



Mindful Educator Tips

Topic 1: What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. It’s about knowing what is on your mind.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

- As educators, we are asked to balance so many tasks during the school day. These tasks can drain us of our energy and enthusiasm when we react to stressful situations during the day instead of mindfully responding. We can consider mindfulness as the practice of paying attention to the space and time that exists between an event that happens in school/the classroom and the subsequent emotion, thought and words/actions that follow.
 - First, there is an event or trigger that happens. (Ex-Student shouts out in class.)
 - Next, an emotion arises within us. It builds up in our body/nervous system and in the brain. (Ex-Anger or frustration towards the student)
 - A conscious or unconscious thought then results. (Ex- “How dare that student disrupt my class.”)
 - From this thought, we quite often move into words/action. (Ex-We yell or reprimand the student in anger or frustration.)
- Mindfulness allows us to calm our feelings so that we act in a manner that does not fuel the fire of anger or frustration. We learn patience and act with intentions that are more aligned with our true values as an educator.
- As Kabat-Zinn suggests, we are paying attention to what is rising up into our minds. We try our best to be kind to ourselves as we do the often very difficult job of working in schools. We pay attention to our emotions and thoughts and take notice how they shape our actions and words toward self and others.



Mindful Exercises

- During the school day, try to just notice what events trigger both positive and negative emotions inside you. This could be certain students, staff members, activities or other stimuli that you encounter during the school day. This awareness helps us prepare ourselves mentally for situations that can fill us up, distract us or take us off our game.
- Do your best to label these emotions. By giving your emotions a label (“This is how anger feels. This is how happiness feels.”) you are taking ownership and control of the emotions that occur within you. You are in essence starting to manage the “monkey mind” that can occur when emotions sweep us away during the day.
- Try to notice the thoughts that arise when you are in a variety of emotional states. What is your mind telling you? What are the messages that are dominating your thoughts while working in schools?
- Reflect on your actions/words even if only for a brief moment. Name your intentions for the future. (Ex- “Next time a student shouts out, I will use proximity and a nonverbal cue to remind the student to raise his/her hand.”)

