



## Mindfulness: Teacher Self-Care in the Classroom

Teachers play an essential role in caring for and nurturing their students. The constant giving of one's self can often take precedence over dedicating time for self-care. Teacher mindfulness is one evidence-based practice connected to enhanced ability to self-regulate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. Mindfulness is the practice of focusing awareness by paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgement (Smiling Mind, 2018). Training our minds to consciously become aware of our inner and outer experiences helps us to manage our emotions and better manage classrooms. Evidence has shown that teachers who practice mindfulness are less stressed, sleep better, experience improved relationships with students, and increased job satisfaction (Smiling Mind, 2018; Flook, 2013).

## Get **READY** to Practice Mindfulness

While practicing mindfulness is relatively easy and requires little to no start-up cost, it is important for teachers to receive professional development to ensure fidelity in the implementation of mindfulness practices (Smiling Mind, 2018). It is equally important for administrators to support, model, and motivate teachers to practice mindfulness because of the stigma and accompanying myths around mindfulness practices despite the growing evidence base (Smiling Mind, 2018).

According to Smiling Mind (2018), common myths surrounding mindfulness include:

- Mindfulness is based on religion
- Mindfulness is just about being kind
- Mindfulness is just about relaxing
- Mindfulness is about clearing the mind and not thinking
- Mindfulness suppresses emotion
- Mindfulness only focuses on positivity

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training has been shown to reduce markers for teacher burnout including stress, depression, and anxiety. However, more research needs to be done on other specific programs promoting mindfulness for teachers (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013).

## SET Mindfulness into Action!

Practice mindfulness regularly and consistently to help manage work-life challenges. “Teachers who practice mindfulness themselves are more effective at teaching mindfulness” (p. 28, Smiling Mind, 2018). Set mindfulness into action by:

- Practicing during times that do not conflict with competing events
- Selecting a quiet location with the fewest distractions
- Focusing on natural breathing or using a “mantra” repeated silently
- Noticing subtle body sensations without judgement and letting them pass
- Identifying sensory experiences without judgement and letting them go
- Allowing emotions to be present without judgement, identifying the emotion(s), then allowing them to release
- Coping with cravings for undesired substances or behaviors and allowing them to go, trusting that the urge(s) will pass
- Practicing mindfulness techniques daily (Benefits of Mindfulness, 2016).

## GO Find More Information

The following articles and websites provide information and resources about mindfulness:

Kamenetz, A. (2016, August 19). [When teachers take a breath, students can bloom.](#) *nprEd*. Retrieved March 15, 2019, from [NPR](#)

Kasson, E.M., & Wilson, A.N. (2017). [Preliminary evidence on the efficacy of mindfulness combined with traditional classroom management strategies.](#) *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 10(3), 242-251. Retrieved from [SpringerLink](#).

[Mindful: healthy mind, healthy life](#) A non-profit organization which offers free tools for anyone wishing to add more mindfulness into their daily lives.

[Calm](#) - An app that can be downloaded for free for any teacher who wishes to incorporate mindfulness into their own lives and into the classroom.

## References

Flook, L. (2013, August 28). [Study shows mindfulness training can help reduce teacher stress and burnout](#). *W News*.

Flook, L., Goldberg, S.B., Pinger, L., Bonus, K., & Davidson, R.J. (2013). [Mindfulness for teachers: A pilot study to assess effects on stress, burnout, and teaching efficacy](#). *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 7(3), 182-195.

Harvard Health Publishing. (2016). [Benefits of mindfulness: Practices for improving emotional and physical well-being](#). Adapted from *Positive Psychology: Harnessing the Power of Happiness, Personal Strength, and Mindfulness*. Retrieved from [HelpGuide](#).

Smiling Mind. (2018). [Evidence based guidelines for mindfulness in schools: A guide for teachers and school leaders](#).

This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff at the VDOE TTAC at James Madison University. For questions about content, please contact [John McNaught](#), [Jacki Nickel](#), or [Amanda Randall](#).

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