

# Mindful Photography

Middle School

High school



## Intervention Overview

As part of the mindful photography intervention, students are encouraged to take pictures of things that are meaningful to them throughout the week. By reflecting on these photographs either through a writing activity, or by sharing them with their peers, students will find greater appreciation for the world around them and enhance their sense of meaning and purpose (Steger et al., 2013; Kurtz, 2015). In addition to reviewing the activity information below, please visit the resource section for additional curriculum guides to assist you in implementing a mindful photography intervention (Kurtz & Lyubomirsky, 2013).

## Intervention Guide

Grade Level:	6th-12th
Materials:	Each student needs a cellphone or digital camera (this activity may be most successful in secondary education classes)
Duration:	One week, one 30-45 minute class session to share photos and additional out of class time
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Introduce the activity and instruct students to take up to 5 photos throughout the week of things that are meaningful to them.</li><li>2. You may also ask students to share some of these pictures with friends and family or share them on social media.</li><li>3. Have students reflect on the activity either through a writing exercise or through sharing and presenting to the class.</li></ol>

## Does it work?

Most studies on mindful photography have involved college students, but could easily be adapted to middle and high schools students. In a 2015 study, 38 college students participated in a four session mindful photography intervention (Kurtz). Students were asked each session to spend 15 minutes a day to take three photos of different subjects such as campus, their friends, the natural environment, and what they found most meaningful to them on campus, respectively. They were also asked to participate in a counting blessings activity. Kurtz (2015) reports that students found the mindful photography activity more enjoyable, engaging and thought-provoking than a traditional counting blessings intervention. It was also found that mindful photography boosted students' mood, appreciation, and motivation (Kurtz, 2015). In a similar study, 86 university students, asked to take 9-12 photos of "things that make [their] life meaningful" (Steger et al., 2013, p.28). After 1 week, the students shared and described their photos with the class. It was found that this mindful photography intervention increased life meaning, satisfaction and positive affect among participants (Steger et al., 2013).

### References:

- Kurtz, J. L., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2013). Happiness promotion: Using mindful photography to increase positive emotion and appreciation. In J. J. Froh & A. C. Parks (Eds.), *Activities for teaching positive psychology: A guide for instructors*, 133-136. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14042-021>
- Kurtz, J.L. (2015). Seeing through new eyes: An experimental investigation of the benefits of photography. *Journal of Basic & Applied Sciences*, 11, 354-358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6000/1927-5129.2015.11.51>
- Steger, M., Shim, Y., Barenz, J. & Shin, J.Y. (2013). Through the windows of the soul: A pilot study using photography to enhance meaning in life. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Sciences*, 3(1).



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