



A new subject in school: Mindfulness

Level B1

15 Maggio 2018

This year there's a new subject in thousands of Australian schools. Besides the traditional subjects such as English, Maths and P.E., teachers are teaching Mindfulness. Developed by educators, psychologists and experts, the Mindfulness Curriculum teaches self-awareness, self management, social awareness and social management skills to students. It also aims to enhance creativity, curiosity and empathy, reduce anxiety and improve concentration. Considering these ambitious goals, a Mindfulness class is strangely simple: the main part of the class consists of sitting up straight and breathing calmly with your eyes closed. The work that goes on behind those closed eyelids is, in a nutshell, being mindful of what is happening each moment within the body and the mind, and sensing the coming and going of thoughts and emotions. It sounds simple, but it's not.



Right here, right now

Once we start paying attention, we realize how our mind churns out, non-stop, all kinds of thoughts. Often they are worries about the past or the future, or fantasies in which we get lost. We also find that we often fall prey to powerful emotions (caused by our thoughts) that can manifest themselves in strong, physical sensations. Mindfulness teaches that our thoughts and emotions are not us: they are just mental events. Being mindful of them means observing them, rather than being governed by them. This does not mean rejecting

our thoughts or emotions; it means taking control of our inner life and developing a better relationship with our experience.

Scientific evidence

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist meditation, but it does not need to be some exotic, religious practice. Mindfulness in the West is often taught without its original religious framework. Rather, its basis is often scientific. Scientists discovered that the brain, just like muscles, can be affected by 'training'. Mindfulness 'training', for example, thickens the areas of the brain that are associated with attention, memory and empathy, and shrinks the amygdale (the part of the brain that produces stress responses). Scientific studies have proven that Mindfulness is a useful tool to reduce anxiety, stress, depression, anger, and to better deal with pain and illness. They have also demonstrated that, besides reducing unwelcome states of mind, it also promotes positive ones such as emotional balance, inner peace, self-knowledge and altruism.

A growing trend

The teachers of Mindfulness in Australian schools claim that their students' results support the scientific evidence. They found that, just like doing P.E. helps build a strong body, doing Mindfulness helps build a healthy mind. "Kids can't flourish academically if they've got a stressed and anxious brain," claimed the principal of one school that adopted the Mindfulness Curriculum. Another said that "teachers say students have been more productive in the classroom and more focused and calm, particularly after a session." In addition to the 40,000 teachers now teaching the Mindfulness Curriculum in Australian schools, there are many more around the world that are doing the same. For example, Mindfulness has been taught for years in many schools in the UK and the US, from primary school all the way to university. Of course, as with any other school subject, for Mindfulness to work one needs to practice regularly. Just like your normal classes, such as English, Maths, Sciences, to do well you need to do your homework!

USEFUL WEBSITES

1) Read about the new Mindfulness Curriculum in Australian schools:

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/education/mindfulness-makes-its-push-into-classrooms-via-gonski/news-story/6e1a538608d6b6691edc5c150e7659bf>

[<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/education/mindfulness-makes-its-push-into-classrooms-via-gonski/news-story/6e1a538608d6b6691edc5c150e7659bf>]

2) Here is the Mindfulness Curriculum taught in Australian schools. You can even download the app!

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/the-mindfulness-curriculum/>

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3) Here are a couple of animated videos that explain the basics of Mindfulness meditation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjtfyuTTQFY> [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjtfyuTTQFY>]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqoxYKtEWEC> [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqoxYKtEWEC>]

v=rqoxYKtEWec]

4) Do you want to know more about Mindfulness? Check out this useful website and try one of the Mindfulness activities it offers:

<http://blissfulkids.com/> [<http://blissfulkids.com/>]

The same website also explains how Mindfulness works in the brain:

<http://blissfulkids.com/mindfulness-and-the-brain/> [<http://blissfulkids.com/mindfulness-and-the-brain/>]

5) Read about these Mindfulness stories about some American and British schools:

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/nov/24/san-franciscos-toughest-schools-transformed-meditation> [<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/nov/24/san-franciscos-toughest-schools-transformed-meditation>]

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/oct/23/mindfulness-school-lessons-pupil-stress> [<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/oct/23/mindfulness-school-lessons-pupil-stress>]

COMPREHENSION

1) Read the article and complete the sentences with the right alternative.

1. A Mindfulness class teaches

- how to sit up straight.
- facts and figures.
- personal and social skills.

2. Being mindful means

- having one's mind full of thoughts.
- paying attention to what goes on in one's mind.
- following one's thoughts and emotions.

3. During mindfulness meditation one learns that the mind is

- easy to control.
- very focused.
- easily distracted.

4. Mindfulness helps one

- control one's thoughts and emotions.
- be controlled by one's thoughts and emotions.
- shut out thoughts and emotions.

5. Mindfulness

- is an exotic practice.
- has developed from Buddhist meditation.
- is Buddhist meditation.

6. Scientists discovered that the brain

- a. cannot change.
- b. responds to mental training.
- c. is a muscle.

7. If the amygdale shrinks, one is likely to be

- a. more stressed.
- b. less stressed.
- c. more attentive.

8. Australian teachers found that

- a. scientists are right about Mindfulness.
- b. scientists should study Mindfulness.
- c. helps build a healthy mind.

9. Some Australian teachers point out that stressed students

- a. do well in school.
- b. have a healthy mind.
- c. don't do well in school.

10. Australia is

- a. the first country to teach Mindfulness in schools.
- b. is not the first country to teach Mindfulness in schools.
- c. is the third country to teach Mindfulness in schools, after the US and the UK.

VOCABULARY

2) Complete the sentences with the following words. Put the verbs and nouns in the right form, if necessary.

empathy * P.E. * to fall prey to * eyelid * in a nutshell * to enhance * to churn out * to flourish * framework * to reject

1. _____ is an expression that means 'in a few words'.
2. She has a lot of _____ for her friends: she can really feel and understand their emotions.
3. Mindfulness can _____ the quality of one's life.
4. _____ is an abbreviation that stands for Physical Education.
5. A _____ is a supporting structure.
6. When you blink, you open and close your _____.
7. I think it's more important to learn relevant skills in school than learn how to _____ facts and figures.
8. He's very emotional. He often _____ sadness and regret.
9. Meditation teaches that if you try to _____ a thought or emotion, you might end up making it stronger.
10. The verb _____ originates from a Latin word that means 'to bloom'.

GRAMMAR - Possessive adjectives and pronouns

3) Complete the sentences choosing the correct possessive adjective or pronoun.

1. I forgot _____ (I) History book, so Jane kindly lent me _____ (she).
2. _____ (you) mum told me this English grammar book is _____ (you).
3. _____ (they) Mindfulness teacher told them to practice at home.
4. We're all friends, so _____ (you) problem is also _____ (we) problem.
5. _____ (she) class is next to _____ (he).
6. Meditation was practiced thousands of years ago. _____ (it) origin is truly ancient.
7. These aren't my trainers - _____ (I) are black.
8. _____ (he) Mindfulness classes are inspirational!
9. This schedule is not _____ (we), its _____ (they).
10. A friend of _____ (you) told me where I could find you.

SHORT ESSAY

4) Can you think of a 'new' subject that you believe should be taught in school? Motivate your choice.

5) Sit up straight, close your eyes and try to concentrate on your breathing for five minutes, then write about your experience. How did your mind 'behave'? Was it difficult to concentrate? What did you think and feel in those five minutes?

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(Carlo Dellonte)

(Image credits: [pixabay \[https://pixabay.com/it/legno-vecchio-porta-3345661/\]](https://pixabay.com/it/legno-vecchio-porta-3345661/) and [flickr \[https://bit.ly/2rIRtpP\]](https://bit.ly/2rIRtpP))



Per scaricare le soluzioni clicca qui. [<https://aulalingue.scuola.zanichelli.it/xstudx-login-filedownload.php>]

TAG Australia, Goal 4 - Quality Education, Mindfulness, Obiettivo 4 - Istruzione di qualità, school

