

Notes from Presentation on Mindfulness by Counselors Becky Best and Erika Huck

Pyle Counseling Advisory Committee, January 18, 2018

These notes were compiled by a parent to capture some of the comments by the presenters and attendees in the room; please refer to the presentation slides (also available as a PDF on Pyle's website) for the substance of the presentation.

Opportunities for students to learn about and practice mindfulness at Pyle:

- Drop-in Mindfulness TAG
 - held twice a month, 10-20 students typically attend
 - once a month is yoga
 - once a month, Mrs. Best or Ms. Stablein runs the session, providing a range of creative approaches to mindfulness. Examples of past sessions include guided imagery, mindful drawing, catching and throwing, breathing, making stress balls and so forth
- 7th graders are assigned to read Zen and the Art of Faking It in English class; after they have finished it, a Counselor visits the classroom to offer mindfulness strategies
- The Pyle Education Foundation sponsors occasional workshops during TAG by Minds, Inc., a non-profit dedicated to empowering Washington DC-area schools by teaching mindfulness-based practices to students, educators, and parents.
- Some teachers will integrate mindfulness exercises into classes before testing to ease anxiety
- Yoga/Mindfulness is offered after school through Flex Academy

Mindfulness exercises tried or suggested during the CAC meeting:

- Play a song and focus on one thing in the song—a particular instrument, the beat, the lyrics, etc.
- Play a song and shake a part of your body (e.g. your hands, your hips) repetitively to the rhythm
- Indulge in gratitude. Choose a category (e.g., people, food, places, objects) and identify one or more things in that category for which you are grateful; consider why you are grateful for that thing.
- Hold an object in your hand and focus on one part of it (e.g., the eraser on a pencil); examine it carefully, noting the shape, color, feel of it and any imperfections. What do you notice when you concentrate and look closely?
- Mix up one of your daily routines. For example, if you always put lotion on your right cheek before your left in the mornings, switch it up. If you always clean up from breakfast before showering, try the reverse.
- Conduct a body scan. To learn more about this exercise, search the web for “mindfulness body scan”
- When a child is unable to fall asleep, have them put their body parts to sleep one at a time. Start with toes (focusing on each toe individually), then move to feet, ankles, calves, etc.
- For children who cut themselves to deal with emotional pain or other intensity, counselors recommend they choose an alternative outlet; replace the destructive behavior with an action that similarly provides release, such as wearing a rubber band on one’s wrist and snapping it.

Additional comments shared by participants:

- Mindfulness techniques can be useful to prevent a tense situation with your middle-schooler from escalating into a fight. Conducting a quick exercise in mindfulness may distract you from a

moment of anger long enough to calm down, gain perspective and approach the situation more rationally.

- Parents are frequently multi-tasking, which one parent uses to her advantage when she finds herself feeling stress or irritation in an interaction with her child. She consciously focuses on the “other” activity (e.g., sweeping the floor, driving the car, chopping vegetables) or simply on the sensation of keeping her mouth shut, which allows her to let the moment pass without immediate conflict. Then, she circles back later to discuss the topic or behavior at a more productive time.
- Incorporate mindfulness into your routine to prepare yourself for stressful activities. One counselor sets a reminder alarm for a mindful moment each day at 11 am, so that she is ready to tackle the busyness, unpredictability and stress of the lunch period.
- Identify the events you typically find stressful (e.g., visiting extended family) and practice mindfulness ahead of time.

EVERYDAY MINDFULNESS:



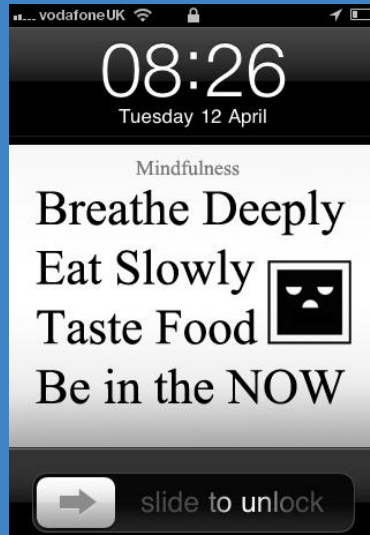
SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO HELP WITH THE UPS AND
DOWNS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL LIFE

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO :

- Explanation of mindfulness and the benefits of using everyday calming strategies
- Participate in hands-on activities that can be used with middle school students and the whole family
- Identify parenting situations where mindfulness activities can be implemented

MINDFULNESS DEFINITION

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training.



BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS (WWW.APA.ORG)

- Stress/anxiety reduction
- Better working memory capacity and working memory speed
- Improves ability to sustain attention/focus
- Increases positive affect
- Helps with emotion regulation and reactivity
- Improves skills like self-observation, intuition, fear modulation
- Helps with managing stress associated with friendship/relationship conflicts

Drop-in TAG: Time to practice mindfulness with a group

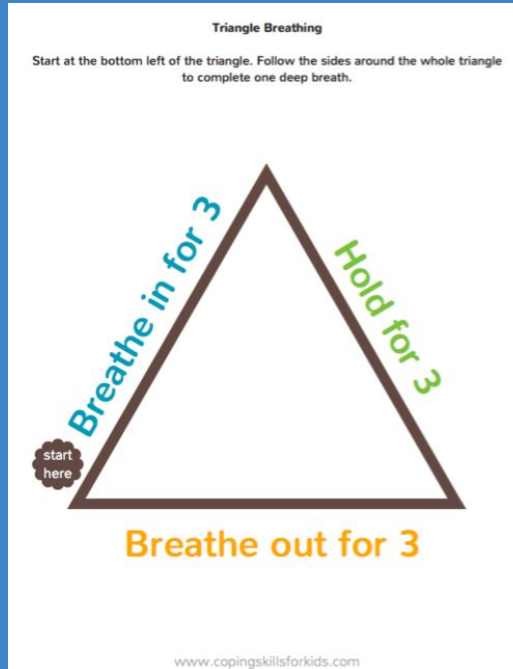
Pyle has two drop-in TAG times every month on Tuesdays!

Students sign up in the counseling office.

Upcoming dates: February 20, March 13, and March 20

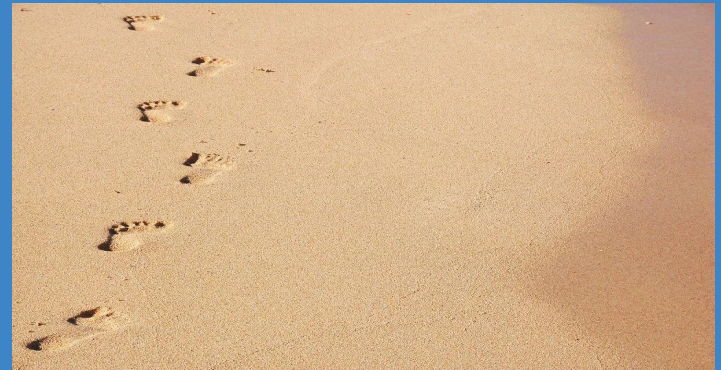
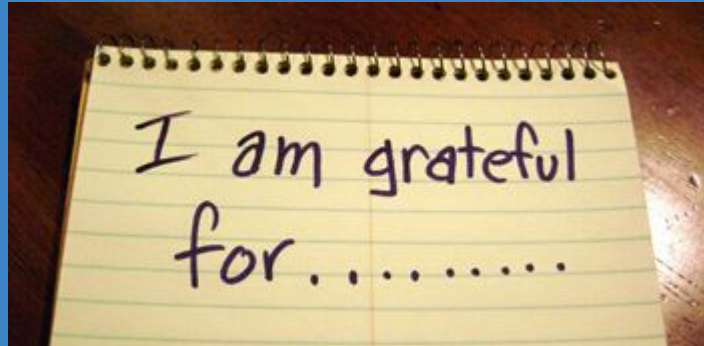
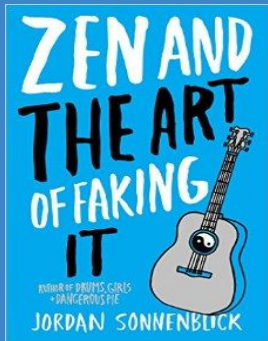


Mindful Breathing and Mindful Music



Focusing on the Positive together

- Gratitude exercises: The Gratitude Game
- Gratitude Cards for parents and children
- Journaling (e.g. “180 Days of Awesome” book)
- Reading (e.g. Zen and the Art of Faking It)



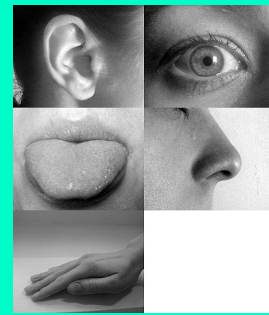
6 MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

<https://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>



QUICK MINDFULNESS EXERCISES FOR ANYTIME

1 MINUTE: SENSES CHECK



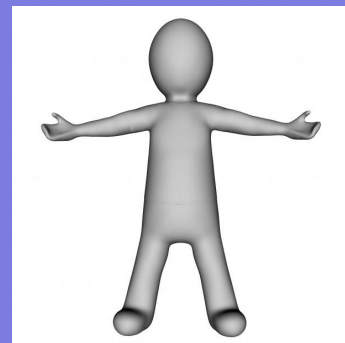
Sit down and move yourself into a comfortable position. "This helps us to pay attention to whether we are hunching over our desks, for example, or sitting at a funny angle," Wootten said.

Sit up straight, close your eyes and take a breath.

Focus in on your senses (or a particular sense). "This is a powerful way of bringing your attention to what is around you. Often offices are busy and you'll hear lots of noises around you, but paying attention to them in a mindful way allows you to become aware of those sounds but not react to them."

Bring your attention to your body and how it is feeling.

5 MINUTES: BODY SCAN



A body scan meditation can be a useful one for five minutes (or more).

"The process of checking in on how each part of the body feels helps you connect to the present moment, as well as being aware of any tension," Wooten said.

Sit up straight (or lie down, if where you are permits).

Close your eyes and take a few breaths.

Start from the top of the head and scan through each part of the body, down to your toes. Take note of any bodily sensations as you move through.

10 MINUTES: MINDFUL MOVEMENT

This one is simple -- and can be infused into any daily practice.

"You can even go for a walk mindfully," Wootten said.

"The aim is to use what you are doing to keep your attention focused on the present."

Get up.

Go for a stretch, walk or run. Pay attention to how your body feels and what is around you.

"If you are walking outside, what is the weather like? What can you smell in the air? These are all important cues."

"If you are stretching on a mat, how does the mat feel?"



10 MINDFULNESS EXERCISES TO HELP YOU STAY PRESENT

<https://blog.mindvalley.com/stay-present/>



WEBSITES AND APPS

Websites:

www.innerkids.com

www.stressfreekids.com

www.minfulnesscenter.org

www.mindgains.org

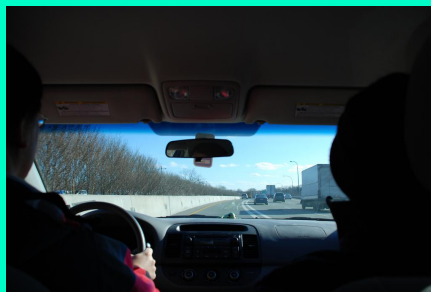
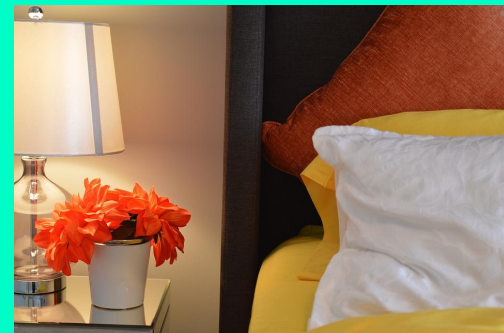
Apps

Breathe2Relax, Headspace, Calm



TIME FOR IMPLEMENTING MINDFULNESS

- Bedtime
- School
- During morning routine
- After-school- downtime
- Homework time
- Meals
- Sports/Activities
- Car Rides
- Anytime!



QUESTIONS

