

Supporting Diverse Classrooms: One Mindfulness Lesson At A Time

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Today's Goals

- * Define mindfulness
- * How mindfulness became secularized and integrated into schools
- * Discussion of specific mindfulness techniques
- * Overview of pilot site for Mindful Schools curriculum
- * Data/outcomes from curriculum

What is Mindfulness?

- * Mindfulness is...
 - * A particular way of paying attention to the present moment
 - * Meeting our present experience with an accepting and nonjudgmental stance
 - * Purposefully bringing awareness to everything in one's experience; includes all sensations, thoughts, and feelings
- * This helps us understand how our inner world operates

“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

“...mindfulness is moment-to-moment awareness. It is cultivated by purposely paying attention to things we ordinarily never give a moment’s thought to. It is a systematic approach to developing new kinds of control and wisdom in our lives, based on our inner capacity for relaxation, paying attention, wisdom, and insight.”

– Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*

What Mindfulness is Not...

- ... about being calm or any particular way but instead finding a place for the full range of experience
- ... to make ourselves feel better, but to get better at feeling
- ... about stress reduction (though it can help to significantly reduce stress)
- ... the absence of thought
- ... about being complacent or passive
- ... religious

Mindfulness Practice: Where to Begin

Begin With the Breath:

- * It is portable, necessary, and silent (you can tap into this anywhere)
- * Connected to the physical body
- * Anchoring to the breath when the mind wanders
- * Creates a foundation of mindfulness to then be able to 'drop in' in small moments throughout the day

Additional Points to Consider...

- * You can do ANYTHING mindfully
- * Mindfulness is not necessarily a “quiet” practice: all activities can be done “one mindfully”, that is, bringing full attention to the here-and-now, whatever that may be
- * Mindfulness involves observing without judging-- allowing and accepting what is
 - * *This doesn't mean everything is perfect-- it means we can choose what kind of relationship we want to have with a situation*
- * Distractions and thoughts are INEVITABLE- it's your **response** to this observation that makes the difference
- * ***Why practice mindfulness quietly, then?***
 - * Quiet practice helps cultivate a foundation to generalize mindfulness into daily life

What Purpose Does Mindfulness Serve?

Emotion



Reaction

Emotion



Mindfulness



Response

The Importance of Mindful Attention

Pitfalls of Emotion

- * Our emotions can make us feel like we're out of control
- * We get 'caught up in our emotions'
- * Roughly *half a million* U.S. teachers leave the profession each year – a turnover rate of over **20 percent** (*Mindfulschools, 2015*)
- * We react vs. respond—we're less able to make a thoughtful choice about our decisions



How Mindfulness Can Help

- * When we strengthen our awareness of the present moment, we are able to:
 - * Slow down
 - * Recognize what's going on for us
 - * Discern whether or not we want to make a specific choice
 - * Make decisions with intentionality



Time to practice...

Observation of Breath



Mindfulness for the educator

* Research shows integrating mindfulness into your life results in:

- * Increased self-care and decreased burnout
- * Increased compassion for students
- * Increased ability to connect with students; stronger relationships
- * Increased awareness of responses to students
- * Ability to teach students mindfulness skills more effectively

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sChYoFxPznl> – Dr. Richard Davidson

(Flook et. al, 2013; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, Walach, 2004)

History

- * Mindfulness has been in practice for thousands of years
- * The concept and practice has become secularized
- * Began to become integrated into physical health and mental health practices
 - * Ram Dass (Harvard Psychologist), Jon Kabat-Zinn (UMASS Medical Center) and others brought the practice to the U.S. in the 1970's
 - * 30 years of research and empirical evidence to support the practice*
- * Mindfulness has been shown effective across a wide variety of presenting problems and concerns and is integrated within many disciplines, including healthcare, business, and education

*(Grossman et. al, 2003; Langer & Moldoveanu)

Reality is...

- * Kids are coming to school with more and more difficulty regulating their emotions and sustaining attention...

According to NIMH:

- * 9% of children 13-18 are diagnosed with ADHD
- * 14% of children 13-18 are diagnosed with a mood disorder
- * 25.1% of children 13-18 are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder

According to CDC:

- * Mental health diagnoses have become a 'public health concern'
- * In 2007- 11.3% of children aged 2-17 years had been diagnosed with an emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition and nearly 50% of adolescents aged 13-18 years had ever had a mental health disorder.

(NIMH, 2015; Perou, et. Al, 2013)

Why try mindfulness in the classroom?

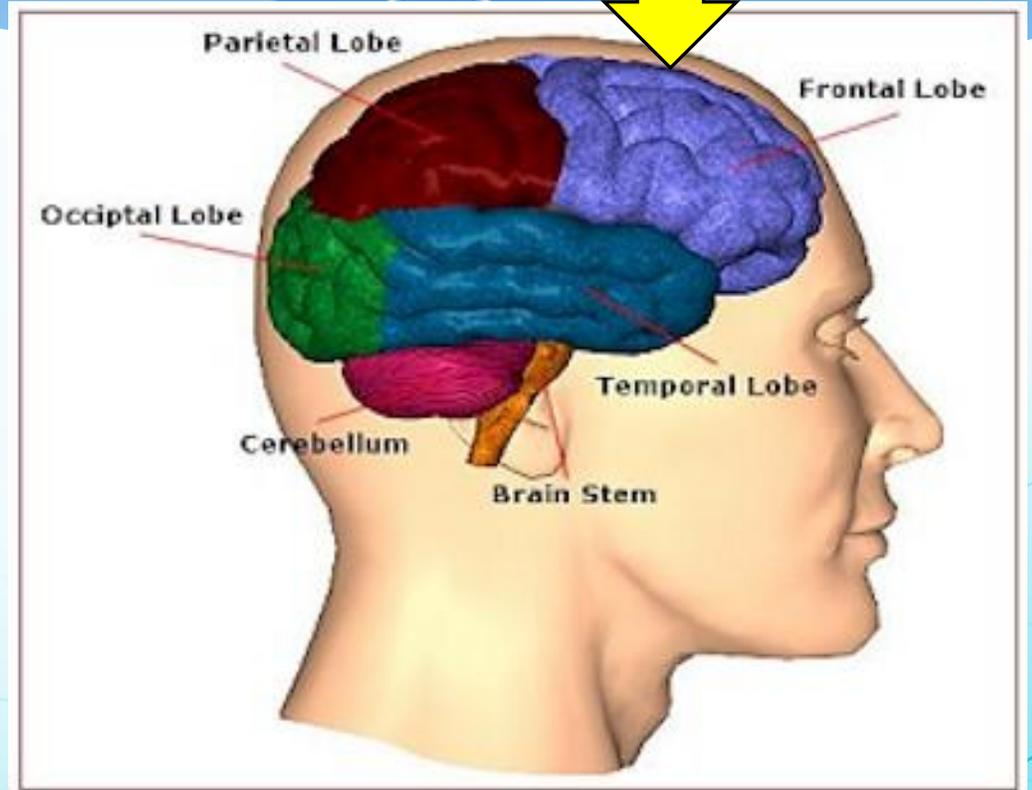
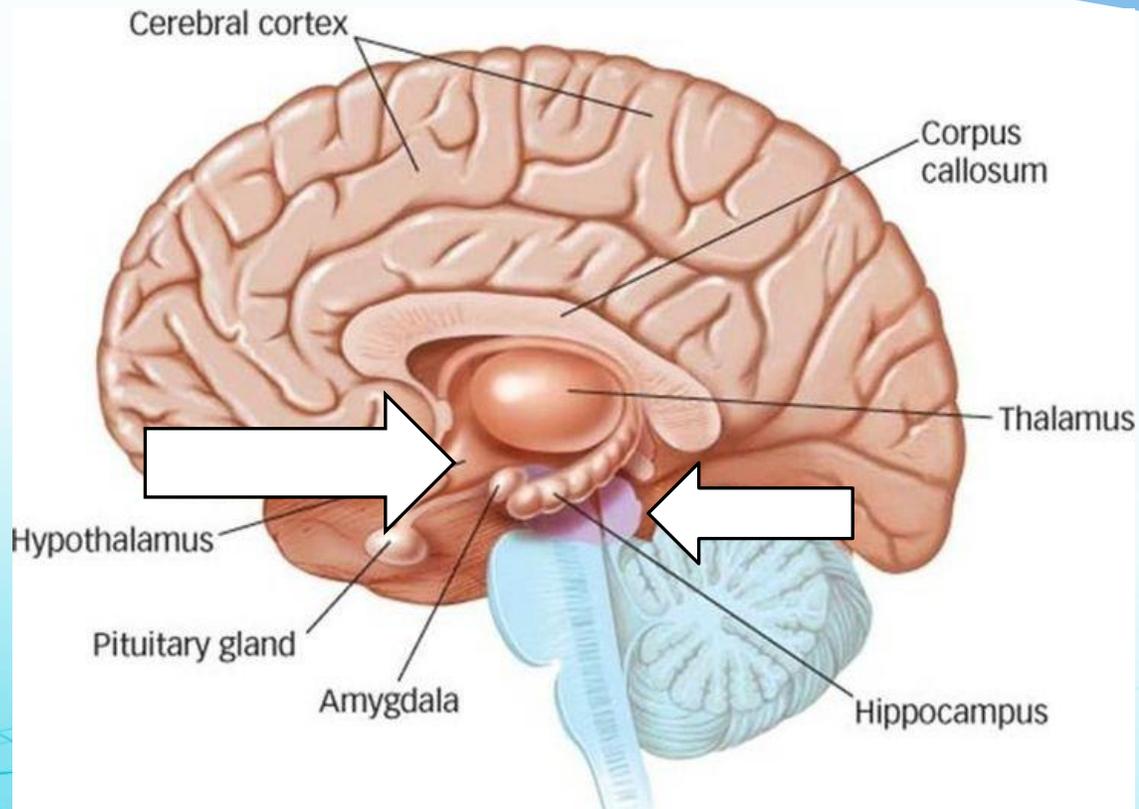
Research shows that the implementation of mindfulness in the classroom is connected to improvements in:

- * Executive brain function- impulse control, planning, reasoning, problem solving, etc.
- * Memory
- * Attention
- * Emotional resilience
- * Academic performance
- * Student behavior
- * Ability to manage ongoing stress
- * <https://youtu.be/D83VV18Lc5s>

Calm Classroom, 2014



Subcortex & Frontal Lobe



A little bit about the brain...

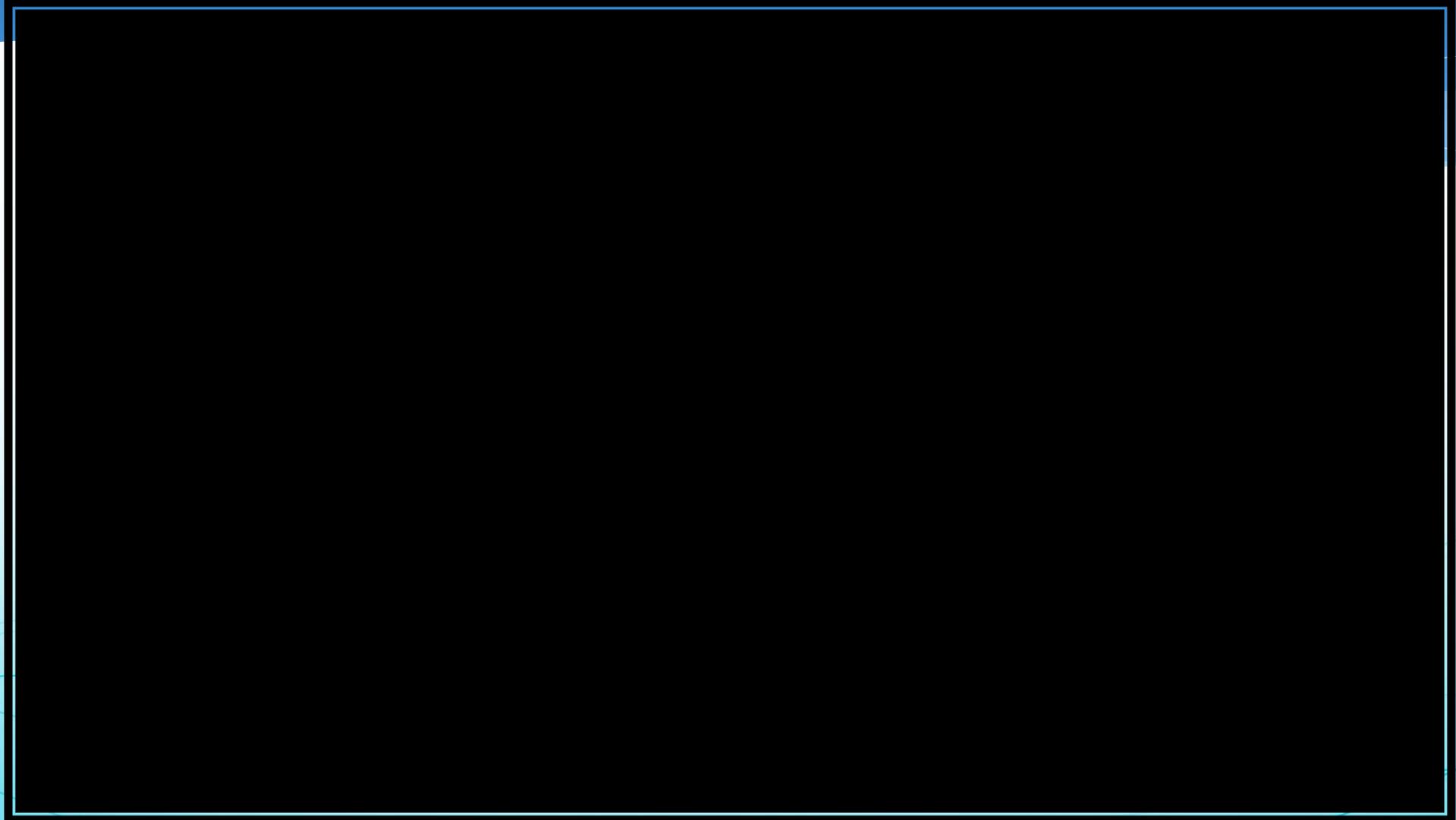
- * The brain stem is our most primal part of the brain-- it is responsible for the fight, flight, or freeze response.
- * The frontal lobe is responsible for executive functioning: planning, reasoning, problem solving, impulse control, etc.
- * When the body perceives threat or fear, the subcortex, limbic system, and brain stem (sympathetic nervous system) go into overdrive and the frontal lobe is DEACTIVATED
 - * This means we are reacting emotionally and can't make good choices!
- * **Mindfulness helps us SLOW down and engage prefrontal cortex (parasympathetic nervous system) in order to make better choices.**
- * Repetition of mindfulness practice actually **changes the brain**

How are we changing experience?

- * Begin with focusing on bodily sensations as a base, noticing changes in the sensory field, strengthening this body-brain connection
- * → Move toward more sustained attention states
- * → Reduce habits and reactions, increasing responses and choices
- * → Strengthen the ability to shift from sympathetic nervous system to parasympathetic nervous system
- * Change from top-down regulation (e.g., using the prefrontal cortex to down-regulate the limbic system through reappraisal) to down-up regulation.
- * This process strengthens the neuro-circuitry in a different and more helpful way-- neurons that fire together, wire together.

(Farb, Anderson, & Segal, 2012)

Hand Model of the Brain



Our Pilot Site

- * Broken Ground elementary School in Concord, NH
 - * Serves Grades 3, 4, and 5
 - * Concord, NH has served as a refugee relocation site for several years: during 2008-2014, 1,339 refugees were relocated to Concord
 - * Refugees were resettled from the following countries in FY 2014: Serbia, Russia, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Vietnam, Bhutan, Burma-Rohingya, Afghanistan, and Iraq

Why Mindfulness With a Diverse Student Population?

Mindfulness skills are fully accessible to students regardless of their:

- * Level of English language proficiency
- * Level of cognitive ability
- * Socio-economic status
- * Age
- * Severity and range of symptoms

Demographics

- 40% of students receive free or reduced-cost lunch
- 20% of students receive therapy, either in school or in an outpatient setting
- 15% are English Language Learners
- 30% were identified in universal screening process (SSBD) with internalizing, externalizing, or academic problems

Mindful Schools

Participants at Pilot Site

- * Third Grade Classrooms: 3 out of 6
- * Fourth Grade Classrooms: 5 out of 6
- * Fifth Grade Classrooms: 3 out of 5
- * Total Students Served: 253
- * Children in these classrooms represent the full continuum of students typically served by this elementary school:
 - * “typical” students
 - * refugee students
 - * attention problems
 - * emotion regulation/mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, ASD)
 - * learning and intellectual differences

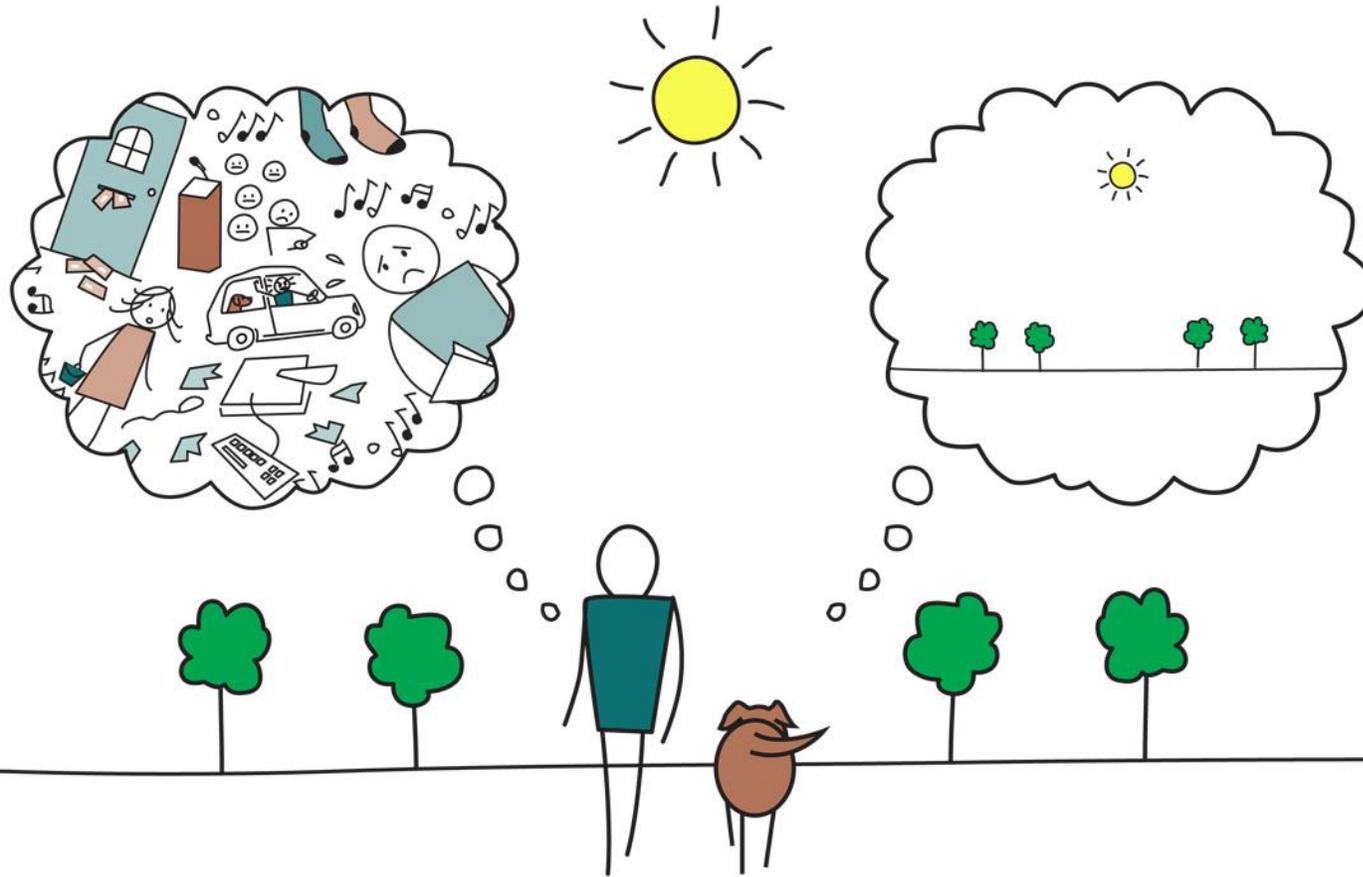
About Mindful Schools

- Established in Oakland, CA
- Includes sixteen 15-minute mindfulness lessons
- Can be used in conjunction with any kind of SEL Curricula
- Teachers/support staff stay in classroom to learn the material alongside students
- Two foundational lessons are taught in first two sessions and built upon in subsequent sessions
- Once the techniques are taught/internalized, the main instruction is to repeat short moments of practice throughout the day
- There is a worksheet for each lesson to help children internalize & generalize skills

Outcomes

- * Of the 11 classrooms, teachers felt mindfulness created an environment where they could get significantly more instructional time PER DAY:
 - 5-10 minutes 64% of respondents
 - 11-20 minutes 18% of respondents
 - 21-30 minutes 18 % of respondents

	Student Relatedness	Attention	Student Ability to Settle Down	Impulse Control	Emotion Regulation
Very Helpful	67%	67%	100%	55%	55%
Somewhat Helpful	33%	33%	N/A	45%	45%



Mind Full, or Mindful?

How To Introduce Mindfulness

- * Before introducing curriculum to the classroom, meet privately with students who may disrupt the process in order to preview material
- * Suggestions to introduce:
 - * “Has anyone ever felt mad, sad, or nervous, and didn’t know how to feel better?”
 - * “Has anyone ever done something when they were upset, angry, etc., and then later felt badly about it?”
 - * “Has anyone ever got really distracted in class and by the time you realized it, you had no idea what was going on?”
- * Create a “container” including agreements and structure for mindfulness time

A Consideration For Trauma

- * Trauma affects brain development and alters responses for children and teens
- * Educators need to be aware that some responses and behaviors may be the result of adverse childhood experiences or chronic stress
- * When practicing and teaching mindfulness, be **curious** about the child's responses
- * Be responsive, compassionate, and considerate if you are aware of the child's history
- * Offer accommodations- eyes open for example

What Kids Think About Mindfulness



Mindful Bodies

- * Many kids have not been taught to pay attention to their bodies, therefore we can't expect them to know HOW to regulate them.
- * Great foundation for other mindfulness exercises—easy to reference anytime once established
- * Reinforce practice and talk about experience
- * “We can wear our mindful bodies and we can take them off. So until next time we practice, we’re going to take our mindful bodies off.”

Mindful Breathing

- * Teaches kids not just to breathe, but to pay attention to their breathing, to notice when they are distracted, and refocus on breath
- * Using the belly as their “anchor”
- * Easy for kids to use and understand

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3hXqh93QRo>

More Mindfulness Exercises

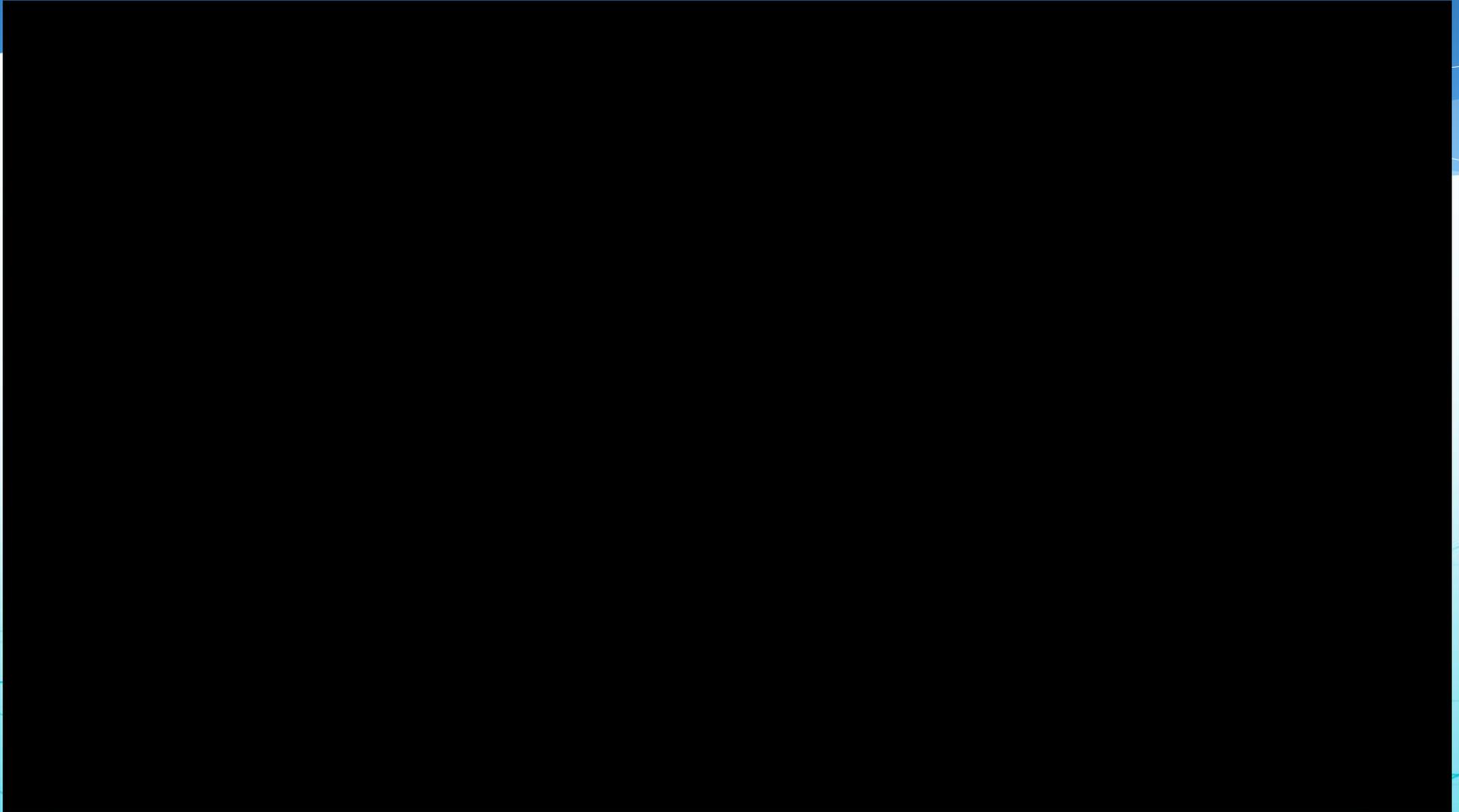
Mindful Colors

- * Choose a color and have kids close their eyes
- * Individually or in small groups, have them name 5 things in the room that are that color
- * Have them open their eyes and repeat exercise
- * Discussion: What was the difference?

Gratitude

- * Teaches children to look for the positive and be more mindful of the good in their lives
- * Places emphasis on gratitude not just for “big” things, but also simpler, everyday things
- * Makes connection that shifting our attention helps to shift our feelings

Video Example



Hand Breathing



Mindful Walking

- * What do you notice using your five senses:
 - * Smell
 - * Hearing
 - * Taste
 - * Touch
 - * Feel

Counting to 5 Senses

* In THIS moment:

* What do you

* Smell

* Hear

* Taste

* Touch

* Feel



Mindful Eating

- * Mindful snack
- * Smaller groups- Mindful Bite
- * Candy/Raisins, etc.
 - * Smell
 - * Hear
 - * Taste
 - * Touch
 - * Feel

If a Child Refuses...

- * Self reflection
 - * How mindful was I? How did I present/explain things?
- * Request they sit quietly for allotted time and they have the choice to participate or not.
- * Don't expect perfection
- * Check in with them one on one afterwards
- * Check your intentions and judgments

Even If You Choose Not To Teach Mindfulness...

Being a mindful educator is a very powerful intervention

Questions and Troubleshooting?



Resources/Programs

- * Mindfulschools.org
- * Calm Classroom
- * Mindup (The Hawk Foundation, 2011)- <http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>
- * <http://stopbreathethink.org/>
- * <http://www.roomtobreathefilm.com/resources/organizations/index.html>
- * <http://www.mindfuleducation.org/about-ame/>
- * <http://www.edutopia.org/>
- * <http://www.teachthought.com/uncategorized/new-priority-teaching-mindfulness-elementary-school/>
- * <http://www.modmind.org>