Creating a Space for Mindfulness in the Classroom
Benefits for the ADHD/LD Student
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What is Mindfulness?

- Buddhist roots; Pali word *sati* (awareness)
- Living fully in the moment with intention and without judgment
- Attention to breath
- Acknowledgement and immediate release (nonattachment) of thoughts, emotions, and sensations

Mindfulness in Education: Increased Recognition and Respect

- Paying attention *here and now with kindness and curiosity* and then *choosing your behavior*
- Students can observe emotions as they arise
- Identify impulses driving behavior
- Cultivate awareness of classroom environment/their own experience

Social-Emotional Benefits

• Increased self-esteem and self-acceptance
• Stress relief
• Respite from the rush of daily activity
• Mindfulness reduces negative emotional states such as anxiety, depression, and anger
  1
• Mindfulness helps cultivate a sense of peace and calm from which students can approach learning with ease
  2

1 Thomas J. Casey, MD, 2009 Mindfulness Course; adapted from Jefferson University MBSR training

Physical, Intellectual, and Cognitive Benefits of Mindfulness

• Decreases heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, muscular tension
  1
• Increases immune and digestive functions
  1
• Improved executive function (working memory, planning, organization)
  2
• Strengthens the attentional capacities of the brain
  3

1 Jefferson University MBSR Manual, 2013

Metacognitive Benefits

• From a mindfulness standpoint, balance comes from creating “space” to breathe and be aware of the present moment
• Enables us to let go of preoccupations, worries, and frustrations about the past, and put aside anxiety, anticipation, and distraction about the future
• Mindfulness allows us to pursue our activities in the present moment with more focus and equanimity
Benefits for ADHD

• Mindfulness helps to train awareness of attentional focus, increasing capacity for regulation of attention
• Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy has been shown to enact comparable neurophysiological effects related to attention and self-regulation as pharmacological ADHD treatments in adults\(^1\)


Benefits for ADHD

• Since mindfulness practices focuses on “increasing the ability to control attention, and on reducing automatic responses,”\(^1\) it can have a behavioral impact on students with ADHD
• Mindfulness has also been shown to enhance performance on tasks measuring executive function such as attention, working memory, and cognitive control


Benefits for LD

• 5-week mindfulness meditation course in adolescents diagnosed with LD showed promise for managing LD in school
• Students reported “overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the program”
• Significant improvement in anxiety, social skills, and academic performance

In and Outside the Classroom

- Students grew to depend on daily mindfulness exercises
- Awareness of how it helped them focus; expressed desire for similar activities in all classes
- They also reported distinct situations outside of class where they used the techniques of mindfulness and felt its benefits

Mindfulness Practices

- Opening listening meditation using bells or bowl
- Gentle movement practices (especially useful for ADHD)
- Fields of Sound
- Three Calming Breaths or Sighs
- Counting to Ten on each exhale (notice where you feel each breath)
- Body Scan Meditation/ Extended relaxation

Mindfulness Resources