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“When we journey within, we are never without.”
Anonymous

MINDFULNESS AND CHILDREN

Mindfully Presented by:

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Inward Bound LLC

January 8, 2003

I hope you have enjoyed this presentation and have been enlightened regarding your own spiritual journey as well as the spiritual journey of all the children in the universe.

It's important to first understand what Mindfulness is:

Mindfulness is simply bringing your awareness to the present moment, without judgment.

It is a way of being. When practicing mindfulness we train ourselves to see reality as it truly is. In the process we discover who we really are. In addition, it's the way to health and wellness.



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One technique is through meditation; an exercise in concentration and developing awareness.

We really don't see what is right in front of us. We see life through our thoughts and concepts and we mistake those mental objects as reality. We get caught up in the thought-process and reality flows by unnoticed. (1) We spend our time engrossed in activity, in pursuit of pleasure and gratification and running away from pain and unpleasantness. We use numerous amounts of energy trying to make ourselves feel better, burying our fears. We are always seeking security. In the meantime, the world of real experience is not lived.

Real peace comes only when you stop chasing it.

When you stop seeking comfort, you become fulfilled

When you stop seeking gratification, you see the real beauty of life

When you seek to know the reality without illusions, including pain and danger, real freedom and security are yours.

You can perceive your life as an ever-flowing movement.



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(2) If we can teach children early in life how to recognize stress and its symptoms, learn effective ways of dealing with it; how to develop healthy social relationships and develop lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors to promote health and psychological growth, what a wonderful, fulfilling life they can have. Although some children tend to see things as they really are. They say exactly what’s on their minds.

(1) Mindfulness In Plain English by Venerable Henepola Gunaratana

(2) Being Present and Mindfulness Meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn



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[Conscious Parenting; Invitation to the Inner World by Antonia Martinez, PhD. Featured in \[www.healingspirit.com\]\(http://www.healingspirit.com\)](#). Read portions of the article as follows “We routinely and unknowingly turn down children’s invitations to their inner, spiritual world. When we parent unconsciously, interacting with our children without awareness of their spiritual needs (or our own), we unknowingly solidify or help create behavioral, emotional, and mental patterns that keep the child from fulfilling those needs. Likewise, we can wear away inherent, beneficial patterns that would assist the child in experiencing outer harmony with the inner, spiritual world. ..Brain research indicates that adults spend approximately 80% of their wakefulness at the beta (the most irregular wave pattern also carrying the lowest power voltage. Associated with the normal, waking state for most adults) level of brain activity. Children, however, before reaching puberty, spend 80% of their waking hours in the alpha (produced in meditative states. Accelerates the body’s natural healing process. Can change to theta waves) state-the electrical equivalent of a meditative state. They are, therefore, in a heightened state of sensitivity and awareness most of the time. A child’s mind is in an almost constant state of meditation and

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contemplation. Children are having a much more profound experience with the inner and outer worlds than we realize. The majority of their childhood is a meditation”.

Recommend reading [The Indigo Children and An Indigo Celebration by Lee Carroll and Jan Tober](#). An Indigo Child is one who displays a new and unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a pattern of behavior generally undocumented before. This pattern has common unique factors that suggest that those who interact with them change their treatment and upbringing of them in order to achieve balance. To ignore these new patterns is to potentially create imbalance and frustration in the mind of this precious new life.

I had an opportunity to teach a few Mindfulness classes at an [Alternative High School](#). We practiced silent and guided meditation, eating mindfully and gentle yoga stretches. There were 12 students that participated and I would say at least 3 were really interested.

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There were 5 females and 7 males. My theory is if I can help one child, then it was worth the effort. I also think that there may be some long-term effects that aren't noticed in the short term. I'd like to share some of the students' responses to the mindfulness sessions. (Cliff, Alex, Pat) Copies available upon request.

You may have heard of [Mattie J. T. Stepanek](#): He's been featured in various newspapers and on television. He's only 12 years old and he was on the New York Times bestsellers list for his book called "Journey Through Heartsongs". He has mitochondria and myopathy; a rare degenerative neuro-muscular disease. In spite of his illness; his wisdom and outlook on life is beyond that of a 12 year old and he's living life mindfully. I'd like to read a poem he wrote from [Hope through Heartsongs](#) entitled "[For Our World](#)".

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There is a [Young Adults Retreat at Insight meditation Society \(IMS\)](#) started in 1987 with 10 young people, all of whom were children of meditators. Over the years this retreat for teens has increased to include 60 yogis. For many young people it is an annual event, an introduction to dharma, and an opportunity for practice to deepen. Below are some thoughts from a group of yogis who participated on at least three of the retreats. Copies are available upon request. (Jessica, Sarah, Mark, Mark) “Reprinted by permission of Inquiring Mind, the Journal of Vipassana Community. Copyright 2000. for a subscription, please write to Inquiring Mind, P.O. Box 9999 Berkeley, CA 94709 or visit www.inquiringmind.com

And now the instructor’s point of view; Andrew, who works with at-risk youth.

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Another example of mindfulness and children would be

Judith Lyons, holistic teacher, Body & Soul Magazine July/August 2002

by Christine Richmond

Judith leads the students at south Boston High School (an alternative high school for high-risk seniors) with a 15-minute guided meditation. She developed a program called redemption Spirit Mask project. Her goal is “to introduce these kids to the self-the person that exists inside who has some power over their lives and some control over their thinking. “It’s really a tool to empower them”. After meditating the students explore identity, writing assignments, discussions and create a plaster mask of either their inner or outer selves. In 5 years, 80% of Judith’s students graduated from her program at South Boston.

Another article featured in Better Homes & Gardens, November, 2002 edition called
Calm in the Classroom by Jeanne Ambrose, Illustrations by Caroline Hamel (attached)

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150 students participated in a blood pressure reduction study in Richmond county School District in Augusta, Georgia conducted by Verson Barnes, PhD. Of the Georgia Prevention Institute. The research sought to determine if relaxation techniques could alleviate hypertension.

The student meditated for 15 minutes at school every morning and at home each night.

After four months, many students showed a drop in blood pressure, absenteeism and suspensions. That’s major!

Another study conducted with fifth-eight grade students participated in Transcendental meditation, a technique that involves sitting comfortably with eyes closed while the mind settles into a state of calmness and the body relaxes, twice a day. “Children are introspective, they talk their feelings out”, according to Principal Carmen N’Namdi.”

They have a grip on their emotions. I think it comes from having that quiet time”.

The teachers participated also. They found no need to raise their voice, or fuss or cuss.

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Another study Published in the [Journal of Research & Development in Education](#), [Volume 27, Number 4, Summer 1994](#) was founded by Harvard physician Herbert Benson- a proponent of the “Relaxation Response” method of reducing stress. His results: “sitting quietly for 20 minutes twice a day leads to healthy decreases in blood pressure, breathing rate, metabolism, and brain activity.

The Journal of Research and Development in Education, Summer 1994; a study was conducted to measure “Increases in positive psychological characteristics with a new relaxation-response curriculum in high school students” Facilitated by Harvard Medical School, Mind/Body Medical Institute, Deaconess Hospital, etc.

Self esteem and locus of control were evaluated in a group of high school students prior to, during and following a single academic year. Using a randomized, crossover experimental design, students were exposed to either a health curriculum based on

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elicitation of the relaxation response and then a follow-up period, OR to a control health curriculum and then the relaxation-response based curriculum.

Exposure to the relaxation-response curriculum, but not the control curriculum, resulted in significant increases in self-esteem and a tendency toward greater internal locus of control scores. These results suggest that incorporation of the relaxation response into high school curricula may be a practical and efficient way to increase positive psychological attitudes.

Also measured in the [Journal of research & Development in Education, volume 33, Number 3, Spring 2000](#), Athens, Georgia was Academic Performance among Middle School Students after exposure to a relaxation response curriculum. The relationship between exposure to a relaxation response curriculum and academic achievement was

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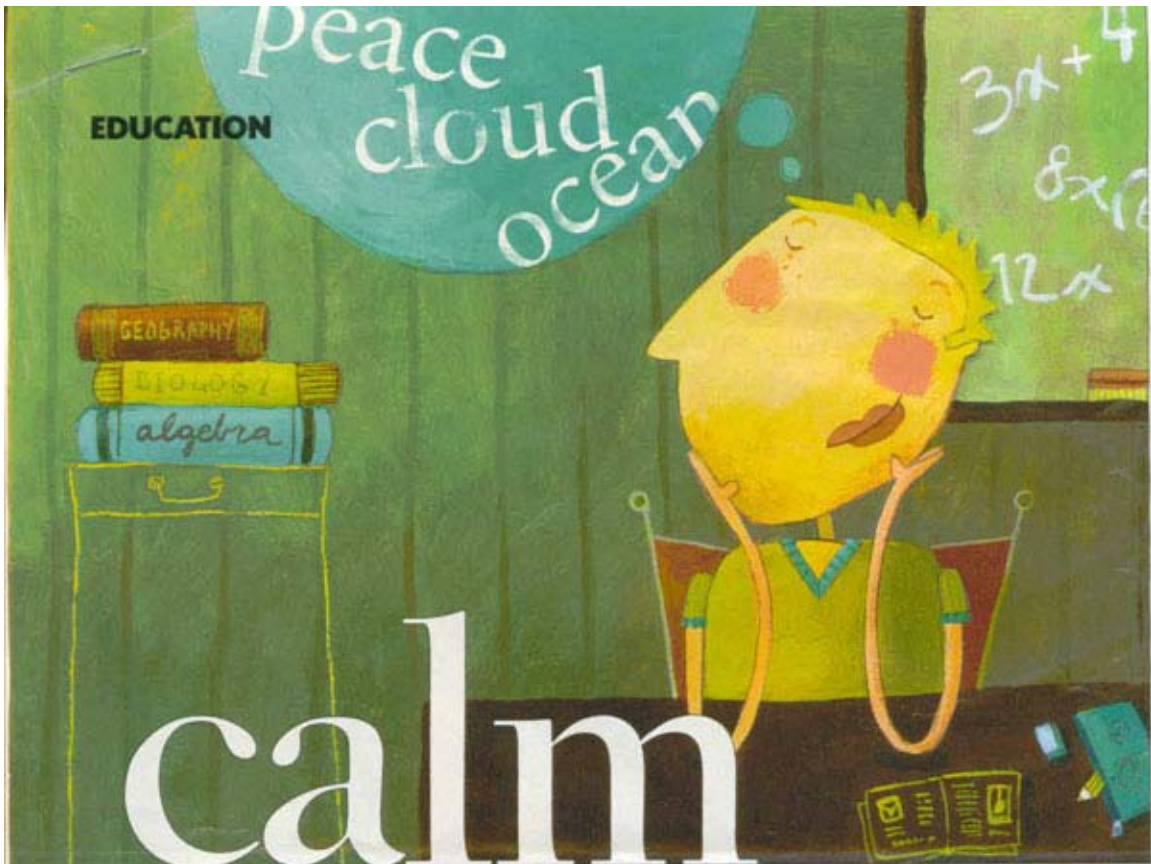


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examined. Teachers were trained in how to teach relaxation response exercises to the students. Four measures of academic outcomes were analyzed: grade point average, work habits, cooperating, and attendance. Students who had more than two exposures to semester long classes in which the teachers had been trained in the relaxation response curriculum had higher grade point averages, work habits scores, and cooperation scores than students who had two or fewer exposures. In addition, students who had exposures to the relaxation response curriculum showed an improvement in academic scores over the course of a 2-year period.

A question and answer period followed.

Wishing you all peace!



EDUCATION

calm

IN THE CLASSROOM

FOR MANY KIDS, A LITTLE QUIET TIME OFFERS A LOT OF STRESS-REDUCING BENEFITS. SOME SCHOOLS ARE ENCOURAGING A KIND OF HUSH THAT HELPS.

Johnny Beard says he used to be “kind of hyper.” He was a whirlwind of activity, plus he had high blood pressure—at the age of 18. Then he started meditating in school.

“I used to bounce off the walls,” he says. “Now, I just chill.”

Johnny was one of 150 students who took part in a blood pressure reduction study in Richmond County School District in Augusta, Georgia. The research sought to determine if relaxation techniques could alleviate hypertension. Students meditated for 15 minutes at school every morning and at home each night, says Vernon Barnes, Ph.D., of the Georgia Prevention Institute, who conducted the study funded by the American Heart Association and the National Institutes of Health. After four months, many students showed a drop in blood pressure, and the school began to see a drop, too—in student absenteeism and school suspensions. Findings like these are the sort that turn educators’ heads, and with good reason.

BY JEANNE AMBROSE ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAROLINE HAMEL

"An excessive number of students are engaging in fighting, arguing, tardiness, and truancy. Preventing this negative behavior has become a national priority," says Barnes. "What's needed are programs of demonstrated efficacy that can be added to the standard school curriculum." Meditation and similar techniques may be just the ticket.

The Georgia students were taught Transcendental Meditation (TM), a well-studied technique that involves sitting comfortably with eyes closed while the mind settles into a state of calmness and the body relaxes.

In Detroit, students at Nataki Talibah Schoolhouse report to the gym first thing in the morning and at the end of each day to practice TM. Principal Carmen N'Namdi refers to this period as quiet time. "If you use the word 'meditation' people connect that with religion. It's not," she says. "There are no values involved. There's nothing to believe in. It's just physical. It releases stress from the body."

Nearly all of the fifth- through eighth-graders choose to participate in the twice-a-day sessions. "If nothing more, it enhances the school culture. The children are more introspective, they talk their feelings out. They have a grip on their emotions. I think it comes from having that quiet time," N'Namdi says.

Other focusing techniques have an impact on student behavior, says Jennifer Johnston, director of curriculum at the Education Initiative at the Mind/Body Medical Institute. Founded by Harvard physician Herbert Benson—proponent of the "relaxation response" method of reducing stress to maintain health—the institute has looked at the relaxation response's impact on everything

from blood pressure and heart rate, to brain-wave activity and metabolism. The results, in a nutshell: Sitting quietly for 20 minutes twice a day leads to healthy decreases in blood pressure, breathing rate, metabolism, and brain activity.

SILENCE SOOTHES FACULTY MEMBERS TOO

Taking time each day to participate in some form of relaxation has helped more than just the students. Quentin Motley, a high school principal involved in the Augusta, Georgia, schools project, is proof of that.

"I had high blood pressure," he says. "Now I take time during the day, close the door to my office, turn the light out, and meditate." His elevated blood pressure dropped and now "I don't fuss, don't cuss, and don't raise my voice," he says. Motley noticed that meditation had a calming effect on students, too. "It gives them a chance to relax. We don't have as many fights as we used to—there's not as much hostility."

The trick to attaining the calming benefits, though, is to realize that all students are unique, Johnston says. "Some students respond to sitting in silence. But for students with attention deficit disorder (ADD), seated meditation can be torture." Options for such students might be yoga or similar movement-based practices.

Diane Smallwood, Psy.D., president of the National Association of School Psychologists, agrees. "It's important that students find their own strategies. For some, quiet time is beneficial. For others, shooting a basketball or running track is more helpful."

The Mind/Body Medical Institute has resources, audio and video tapes, CDs, and data to support the relaxation response. Check out its Web site: www.mbmi.org. For details about Transcendental Meditation, visit www.tm.org, where you'll find scientific studies and related links. ☺

MORE ABOUT LOWERING STRESS
www.bhg.com/meditation

DO-IT-YOURSELF RELAXATION

Formal training in Transcendental Meditation can be pricey, up to \$2,500. The schools that offer it often rely on grants and donations to provide funding so all students can participate. At Nataki Talibah Schoolhouse in Detroit, major benefactors included Chrysler, General Motors, and private donors.

Relaxation response techniques, as used at Boston's Mind/Body Medical Institute, can be self-taught. If practiced regularly, like TM, the positive effects are cumulative, says Jennifer Johnston.

The process is fairly simple.

- Begin by sitting comfortably with your eyes closed.
- Choose a point of focus. It can be a word, a short phrase, or even a prayer, Johnston says. Commonly chosen words include ocean, peace, or calm.
- Breathe naturally, but slowly, silently repeating your focus word or phrase every time you exhale.
- If your mind wanders or becomes distracted, direct your thoughts back to your focus word.

"We usually suggest this practicing relaxation technique for 20 minutes once or twice a day, although with children—depending on their age—5 or 10 minutes is enough," Johnston says.