

# MINDFULNESS FOR TEACHERS

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Simple Steps to Improve Your Focus  
and Peace of Mind



# Molly Kiebel, Presenter

- Former Language Arts teacher
- Married with two active daughters
- Loves travel and exploring the outdoors with family and friends
- Taught for 15 years in both Minnesota and California
- Current Role: Curriculum & Instruction Specialist



# Agenda

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- What is mindfulness?
- How can it help me?
- What does the research say?
- Can it help in my classroom?
- How do I get started?
- Additional resources.

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# What is Mindfulness?



*“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” Jon Kabat Zinn*

*“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn’t more complicated than that. It is opening to or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.” Sylvia Boorstein*

Mindfulness is about training yourself to pay attention in a specific way. When a person is mindful, they:

- Focus on awareness of the present moment
- Set aside thoughts or concerns regarding past or future events
- Purposefully concentrate on what is happening around them
- Acknowledge but do not judge their feelings or actions and avoid labeling things as as ‘good’ or ‘bad’

# The Power of Mindfulness

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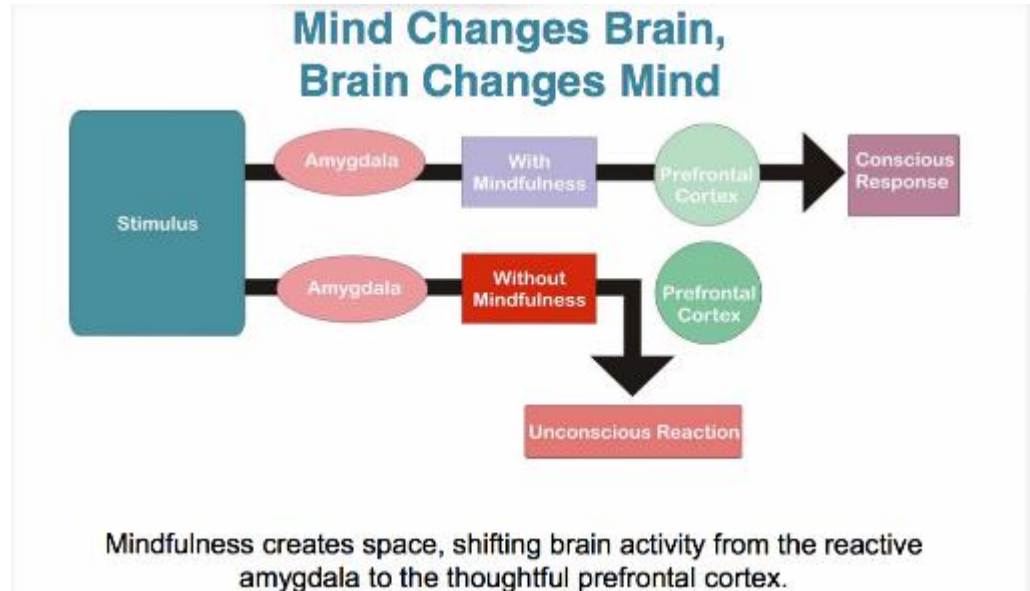
- Improve Focus
- Reduce Negative Self-talk/ “Brain Chatter”
- Connect With Others
- Support Emotional Regulation and Improve Mental Health
- Lower Stress



# Mindfulness Research

## “Overriding The Amygdala Hijack”

When Mindfulness is practiced, changes in the activity and the thickness of the Prefrontal Cortex have been seen through the use of MRI's and EEG's



# The Importance of Mindfulness for Teachers

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## Teachers and Stress

- 46% percent of teachers say they feel high daily stress
- Between 30 and 40 percent of teachers leave the profession in their first five years

*2016 Gallup Report: State of America's Schools*

## Top Amygdala Triggers at Work:

- Being treated disrespectfully, unfairly, or condescendingly
- Feeling that you are underappreciated or not listened to
- Being held to unrealistic deadlines or tasks

*Dan Goleman: The Brain and Emotional Intelligence*

## Secondary Trauma in Education Fields

# Getting Started: Mindful Breathing



- *Breath is the bridge which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again. For when you focus and come back to your breath, you find the grounding within your body. You need to search no further. It is right there within you. It is always there.*

- *When the moments seem stressful or the frustrations mount, remember to breathe. You can do this anywhere you are at. That few seconds of noticing your breath rise and fall, can be enough to cause a shift within yourself.*

— Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*

- *The moment you realize you are not present, you are in fact present.*

— *Bob Stahl, mindfulness trainer (My favorite!)*



# Try It: Mindful Breathing

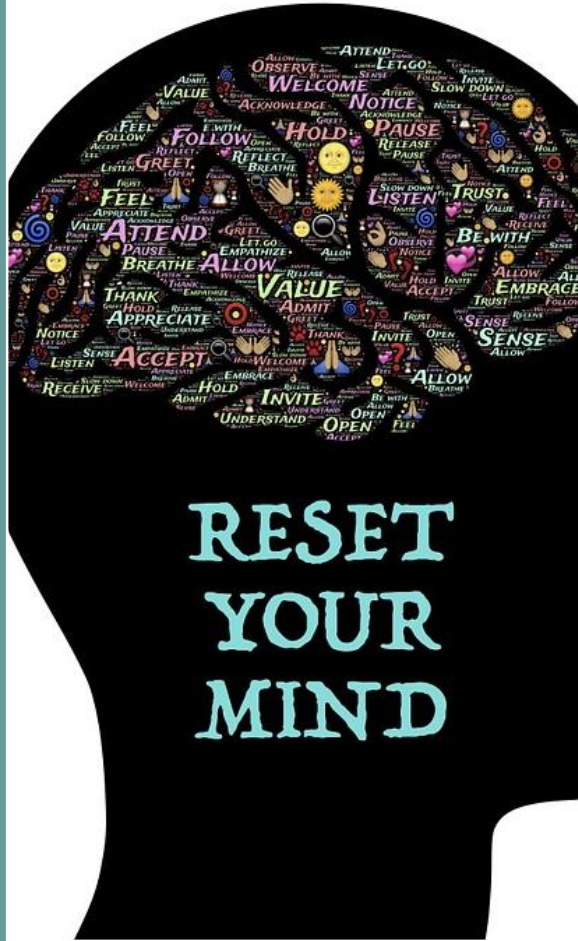


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEfs5TJZ6Nk>

“The present  
moment is filled  
with joy and  
happiness. If you  
are attentive, you  
will see it.”

-Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace is Every Step:  
The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life

# Bringing Mindfulness Into Each Day



- Master the Mindful Moment: STOP  
Stop,  
Take a Breath,  
Observe (acknowledge and allow what's here),  
Proceed and be present
- Find a 3-5 or 10 Minute **Body Scan** That Works For You
- Develop a **Morning Routine**
- Practice Gratitude  
Daily Gratitude Moment: *Where can I start to be more mindful/  
honor or recognize my gratefulness?*
  - Journaling
  - Photography
  - Walking
  - Family Meals
  - Daily Rituals: Gratitude Jar



# Sharing Mindfulness in Your Classroom

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- Have your own practice in place
- Teach students about the benefits of Mindfulness in age-appropriate ways
- Choose a time and create the space
- Share your experiences
- Practice each day

## ***A few things to consider:***

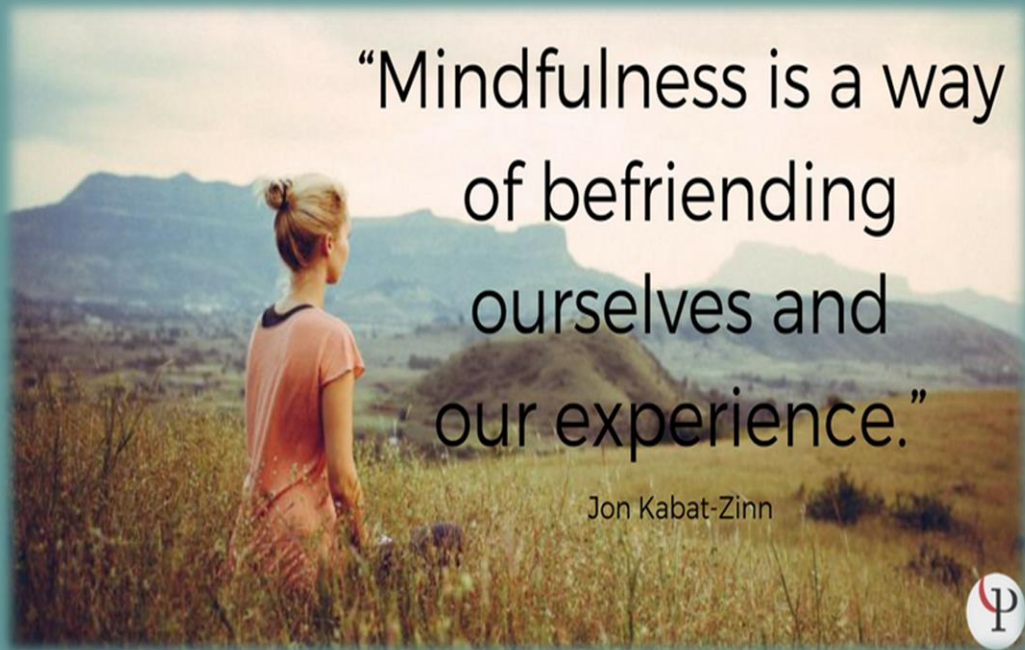
*Concern about the spiritual element: talk with others, especially administrators and team leaders before you start, use consistent language (calming techniques, focusing strategies, etc). Be clear in what you are doing with students, colleagues and parents.*

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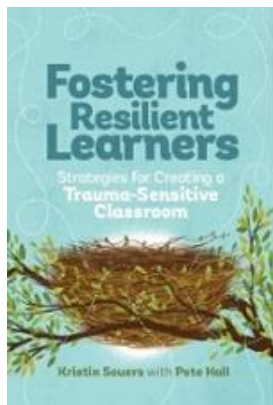
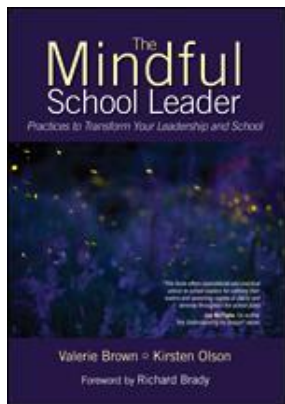


# Next Steps

- Resource Pages
- Share your experiences!
- Molly.Kiebel@learnersedgeinc.com







# Learners Edge Resources



- **Course 898: Mindful Leadership in The Schools**

- 3 Graduate Credits**

For school leaders and teacher-leaders wishing to incorporate mindfulness into their lives, this course provides a clear and engaging pathway. Participants will discover how mindfulness can help manage the demands of leadership, improve communication, and support a healthy lifestyle.

- **Course 5007: Trauma-Sensitive Teaching: Helping Students Overcome Adverse Experiences**

- 3 Graduate Credits**

In this course, you will learn how to help your students overcome adverse experiences as you develop trauma-sensitive strategies for your classroom. Explore the foundations of trauma-informed teaching, including an emphasis on relationship-building, student choice, safety, and resiliency. This course will also present a thought-provoking look at the importance of self-care for educators working with students impacted by trauma and provide teachers with the tools they need to build their own wellness plan.

- **Online Blog Post: Mindfulness in the Classroom**

- **\* Free\* Edge Express Workshop 433: Ready, Set, Breathe: Lessons for Calm in the Classroom**

Understand and apply the latest brain research to help students manage stress in more productive ways. We'll introduce you to ideas to teach students about the impact of stress on our bodies and provide several strategies, including Mindfulness and self-management methods, to foster calm in your classroom.

# References and Resources

## Slide Resources:

- <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-mindfulness-definition/>
- <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/12/30/505432203/teachers-are-stressed-and-that-should-stress-us-all>

## Other Mindfulness Exercises to Try:

- STOP Practice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiuTpeu5xQc>
- Mindful Breathing and Walking, Body Scan:  
<https://resources.corwin.com/brownmindfulleader>
- Yoga “Leg Up the Wall” Pose: <https://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/wellbeing/legs-up-the-wall-pose-at-work>
- Free Phone Apps for iPhone and Android: *Headspace; Aura; Stop, Breathe & Think*

# References and Resources

## Research on Benefits of Mindfulness:

- <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/benefits-of-mindfulness/>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>

## Secondary Trauma Resources:

- <https://traumaawareschools.org/secondaryStress>

## Mindfulness in Schools:

- <http://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/08/mindfulness-education-schools-meditation/402469>
- *Hand Model for Students:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>



# QUESTIONS?

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