

3/11/2020 Christopher Willard Ph.D

GPS Mindfulness

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- Educating Mindfully book
- Growing up Mindful book
- Alphabreaths book
  
- The best thing we can do for our kids is have our own mindfulness practice
- What makes kids resilient despite multiple ACES?
  - One consistent and positive adult role model significantly changes their trajectory
  - This is why we need to focus on ourselves
  - The best intervention for kids is to surround them with mindful adults
  - Kids cannot regulate themselves until they feel safe
- Teach components of mindfulness to children rather than them needing the entirety of a mindfulness practice
  - Teach paying attention
    - § How present you are in the moment is twice as important for happiness than what you are actually doing
    - § 47.8% of the time our mind is wandering as adults
  - Teach non-judgement
    - § Comparison online and in classes- we all have critical voices in our head
    - § “Don’t believe everything you think”
      - We are hard on ourselves
      - Activity: Write thoughts down and add in front of it- I’m having a thought that...I’m bad at math”
      - OR add ...”yet” (growth mindset)
        - This helps us to see our thoughts more objectively rather than letting them control our emotions
  - Teaching students mindfulness is building a pathway to get into the present moment more quickly... notice the sunshine etc.
    - § Under a lot of stress we see things less accurately
    - § Teens are the most stressed group
    - § Public health intervention to wire their brains for more resilience from young age
- Stress= Regress
  - Fight- aggressive/ Flight - anxious/ “Freeze” leads to dissociation and / “Forget It” leads to depression
  - Everyone looks like a threat or enemy
- Strategies to teach
  - Use your breath like a remote control to turn down the “alarm” that makes it hard to focus (4-6 breaths in a minute is good)
    - § Regulate attention, emotion, impulses
  - Training wheels for mindful breathing- Alphabreaths
    - § Put hands behind your head and lean back to deep breathe
    - § Alligator breaths (open and close hands)
    - § Hot chocolate breath (hold hands up and breathe in to smell it then breathe to cool it off)
  - Sensory- body awareness

- § Be aware of hands, feet on the ground, finger on forehead
  - § Hands- clap together notice where they met etc.
    - Heat, cold, moisture
  - § Feet- if anxiety is in head move attention down body into feet
    - Feet in socks, socks in shoes, shoes on floor
  - § Use these before the game, tests etc. as teacher is passing them out etc.
- Use breath
- Engage five senses
  - § Sound countdown
    - Notice farthest away sound and closest sound – above behind below, left, right etc.
  - § Ring and bell and focus on the sounds from start, middle, end
- Engage imagination as anchor (play, games, guided imagery)
  - § Stand still like a knight guarding a castle
  - § Visualizing something
  - § Yoga poses (dog, mountain etc.)
  - § Listen to favorite song but follow one instrument
  - § Listen to sad song/ angry song etc. notice how body feels
    - Recognize how emotions feel in your body and then know what to try to regulate those emotions better
- Into things we always do: eating, working, chores etc.
- Mind jars with glitter (glitter is thoughts- we want them to settle so we can see our thoughts but they aren't clouding our vision)
- 7-11 breaths
- Labyrinth tracing with fingers as you breathe
- Recognize space between stimulus and response and there lies growth and power (Victor Frankel) Respond vs. React
- Training our brains
  - Muscles bigger with work outs AND brain more connections in brain and more gray matter in PFC and INSULAR CORTEX (smaller in autism- helps social connections) and amygdala (anxiety has alarm that goes off at the wrong times- enter café vs. step into traffic - Amygdala fight or flight shrinks with practice)
  - Single tasking not multi-tasking “do one thing at a time day”
  - What am I doing right now and how do I know I am doing it?
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