

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness quiets and shifts the chatter of the mind to focus on what is happening right now. Mindfulness can help you learn to pay close attention to many things, including your feelings and bodily sensations. The goal is to **pay attention to the present moment**, rather than thinking about the past or imagining the future.

Based on ancient Buddhist meditation, mindfulness techniques are building an impressive body of research. Mindfulness **improves stress management** and has numerous health benefits, including improving eating habits, boosting the immune system, and increasing positive feelings and well-being. Importantly, mindfulness helps you tune out distractions and improves memory and attention skills – which has clear benefits both inside and outside of classroom walls! **Mindfulness encompasses many aspects of the strategies mentioned in this training.**

As an educator, it is important to both model being present as well as teach and encourage youth to use this skill in everyday life. Below are a few exercises that may help teach this concept to youth.

BODY Scan

Find or create a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Starting at the top of your head and going down to your toes, focus your attention on sensations in your body (e.g., tenseness, a tickle) and accept what you feel without trying to control or change it. This exercise gives you a moment to just be instead of do.

RAISIN Exercise

Adding in one sense at a time (first holding, then eating), observe a raisin in as much detail as possible. Focus on the present moment and various sensations, from how the raisin looks, feels, and smells to how it tastes as you chew and swallow it. Giving an ordinary fruit your undivided attention might sound unusual or simplistic, but this exercise can help you slow down and appreciate an everyday act that is often taken for granted.

WALKING Meditation

For a defined number of steps or path, give your full attention to the movement of your body. Feel your knees bend and each part of your foot as it makes contact and then lifts off the ground. This exercise is an opportunity to break up a long period of sitting and keep both the body and mind healthy.

Keep in mind that mindfulness takes practice and the longer you practice, the easier the process becomes. More information, including videos demonstrating the above exercises and tips on teaching mindfulness in schools, can be found at the University of California, Berkeley Greater Good Science Center →

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/>

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids/