

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been growing in popularity as a coping mechanism for stress and for its use in combating mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. While mindfulness has its roots in meditative practices from Buddhism and other Eastern cultures and religions, the modern practice of mindfulness was first developed by psychologist Ellen Langer in the 1970s, when she discovered that mindful practice led to improved cognitive function in older adults (Cohen & Gonchar, 2017). Mindfulness has been defined as a practice that “enhances attention by bringing awareness to the object of attention whether it is the breath, other bodily sensations, external stimuli, thoughts, or emotions” (p. 183). Mindfulness involves “mental activities which share in common a focus on training the self-regulation of attention and awareness” (Lomas et al., 2017, p. 134). Below we have included a list of mindfulness activities you may consider practicing each day. Flook and colleagues (2013) state that just as physical health is improved through regular exercise, consistent mindfulness practice is essential for the benefits of mindfulness on psychological well-being to be fully recognized.

Guided Meditation Resources

UCLA Health (n.d.). Guided meditations. <https://edtechbooks.org/-hKaK>

CREATE for Education (n.d.). Mindfulness Practices. <https://edtechbooks.org/-eAjK>

Materials:	Varies
Duration:	A few minutes daily, as needed. Varies depending on activity.
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Two Feet- One Breath:” Take 5 seconds to be mindful of the sensation of both your feet on the floor and take a deep, cleansing breath.• Plan to make one small activity each day more mindful (eating, commuting, drinking water, etc.). Commit to give this activity your full attention and savor the sensations you experience during this activity.• Listen to and follow along with a guided mindful meditation recording, like the ones provided here.• Print a few mandala drawings (or create your own) and practice mindful breathing while coloring in the mandala. You may also consider purchasing Patricia Jennings (2015) book <i>Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom</i> for additional suggestions about practicing mindfulness in a school setting.

Does it work?

Cohen and Ganchar (2017) provide some tips for teachers on getting started with mindfulness, many of which, though researched for their effectiveness in adult well-being, have not been thoroughly studied in their effectiveness with teachers. One recommended breathing activity is called “two feet one breath” and involves taking five seconds to feel the sensation of one’s feet on the floor and of taking one long breath (Cohen & Ganchar, 2017). This activity was found to significantly improve burnout among physicians and other care professionals (Chen cited by Cohen & Ganchar, 2017). Teachers can also make one activity each day, such as drinking water or eating lunch, more mindful. This can be as simple as focusing one’s entire attention on the experience of one bite or taste, instead of performing other teaching tasks at the same time, similar to the mindful walking or eating activities included in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Cohen & Ganchar, 2017; Santorelli et al., 2017). Sharp and Jennings (2016) found that some of the most helpful mindfulness practices among teachers were mindful breathing, mindful walking, and a body scan relaxation exercise.

Another individual mindfulness-based intervention that has been researched recently is a mindful coloring exercise (Czerwinski et al., 2020). For this study, 45 teachers from a variety of primary and secondary schools in the UK were observed. Half of the participants were assigned to the intervention group and instructed to watch a video explaining mindful coloring, while coloring in a mandala drawing, once a day for five days (Czerwinski et al., 2020). Participants in the intervention group reported significantly lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress following the intervention using a number of self-reported surveys. The researchers concluded that mindful coloring could be a viable option for improving teacher well-being and burnout (Czerwinski et al., 2020). Though this is the only current study regarding the use of mindful coloring specifically for teachers, Mantzios and Giannou (2018) found that a mindful coloring activity successfully reduced anxiety among female undergraduate students.

References:

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SYDNI FAWSON, MEGAN BATES AND
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Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing