Mindfulness for Students with Disabilities

Shannon Stuart, Ph.D.
Special Education Graduate Coordinator
Autism Specialist Certificate Coordinator
Welcome!

By the end of the session, you will be able to:

• link principles of mindfulness and self-regulation
• gain exposure to classroom strategies which foster mindfulness
• map mindfulness strategies onto a classroom PBS matrix
Kyle loves playing soccer at recess.

One day, he races out onto the playground with his friends and notices the soccer goals have been moved. No soccer today. Kyle runs to the teacher and begs her to call for the soccer goals. The teacher reminds him that there are other choices but he continues to escalate and begins to cry. He takes most of the recess period to calm down before choosing an alternate activity.
SEL Skills to Self Regulate

- Self awareness to identify emotions
- Self management for impulse control
- Social awareness for perspective taking
- Relationship skills for communication
- Decision making to solve problems
A Child with Self Regulation Skills Can

• Stop playing that video game and come to dinner
• Pick up their toys when asked
• Turn their attention to an adult when asked
• Withhold the impulse to
  – Grab another’s toy
  – Hit another child
  – Scream when they don’t get their way
• Maintain attention to a particular task even in the context of distractions

-Biglan, 2018
"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Jon Kabat-Zinn).”

“The process of noticing new things and drawing novel distinctions which keeps us situated in the present (Ellen Langer).”
Attention

The ability to purposefully attend to thoughts, feelings and sensations while ignoring others.

Helps a student to:
• NOTICE their thoughts, feelings and sensations
• Attention prevents us from escalating difficult emotions

-Felver et al., 2013
Flexible Thinking

Helps a student:

- Think about their experiences in new ways,
- Slow down to control impulses
- Notice things for what they are (neither + or -)
- Understand that events are not inherently good or bad: it is *thinking* them that makes them so.

-Felver et al., 2013
What is Mindfulness?

Stimulus

Attention

Flexible Thinking

Response

Mindfulness
What is Mindlessness?

Stimulus

Automaticity

Categorical Thinking

Response

Mindlessness
Let’s put it all together...

Attention

Flexible Thinking

Mindfulness

Self Regulation
1. Seek out, create, and notice new things.
2. Realize how behavior can be understood differently in different contexts.
3. Reframe mistakes into successes.
4. Be aware that stress (and all emotions) are the result of our views about events.
5. Be authentic.

(Caprino, 2014)
What self regulation strategies did the children use to avoid eating the marshmallow?

How might mindfulness enhance the self regulation skills of the children who did not wait to eat the marshmallow?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ
Mindfulness Tools for Students
Research about MBI with youth

- Small to moderate effect sizes
- Typical outcomes measures include: cognitive performance, emotional problems, stress/coping, resilience and third party ratings (e.g. parent and teacher questionnaires related to aggression, social skills, wellbeing, or attention)
- Results were strongest in relation to cognitive performance and resilience to stress
- Results suggest MBI have the greatest impact with at risk youth

Zenner, Hermleben-Kurz & Walach, 2014
Zoogman et. al., 2014
Common Elements of MBIs

- Breath awareness,
- working with thoughts and emotions,
- *psycho-education*,
- awareness of the senses and practices of daily life,
- *group discussion*,
- body-scan,
- kindness practices,
- home practice,
- body-practices (like yoga)

• Breathing is always with us, so paying attention to it requires nothing extra
• We breathe 20,000 times a day (15 per minute)
• When we feel panicky, there is a decrease of carbon dioxide in the blood
• Diaphragmatic breathing is a method of balancing the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the blood. It only takes 4 minutes to re-regulate the system via diaphragmatic breathing

Holland & Sisson, 2014
4x4 Breathing

• Focus on breathing for 4 minutes, counting to 4 (one count per second) on inhales and 4 on exhales
• The breathing is diaphragmatic
• Later increase to 8 seconds on the exhale
• 4x4 breathing cuts your rate of breath in half, and at 4x8 then breathing is only 5 breathes per minute.
• Focusing on the long exhale slows the heart rate down/stops the fight or flight response

Holland & Sisson, 2014
Breath Awareness

Belly Breathing, Alternate Nostril Breathing, Count to Ten, good in/bad out, bumble bee breath

Long slow breaths activate the parasympathetic nervous system which controls the relaxation response

2 to 1 Breath, Lion Breath, Bunny Breath, Conductor Breath

Quick breaths activate the synthetic nervous system which controls the arousal response
• Movie directors: constantly playing scripts and clips in our minds. Often leads to an emotional experience.
• We often react and respond to the script in our minds, not what is actually occurring in the present.
• Automatic pilot
• 80-90% of our thinking is repetitive
• Our thinking minds should be tools; pick it up when we need it, then set them down (at times we make connections and predictions)
Social Stories
### Automatic Thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Self Talk</th>
<th>Unhelpful Self Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can do this</td>
<td>This is too hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m awesome at this</td>
<td>I’m not good at this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can keep trying</td>
<td>I give up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can always keep trying OR I can ask for help</td>
<td>I can’t make this any better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan A didn’t work</td>
<td>Good thing there are 25 more letters of the alphabet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate Yourself on a Scale on how much you believe the thoughts about yourself 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely)

1. Nothing works out for me
2. People don’t understand me
3. I make too many mistakes
4. I am not good enough

When we feel good, we have a harder time believing these things about ourselves and the thoughts don’t come up. But when we are stressed, these thoughts pop up more frequently. Our mood affects our thinking and our thinking affects our mood.

(Vo, 2015)
WHAT ZONE ARE YOU IN?

**GO**

The Green Zone, a calmer place, where we feel focused, alert, in control of our emotions, and ready to learn!

HAPPY

**REST AREA**

The Blue Zone, a low state of alertness, too low to get much work done.

TIRED

**SLOW**

The Yellow Zone, where emotions are not as intense, at least not as yet, and we still have some control.

FRUSTRA TED

**STOP**

The Red Zone, where emotions are so intense that we feel out of control!

ANGRY

https://www.transformingeducation.org/rubber-bracelets-birthdays-and-wonder/
Size of the Problem

Remember: stress (and all emotions) are the result of our thoughts about events.
Awareness of the Senses

Chime Listening

Outside/in Meditation

Intuition Game

Mindful Eating
Body Practices

- Musical poses,
- Pose of the day,
- What am I?
- Strike a pose
The Body Scan Meditation
Kindness Practices

- Define Kindness as a universal classroom expectation
- Link kindness to brain research: mirror neurons
- Use a job list that includes rotating roles for everyone in the class (or a list of acts of kindness that students can sign up for periodically)
- Practice giving and receiving complements
- Gratitude exercises

Personal Gratitude List

1. ________ was kind to me today.
2. Today the thing I enjoyed most was ________.
3. I helped ________ today.
4. Today I learned ________.
5. In mistakes I made today, I learned that ________.
6. This person made me feel important today ________.
7. Something I couldn’t do last week that I can do today is ________.
8. One simple thing that made my day good was ________.
9. ________ made me smile today.
10. Today my favorite taste, touch, smell, sight or sound was ________.
Loving Kindness Meditation
Group Sharing

Mindfulness Discussion
Expectations:

1. Listen all the way to the end of the question before answering.
2. Listen with your whole body without reacting until others finish speaking.
3. Pay such close attention to what someone else is saying that you could repeat or explain in to someone else.
4. Listen for ideas that are different than your own and ask questions if you don’t understand.
5. When you notice you are tuned out, try a mindfulness trick to re-join the conversation.
Group Games
Mindfulness and PBiS

1:1 FBA/BIP

Group mindfulness with students of similar needs
DBR; prompting/reinforcing use of Strategies

Integrated with School Wide PBIS Program

Daily mindfulness practices

Mindfulness research has shown greater improvements in outcome measures at follow up.

Daily mindfulness activities helps bring students back to the previous practices.

Holland & Larkin, 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Mindfulness Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be Safe</td>
<td>I use 4x4 breathing when I sense strong emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I label the size of the problem before I act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Respectful</td>
<td>I listen to others before I react or respond</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I find multiple ways to solve a problem</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I look for ways to demonstrate kindness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I care about how others feel and think</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Responsible</td>
<td>I observe my thoughts and emotions when I am learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I learn from my mistakes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I use my tools to stay tuned-in during class</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-wide Expectations</td>
<td>Classroom Routines/Procedures, Socio Emotional Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Respectful</td>
<td>Entering Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolving Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Making Friends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Learning Groups</td>
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**Attention Signal:** 4 fingers = 4x4 breathing

**Be Respectful**
- Use kind words & actions
- Use appropriate voice level

**Be Responsible**
- Follow adult directions
- Take care of materials/equipment
- Place materials in correct area
- Begin warm-up promptly
- Use inside voice

**Be Safe**
- Keep hands, feet & objects to self
- Use all equipment/materials appropriately
- Walk
- Use 4x4 breathing in a safe space
- Label the size of the problem before acting

**Specific Behaviors**

**SEL Skill**
- Listen to others
- Accept differences
- Encourage others
- Wait your turn to speak
- Use Time Wisely
- Contribute
- Complete your part
- Use Materials Carefully
- Stay in your designated area
Matrix can be a working document...
You can add skills to it as they are taught.
Questions?

Shannon Stuart
stuarts@uww.edu
262-472-4877


