

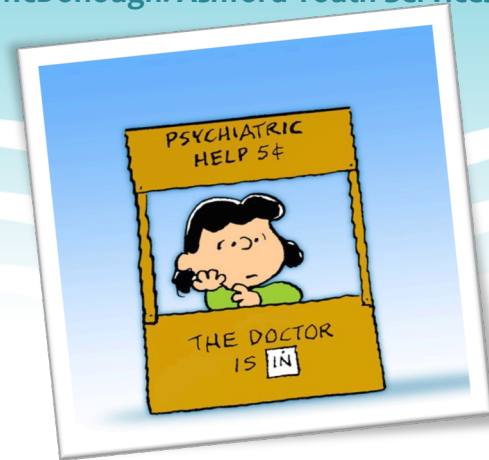
D E C E M B E R 2 0 1 8

Psych Up Ashford!

Brought to you by your **Mental Health Squad**:

Emily Deliberto, School Psychologist PK-3rd
Jessica Bernardi, School Counselor 5th-8th

Alicia Marceau, School Psychologist 4th-8th
Melissa McDonough, Ashford Youth Services



In This Month's Newsletter:

Why Mindfulness?

Learn about the impacts of mindfulness on students

Yoga Time!

Discover ways to incorporate yoga practices into the classroom

Mindful Moments

Get tips on incorporating mindfulness and meditation into the classroom routine

Self Care for Teachers

Find out how to engage in your own self-care with mindfulness practices

The Monthly School Psych Newsletter: Helping You Help Your Students Socially & Emotionally



Save The Date!

No Name Calling Week

January 21-25

Inspired by the story, *The Misfits* by James Howe. Use this week to do more than teach the importance of kindness—put it in action!

<https://www.glsen.org/no-name-calling-week>

National Mentoring Month

January

Use the new year to establish a mentoring program between two classrooms of different ages.

Mentors can be academic or social emotional support.

Hunt for Happiness Week Third Week of January

This week is focused on defeating post holiday blues by looking for happy moments all around you and your students!

Why Mindfulness Matters

From your School Counselor, Jessica Bernardi

The last decade has seen a huge spike in the application of mindfulness, the practice of focusing our attention on our thoughts, feelings, and environment in the present moment. While the first wave of mindfulness-based programs were for adults, more recent efforts have targeted the well-being of children and adolescents; as a result, mindfulness programs in schools are becoming more and more widespread.



Round Up of Recent Studies:

Black, & Fernando (2013). Mindfulness training and classroom behavior among lower-income and ethnic minority elementary school children.

What did they study?: The Oakland-based Mindful Schools curriculum lasts five weeks, with three sessions per week, and focuses on mindfulness practices that help children pay attention, build empathy and self-awareness, improve self-control, and reduce stress.

What did they find?: Immediately after the program ended, student behavior improved significantly in all four areas measured—paying attention, self-control, classroom participation, and respect for others—and these gains were maintained seven weeks later.

Klatt, M., et al. (2013). Feasibility and preliminary outcomes for Move-into-Learning: An arts-based mindfulness classroom intervention.

What did they study? An 8-week mindfulness-based program called Move Into Learning (MIL). The program involved a weekly 45-minute session, led by an outside trainer, that included mindfulness meditation, yoga and breathing exercises set to music, and positive self-expression through writing and visual arts.

What did they find? At the end of the 8 weeks, teachers observed significantly less hyperactive behavior, ADHD symptoms, and inattentiveness among their students; these improvements were maintained two months later. In fact, students continued to show improvements in their attentiveness even after the program had ended.

Wisner, B. L. (2013). An exploratory study of mindfulness meditation for alternative school students: Perceived benefits for improving school climate student functioning.

What did they study? At-risk high school students' perceptions of the benefits of mindfulness meditation. Students attending an alternative high school in a low-income, rural area participated in 30 min. guided mindfulness meditation sessions, offered at least twice per week for 8 weeks.

What did they find? Students were asked what changes they had noticed. From 8 types of potential benefits identified by the study's authors, those rated most important by students were stress relief and enhanced school climate, including improved teacher mood.

- *Increased* focus, attention, self control, classroom participation, compassion
- *Improved* academic performance, ability to resolve conflict, overall well-being
- *Decreased* levels for stress, depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior



...Yoga in the Classroom...

From Ashford Youth Services Coordinator (and certified Yoga Instructor who can come into your classroom if interested!):

Melissa McDonough

Teachers and students work under enormous pressure to perform on standardized achievement tests, whose outcomes can affect children's futures and teachers' evaluations, job security, and compensation. Nationwide, the curriculum has become test-driven, while many artistic and creative aspects adding enjoyment and engagement to the school experience have been eliminated. **Yoga is one path to a classroom where teachers and students can relax in the face of stress, and love themselves, each other, and their work a little more.** There are endless ways to include yoga practices into your classroom from curriculum reinforcement to self regulation.

...Breathing...

is one quick and easy way to begin bringing yoga into a classroom- The practice of conscious breathing provides a ready solution for many challenges during the school day. It doesn't require special clothing or equipment, moving furniture, or very much time. A one-minute breathing break helps to improve the learning environment, and builds a skill that students can use in their own time. A breathing break improves posture, attention, and focus, and encourages mindful action. In a crisis, taking a moment to breathe together makes efforts to resolve a conflict more productive.



Breathing Break Ideas

Bunny Breath: Taking big breaths will re-energize the body and wake up the brain. Inhale 3 sips of air through your nose and exhale 1 long breath through your mouth. Repeat a few times.

Flying Breath: Add movement to your breath to stretch the whole body. Start with your arms dangling at your sides. Inhale through your nose and raise your arms. Get tall and take up space. Breathe out through your nose and let your arms float back to your sides. Repeat a few times.

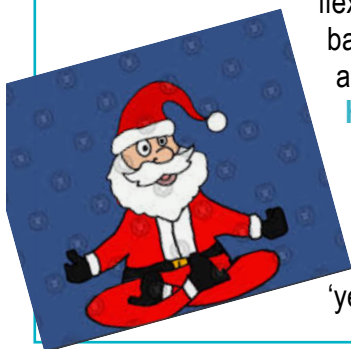
Neck Circles: We hold tension in our neck – let it go! Pretend you have a witch's hat on and draw circles on the ceiling with the tip of the hat. Go both directions. Now do the same thing with your long, pointy witch's nose. Draw a circle with the tip of your nose, both directions.

Shoulder Circles: Relieve stress stored in the shoulders. Roll shoulders forward and backward, using fluid movements, several times in each direction.

Wrist Stretches: Especially important when doing a lot of writing or typing. Extend the right arm in front with the palm flexed (like the "stop" gesture). Interlace the fingers with the left hand and gently pull the right fingers back. Release and point the right fingers down. Grasp the fingers with the left hand, and gently pull again. Repeat on the other side.

Half Moon: Raise both arms to the ceiling, keeping shoulders down. Grasp the right wrist with the left hand. Now lean to the left, feeling the ribs open on the right side, being sure to keep the heart facing the front. Hold for 3 breaths. Repeat on the other side.

Ragdoll: Scoot to the very front edge of the chair. Open the knees wide, feet flat on the floor. Keeping a flat back, fold forward into the space between the legs. Let go of the head – shake it 'yes' and 'no'. Dangle for several breaths. When ready, inhale and roll up one vertebra at a time.



Bringing Mindfulness into Your Classroom Routine

Current Mood

From your Pre-K-3rd Grade School Psychologist, Emily Deliberto

Finding a Mindful Moment in Your Classroom

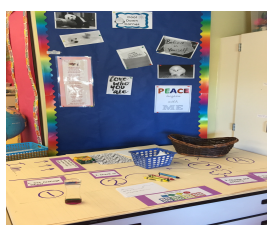
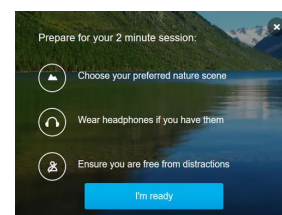
Being a teacher in November and December is a *seriously busy time!* There are report cards, parent teacher conferences, holiday events, extra assemblies, making gifts, classroom parties, throw in an observation or two, meetings, grading and all the wonderful teaching you amazing teachers do. **While it feels like there is no time for mindful minutes, moments, or meetings in your classroom, that means it's the perfect time to introduce mindfulness into your classroom routine!** Some great times to have students practice mindfulness are (1) during the morning in order to get focused for school and (2) after lunch and/or recess so students can let go of any social dramas and get back in the school mindset. Mindfulness in the classroom can be guided by the teacher or use technology resources or it can be a more flexible relaxing time with mindful tools and options open to students. If daily mindfulness seems like too much to add, challenge yourself to provide students with at least 1 mindful moment per week.



Ideas for Classroom Mindfulness Practices

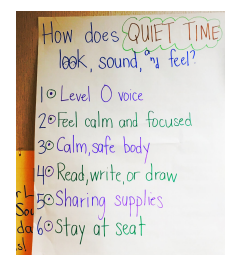
Did You Know? Calm.com Offers Free Access to All Teachers!

The Calm Schools Initiative offers teachers a **free** subscription to a large (and growing) set of guided meditations with calming imagery, for all different ages and all different lengths and focuses. Find out more and sign up here: <https://www.calm.com/schools>



A Mindful Corner Allow your students the opportunity to take a mindful minute as they need it by establishing a “Mindful Corner” in your classroom. Agree with you students on a set amount of time for the mindful corner (1-5 minutes) and use a timer. Items to include could be coloring pages (such as mandalas), zen sand garden (you can make your own), materials for coloring and writing, quotes to read, breathing strategies, etc.

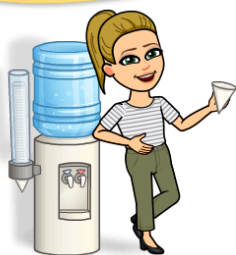
Mindful Moment/Quiet Time Free Choice A great time for mindfulness in the classroom is after a lunch/recess or specials block. As students switch from unstructured to structured, this gives students time to adjust. (Think about when you might rush from lunch break right into the classroom, having a few minutes help!) Work as a class to create the rules and guidelines. Options for quiet time could be reading, drawing or writing. Responsive Classroom trainings often advocate for the importance of this time. More info here: <https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-is-quiet-time/>



.....Helpful Books or Clips to Use.....

- GoNoodle's Flow channel has several great practices
- Cosmic Kids has fun themed yoga practices and mindfulness practices for younger children <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>
- Lori Lite has great books that serve as guided meditations. I have some if you want to borrow one! More info here: <https://stressfreekids.com>
- YouTube can be a easy resource for guided mediations or relaxing music with imagery

let's DISCUSS



Seven Reasons Why Teachers Should Practice Mindfulness

2. Mindfulness helps us communicate more effectively with students



5. Mindfulness helps strengthen our relationship with students

Giving each student our full mindful attention for even a short period of class time gives him or her the message “I see you.” By making a connection with our students, we let them know we value them as individuals.

Not Yet Convinced?
Find out more
here → →

1. Mindfulness helps teachers understand your own emotions better

Practicing mindfulness can help teachers to recognize our emotional patterns and proactively regulate how we behave, responding in the way we want to rather than reacting automatically. It can also help us to savor the positive moments in our job—when we feel the joy of true connection with our students or resonate with the joy and excitement our students feel when learning clicks for them.

3. Mindfulness helps us manage students behavior we might find difficult

Mindful awareness helps us attend to what’s happening with a child to cause them to misbehave. Nonjudgmental awareness is an important aspect of mindfulness, too—one that involves accepting things as they are in the present moment. When we first practice mindful awareness, we often notice how hard it is not to judge. But, as we observe ourselves engaging in judgment, we become more aware of it in the moment, our mind begins to settle, and eventually our tendency to judge subsides.

6. Mindfulness helps us slow down when we need to

Slowing down and deliberately pausing for a moment of mindfulness can give us time to ask ourselves how we are feeling, what’s happening in the classroom, and what our students need at that particular moment. It also models mindfulness for our students.



Mindfulness for Teachers

by Patricia A. Jennings

Happy Teachers Change the World

by Thich Nhat Hanh

4. Mindfulness helps us set up a positive learning environment

Learn about the impact of mindfulness on student’s compassion from Mindful School’s program director, Megan Cowan here:

<https://youtu.be/D83VV18Lc5s?list=UUPfDEtmabmiBHjNrPPH1F5A>



7. Mindfulness helps us build community

Mindfulness can help teachers to be the best they can be and bring out the best in their students. Being able to approach a classroom with a sense of calm understanding and the skills to intervene appropriately can make learning a pleasure for everyone.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHY YOGA FOR KIDS?



Healthy Physical Activity, Enhanced fine-and gross-motor skills, balance, core strength, posture, and flexibility

Provides Stress & Emotional Management Tools.

Teaches Positive Self-Coping Skills

Increased Self-Esteem, Mind-Body-Emotional Awareness, and higher levels of energy

Enhances circulation and digestion, regulates sleep habits, and keeps bones, muscles & joints healthy!



YOGA ENHANCES LEARNING!

The **BODY** plays a crucial role in learning! Integrating the body and mind optimizes the learning process!

- ⇒ Helps redirect scattered energy, regain focus, relax and self-calm
- ⇒ Increases **focus** and **concentration** needed for a classroom setting
- ⇒ **Eases Stress and Anxiety**, Reduces Pre-test nerves
- ⇒ Supports **Social-Emotional Learning** (self-coping, calming, mindfulness, self-esteem, collaboration, respect)



USING YOGA WITHIN LESSON PLANS:

- ⇒ Stimulates Left- and Right-side of the brain, connects the mind and body, to **enhance comprehension and retention** (muscle memory is our strongest form of memory!!)
- ⇒ Creates a **multi-sensory environment** that appeals to **various learning styles** (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, intellectual)
- ⇒ Invites children to become **ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS**, and makes learning **FUN and DYNAMIC**
- ⇒ **Aligns with STEAM** (Yoga is an art form with which you can teach required standards—literacy, math, science, etc.)

Mindfulness Exercises for Kids: <https://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/>

List of Mindfulness/Relaxation Apps: <http://parentingchaos.com/anxiety-apps-kids/>

Evidence Based Classroom Yoga Program: <http://getreadytolearn.net/>

Mindfulness Books for Kids: <https://www.readbrightly.com/mindfulness-meditation-books-for-kids/>

Always feel free to pop in for a visit with your friendly school psychologists, school counselor or Ashford Youth Services coordinator.

Thought of the Month:

“Mindfulness is simply being **AWARE** of what is happening **RIGHT NOW** without wishing it were different; enjoying the *pleasant* without holding on when it changes (*which it will*), **BEING WITH** the *unpleasant* without fearing it will always be this way (*which it won't*).

-James Baraz

Wishing You and Yours a Very Happy (and Mindful!) Holiday Season and Break!



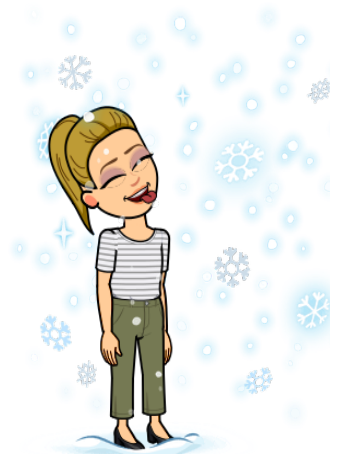
Jessica



Melissa



Emily



Alicia