**Monthly Article**

**Mindfulness: Develop a Daily Practice**

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”

JON KABAT-ZINN

**EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES**

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Free confidential professional help for district employees and family members:

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- Life transition issues.

Professional counselors are ready to help. Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7 assistance.

**MESSAGE FROM EASE**

The summertime for those who work in the educational sector is a special time. It symbolizes the closure of one academic year, and often immediately preparation for the incoming year. Frequently, we move quickly from one task to the other rarely stopping to pause, or taking time to replenish and re-nourish ourselves. This can lead to increased feelings of stress, feeling burnt out, and even exhaustion and fatigue.

While healthy stress is a natural part of life, healthy stress can easily get replaced by toxic stress if we don't take care of ourselves. This happens when life's demands consistently outpace our ability to cope with those demands. This experience causes us to rely on our bodies mostly unconscious instincts for dealing with stress which lie deep within our nervous systems. Mindfulness is a specific tool that directly targets this system and has immediate results that can be experienced. Engaging in mindfulness practices actually induces the relaxation response in the body. **We invite you to begin your relationship with mindfulness today.** Due to the research and benefits of mindfulness on personal health and as an effective tool for stress management, EASE will continue to share information about Mindfulness in the coming months.

"May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be peaceful. May you be at Ease.” - Loving Kindness Mantra

**7 Attitudinal Foundations of Mindfulness**

- **Non-judging** - observe your thinking, notice the stream of the judgemental mind.
- **Patience** - allow things to unfold on their time, practice patience with yourself and others.
- **Beginner's Mind** - be curious, cultivate a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time.
- **Trust in yourself** - develop a basic trust in yourself and your feelings. Mistakes are ok.
- **Non-striving** - paying attention to how you are right now - however that is.
- **Acceptance** - seeing things as they actually are in the present and accepting whatever that is.
- **Letting go** - letting go is a way of letting things be, of accepting things as they are.

(Black & Grey, 2013)
MINDFULNESS: DEVELOP A DAILY PRACTICE

By: EASE Staff

You may have heard of the term Mindfulness, or the phrase “Be Mindful.” Maybe you shrugged your shoulders, sat in confusion, or took a deep breath trying to contemplate the vastness of what Mindfulness actually means thinking to yourself, “What is this Mindfulness stuff and how do I get it?” The great news is that Mindfulness is something that is free, available at all times, and within us all! There is no wrong or right way to do it. The biggest mistake to be made is to simply not do it. It can be the greatest gift to yourself, your health... and others in your life... once you really understand what Mindfulness is.

So what does it mean to be mindful?

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” It means not living your life in automatic mode, but instead focusing on the immediate experience of the moment. Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.

**THE EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS**

Mindfulness meditation has long been studied as an effective way to manage stress and improve our overall health and well-being.

**Mindfulness helps to decrease:**
- Levels of emotional exhaustion
- Stress
- Psychological distress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Occupational stress

**It helps to:**
- Boost the immune system
- Increase personal accomplishment and productivity
- Increase self-compassion
- Increase quality of sleep
- Improve attention
- Increase relaxation
- Promote a general sense of health and well-being

*Mindfulness meditation has been found to literally rewire the brain and rebuild the gray matter that helps us function better.*

By developing a regular “practice” in mindfulness, you are training your brain to interrupt repetitive patterns, and to calm and center yourself.

**HOW YOU CAN PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**

There are many tools and exercises that develop greater mind-body awareness and promote mindfulness in daily life. Mindfulness is like a muscle that must be used to get stronger. Regular daily practice is highly recommended for best results. Yes I know, we are busy! There are simple ways to get your mindfulness in even when you are on a tight schedule.

The easiest way to begin developing a mindfulness practice is to just make time for it. You can begin by doing a 3-5 minute breathing exercise everyday which will help diffuse reactions and emotions enabling you to better respond to situations and avoid the automaticity of reacting.

Some other easy ways that you can practice mindfulness on a daily basis include:
- Listen to guided meditations (free and easy to access)
- Schedule time in your daily calendar (5-20 min./day)
- Develop your mindfulness muscle by making it a part of a habit, or daily routine (like hygiene)
- Go outside when possible. Sit or stand near a tree, plant or grass.... and focus on your breath for 2-3 minutes.
- Practice 3 deep breaths during passive time (walking, driving, sending emails, etc.)
- Practice active listening with others. Be in the moment.

There are many free technology tools to help you get started that can be utilized for instant access to mindfulness, meditation, and stress management.


https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/default.cfm
https://www.mindfulschools.org/
https://www.mindful.org/