Mindfulness: An Approach for Learning and for Life

Margaret Anne Smith

Abstract
Although present for thousands of years in various traditions, the practice of mindfulness has been growing in dedicated ways since Jon Kabat-Zinn introduced his mindfulness-based stress reduction program to students in 1979. The physical, psychological and social benefits of “paying attention in the moment” have been well-documented since then, and benefits for student learning are now being recognized. In the era of “helicopter parenting” and growing competition for the attention of our students (and ourselves), students need to learn how to learn, but also need to learn how to increase focus, improve memory and foster an independent, self-generated ability to lessen anxiety and cope with stress. If we model these skills ourselves and—through dedicated classroom time—feature them as part of university preparation for life and work, we will help students build foundational attributes and skills for the future. In this report I present data from the National College Health Assessment-II (Spring 2013) to give a snapshot of the anxiety self-reported by Canadian students, then describe a two-minute mindfulness activity that I regularly use with first-year students in a university skills course. It is simple to make this activity a regular feature of classroom learning, improving student focus, lessening anxiety, and giving them skills for a challenging future.

Keywords
Mindfulness; Learning; Anxiety; Grit; Life skills

Full Text:
PDF

References

What is mindfulness? Here's why being mindful matters and how to practice the art of mindfulness at home - with some easy, inspiring exercises! You'll discover how you can enjoy the rewards of being mindful by integrating it into your everyday life. We'll also run through five quick mindfulness trainings you can practice at home. Table of Contents. 1. What Is Mindfulness? 1.1. Mindfulness Definition. 1.2. What Mindfulness Is Not. Advocates of mindfulness would have us believe that virtually every client and therapist would benefit from being more mindful. Among its theorized benefits are self-control, objectivity, affect tolerance, enhanced flexibility, equanimity, improved concentration and mental clarity, emotional intelligence and the ability to relate to others and one’s self with kindness, acceptance and compassion. Future research holds tremendous potential for learning more about the neurophysiological processes of meditation and the benefits of long-term practice on the brain. Research on neuroplasticity may help explain the relationships among length and quality of meditation practice, developmental stages of meditators and psychotherapy outcomes. Other approaches include practising yoga asanas while attending to movements and body sensations, and walking meditation.[1][2]. Timings[edit]. Meditators are recommended to start with short periods of 10 minutes or so of meditation practice per day. Satipaṭṭhāna is the establishment of mindfulness in one's day-to-day life, maintaining as much as possible a calm awareness of one's body, feelings, mind, and dharmas. The practice of mindfulness supports analysis resulting in the arising of wisdom (Pali: paññā, Sanskrit: prajñā).[17]. Samprajaña, apramāda and atappa[edit].