

WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



This publication is brought to you by the District Wellness Council, which is dedicated to educating Rush-Henrietta families about important topics to keep your children healthy.

Helpful Links:

- [SAM \(Self-help for anxiety management\) APP](#)
- [Mindshift APP](#)
- [Calm APP](#)
- [Headspace APP](#)
- [Mindfulness Podcasts](#)
- [Mindfulness TED talk](#)

Mindfulness: Positive Changes For Our Students From The Inside Out

Stress is everywhere in our lives and we always seem to be falling a little bit further behind every day. Have you ever wished the world would just freeze around you so you could have a few extra hours or days to get ahead? Today's children are no different and have even more time pressures on them than their parents did at their age. A big part of their day is experienced in school and therefore a source of stress. Children and youth frequently experience stress in school, which has an impact on the brain structures involved in cognition and mental health (Zenner, Herrnleben, Walach, 2014). More children are being diagnosed with serious mental disorders in addition to this everyday stress. It has been reported that 21% of the 13- to 18-year-olds in the U.S. are currently suffering, or have at some point suffered, from a severe mental disorder (Merikangas et al., 2010), with ADHD, behavioral or conduct problems, anxiety, and depression being the most prevalent current diagnoses (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

Mindfulness teaches students to start from the inside out, cultivating increased self-awareness and attention by focusing on thoughts, emotional states, the breath, and other bodily sensations.

Schools are faced with the task of not only being institutions for formal education, but also places that provides children with the tools for improving these disorders and fostering personal development. These needs have driven Rush-Henrietta administrators, teachers, school nurses, and psychologists to seek methods to improve not only school-based learning but the social interactions of our students. The practice of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) is a successful approach used across the world to tackle these challenges, because it addresses a wide range of needs and unfulfilled potential of students while furthering learning in the classroom. What is Mindfulness? According to the Oxford dictionary, it is "a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique."

MBIs teach students to start from the inside out cultivating increased self-awareness and attention by focusing on internal experiences such as thoughts, emotional states, breathing, and other bodily sensations (Semple, Drouman, Reid, 2017). "The ultimate aim of most school-based mindfulness programs is to increase awareness of the influence of thoughts and emotions on speech and behaviors, and thereby enhance the likelihood of making more skillful or appropriate choices" (Semple, Drouman, Reid, 2017, p. 29).

These MBIs have been successfully applied to adolescents with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms and to adolescents with a variety of externalizing disorders (Zenner, Herrnleben, Walach, 2014). MBIs lead to a reduction in symptoms of depression in minority children and to a reduction in anxiety and increase of social skills in students with learning disorders (Zenner, Herrnleben, Walach, 2014).

Mindfulness practice enhances the very qualities and goals we strive for here in the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. These qualities include not only thoughtful and emotional self-regulation, but also positive social inherent skills such as empathy and compassion, self-representations, ethical sensitivity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. They enable children to deal with future challenges of the rapidly changing world, ideally becoming smart, caring, and committed citizens (Zenner, Herrnleben, Walach, 2014; Mind and Life Education Research Network (MLERN), 2012).

Mind Full, or Mindful?



Mindfulness Exercise



The Basics of Mindfulness Practice

The following instructions are taken directly from the website mindful.org.

Mindfulness helps us put some space between ourselves and our reactions, breaking down our conditioned responses. Here is how to tune in to mindfulness throughout the day:

1. **Set aside some time.** You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills — but you do need to set aside some time and space.
2. **Observe the present moment as it is.** The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. Easier said than done, we know.
3. **Let your judgments roll by.** When we notice judgments arise during our practice, we can make a mental note of them, and let them pass.
4. **Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.
5. **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back.

That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.



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