

Mindfulness in the Classroom

Kari Lotzien, Occupational Therapist
To the Stars Occupational Therapy &
Wellness Centre
www.tothestars.ca



1

Grounding Activity

2

Check in

- Start with gratitude or positive
- One distraction
- Finish with "I am in."

Allows you to get a "pulse" on the classroom. Allows distractions to be verbalized and then set aside for the time being.

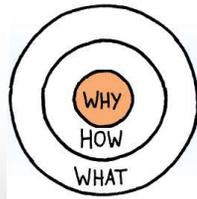
3

Classroom Connections

- Allows students to share their thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the day.
- Use a question or leave it open ended.
- Helps keep a "pulse" on the classroom.
- Creates a classroom affiliation of safety and security.
- Helps students get to know one another.
- Teaches active listening.
- Increases self awareness.
- You may delegate an adult in the school for regular check in.

4

Start with Why



"Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" Simon Sinek

5

Effects of Stress

- Toxic stress can impair the connection of brain circuits and, in the extreme, result in the development of a smaller brain.
- Brain circuits are especially vulnerable as they are developing during early childhood.
- Toxic stress can disrupt the development of these circuits. This can cause an individual to develop a low threshold for stress, thereby becoming **overly reactive** to adverse experiences through-out life.

6

Effects of Stress

- High levels of stress hormones, including cortisol, can suppress the body's immune response.
- Sustained high levels of cortisol can damage the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for learning and memory. These cognitive deficits can continue into adulthood.

Middlebrooks JS, Audage NC. The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2008.

7

“Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose with a non-judgemental attitude.”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn

8

Mindfulness can...

- Take us out of autopilot
- Allows us to “tune in” to our reactions and body signals. This allows us to listen to our bodies rather than ignoring or pushing through.
- When we develop greater self awareness, we develop greater awareness of others and can socially engage more effectively.

9

How the Brain Works

Prefrontal Cortex: "Quarterback"/ Coach

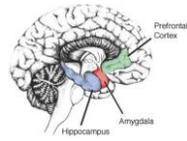
- Executive function, planning complex cognitive behaviors, personality, decision-making, social behavior

Amygdala: "Security guard"

- FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE
- Encodes emotional message for long term storage

Hippocampus: Saver of memories

- Compares new learning to past learning
- Working memory to long-term storage



10



11

My Stroke of Insight-
Jill Bolte Taylor

Please be responsible for the energy you bring to this space.

12

Attuning with Others

- Get to the same physical level or slightly lower
- Lean in
- Tilt chin towards your partner
- Open posture
- Relaxed muscle tone
- Slow rate of speech
- Lower tone of voice (take a breath, gently hum or sigh to release)
- Mirror gestures and expressions



13

Compassion, Empathy and Boundaries

• [Brene Brown](#)

14

Balanced Approach to BIG conversations



Top hand
 BOUNDARIES
 CLEAR EXPECTATIONS
 CHOICES

Bottom hand
 NURTURING
 EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE
 "I UNDERSTAND"
 GENEROSITY

15



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

16

Mindful Listening Activities
• Guess that sound
• Sound memory game
• Mom and baby game –
• Pass a sound
• Listen to a story and focus on a certain word or sound
• Mindful School lesson

Seven horizontal lines for writing.

17

Mindful Listening
• Listening without interrupting
• Waiting to respond until the person is finished talking
• Asking a question to clarify what a person meant or if you need instructions repeated.
• What does mindful listening look like?
• What does it feel like when someone is listening mindfully to you?

Seven horizontal lines for writing.

18

Mindful Observation

- Observation as a learning tool – what do I do in this situation? Link to expected behaviours
- Observing without reacting
- Microexpressions

19

Mindful Watching Activities

- Memory games
- Noticing your surroundings
- Noticing facial expressions
- I spy Games
- Silent ball
- Charades
- Calming jar

20



Observations

21

Mindful Observation

- Kids are tuned in and notice changes
- Connect with body language and facial expressions
- Can describe or imitate what others are doing?
- Can follow visual demonstrations.
- Visual supports for calming

22



- Scent and the amygdala
- Scent and memory
- Scent and emotional memory

Mindful Scent

23

Teach associations in the brain

Calming	Alerting
Vanilla	Lemon
Lavender	Grapefruit
Sandalwood	Citrus
Vetiver	Peppermint
Valour	Spearmint
cinnamon	

24

Mindful Movement

- Create a yoga pose
 - What does your body/heart need?
- Mindful walk



25

Mindful Touch

- Sculptor game
- Provide mindful feedback
- Explore object using only touch

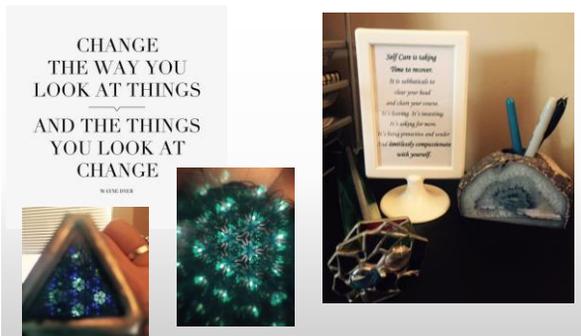


26

Perspective Taking

- Ask 'why' questions in books
- Role playing
- Reflect on memories and how they influence perspectives

27



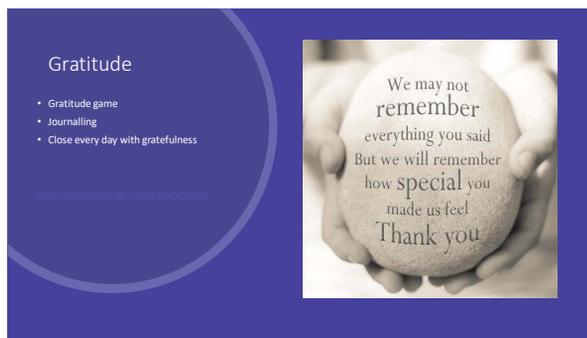
28

Signs of Dysregulation

- Tight muscles
- Tense voice or raised pitch
- Leaning back
- Moving backward
- Wide eyes, dilated or pinpoint pupils
- Shifting eye gaze
- Raised eyebrows
- Wrinkled nose
- Touching face or hair
- Bringing hands to midline (mouth, nose or genitals)
- Microexpressions
- Fidgeting
- Yawning

[Good Will Hunting](#)

29



30

Take Aways

- What is one mindfulness tool that you are excited to bring to your students?
- What is one mindfulness tool that you are excited to bring into your own life?

31

Visit Us

To the Stars Occupational Therapy & Wellness
Centre
Lacombe AB
P 403.786.0006
www.tothestars.ca
Like us on Facebook and follow along for articles
and upcoming events.

32