

# The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

# Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness is the human ability to be fully present. Being engaged in the moment means that we are free from distraction and open to an attitude of acceptance, curiosity and calmness. Cultivated in Buddhism, mindfulness embraces an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life. Mindfulness supports and enriches meditation, while meditation nurtures and expands mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which there is an intense awareness of what is sensed and felt in a moment, without interpretation. Research suggests that there are many benefits to mindfulness including improved wellbeing and physical health by relieving stress, lowering blood pressure and improving sleep. Mindfulness meditation also improves mental health being an important element in treatment for anxiety, depression and a range of disorders.

The cultivation of mindfulness has roots in Buddhism, but most religions include some type of meditation technique that helps move individuals' thoughts toward an appreciation of the moment and a larger perspective on life. The term "mindfulness" refers to a psychological state of awareness and the practices that promote this awareness. It is often also described as a moment-to-moment consciousness of one's experience without judgment. Mindfulness can be cultivated through practices such as yoga and tai chi, but most of the literature has focused on mindfulness that is developed through mindfulness meditation. These self-regulation practices focus on training attention and awareness to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster capacities such as calmness, clarity and concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006).

Mindfulness meditation helps improve individual's ability to comprehend their emotions and helps to recognise the emotions of other people. Researchers posit that mindfulness meditation reduces stress and rumination; fewer depressive symptoms; decreases anxiety; promotes metacognitive awareness and working memory capacity; supports the use of emotion regulation strategies and boosts working memory and focus.

In recent years education researchers and teachers have focused on social emotional learning and the emotional wellbeing of students. Research confirms that social and emotional competencies can be taught, modelled, and practiced and can lead to positive student outcomes that are important for success in school and in life. Given the attention to student wellbeing and the recognition of the importance of happiness there has been an increase in holistic health activities in educational settings – these include mindfulness meditation.



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Mindfulness meditation activities and techniques that calm the mind and body can decrease the negative effects of stress and expand students' ability to stay engaged. Saltzman (2021) states "mindfulness is a powerful tool that supports children in calming themselves, focusing their attention, and interacting effectively with others, all critical skills for functioning well in school and in life."

The workplace can be a very stressful competitive place where achievement and success can be an expectation of employees. In work environments there is an expectation of productivity, focus, teamwork and at times it can be demanding. Mindfulness meditation can be a powerful tool that individuals and teams can utilise to decrease stress, connect with colleagues, strengthen focus and demonstrate resilience. Some benefits to the incorporation of mindfulness meditation practices in the workplace include:

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improves communication
- Increases emotional intelligence and resilience
- More cognitive flexibility
- Increased self-awareness and self-insight
- Increased immune functioning
- Reduced psychological distress
- Increased relationship satisfaction
- Improved focus

Mindfulness meditation has the capacity to support people's sense of awareness, clarity, calmness and compassion.

## References

- Saltzman, A. (2021). Still quiet place. Retrieved from <http://www.stillquietplace.com/>
- Walsh, R., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). The meeting of meditative disciplines and western psychology: A mutually enriching dialogue. *American Psychologist*, 61, 227–239. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.61.3.227



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