

MINDFULNESS at Blue Ash Elementary

Who: Beneficial to all ages!

What: Mindfulness is-

- intentionally paying close attention to whatever is happening as it is happening in the present moment
- observing/noticing sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings in non-reactive way even if unpleasant, distressing, painful
- acting with awareness instead of being on automatic pilot
- Mindfulness can be part of breathing, eating, brushing your teeth, feeling your feet on the ground and smelling the air if you're outside taking a walk, and much more


Why: It is helpful for our brains and bodies!

- Mindful Schools reports that research has found improvements in anxiety, cognitive functioning and self-regulation among children trained in mindfulness.
<http://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/>
- Learning to be mindful of what's happening in the moment helps kids make sound decisions rather than be ruled by their emotions. When we're calm, we can more easily be mindful and make good choices.

Mindful Life and your Child:

Life for most kids today presents:

- A schedule that is too busy
- Pressure to perform
- Too much media
- Lack of face to face relationships
- Increasing anxiety & depression
- A brain that is in a constant state of Fight or Flight




The Result:

- Decreased academic performance
- Problems with attention
- Impulsive behaviors
- Increased depression and anxiety
- Sleep difficulties
- Social struggles

Mindfulness helps children develop:

- Increased stimulation in the prefrontal cortex of the brain
- Better focus and concentration
- Compassion
- Increased sense of calm
- An understanding of how their brain works



The Result:

- Increased self-awareness
- Skillful response to difficult emotions
- Increased empathy and understanding of others
- Natural conflict resolution skills
- Happier, healthier kids who are ready to learn

<https://move-with-me.com/research/why-mindfulness-practices-are-worth-your-instructional-time/>

Where: At BAE in the classroom, media center AND can be implemented at home if desired

How: At BAE we are planning to incorporate mindfulness into the student's experience in the classroom with _____ and gratitude journals, the media center with the addition of mindfulness related books, yoga for select classrooms and grades (I think this is happening right?)

- To implement at home: Search for mindfulness on the internet. You will find links to yoga, meditation, activities, apps, worksheets, etc. Feel free to reach out to the Wellness Committee as well for additional resources.
- Try these ideas from the Kids Activities Blog:
 - Blowing bubbles. Have your kids focus on taking in a deep, slow breath, and exhaling steadily to fill the bubble. Encourage them to pay close attention to the bubbles as they form, detach, and pop or float away.
 - Pinwheels. Use the same tactics from blowing bubbles to encourage mindful attention on the pinwheels.
 - Texture bag. Place several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects in a bag, and have each child reach in to touch an object, one at a time, and describe what they are touching. Make sure they don't take the object out of the bag, forcing them to use only their sense of touch to explore the object.
- Other things to try:
 - SpiderMan meditation. This meditation from Kids Relaxation teaches children to activate their "spidey-senses" and their ability to focus on all they can smell, taste, and hear in the present moment. <http://kidsrelaxation.com/uncategorized/spider-man-practicing-mindfulness-and-increasing-focus/>
 - *Counting the Breath*. You can start with counting the in-breath and out-breath. One breath in and out is "1", then "2", and so on, up to ten. <https://www.mindful.org/body-scan-kids>
 - Make a mindful glitter jar to teach kids that they can calm their bodies and minds with deep breathing

<u>Supplies needed:</u>	
1) Jars (any jar or closable container, canning jars work well)	-Fill water almost to the top of the jar
2) Water	-Add lots of multi-colored glitter
3) Glitter of any shape, size, color	-Label each jar and have the kids decorate the lids
	-*Jars can be glued for securement as well

- Practice deep, calming breathing *at times when the kids are already calm*. Shake the jars and then breathe calmly while watching the glitter settle.
- Keep the jars in an accessible area so you can get them if kids need to use them to calm down.
- When kids get upset, encourage them to remember this exercise and get their jar. **This part only works if kids practice using the jars at times when they are NOT upset.*