



## School Mental Health Communities of Practice

### *School-Based Mindfulness Strategies for K-12 Students*

Mindfulness is often defined as the practice of “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” In short, it involves focusing one’s attention. Mindfulness is said to have originated some two and a half thousand years ago from the religious traditions of Buddhism. Around the late 1970’s, mindfulness was introduced to Western cultures as a secular health practice. Since then, mindfulness has become a very popular practice due to its various mental and physical health benefits. Mindfulness is considered one of many contemplative practices. Youth-focused contemplative practices that have been shown to be effective include yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, breathing exercises, and body scan. Two of the more commonly recognized interventions include mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). MBSR focuses on “mindful eating, body scan, sitting meditation, Hatha Yoga, walking meditation, and mindfulness in everyday living.” MBCT, on the other hand, focuses on handling negative or depressing thoughts by teaching participants to notice their thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way. When the three components of mindfulness—mindful awareness, mindful responsiveness, and mindful effort—are integrated and used together, the full spectrum of positive effects can be experienced.

### School personnel can recognize the positive outcomes associated with school-based mindfulness practices for K-12 students.

- **Mental health outcomes associated with school-based mindfulness practices**
  - higher levels of emotional well-being
  - less rumination
  - less intrusive thoughts
  - less symptoms of depression
  - lower levels of negative emotional arousal
  - lower levels of stress
- **Behavioral and physical health outcomes associated with school-based mindfulness practices**
  - more on-task behavior
  - more prosocial behavior
  - healthy responses to stress
  - lower levels of cortisol
  - less negative coping behaviors
  - less self-harm
- **Academic outcomes associated with school-based mindfulness practices**
  - improvements in cognitive performance
  - positive school self-concept
  - increased engagement in school



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### School personnel can support the implementation of school-wide and/or class-wide school-based mindfulness practices for K-12 students.

Schools considering implementing mindfulness programming should consider how it can be aligned with a multi-tiered system of behavioral support (e.g., PBIS efforts). For example, at Tier 1, mindfulness strategies or curricula could be incorporated into universal supports at the school and classroom levels. At Tier 2, small groups of students experiencing similar MH/BH issues could benefit from more targeted mindfulness approaches. At Tier 3, MBSR, MBCT, or other individualized approaches could be used for students experiencing significant MH/BH issues that are not responsive to interventions from Tier 1 or 2.

Based on your specific aims, you may decide to use a comprehensive mindfulness-based curriculum and/or to incorporate individual mindfulness-based activities into existing school routines and practices.

#### *Examples of Mindfulness-Based Curricula:*

- **Learning to Breathe** curriculum: <http://learning2breathe.org>
- **Mindful Schools** curriculum: <http://www.mindfulschools.org/>
- Mindfulness in Schools **.b** [dot-be] curriculum (ages 11-18): <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/teach-dot-b/dot-b-curriculum/>
- Mindfulness in Schools **.breathe** curriculum (ages 9-14): <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/breathe-introduction-to-mindfulness/breathe-curriculum/>
- Mindfulness in Schools **Paws b** curricula (ages 7-11): <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/teach-paws-b/paws-b-curriculum/>
- **MindUP** curriculum: <https://mindup.org/>
- **Smiling Mind** curriculum: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/the-mindfulness-curriculum>
- **Still Quiet Place** curriculum: <http://www.stillquietplace.com/>

#### *Examples of Mindfulness-Based Activities:*

- Building Everyday Resilience: A Practical Handbook on Mindfulness Adapted for Primary School Teachers (starts on page 69; includes 30 activities): [http://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/5862/Brock\\_Peacock\\_Jennifer\\_2014.pdf?sequence=1](http://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/5862/Brock_Peacock_Jennifer_2014.pdf?sequence=1)
- Classroom Yoga (Elementary and Middle School): <https://childrensyoga.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Classroom-yoga.pdf>
- Integrating Mindfulness in Your Classroom Curriculum: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/integrating-mindfulness-in-classroom-curriculum-giselle-shardlow>
- Mindfulness in Education: 31+ Ways of Teaching Mindfulness in Schools: <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-education/>



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### Mindfulness Resources

#### **Mindfulness Mobile Apps**

- Breathr (<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/breathr>): Dr. Vo helped to develop this mindfulness app for youth with the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre (British Columbia, Canada). Free for Apple and Android mobile devices.
- Stop, Breathe, and Think (<http://stopbreathethink.org>): Web and mobile app for youth, with meditations for mindfulness and compassion.
- Calm.com (<http://www.calm.com>): Free website and mobile app with guided meditation and relaxation exercises.
- Insight Timer (<https://insighttimer.com>): Free mobile app with virtual “bells” to time and support your meditations, and access to lots of guided meditations by many different meditation teachers.
- Plum Village: Zen Meditation (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/plum-village-zenmeditation/id1273719339>). Free app for iOS, loaded with beautiful meditations and teachings in the Plum Village/Thich Nhat Hanh tradition.
- MindShift ([https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bstro.MindShift&hl=en\\_US&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bstro.MindShift&hl=en_US&gl=US)): Free mobile app for teens developed by Anxiety Canada, with mindfulness and other coping skills for anxiety.
- Smiling Mind (<http://smilingmind.com.au>): Free mobile mindfulness app for young people, from Australia.
- Headspace (<https://www.headspace.com/>): “Meditation made simple.” This app has a free introductory period, after which it requires a paid subscription to continue to use.

#### **Mindfulness Books**

- The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time by Dzung Vo, MD (New Harbinger, 2015) is a mindfulness book for teens, with mindfulness instructions, guided meditations, examples, and youth voices. Click here (<http://mindfulnessforteens.com/the-mindful-teen>) to learn more about The Mindful Teen.
- The Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are by K. Bluth (Instant Help Books, 2017): <https://karenbluth.com/books/>
- The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress by Gina M. Biegel (Instant Help Books, 2009): <https://www.stressedteens.com/stress-reduction-workbook-for-teens>
- Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens: A Guide to Living an Extraordinary Life by Joseph V. Ciarrachi, Louise Hayes, and Ann Bailey (Instant Help, 2012): <https://www.newharbinger.com/get-out-your-mind-and-your-life-teens>
- Mindfulness for Teen Anger: A Workbook to Overcome Anger and Aggression Using MBSR and DBT Skills by Mark C. Purcell and Jason R. Murphy (Instant Help, 2014): <https://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-teen-anger>
- Mindfulness for Teen Anxiety: A Workbook for Overcoming Anxiety at Home, at School, and Everywhere Else by Christopher Willard (Instant Help, 2014): <http://drchristopherwillard.com/mindfulness-teen-anxiety-workbook>
- Growing Mindful: A Deck of Mindfulness Practices for All Ages by Christopher Willard and Mitch Abblett (Growing Mindful Games, 2015). A deck of cards with short mindfulness practices to “cultivate mindfulness on the go.” <http://drchristopherwillard.com/growingmindfulcards>

#### **Mindfulness Social Networking Sites**

- Facebook: Like “The Mindful Teen” (<http://www.facebook.com/themindfulteen>) on Facebook to receive regular inspirational quotes, poems, and articles to help you keep your mindfulness practice fresh and alive.
- Twitter: Follow “The Mindful Teen” (<https://www.twitter.com/themindfulteen>) (@TheMindfulTeen) for mindful tweets.