Developmental Applications of Mindfulness:

Big Kids to Little Kids, We’re all Special

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Objectives

- Participants will learn about the (recent) history of mindfulness
- Participants will practice developmental applications of mindfulness
- Participants will learn about the polyvagal theory and mindfulness strategies
- Participants will be exposed to mindfulness strategies that encourage resilience and help to reclaim hope
What is Mindfulness?

ATTENTION

ACCEPTANCE
With intent, mindfulness can be …

Proactive: for health; prevention

Reactive; Interventive; skill-building

Practiced in numerous settings
Mindfulness in the United States

1\textsuperscript{st} wave: Medical and physical applications
- Jon Kabat-Zinn: late 1970s, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction –
- paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally
- minimizing physical and psychological stress symptoms; pain a particular focus
- 1980-1990 increased use in medical settings

2\textsuperscript{nd} Wave: Psychological settings, 1990-2005
- Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

3\textsuperscript{rd} Wave: Educational Settings

Mindfulness also a 3\textsuperscript{rd} wave type of therapy that followed behavioral and then cognitive.
Attention

The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. No one is compos sui (master of himself) if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical instructions for bringing it about.

William James, 1890
Father of Psychology
Cognitive Neuroscience Model of Attention and Meditation

- Focus and Stay
- Your mind begins to wander
  - Nonintentional distraction
- You recognize your mind wandering
- You let it go (nonjudgemental)
- And return your focus

This is continuous and brain buffing!

How we focus attention helps directly shape the mind.
Let’s try it!!

- Focus and Stay
- Your mind begins to wander
  - Nonintentional distraction
- You recognize your mind wandering
- You let it go (nonjudgemental)
- And return your focus
Labeling

- Applying mental labels to different physical, emotional and mental events
- Noticing your relationship to the emotion
- Notice some more without words
- Don’t judge it. Don’t let it rule.
- Let it go.
- Practice self-compassion. It’s ok.
Developing an Emotional Vocabulary

Feelings and Emotions
happy  surprised
sad   tired
cross embarrassed
worried confused
scared hot
excited cold

Listening to My Body
By Gabi Garcia
Illustrated by Ying Hui Tan
Negativity Bias  
Rick Hanson  

- It’s survival!  

- Nurturing Sensations: point them out, soaking them in  
  - Watching a sunset  
  - Eating a strawberry  
  - Jumping in the swimming pool  
  - The smell of a flower  
  - The feel of a smooth stone  

- For the purpose of being able to stabilize the experience of feeling a positive  

The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences, though like Teflon for positive experiences.
Life Skills

More simply put, Self Regulation

Hope and Resilience
The Polyvagal Theory: A two part brain model that allows us to look at emotions through the lens of the nervous system

The Sympathetic Nervous System

- The gas pedal
- Fight or flight in response to threat perception
  - Startle, Pupil dilation, self-protection, increased muscle tone, striking and/or recoiling, digestion shuts down, heart rate goes up, blood to the extremities

The Parasympathetic Nervous System

- The brakes
- Rest and digest
  - Relaxed, small or typically sized pupils, cool rather than hot or flushed skin, digestion works, slow breathing, slow heart rate
"AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONSE"

SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE
"FIGHT OR FLIGHT"

PARASYMPATHETIC RESPONSE
"REST & DIGEST"
Porges’ View of the ANS
The metaphor of safety

Environment: outside and inside the body

Nervous System

Safety
- Optimal arousal level
- Rest and digest
- Parasympathetic ventral vagal system
- “Social Engagement System”
- Eye contact, facial expression, vocalization

Danger
- Hyperarousal
- Increased Heart Rate
- Sympathetic System
- Mobilization – “fight-flight”
- Dissociated rage, panic

Life threat
- Hypoarousal
- Decreased Heart Rate
- Parasympathetic dorsal vagal system
- Immobilization–“freeze”
- Dissociated collapse

Wheatley-Crosbie, adapted from Porges, 2006
(VVC) Ventral Vagal Complex: Signaling System for motion, emotion & communication. (Our Social Engagement System)

(SNS) Sympathetic Nervous System: Mobilization System for Flight or Fight Behaviors. (Our Aggressive Defense System)


Our Autonomic Nervous System fires muscular tensions triggered by feedback signals from the external & internal world at millisecond speeds below conscious awareness. These muscles tensions fire our Thoughts?
Resetting fight or flight. Show sympathy to the sympathetic nervous system.

- We all know the strategy breathe, but how to put it in practice. -- multisensory approaches

4, 3, 2, 1

- Notice 4 green objects in the environment – Take a breath
- Notice 3 sounds outside of the room – Take a breath
- Notice 2 sounds in the room – Take a breath
- Put your hand on your anchor (your heart or your belly)
Mindfulness assists with increased attunement to (sympathetic) arousal.

Mindfulness helps with resolution of waves of energy.
Parasympathetic System (Porges)

● **Dorsal Vagal**
  ○ Helpless, freezing response
  ○ Ancient part of our nervous system
  ○ Unmyelinated
  ○ Everything goes into slow motion
  ○ May not “connect”
  ○ (dissociation)

● **Ventral Vagal**
  ○ Attunement and orientation
  ○ The person relaxed, scanning, attuned with good eye contact, **comfortable and safe**
  ○ Mindfulness reconnects kids with the environment
  ○ Bringing kids, and yourselves back into a ventral state is an important skill
  ○ Highlights the importance of having a safe place in at least one environment, hopefully more.
Ventral Vagal: Mindfulness + Neurobiology

- Orienting and scanning
  - Anchors – visual, sound, tactile, space itself (next slide)
  - If nervous system overwhelmed
    - Return to the environment
    - Looking around, neck muscles, scanning
    - Take a break with relaxed attention

Mindfulness applied with the senses
Social Engagement Anchor Examples

- Scanning
- Sound - with singing bowl
- How many sounds can you hear?
- Standing and Shifting.
- In touch with yourself.
Why is breathing so hard?
The Breath

- Overbreathing
- Fast Breathing
- Chest Breathing
- Holding your Breath

- Increased Stress and Tension
- Less energy
- Less Efficient

**Go Parasympathetic!**

- 1. Breathe through your nose
  - It filters and prepares the air

- Inhale with your diaphragm
  - All the way into your belly

- Breathe relaxed
  - It helps your body tune in

- Breathe rhythmically

- Breathe Silently

Diaphragmatic breathing (*also referred to as "slow abdominal breathing") is something you can do *anytime and anywhere* to instantly stimulate your vagus nerve and lower stress responses associated with "fight-or-flight" mechanisms.
Practice a stealth breath

- Take a moment to brainstorm 10 times you might take a stealth breath
- Try it!!
- Have your students brainstorm 10 places they might take a stealthy breath.
- Share it!
Mindful Speech and Actions

T H I N K
r e n e i
u l s c n
e p p e d
f i s
u r s
l i a
r
n y
Ending Thoughts

- When you have (or work with) children, you realize how easy it is to not see them fully …

- Being a parent (or working with children) is one of the greatest mindfulness practices of all.

  Jon Kabat-Zinn