



MERCER
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ENGAGED LEARNING

MINDFULNESS

An Effective Tool to Help Kids Learn Self-Regulation

Image source: Building Blocks Therapy

What is mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is about learning how to focus on what's happening now and controlling our thoughts about other things going on in our lives that may be fed by anxiety, stress, or worry.
- There are three key characteristics of mindfulness that can be really helpful for both teaching and learning – intention, attention, and attitude.
- Check out this video from the University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality & Healing for a brief explanation of what these three characteristics mean and how they relate.



If the video does not play, click this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWJUv1IH-Ng&feature=emb_title



Elements of Mindfulness Activities

If you google “mindfulness activities,” you’ll get a huge list of ideas that range from yoga and meditation to nature walks to coloring. There is not one best way to practice – it depends on the person. According to the blog [The Beautiful Life Plan](#), a mindfulness activity will typically have several of the following characteristics:

- Can do alone
- Doesn’t require much thinking
- Easily accessible
- Focuses on a simple task



Bite-Sized Mindfulness Exercises are Quick and Effective



- You may notice that many of the mindfulness practices that rise to the top of the search engine results tend to take time, and time is not something you have much of during a tutoring session.
- Enter “bite-sized mindfulness,” or short 1-3 minute activities you can do to practice mindfulness. These are typically breathing exercises, and they can be really useful in a tutoring setting.



The Impact of Bite-Sized Mindfulness on Learning

To learn more, watch this TEDx Talk from Kira Willey about the impact that mindfulness exercises – even bite-sized activities – can have on both student learning and teacher experiences. Then come back to this Canvas page to do some reflection.

- Think about your experiences as a student. What experiences, if any, did you have with mindfulness practices? If you didn't have exposure to mindfulness practices in school, what are your thoughts on their relevance?
- Now, as an adult, what role, if any, might mindfulness play in your personal growth and development?



If the video does not play, click this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOlldmMK_zM



Place the Mindfulness Mask on Yourself First

If you've ever flown on an airplane, you've heard the flight attendant instruct parents to put on their own oxygen masks before helping their children. Have you ever stopped to think about why a parent, who is supposed to prioritize their child's health above their own, is supposed to take care of themselves first?

It's because you can't help someone else breathe if you're not breathing.



Place the Mindfulness Mask on Yourself First

Let's apply that principle to tutoring. Think back on your experiences with your students (or if you're a new tutor, with kids in general).

- How often did you join a session while you were still agonizing over that embarrassing thing you said, or worrying about an upcoming assignment, or anxious about getting to class on time?
- Have you ever zoned out while your student was talking or reading?



Place the Mindfulness Mask on Yourself First

It's likely that there have been some occasions where your mind was focused elsewhere – that's just part of being a human. But what happens if you're distracted and your student can feel that you aren't "present" with them during their tutoring session?

- What message does that send about how that student is valued?
- What progress or small achievements do you risk missing out on if your mind is wandering?

Just as we want children to develop self-regulation skills so that they are better able to focus and engage, it's important as adults that we don't forget to keep practicing this important skill.



Good Teachers Practice Mindfulness Too

To help explain why it's important for tutors to engage in some bite-sized mindfulness before starting a tutoring session, watch this TEDx Talk from teacher Amy Burke about how incorporating mindfulness into her own life made her a better teacher.

- What was your biggest takeaway from the two videos in this module about mindfulness?
- How will you plan to incorporate mindfulness into the beginning of your tutoring sessions?
- What kinds of activities do you want to try together with your student?



If the video does not play, click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2i2B44sLVCM>

