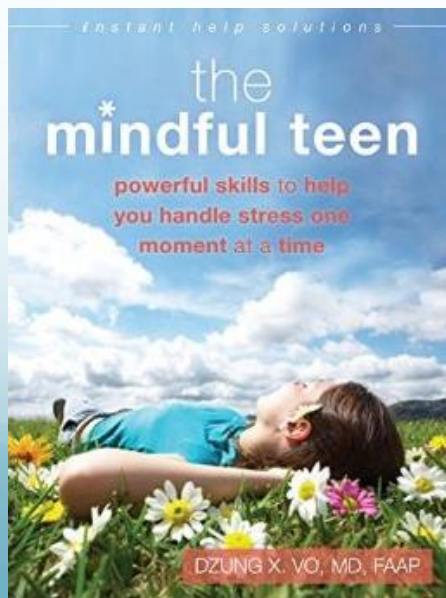
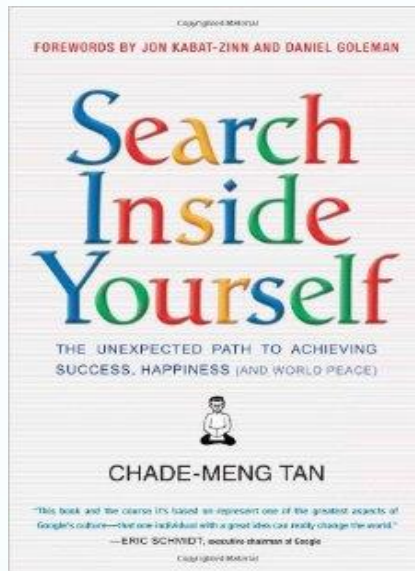
Stephanie Curran R.TCM.P

Practitioner of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine
Director of Elements of Health Centre (Victoria, BC)

Objectives

- Define mindfulness and indentify the role of mindfulness for children, youth and families
- Review the research on mindfulness-based intervention, including a review of the growing studies in parenting, childhood development and family well-being
- Experience a mindfulness practice

The Mindfulness “Revolution”



What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means
paying attention
in a particular way;
On purpose, in
the present moment,
and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

What mindfulness is NOT...

- religious
- about being calm
- absence of thought
- a “quick fix”
- a silver bullet



Stress - a Growing Pandemic

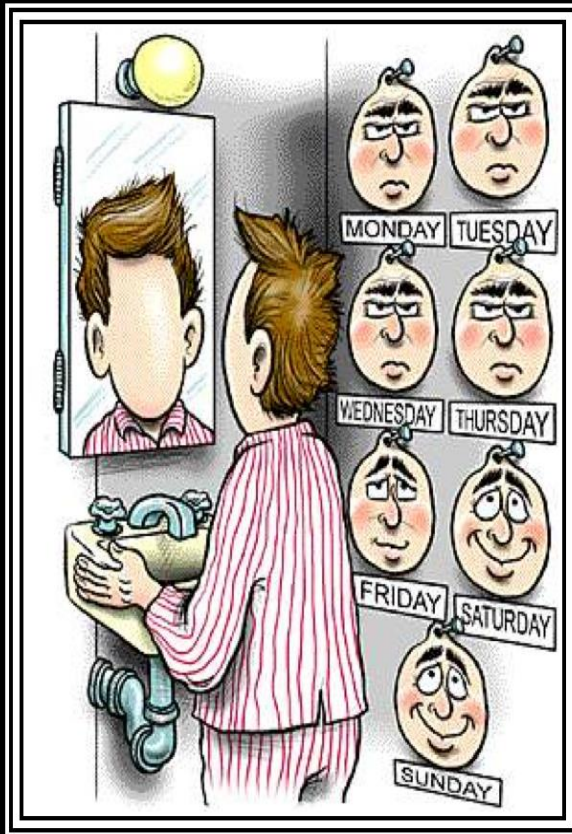
- Depression is the leading cause of disability as measured by YLDs
- By the year 2020, depression is projected to reach 2nd place of the ranking of overall global burden of disease calculated for all ages, both sexes.



Stress Contributes to:

- Asthma
- Allergies
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic fatigue
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Hypertension
- Pain
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Skin conditions
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Multiple chemical sensitivities
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Diabetes
- Insomnia
- Addictions
- Arthritis

A Growing Problem in the Workplace



- Currently, over half of all sick days in Canada are due to mental illness
- 75% of short term and long term disability claims in Canada are related to mental illness
- Mental health problems cost Canadian employers \$20 billion annually

Mindfulness Training Benefits

- Healthier
- Happier employees
- Greater focus and productivity
- Less stress
- Improved well-being
- More creativity
- Improved communications & team work
- Increased work satisfaction

Perinatal Stress

Maternal Mental Health Difficulties contribute to:

- Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes:
 - Preterm birth
 - Low birth weight of infant
 - Miscarriage
 - Preeclampsia
- Compromised parenting and marital conflict
- Compromised maternal physical and social functioning
- Insecure attachment of offspring
- Impaired emotional and behavior regulation in offspring

Affects of stress on children



- High levels of stress
- Anxiety and depression
- Bullying
- Inability to focus
- Impulsiveness
- Drug and alcohol abuse

Stress impacting families

- Challenges:
 - Money for food and housing
 - Health problems
 - Violence in home
 - Safety in neighborhood
 - Stress, stress, stress



Effects of Childhood Toxic Stress



- A high prevalence of ACE's (4 or more) associated with 2.2 fold increase in high perceived stress and 4.0 fold increase in difficulty controlling anger
- As # ACE's increased, prevalence and risk of illicit drug use increased
- Women with Hx ACE's poorer mental and physical health than women w/o Hx ACE's
- Women w/Hx ACE's heavier users of opiates compared to those w/no Hx ACE's

Source: Child and Family Research Partnership at the University of Texas

'Fight or Flight' stress response



...but what about this?

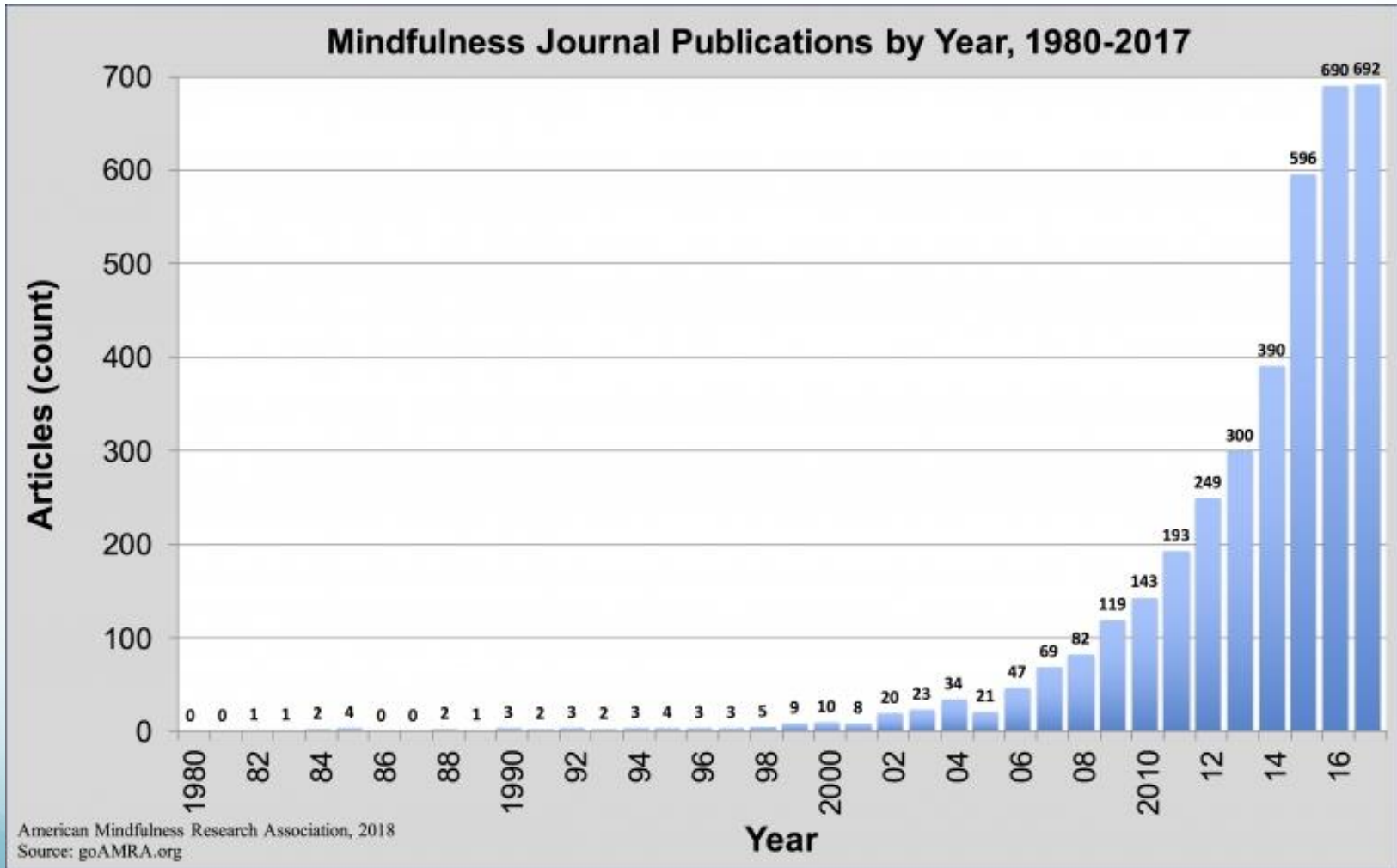


Is stress contagious?



Waters, S. F., West, T. V., & Mendes, W. B. (2014).
Stress contagion: Physiological covariation between mothers and infants.
Psychological Science, 25(4), 934-42.

History of Mindfulness



Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

MBSR began as a stress reduction program in a single hospital in Massachusetts in 1979. **Thirty-nine years later, it is offered at over 200 hospitals, clinics and universities worldwide.**

Four decades of research studies show a positive impact on:

- Stress reduction
- Chronic pain response
- Overall well-being
- Recovery from addiction
- Attention and memory
- Immune
- Self-regulation
- Emotional resilience

MBCT: Depression Relapse Prevention

- Meta-analysis of 9 RCTs of MBCT
- N=1258
- MBCT assoc'd w/ significant reduction in risk of depressive relapse compared to TAU over 60 wk f/u
- **MBCT has comparable benefits to active treatment controls (including antidepressants)**
- Especially effective with higher frequency of past episodes

Kuyken et al., 2016, JAMA Psychiatry

Mindfulness for anxiety disorders


- Meta-analysis of 19 studies of MBIs and acceptance-based interventions
 - Effect sizes 1.08 for anxiety symptoms vs. 0.83 for mixed controls
 - Large heterogeneity

Vollestad J, Nielsen MB, Nielsen GH (2011): *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*

- Meta-analysis of 39 studies of MBIs
 - In anxiety and mood disorders, large effect sizes of 0.97 for anxiety and 0.95 for mood symptoms
 - Only 5 studies had active control ES=0.81 (but sample too small)
 - ES's robust and maintained over follow-up

Hofmann, S. G., Sawyer, A. T., Witt, A. A., & Oh, D. (2010). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*

Benefits of preparing for childbirth with mindfulness training: a randomized controlled trial with active comparison

Larissa G. Duncan  , Michael A. Cohn, Maria T. Chao, Joseph G. Cook, Jane Riccobono and Nancy Bardacke

BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth BMC series – open, inclusive and trusted 2017 17:140 | DOI: 10.1186/s12884-017-1319-3 |

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Received: 19 March 2016 | Accepted: 26 April 2017 | Published: 12 May 2017

- RCT: $n = 30$
 - 2.5-day mindfulness-based childbirth preparation course□ based on *Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting* (MBCP)
 - Control =standard prenatal class
- Improved women's childbirth-related appraisals and psychological functioning
 - greater childbirth self-efficacy and mindful body awareness
 - lower post-course depression symptoms; maintained through postpartum f/u
 - trend toward a lower rate of opioid analgesia use in labour
 - no change in perceived labour pain or epidural use

University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine (PI: Duncan)

- Target N = 36 randomized in 3 cohorts to:
 - **Listening Mothers** n = 18; n = 6 per group)
 - Wait-List Control (n = 18)
- Self-report assessment pre-course, post-course, and 6 months follow-up
- Post-course focus groups

**“I’M OPENING MY ARMS RATHER THAN PUSHING AWAY:” PERCEIVED BENEFITS
OF A MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION AMONG HOMELESS WOMEN
AND YOUNG CHILDREN**

Qualitative study: n = 17

SHINE mindfulness program : 10x 1hr sessions that teaches research-based, mindfulness awareness practices to people living with poverty, homelessness, addictions, abuse, and physical and mental health challenges

Mindful Awareness Play (MAP) parent–child play activity, to promote mutual regulation, strengthen family attachments, and reduce stress and anxiety.

Four themes emerged for perceived benefits:

- “me time”
- maternal self-regulation
- dyadic connectedness
- child well-being



*Helping professionals help families affected
by substance abuse and HIV*

*A service of the Children's Bureau,
member of the T/TA Network*

Mindfulness Based Parenting for Mothers in Substance Use Treatment who have Infants and Young Children



Diane J. Abatemarco, PhD, MSW

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Chief, Pediatric Population Health Research
Director of Maternal Addiction Treatment, Education & Research
Department of Pediatrics
Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children – Nemours
Thomas Jefferson University
Philadelphia

Summary of research findings on benefits of mindfulness:



Attention

Numerous studies show improved attention¹, including better performance on objective tasks that measure attention.²



Emotion Regulation

Mindfulness is associated with emotion regulation across a number of studies³. Mindfulness creates changes in the brain that correspond to less reactivity⁴, and better ability to engage in tasks even when emotions are activated.⁵



Compassion

People randomly assigned to mindfulness training are more likely to help someone in need⁶ and have greater self-compassion.⁷



Calming

Studies find that mindfulness reduces feelings of stress⁸ and improves anxiety and distress when placed in a stressful social situation.⁹

Mindfulness with Students

Mindfulness with Students

Studies find that youth benefit from learning mindfulness in terms of improved cognitive outcomes, social-emotional skills, and well being. In turn, such benefits may lead to long-term improvements in life. For example, social skills in kindergarten predict improved education, employment, crime, substance abuse and mental health outcomes in adulthood.¹⁹



Cognitive Outcomes

- Attention and Focus²⁰
- Grades²¹



Social-emotional Skills

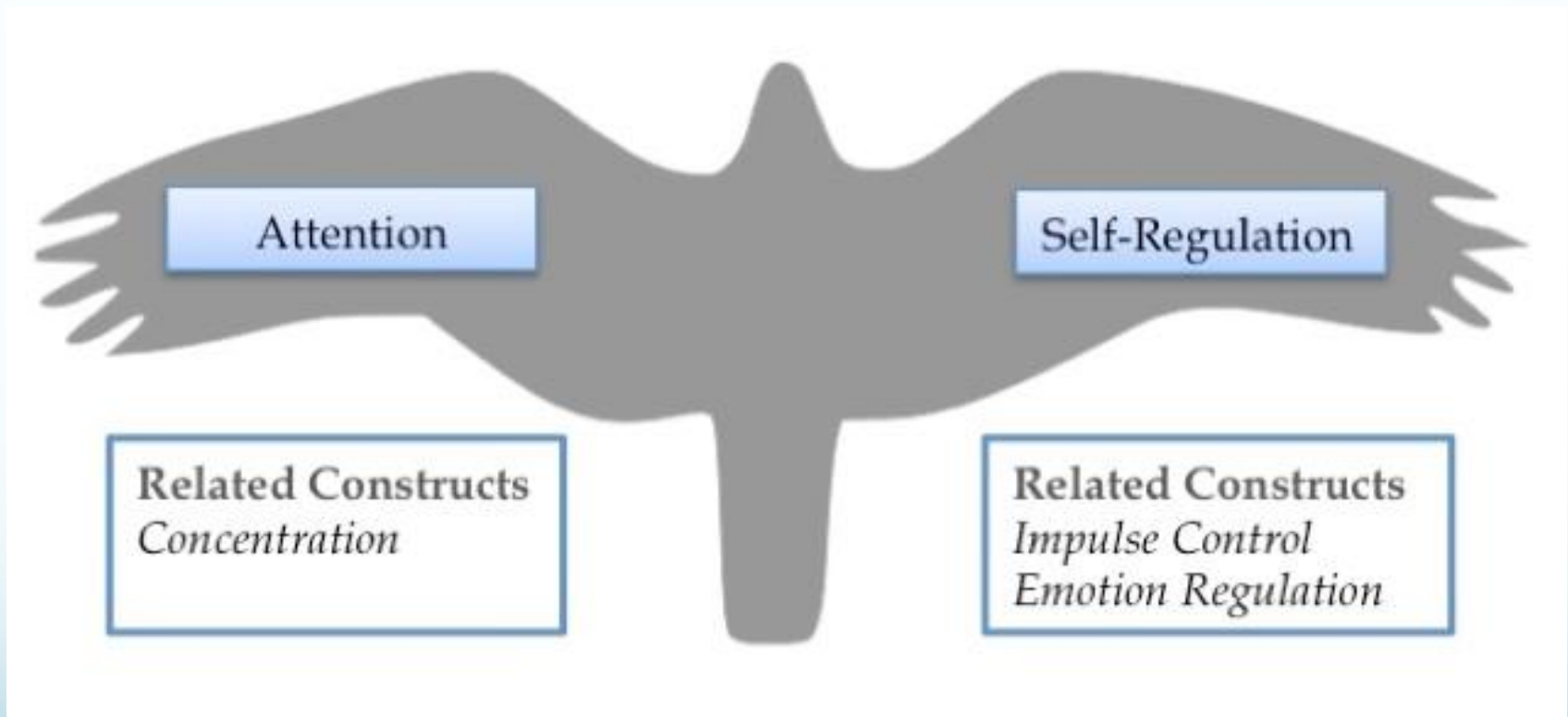
- Emotion regulation²²
- Behavior in school²³
- Empathy and perspective-taking²⁴
- Social-skills²⁵



Well Being

- Test anxiety²⁶
- Stress²⁷
- Posttraumatic symptoms²⁸
- Depression²⁹

The Two Wings of Mindfulness for Students



A mindful moment...



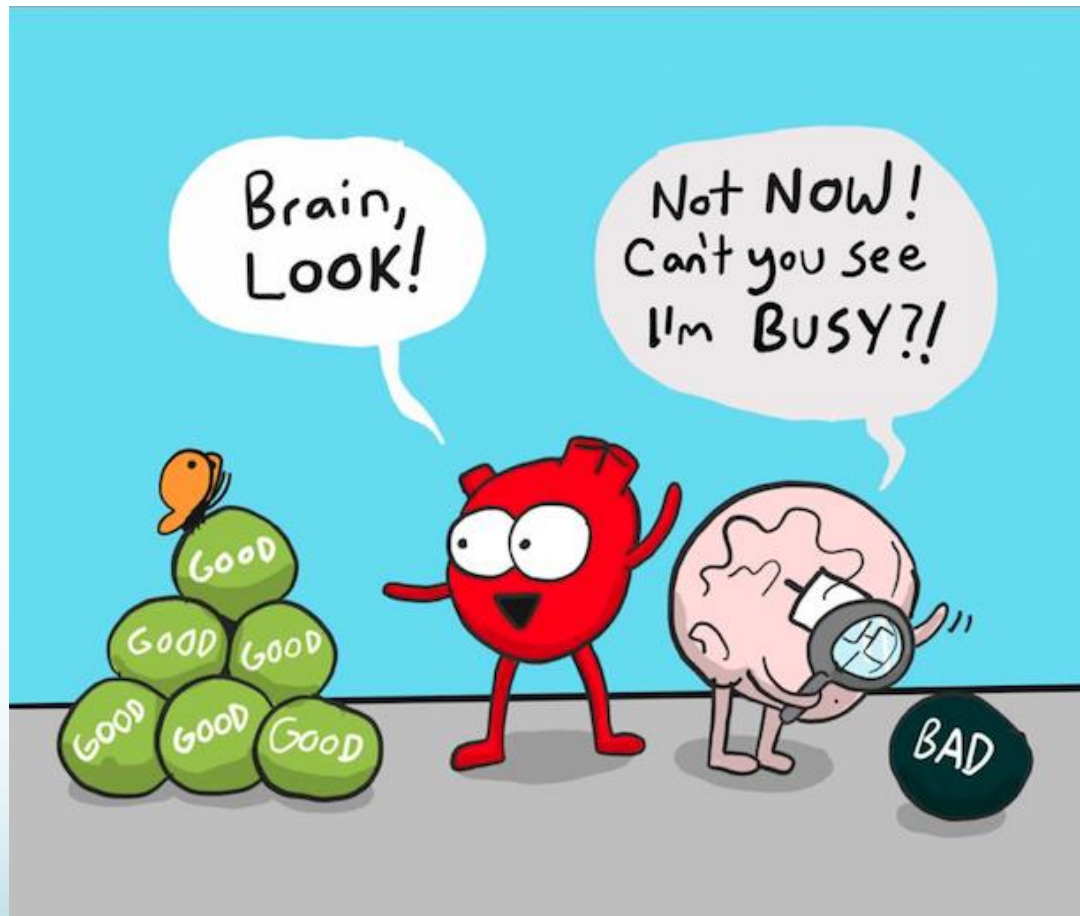


Mind Full, or Mindful?

The Neuroscience of Mindfulness



What are we practicing?



Your presence matters



Mindfulness for Educators: Research Summary

- Intention:
 - To examine the experience of educators participating in the SD 61 and SD 62 *Mindfulness for Educators* program offerings (Spring 2016; Fall 2016; Winter 2017; Fall 2017; Winter 2018) with the aim of documenting how educators perceived it impacted their practice.
- Participants:
 - 100 educators have participated in program to date
 - 69 completed the online survey; 34 participated in the follow up interviews
 - Age range in study = 22 – 55+
 - Majority (36%) had greater than fifteen years teaching experience

Study Findings

- Mixed methods approach used:
 - Initial *Mindfulness Attention Awareness self assessment* survey
 - 30 - 40 min individual interviews with participants upon completion of the 8 week experience
- Survey Data:
 - The majority of participants self identified as incorporating limited aspects of mindfulness into their daily life.
- Interview Data:
 - Six themes emerged:
 - Program Structure and Delivery;
 - Authenticity & Accountability;
 - Personal Value;
 - Impact on Professional Practice;
 - Strategies for Classroom Use and,
 - Supporting the Practice of Mindfulness.

Theme: Program Structure & Delivery

- Program structure and delivery
 - All participants identified the group sessions; the focus on cultivating an individual practice; the sharing of experience, and the regular schedule as being critical features of the program. Facilitator and structure that modeled the practice was highlighted.

“I really feel like the 8 weeks inserted into your life helps to establish a commitment to practice instead of a one off event. People would ask me when are you done and I would say, I’m not done. This is what I do now”
(Interview participant, Winter 2017).

“The check-ins created a sense of community and a place to be honest and feel supported with the experience of incorporating this new lifestyle into our busy worlds” (Interview participant, Fall 2017).

Theme: Authenticity & Accountability

- A theme throughout all of the interviews was authenticity – a need to experience mindfulness for themselves in order to be able to incorporate mindfulness strategies and approaches into their teaching in meaningful ways.

“I thought intuitively it should transfer into my life but it takes work and practices and you can’t just assimilate it by reading about it you actually have to do the practice”

(Interview participant, Winter 2017).

“Having an understanding of my own practice helps me to anticipate some of the roadblocks that students may encounter”

(Interview participant, Fall 2017).

Theme: Personal Value

- All attributed high personal value to their participation and cited evidence of impact on their resilience and well being; improved interactions with students, colleagues and parents.

“I feel very fortunate to be part of this program. It has changed the way I look at my own life, how I value life and experiences, and how I can help my students feel connected to their true self and realize their own value” (Interview participant, Spring 2016).

“I see the benefits from my morning practice affecting me throughout my day. I am able to stay calmer. I spend more time engaging in problems instead of making snap decisions. I am happier. I am taking time to connect and really hear what the people around me have to communicate”

(Interview participant, Fall 2017).

Theme: Impact on Professional Practice

- All interviewees provided examples of the direct impact it had on their professional lives:
 - A calm and focused classroom
 - A change in tone of voice used to deal with students
 - Increased level of patience in frustrating situations
 - More empathy towards others
 - Increased reflection on practice of teaching
 - Being present with students in the moment
 - Formal use of breath in escalating situations
 - Recognition of choice in how they reacted in the classroom – regulation of emotions

“Every time I have an interaction with a kid I give them the opportunity to tell me what is happening – giving them silences so that they can give the answers instead of adults filling in the spaces all the time”

(Interview participant, Fall 2016).

“I am calmer and more present than I ever was before. This has greatly impacted my teaching practices. I now find it much easier to keep my stress levels low because I am able to take a breath and really look at a situation before doing anything...I am not letting old stressors trigger me because I am able to take a moment after the stimulus to think clearly before my response rather than just reacting”

(Interview participant, Fall 2017).

Theme: Strategies for Classroom Use

- All interviewed identified a variety of strategies they had begun to incorporate into their classroom practice including:
 - The use of breath and pauses
 - Mindful eating practice
 - Non-judgmental listening techniques
 - Short meditations
 - Meditations connected to curriculum topics (study skills; content specific)
 - Listening to our bodies moments
 - Heartfulness
 - Yoga

“I now practice deep breathing, yoga and mindful listening as well as heartfulness (sending love to our beloveds) each day after recess and just before math. I was shocked the first time I tried it as I couldn't believe that a simple ringing of a singing bowl and breathing three breaths could have such an affect. My learners (half of whom are VERY high energy) were calm and alert for 10 minutes. I know that this method is effective as I am seeing it in action!”

(Interview participant, Winter 2017).

“Some students are already enjoying the “release of tension” they feel happening and are recognizing how this can be helpful to them outside the classroom”

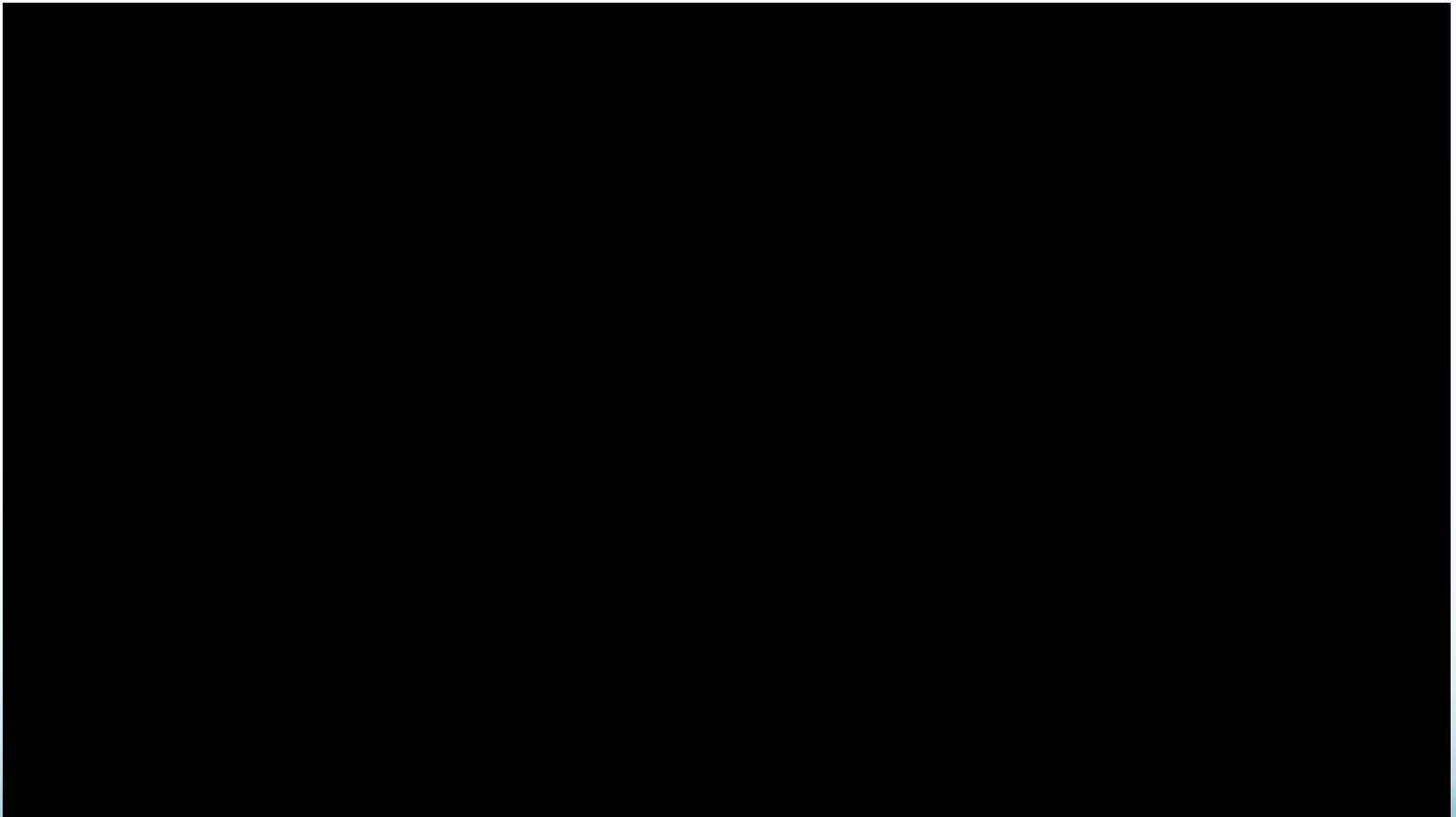
(Interview participant, Fall 2017).

Theme: Supporting the Practice of Mindfulness

- The majority of participants commented on the following areas:
 - Gratitude to the district for their support in bringing this program to them
 - Desire for the program to be offered to their colleagues and to be a regular part of the school experience.
 - Need for ongoing support and opportunities to continue the practice and learn more techniques for taking it into their classrooms.

“Our job as teachers is getting bigger and harder and there is a place for mindfulness and there is increasingly a need” (Winter, 2017).

“Just Breathe”



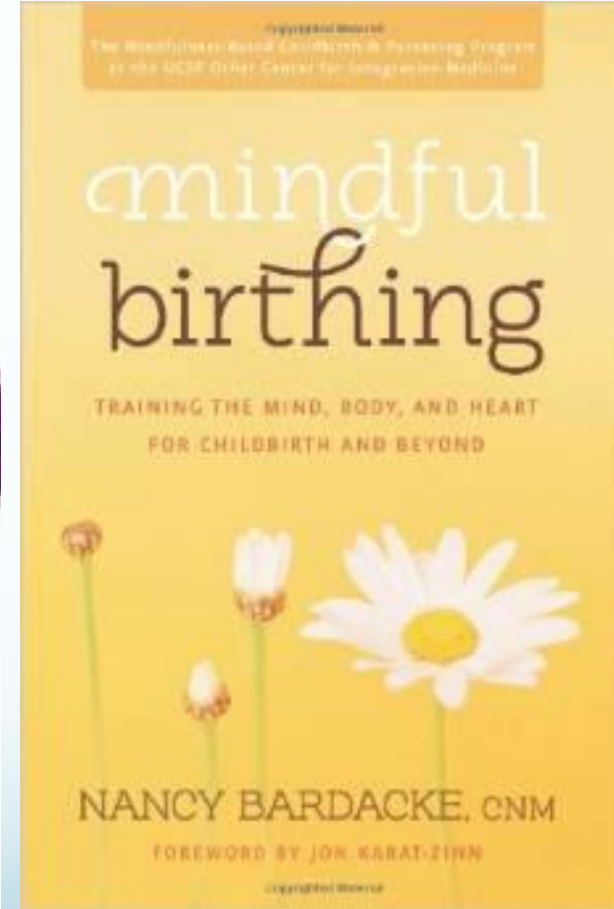
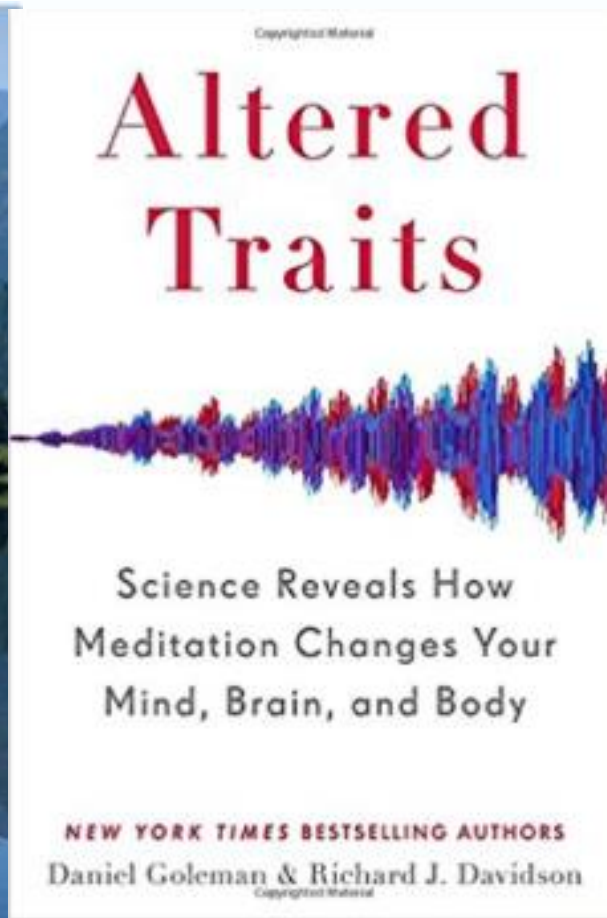
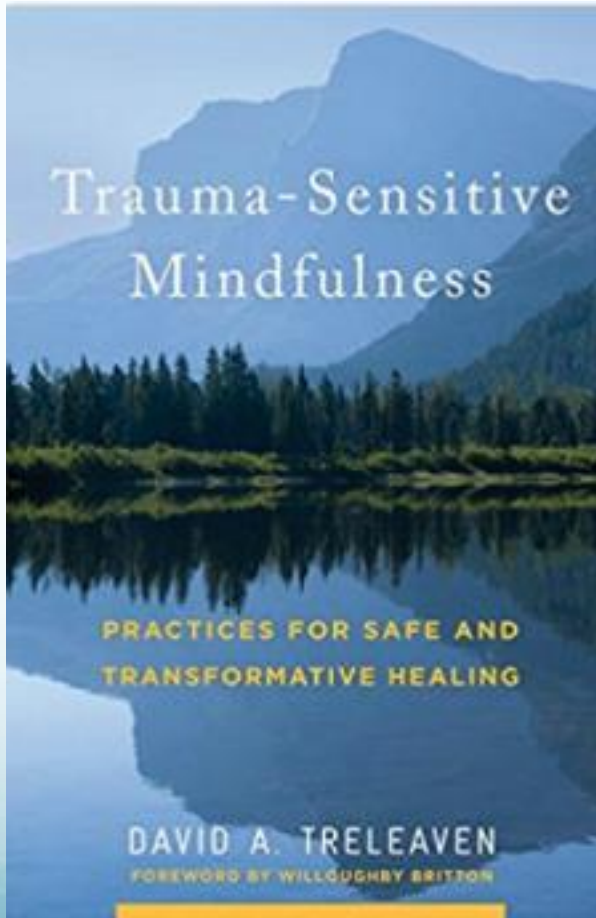
<https://www.mindfulschools.org/video/just-breathe-3/>

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a brass bowl. The word "MINDFULNESS" is written in large, white, distressed capital letters across the center of the bowl. The background is blurred, showing a person in a white shirt. In the bottom right corner of the image, there is a small, colorful logo consisting of a square divided into four triangles of different colors (red, green, blue, yellow).

MINDFULNESS

<http://kelymentalhealth.ca/r/mindfulness-youth-voices>

Resources



Thank you!



scurran@elementscentre.ca