growing up stressed? or growing up mindful?

Christopher Willard, PsyD
CLEARING A SPACE
INTRODUCTIONS

Hi, I'm Marcy Peterson, even though there's no such thing as the 'self'.
OVERVIEW

• What is mindful awareness?
• Why teach our kids?
• HOW can we teach our kids
• The science of mindful awareness
• A few practices
The best way to create stressed out, miserable, checked out kids, is to surround them with stressed out, miserable, checked out adults.

BUT.

The best way to create mindful, present, compassionate kids is to surround them with mindful, present, compassionate adults.
GROWING MINDFUL

Living Mindfully
Practicing Independently
Teaching Mindfulness
Mindful Community
Your Own Practice

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NEVER...
In the history of calming down
Has anyone ever calmed down
By being told to calm down.
MAKE "PARENT" A NOUN AGAIN.
MINDFULNESS

What is it?
MINDFULNESS

“Paying Attention… to the here and now … with kindness & curiosity (acceptance & nonjudgment)
PAYING ATTENTION

Forms of Payment Accepted

- [ ] VISA
- [ ] AMEX
- [ ] CASH
- [x] ATTENTION
THE PRESENT MOMENT

Your body is present. Is your mind?

Past Present Future

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TAKING A MINDFUL SEAT

• S Sensations
• E Emotions
• A Actions
• T Thoughts
"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I change" – Carl Rogers

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MINDFULNESS

“Paying Attention... to the here and now ... with kindness & curiosity (acceptance & nonjudgment)
Mind Full, or Mindful?

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THE STUDENT PARADOX

“Pick two”

Studying

No Sleep

No Friends

Impossible

Social Life

No Decent Grades

Sleep

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THE STRESS RESPONSE
STRESS = REGRESS
(FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE/FORGET IT)

Physiology of threat- system evolved to keep us safe from physical threat but we still use it emotional threat (academic, social, athletic, etc)

BRAIN

• Amygdala (cave dweller brain) ON
• Prefrontal cortex (our evolved higher brain) OFF
• Everyone looks like an enemy or threat
• Only thinking “How do I make it end?” not “Who gets hurt?”

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Image courtesy shutterstoo
STRESS = REGRESS
(FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE/FORGET IT)

Physiology of threat- system evolved to keep us safe from physical threat but we still use it emotional threat (academic, social, athletic, etc)

BODY
• Breath tightens, heart rate up, heat up, muscles clench
• Digestion shuts off
• Immune system shuts off (who needs long term survival?)
STRESS = PROGRESS  
(ATTEND & BEFRIEND)

Physiology of Mindfulness and Compassion
System for caregiving, connecting and feeling safe

BRAIN
• Amygdala off, Prefrontal & Insular cortex on (caveman off)
• Open mind to see the larger picture, take 
  off negativity filters
  – Discern friend from foe, danger from safety
  – See short and long term consequences of action

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Image courtesy shuttersto
STRESS = PROGRESS
(ATTEND & BEFRIEND)

Physiology of Mindfulness and Compassion:
System for caregiving, connecting and feeling safe

BODY
• Breath becomes regular and even, heart rate slows, muscles relax, immune system and digestive system start working again

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Image courtesy shuttersto
USEFUL FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

**Anxious**
- Amygdala and limbic brain online
- Prefrontal cortex offline

**Depressed, disengaged**
- Learned helplessness
- Prefrontal cortex offline

**Fight/Flight**

**Freeze**
- Forget It

**Attend**
- Mindfulness
- Aware
- Present
- Prefrontal cortex online

**Befriend**
- Compassion & Self Compassion
- Engaged
- Curious
- Mirror neurons active
- Compassion for self and others

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COLLEGE FACTS

- One in four young adults have a diagnosable mental illness.
- One in three students seek mental health counseling during college.
- 75 percent of mental health conditions begin before the age of 24.
- College counseling centers report double digit growth in the use of their services in the past few years.
- In an ACHA report, students cited stress, depression and anxiety as among the top impediments to academic performance.
- 64 percent of young adults who are no longer in college are not attending college because of a mental health related reason.
- 7 percent of college students have “seriously considered suicide” in the past year.
REMOTE CONTROL
A: Alligator Breath:

Open your arms wide like alligator jaws on the inbreath,

And let them snap shut on the outbreath.
B: Butterfly Breath:

Flap your arms wide like butterfly wings on the inbreath,

And back in on the outbreath.
C: Chocolate Breath:
Breathe in smelling...
Breathe out cooling off...
7/11 BREATH

Breathe in for a count of 7...
Breathe out for a count of 11...
THE SILENT SIGH

KEEP CALM AND SIGH HARD
HOBERMAN SPHERE
UN-WILTING

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ADAPTING MINDFULNESS

Using the Breath
Engaging the five senses as anchors
Engaging the imagination as an anchor
Utilize natural learning styles in teaching & reflecting
  Play, games, music, arts, sports and more!
Bringing mindfulness into everything we do
  Eating, walking, working, even chores and more
Different glitter for thoughts/feelings impulses

Larger jar to add all different colors for emotions and stir

Use as a timer

Pass the jar and everyone shares about their day

Different colored (or tinted) jars to pick up to represent different moods
WALKING MEDITATIONS

• Walking with coins on shoes
• The Ministry of Silly Walks
• Walking with all of our senses
• Walking to notice the beautiful
• Walking as quietly as possible
• Walk like... animal, emotions, zones...
MINDFUL GAMES

- Jenga blocks with mindfulness practices
MINDFUL CANDYLAND

• Blue: Describe a time that you were sad, or something that makes you sad, and how you felt better.
• Yellow: Describe a time that you were glad, or something that makes you glad to think about, and how you shared that with a friend
• Red: Describe a time that you were mad, or something that makes you mad to think about, and how you can deal with mad feelings.

• Purple: Notice one sound.
• Orange: Take one mindful breath.
• Green: Describe a sensation somewhere in your body.

Remember, if you get a double card, you have to think of two things!
What is happening?
THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

Impulsive, labile, no perspective, poor decision making, moody, irrational, poor moral reasoning, reactivity, lack of perspective, short attention span, aggressive, poor executive control...

(& many WONDERFUL qualities too)
Neurons that fire together, wire together.
Our most evolved self

Image courtesy shuttersto@drchriswillard
THE AMYGDALA

Our inner caveman

Image courtesy shutterstoclarity
THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

• Impulsive, labile, no perspective, poor decision making, irrational, poor reasoning, reactivity, lack of planning, short attention span…

• And what do mindfulness and meditation appear to influence?

• Reduced impulsivity… Mood/emotion regulation… Rational decision making… Perspective-taking… Better moral reasoning… Less emotionally reactive… Boosting attention span… Positive affect
NEUROPLASTICITY
EVIDENCE

- Concentration
- Creativity
- Fluid intelligence
- Patience
- Decision making
- Sustained and selective attention
- Learning & Memory
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Health
- Sleep
- STRESS
MINDFULNESS RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS BY YEAR, 1980 - 2013

Number of Publications


Number of Publications: 0, 0, 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 18, 21, 28, 44, 52, 76, 77, 122, 167, 228, 290, 353, 397, 477, 549
WHO IS PRACTICING?

- Athletes
- Politicians
- Musicians
- First Responders
- Actors
- Doctors
- Artists
- Scientists
- Writers
- CEO’s and business leaders
- And more…
WHAT IT’S NOT

- Not getting rid of stress – optimizing stress
- Not passive, active
- Not shutting off thoughts
- Not time consuming
- Not self-indulgent
THE LITTLE MOMENTS

• First thing in the morning/ Last thing at night
• Walking or commuting
• Waiting in line, waiting for the elevator
• Before diving into reading or writing
• Stressful moments
• Waiting for interviews, presentations, reviews
• Before and after meetings or phone calls
• Any time you feel the urge to…

• Mindfulness isn’t difficult or easy, REMEMBERING to be mindful is difficult! – Sharon Salzberg
N: Ninja Breath
Breathe in and breathe out as silently, slowly and still as you can.
50 MOMENTS AND REMINDERS TO CHECK IN RATHER THAN CHECK OUT!

1. Lying in bed first thing in the morning, just before getting up
2. Waiting for the bathtub to fill or the shower to warm up
3. Sitting at a stoplight
4. Riding between stations on subway
5. During attendance at school
6. Waiting for a video game to load
7. Waiting for a website to load or an application to open
8. Waiting for the toast to pop out of toaster
9. Waiting for a chat reply
10. Waiting for the bus, the subway, or a ride
11. Waiting to stand up at the end of a flight or bus ride
12. Waiting for everyone else to arrive in a room or at a table
13. Sitting in a waiting room
14. While the printer to print your documents
15. Standing in line
16. Waiting for the Wi-Fi to connect
17. Waiting for a computer to start up
18. Waiting for the gas tank of the car to fill
19. Waiting for brew
20. Waiting for your name to appear on a TV screen
21. Waiting for the finish
22. Waiting on the street
23. Droping into a mailbox
24. Hearing the chime of a social media alert
25. Hearing birds chirp
26. Hearing a particular word that day
27. Touching a doorknob
28. Seeing brake lights on the freeway
29. Standing at the bottom of a staircase
30. Hearing the ring of a phone
31. Passing a specific landmark on your commute to school or work
32. Flipping a light switch
33. Walking or driving by a stop sign
34. Hearing an airplane flying overhead
35. Hearing car horns blare in the distance
36. Feeling the wind on your cheek
37. Turning a faucet handle
38. Hearing an emergency siren
39. Hearing the sound of laughter
40. Glimpsing the moon during the daytime
41. Looking at your watch or a clock
42. Hearing the beeps of a truck backing up
43. Hearing the refrigerator or furnace click on
44. Hearing the sound of a car starting
45. Heading out to walk the dog
46. Right before falling asleep

50 MORE REMINDERS TO PAUSE AND BE MINDFUL

1. Meeting someone for the first time
2. Giving someone a fist bump or high five
3. During a time out in a game
4. Clicking a pen
5. When an annoying popup ad appears
6. Hearing your dog bark or cat meow
7. Putting your feet the floor as they get out of bed
8. Hearing the ding of the doorbell
9. Opening your wallet
10. Opening a book or notebook
11. Noticing a certain smell, like the smell of flowers
12. Hearing the sound of a crying baby
13. Feeling your hand creeping toward your phone
14. Whenever you encounter a certain person in your day
15. Scoring a point in a game or having one scored on you
16. Opening a lock
17. Pressing play on your iPod
18. Stepping into a shower stall
19. Pressing an elevator button
20. Opening a cabinet
21. Seeing brake lights in the distance
22. Pressing the on button on anything
23. Opening an envelope
24. Starting out on a walk or hike
25. Opening your bag
26. Taking the first bite of a meal
27. Taking work or homework
28. Feeding your pet
29. Receiving an email or text
30. Reading your name
31. Re-filling a glass or a can
32. Seeing something clinging/trash/food in the parking lot
33. Seeing an orange or banana
34. Putting on socks or tying your shoes
35. Clicking a seatbelt
36. Shaking a pencil
37. Putting a stamp on a letter
38. Putting money into a vending machine
39. Right before a big game or performance
40. Waiting for the ATM
41. Waiting for a car alarm in the distance
42. Plugging in or unplugging something
43. Whenever a doorbell rings
44. Making medication
45. Sitting, standing, or transitioning between two body positions
46. Between turns in a game
47. Waiting for the ATM
48. Waiting for your tea to steep
49. Right before you open the refrigerator
50. Every time your hand creeps toward your phone and you feel that urge to check your messages
WHY MINDFULNESS?

Empowering
Simple, cheap, portable
Checking In to our experience rather than checking out with distractions
About connection, not disconnection
Effective, evidence-based
Builds lifelong resilience
Single-tasking not multitasking
There’s a guy in this coffee shop sitting at a table, not on his phone, not on a laptop, just drinking coffee, like a psychopath.
To bring more mindfulness into everything we do, we can simply ask ourselves

WHAT AM I DOING, AND HOW DO I KNOW I’M DOING IT?

and then check in with our five senses. Our thoughts and feelings may race to future or get stuck in the past, but our five senses can always be there to bring us right back into the present moment.
1. Breathe in  
2. Take a walk  
3. Stretch your arms  
4. Eat your favorite meal  
5. Smell the flowers  
6. Shoot some hoops  
7. Hug a friend  
8. Hug a tree  
9. Play with your pet or volunteer at an animal shelter  
10. Work on a puzzle  
11. Write a poem  
12. Take a bath  
13. Listen to a friend  
14. Balance an egg on its end  
15. Listen to music  
16. Speak to a friend  
17. Make a list of your favorite things  
18. Draw or paint  
19. Sip some tea  
20. Listen to a friend’s heartbeat  
21. Hair  
22. Instrument  
23. Ommmm  
24. Dance  
25. Build  
26. Water your plants  
27. Do some arts and crafts  
28. Put on a good smelling lotion  
29. Look at your baby pictures, and your parents’ baby pictures  
30. Make a list of people you are happy to have in your life  
31. Tense and release your muscles  
32. Feel the sunshine and breeze on your skin  
33. Wash your face  
34. Tie your laces  
35. Sing!  
36. Plant a garden  
37. Brush your teeth  
38. Wrap a present  
39. Build a sandcastle  
40. Build a fort with snow or pillows  
41. Make origami  
42. Doodle  
43. Practice calligraphy  
44. Dance  
45. Peel and eat an orange  
46. Roll dice  
47. Finger paint  
48. Cook a meal and eat it  
49. Breathe out

51. Use your non-dominant hand to write, draw, or brush your teeth  
52. Swing on a swing  
53. Slide down a slide  
54. Juggle  
55. Make a sandwich  
56. Watch the sunset  
57. Look for shooting stars  
58. Watch the clouds  
59. Yoga!  
60. Play with your pets  
61. Paint your fingernails  
62. Ski or snowboard  
63. Walk with something balanced on your head or shoes  
64. Water your plants  
65. Watch the ripples on a pond or listen to the wind in the trees  
66. Lay in the grass  
67. Organize your photographs  
68. Teach mindfulness to a friend  
69. Smell spices  
70. Make a back rub  
71. Do service  
72. Give community swimming  
73. Make and drink or lemonade  
74. Repair something broken  
75. Blessings  
76. Kind to a stranger  
77. Fly a kite  
78. Make a model  
79. Build a snow  
80. Watch the snow settle  
81. Smell perfume or candles  
82. Look through an art book, or better yet, an art museum  
83. Explore  
84. Eat finger foods with a knife and fork  
85. Rollerskate or skateboard  
86. Tune your instrument  
87. Shine your shoes  
88. Pat your head while rubbing your belly  
89. Sit by a stream  
90. Watch a sunset  
91. Find the constellations  
92. Bake leaves  
93. Listen to the sounds of nature  
94. Write a thank you note to a friend for being a good friend  
95. Write one to yourself  
96. Write a poem  
97. Climb a tree  
98. Balance on your shoes

EXCERPTED FROM GROWING UP MINDFUL BY CHRIS WILLARD, PSYD
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Stop
Take a breath
Observe
Proceed
ALPHABREATHS

S: Superhero Breath

Breathe in hands on hips,

Breathe out “up up and away!”
FEEL YOUR FEET
Spread your hand out like a star or a stop sign.
Use your pointer finger to trace along your pinky finger, first up and then down.
As you trace up your finger, take a deep breath in through your nose. 
As you trace down your finger, let the breath out through your mouth.
Repeat with all 5 fingers. Keep the pace slow and steady.
80% of life is just showing up.

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growing up stressed? or growing up mindful?

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“Child’s Mind is a wonderful reminder that every young person is capable of great understanding, compassion, and joy.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

“A wonderful approach to learning mindfulness- full of great skills, practical tools, and enormously helpful wisdom.” – Jack Kornfield,

Growing up Mindful is filled with wisdom and expert guidance in sharing the blessings of mindfulness with young people. Drawing on his vast experience as a teacher, clinician and practitioner, Chris Willard provides the kind of practical, doable exercises and reflections that will help you bring mindfulness alive in all the situations of daily life.” – Tara Brach

“This magnificent collection of pearls of wisdom and practical advice on how to cultivate mindful awareness in our youth, and even ourselves, is an important resource for any educator, clinician, or parent who supports the development of children and teens. Each of the experienced contributors offers a unique perspective on a range of populations and ages, creating a broad spectrum of insights in accessible and useful ways we can apply immediately. Soak in these pages!!” - Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

“Christopher Willard’s delightful book Child’s Mind makes the wonder and transformative power of mindfulness meditation accessible to everyone. His elegantly simple practices are a joy to read and will impact kids and families for generations to come.” - Susan Kaiser Greenland

“This book is an excellent resource for parents, teachers, and health-care providers who want to share the benefits of mindfulness with children. The varied practices are presented with clarity and joy, making them both accessible and engaging.” - Amy Saltzman, MD

“If you’re considering how to bring mindfulness into the lives of children, this book is the place to begin. It breathes the sweetness of mindful awareness.. I recommend this book for anyone who wants to be eased into the original wonder and delight of mindfulness practice, or who wants their kids to grow up savoring each precious moment of their lives.” – Christopher K. Germer, Ph.D.