



Practicing Mindfulness in the Preschool-Kindergarten Classroom using Art, Books and Music

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EDUCATORS

PASADENA CONVENTION CENTER

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

- Ability to refocus, bring attention to present moment; thinking before doing
- Useful skill that can be taught even as young as a toddler to take into adulthood
- Different techniques such as breathing exercises, meditation sequences to:
 - Keep classroom calm
 - Calm a child down from a tantrum
 - Aid in transitioning activities
 - Help with concentration of social/emotional skills
 - Creates empathy, encourages gratitude, staying in the present

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS?



- Free!
 - ▶ Only takes a minute!
 - ▶ Lifelong skill that will promote happiness, kindness, empathy, living in the moment, gratitude, focus – skills for success!
 - ▶ Aids in frustration, anxiety and stress levels
 - ▶ Schools and prisons replacing detention with meditation/yoga
 - ▶ Studies showing improvements in cognitive control, working memory, math test scores
 - ▶ Especially helpful with those with ADHD and sensory issues
 - ▶ Calm classroom
 - ▶ Happy child, happy teacher, happy parent
 - ▶ Don't necessarily need any equipment
 - ▶ Finding a 'knead the dough' moment in your day
 - ▶ Gratitude, forgiveness, empathy, kindness
 - ▶ Pausing to create a peaceful approach to resolution

HOW IT WORKS:

- Mindfulness is a skill that needs practice – **practice is key!**
- Modeling mindfulness is best – WHAT WAYS DO YOU CALM DOWN???
- Being present, put phone and distractions away, staying calm, your own time out
- S.T.O.P : **Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed**
- For children, mindfulness can offer relief from stressful situations
 - o Mindfulness is effective for children because of the way their brain develops. Mindfulness promotes skills that are controlled in the prefrontal cortex and therefore has a particular impact in focus and cognitive control – self regulation and self control, judgement and patience.
 - o Sensory meltdowns vs tantrums
 - o Mindfulness has been found to mitigate the effects of bullying

🧐 DISCUSSION POINT 🧐 WHAT WORKS FOR YOU???

- As a teacher/ parent/ adult – what ways do *you* deal with *your* anger?
- How do you calm down from a stressful situation?
- How do you release stress?
- How do you deal with stressful situations?

MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

- ▶ Breathing exercises -
Candle Breath or Flicker Flame, Hot Chocolate mmm, Birthday Candle
- ▶ Mantra
- ▶ Glitter jar (emotions)
- ▶ *Palming*
- ▶ Art
- ▶ Books
- ▶ Movement
 - ▶ Pass the cup, tapping fingers + rhythm, mindfulness walk
- ▶ Music and/or guided meditation sequences
 - ▶ Mindful Moments CD, Kira Willey
 - ▶ Scoring a story with rhythm sticks (tortoise + the hare)

WORKSHOP EXERCISE – MAKING A GLITTER JAR

What you'll need:

- A (plastic) jar with the lid
- Water
- Elmers clear glue
- Glitter

What you say:

'Today we are going to make a glitter jar and this will show us how our brain works when we get upset. When the glitter is at the bottom of the jar we can see clearly. But when we get upset or scared or maybe we are feeling angry and frustrated, our feelings and emotions go swirling around like this glitter (shake the jar). What happens when I shake the glitter all around the jar? Can I see through it? Can I think clearly? When we are feeling this way our brain doesn't know what to do because it can't think clearly. Watch what happens when we put the jar down and pause (put jar down). The glitter is settling to the bottom. Take a breath in and out. Just take a minute to watch the glitter settle to the bottom. After this mindful moment of pause, we can see clearly again. If you are ever feeling this way, you are welcome to take our classroom glitter jar and take a mindful moment of your own if you need.'

MINDFULNESS AND MUSIC

The benefits of music in the classroom are boundless and incredible!

- ▶ 2016 study at USC's Brain and Creativity Institute found that musical experiences in childhood can actually accelerate brain development in language acquisition and reading skills
- ▶ Other studies have found learning an instrument helps with math and significantly improves sat scores
- ▶ Music ignites all areas of child's development – it's magic!
- ▶ School ready
 - ▶ Encourages use of words, meaning of words, memorization, language development
- ▶ A child's musical experience starts in the first year
 - ▶ Nursery rhymes, finger play games, reciting poems, humming, comforting, car rides – music is everywhere
 - ▶ Maria montessori believed the young child has the natural power for musical expression and that it was rhythm child was especially attracted to
 - ▶ Key to children's music is same for books – simple melody, repetition

LET'S TRY IT! – MUSIC & MINDFULNESS GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Silent game
- ▶ Yes/No game
- ▶ Do as I say not as I do game
- ▶ Rainstorm
- ▶ Breathing exercises and mantras
- ▶ Guided Meditations (see www.alittlegoesalongwaybook.com for FREE downloads)

- ▶ Carnival of Animals, Peter and the Wolf (music and feelings, music and storytelling)
- ▶ Scoring stories
- ▶ Musical curriculum at www.alittlegoesalongwaybook.com

Other ideas:

- ▶ Music box with instruments
- ▶ Freeze dance, Laurie Berkner ('Let's Go Swimming,' 'I Know a Chicken')
 - ▶ Other wonderful kids' musicians – Charlie Hope, Kira Willey, Charlotte Diamond, Red Grammer, Greg and Steve, Steve Songs, Mister Rogers
- ▶ Shaker making, streamer craft, guitar, drum
- ▶ Music/sound boxes (dynamics)
- ▶ Music as a transition (Daniel Tiger's jingles, Mantras)

“In and Out we breathe real slow, Up and Down our belly goes...”

OTHER MUSIC AND MINDFULNESS IDEAS IN THE CLASSROOM

- ▶ Cool down corner in classroom, with a cool down kit to include: glitter jar, sensory activities such as smell jars, sound boxes, feelings felt board, stress ball, headphones and portable cd player with meditation music, ABC yoga poses...
- ▶ Scoring stories with rhythm sticks or shakers
 - ▶ Tortoise and the Hare and other Aesop Fables, Peter and the Wolf, Carnival of Animals – how music tells a story/how music makes us feel
 - ▶ Genres of music from around the world: rock n roll, country, jazz, latin, reggae, etc.

NOTES: _____

MINDFULNESS AND BOOKS

ACT OF READING A BOOK TAKES MINDFULNESS; focus, attention, care in turning pages, putting book away, understanding story sequencing

- ▶ What to look for:
 - ▶ Simplicity – few words, allowing illustrations to carry story as well
 - ▶ Interesting illustrations – use these to open conversation and expand language development
 - ▶ What’s the message? Is it easily conveyed?
 - ▶ Rhyming is useful but not necessary
 - ▶ Repetition

OTHER WAYS TO INCORPORATE MINDFULNESS AND BOOKS:

- ▶ Scoring stories with rhythm sticks
- ▶ Mindfulness or yoga cards (free time activity)
- ▶ Calm down kit: silly putty, stress ball, bubble wrap, shaving cream in ziplock bag, smelling bottles, books, portable cd player, how are you feeling cards/game
- ▶ Cool down corner with books, calm down kit, books, cd player
- ▶ Understanding that practicing mindfulness works at home and in other situations too! (stress bugs, brain break, taking a mindful walk)
- ▶ Audio books
- ▶ Bracelet story telling, felt board story telling for added sensory and participatory experience
- ▶ Relatable experience, lesson based

LIST OF RECOMMENDED BOOKS WITH THEME OF MINDFULNESS:

- ▶ A Little Goes A Long Way (Ashley Mills Monaghan)
- ▶ Coming Soon! A Little Gratitude Goes A Long Way, A Little Kindness Goes A Long Way
- ▶ Breathe Like A Bear (Kira Willey)
- ▶ Abc's Yoga (Christiane Engel)
- ▶ No Ordinary Apple (Use With Your Taste Test!)
- ▶ My Magic Breath (Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor)
- ▶ Peaceful Piggy Meditation (Kerry Lee Maclean)
- ▶ What Does It Mean To Be Present? (Rana Diorio)
- ▶ Silence (Lemniscates)
- ▶ The Lemonade Hurricane (Licia Morelli)

The Tortoise and The Hare



There once was a speedy hare who bragged about how fast he could run. Tired of hearing him boast, Slow and Steady, the tortoise, challenged him to a race. All the animals in the forest gathered to watch.

Hare ran down the road for a while and then and paused to rest. He looked back at Slow and Steady and cried out, "How do you expect to win this race when you are walking along at your slow, slow pace?"

Hare stretched himself out alongside the road and fell asleep, thinking, "There is plenty of time to relax."

Slow and Steady walked and walked. He never, ever stopped until he came to the finish line.

The animals who were watching cheered so loudly for Tortoise, they woke up Hare.

Hare stretched and yawned and began to run again, but it was too late. Tortoise was over the line.

After that, Hare always reminded himself, "Don't brag about your lightning pace, for Slow and Steady won the race!"

MINDFULNESS AND ART

- ▶ When a child has opportunity to experiment with a variety of materials they are benefitting from exploring their creativity and expanding language, fine motor skills, social skills, mindfulness, and exploring their sense of the world as how they see it.
- ▶ Visual, creative and sensory experimentation is major contribution to development
- ▶ Any creative project requires mindfulness
 - ▶ Glue, pouring, painting, sticking, coloring...all require focus and can set up for frustration which is where mindfulness is useful
 - ▶ Let them practice their independence!
 - ▶ Let it be a soothing experience for them
 - ▶ It's their creation – not yours!!!!
 - ▶ Ask them about it!!!

PAIR SHARE – WHAT HAS BEEN
SUCCESSFUL FOR YOU?

S.T.E.A.M/ S.T.E.M –

- Design thinking, innovation, **empathy**, creativity – links to mindfulness
- promote mindsets that explore and embrace innovation and empathy
 - Learning and mindfulness go hand in hand

“You need to be in the moment to build something...in the ‘zone/flow’...As I see students building apps, it’s clear: if you’re not in the mindful space, those creative ideas won’t flow” – Tracey Crowley, coordinator to a Middle School curriculum.

My Samples

- ▶ Car Art, Sponge Stamping, Shaving Cream Marble Art, Ziplock Bags With Paint Mixing, Blank Canvas, Dot Art, Writing And Illustrating Own Books, Clay Or Modeling Dough, Saltdough, Pinwheel
- ▶ Language And Science Involved In Art!
 - ▶ Mixing Colors, 3d Geometric Shapes, What Happens And **Why??**
 - ▶ Get kids outside again to use nature in their art!
 - ▶ Help children explore new sensations even unfamiliar or unpleasant ones

Sample Guided Meditation to ‘Into the Reef’ Meditation Series (Ashley Mills Monaghan)

Sit criss cross, or lay down and get comfortable. Place your hands to your side or in your lap, with your palms up to the sky. We’re going to go for an underwater adventure in the ocean. Grab your scuba gear, make sure your scuba mask is on just right, your flippers are on your feet and your oxygen tank is full so you can breathe under water. Breathe in and out to practice with your scuba equipment. Are you ready? Let’s dive in to the water. Is the water warm or cold when you first jump in? As you make yourself comfortable in the water, you start to notice a ray of light from the sun and it leads you further into the water. You have a cooling sensation all around you from the deeper water. The ray of light leads you to the most beautiful coral reef you have ever seen. Full of life, full of color. You are suddenly surrounded by fish of many shapes and sizes, a mermaid flashes before you and takes your hand, leading you further into the reef. So many fish have gathered here and they are so beautiful and swift. As they swim past you they invite you into their home. The coral reef is full of so much beauty and as you swim further on you stop to pick up a conga shell resting on the sand. Under it, a crab jolts out of it and you stop to wonder what it would be like to live in a shell. Would it be dark? Would it make you feel safe? You take a breath in through your nose and notice it feels a little bit different because of the scuba mask you are wearing. As you breathe out you watch your exhale as all the bubbles leave your body through your mouth in the water. They travel up to the surface of the water. You watch the bubbles travel and realize you have ventured even further from the surface. The ray of light you noticed from the sunshine catches the bubbles and carries them up. Up they go. Suddenly, you feel a sudden change in temperature around you, a cool sensation draws all around and as you’re watching the bubbles reach the surface a gentle shadow interrupts the sun gazing through. It is a whale saying hello, welcoming you into her world. She draws you near and as you swim up into the ray of light and out of the cool depth you find yourself dancing around the whale. She protects you. You are safe. You feel a sudden urge to thank her and to thank the ocean for her beauty. As you finish your ride under the sea, you say goodbye to your new whale friend and all the beauty in the reef. You wave good bye, knowing you can always visit and following your breath, your bubbles drift up to the surface. Through the ray of light that you follow, you come up to the surface. Take your mask off and breathe in then out, allowing any fear you had on your ride out. Allow the light in. Allow the fresh sea air in and breathe out any worry or sadness. You feel grateful. You are grateful. Breathe in and out one more time and open your eyes.

RESOURCES CREDIT AND OTHER VALUABLE INFO:

New Harbinger Publications, 2013, Patricia C Broderick 'Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention and Performance'

(www.medium.com / Caitlin E Krause. 2016)

www.alittlegoesalongwaybook.com

Mindfulness for Children – Well Guides, New York Times, David Gelles

Recommended Ted Talks:

Dr Shauna Shapiro, The Power of Mindfulness: What you Practice Grows Stronger

Kira Willey, Bite Sized Mindfulness: An Easy Way for Kids to be Happy

Amy Burke, Mindfulness in Education, Learning from the Inside Out

Richard Burke, Mindfulness in Schools

The Mindful Child, written by Susan Kaiser Greenland, 2010

