Mindfulness Matters
Michigan Association of School Social Workers
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Today’s Mindful Agenda

• To increase your awareness of what “Mindfulness” is and why it is not a “buzz word” that will go away

• To increase your awareness so that you know when you leave this conference, you can choose to lead your districts in Mindfulness practices or wait to follow

Just Breathe
Mindfulness

The practice of focusing our attention on our thoughts, feelings, and environment in the present moment.

Mindfulness

Studies of mindfulness programs in schools have found that regular practice — even just a few minutes per day — improves self-control and increases their classroom participation, respect for others, happiness, optimism, and self-acceptance levels.

Mindfulness

Paying attention in a particular way

• On purpose
• In the present moment
• Without judgment

Jon Kabat-Zinn - Founder: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
University of Massachusetts Medical Center
Stress...everyone has it...

- Emotional stressors
- Family stressors
- Social stressors
- Change stressors
- Work stressors
- Decision stressors
- Physical stressors
- Pain stressors
- Environmental stressors

Mindfulness

- Linked to heightened activation in brain regions
- Responsible for regulating attention and positive affective states
- Including empathy and other pro-social emotions

Fear and Stress Impair Learning

- Evolution has shaped our brains to err on the side of caution and to trigger a response whenever we perceive danger
- Fight, flight or freeze makes us "less intelligent" because amygdala activation
- Fear response interferes with prefrontal functioning (the "smart part" of our brain)
- Stressful situations trigger the release of stress hormones
- Prolonged stress impairs our ability to learn and maintain physical health.
- Success in school depends upon a student's ability to somehow decrease their stress
- The inclusion of stress-management techniques into the curriculum is an obvious application of neuroscience in education that can improve learning, emotional well-being, and physical health
Educational “Standards”

- For students to successfully meet the “Standards”, they must possess social-emotional skills
- Unless students come to school with all these skills in place, deliberate teaching of these skills will be necessary

Kids are killing kids and teachers

No need to look at the data

Mindfulness

- Our thoughts and perceptions, if negative, reinforce emotions that can cause suffering
- Thoughts are, most often, about the past or future
- The one moment we actually can experience — the present moment — is the one we seem most to avoid
Mindfulness

Mindfulness in Schools Means:

- Teaching staff and students to pay attention to their experiences in a non-reactive way
- Using interactive classroom lessons
- Students enhance their self-awareness, increase impulse control, focus, and empathy
- Cultivating a culture of kindness, calm, safety, focus, and connection

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Mindfulness training involves:

- Learning how the brain and body work together
- Practicing well researched meditation/relaxation/awareness exercises
- Using some simple stretching exercises, based on Yoga, to focus attention.

Although many meditation practices may differ from those taught in a mindfulness course, the findings are equally applicable to mindfulness.

- We simply observe and accept whatever happens
- Whether it’s a pleasant experience or a painful experience
- We treat it the same way

~ “A Mindful Nation” (Congressman Tim Ryan) ~

"America has always been defined by how we respond to crisis... in its development, America united behind the philosophy that understood that we are our brothers' and sisters' keeper... Our citizens knew in a deep way that surviving and thriving are best achieved when individuals, families, and communities are working in concert for the betterment of everyone."
Mindfulness

Early research results on mindfulness-based teacher training initiatives suggest that personal training in mindfulness skills can:

1. Increase staff sense of well-being and teaching self-efficacy
2. Increase staff ability to manage classroom behavior
3. Increase staff ability to establish and maintain supportive relationships with students

Mindfulness is making inroads in our schools around the country and the world

Mindfulness leads to a systemic change in all settings:

- Public Schools
- Colleges
- Military
- Hospitals
- Mental Health
- Athletes
Response to Intervention and PBIS

Mindfulness Practices

Schools and Organizations are Bringing Mindfulness Practices to Youth Around the World

- Teacher Buy-in
- Administrative Support
- Parent Support
- Student Buy-in
Mindfulness teaches how to:

- More easily forgive the people that have hurt us
- Increase compassion
- Increase connection
- Slow down
- Be in the moment
- Pay attention
- Regain a sense of balance

Research over the past few decades has found that Mindfulness training develops:

- Decreased ADHD behaviors—specifically hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Fewer conduct and anger management problems
- Decreased negative affect, or emotions
- Decreased anxiety in general and test anxiety in particular
- Decreased depression
- Increased emotional regulation
- Increased self-calming
- Increased social skills and social compliance
- Increased care for others
- Increased sense of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased quality of sleep
- Increased attention
- Increased executive function (working memory, planning, organization, and impulse control)

With Mindfulness

- Staff, students and parents can see the humor in mistakes
- WE can laugh at ourselves more
- WE can be less critical of ourselves and others
- WE are kinder
- WE are more sincere
We each remember a person in our life who showed us compassion.

WE can cultivate compassion.

We can Teach Kids and Staff to Appreciate GOODNESS in Themselves and Others.
Mindfulness can help us negotiate the complexity of life at any age.

Teachers can create classrooms that teach kids "how to pay attention" and ultimately direct their attention to their schoolwork.

Mindfulness Publications

The graph represents the number of peer-reviewed publications in PubMed (through 2013) as referenced by PubMed (published in a dataset at the US National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health).
Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Strong Evidence Base

- Research is trying to keep pace with the explosion of interest in school-based mindfulness programs
- Developmentally appropriate practices are available

Leading Resources Available for Social Emotional Learning using Mindful Practices
The Hawn Foundation

Mindful Schools

Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE)

~ Garrison Institute

Programs focus on developing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making
Your Job as Social Workers

- Engage your teachers and parents in mindfulness practices
- Practice mindfulness yourself

Mindfulness for Children / Teen Books

- The Mindful Child by Susan Kaiser Greenland
- Planting Seeds: Mindfulness Practice with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village Community (includes practice CD)
- Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids by Eline Snell (includes practice CD)
- A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Colors by Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids by Lawrence Shapiro & Robyn Spagnoletti
- The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students by Daniel Rechtshaffen (coming soon in 2014)
- A Full Grown Place: A Mindfulness Program to Teach Children and Adolescents to Manage Stress and Difficult Emotions by Amy Salzman
- Little Flower Journeys for Kids: A Yoga and Mindfulness Program to Help Your Child Improve Attention and Emotional Balance by Jennifer Cohen Harper
- How to Talk so Kids Can Listen & How to Talk so Kids Can Learn by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish (not mindfulness per se, but great!)
- The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students by Daniel Rechtshaffen
**Children's Mindfulness-related Storybooks**

- No Ordinary Apple: A Story About Eating Mindfully by Sara Marlowe
- A Quiet Place by Douglas Wood and Dan Andreasen
- Silence by Luminiscence
- Visiting Penguins by Lauren Bahensten
- Aliens' Anger & Shoes and Shelves by Gail Silver and Christiane Kromer
- The Three Questions & Zen Shorts by Jon J Muth
- Is There Really a Human Race by Jamie Lee Curtis & Laura Cornell
- Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda by Lauren Alderfer
- Silly Billy by Anthony Browne

**Meditation, Peaceful Piggy Yoga, Moody Cow Meditates & Moody Cow Learns Compassion** by Kerry MacLean

**Interpersonal Neurobiology & Neuroscience**

**For kids & teens:**
- The SMILE-inonaire in Every Child: Boosting Children's socio-emotional skills using the latest brain research by Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin
- The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurturing Your Child's Developing Mind by Dan Siegel
- Resilience: The Power & Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Dan Siegel
- The MindUP Curriculum: Brain-focused Strategies for Living & Learning by The Hawn Foundation

**General:**
- Hardwiring Happiness, Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love & Wisdom & Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain the Practice at a Time by Rick Hanson
- Mindfulness Education Program, Optimizing Attachment & Learning in the Classroom & The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy: Building and Rebuilding the Human Brain by Louis Cozolino

**MCME**

Michigan Collaborative for Mindfulness in Education

Below are a few recent scientific studies that demonstrate the benefits of Mindfulness Training programs on teachers, parents, and students:

- Cassette, A. Mindfulness Training as an Adjunct to Evidence-Based Treatment for ADHD Within Families. Journal of Attention Disorders published online 10 May 2013.
- Nikas E, Griffin W, Van der Gaag T, Williams, JH. School-based Prevention and Reduction of Depression in Adolescents: a Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial of a Mindfulness Group Program, Mindfulness 10.1007/s12671-012-0020-1
More and more articles documenting the effects of Mindfulness in the schools are appearing in major news publications. Below are some you can read:

Can Mindfulness Make Us Better Teachers: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/14/mindfulness-teachers-classroom-stress_n_4065019.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/14/mindfulness-teachers-classroom-stress_n_4065019.html)
