



Mindful Life Project

***Helping Transform Schools From
the Inside Out With Innovative
Mindfulness Programming***



THE MINDFUL LIFE PROJECT

The mission of Mindful Life Project (MLP) is to **EMPOWER** students and educators through **MINDFULNESS** and other transformative skills to gain self-awareness, confidence, **SELF-REGULATION**, and **RESILIENCE** leading to lifelong success.

My Personal Story:



- In education since 2002
- Saw the educational systemic inequities and social injustice in our schools that led me attempt to do it all!
- The sacrifice of well-being to be of the “greatest service”
- Burnout! Deep anxiety and depression from chronic stress and vicarious trauma and trying to push through
- In 2012 found mindfulness for personal well-being transformed self and led to starting Mindful Life Project with my 3rd graders!

MLP SERVICES

DIRECT SERVICES

Mindfulness based social emotional learning programs reach over 20,000 students in 40 partner schools across 11 cities.

Assemblies and Hybrid Programming

MLP provides highly engaging assemblies and live virtual programming for students, educators and families as part of our Mindfulness 360 Programming across the country!

LEADING

MLP also leads keynotes, professional development at schools and presentations at conferences!

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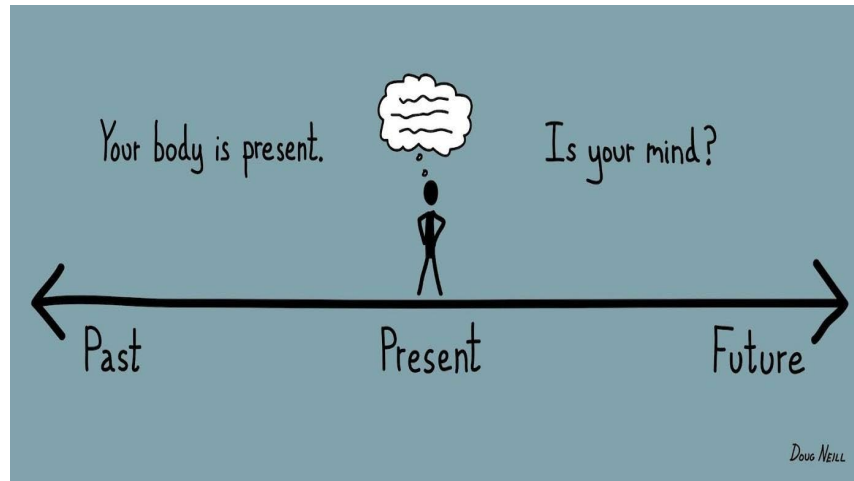
Common Stress Factors for Educators



Life!

- Too much to do and not enough time
- Personal challenges
- Student Behaviors
- Vicarious trauma
- Ever changing curricula/programs
- Growing demands on what it means to be an educator
- Financial
- And the list could go on!

“The more a person’s mind wanders, the more it tends to tilt negatively toward anxiety, resentment, regret, and self-criticism” -Dr. Rick Hanson



What does the research say?

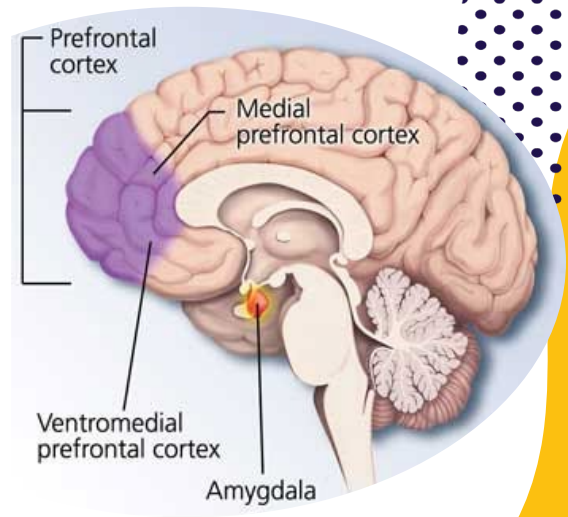


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BRAIN SCIENCE

The brain is naturally wired for survival.

- With repeated stress or trauma:
 - That wiring is reinforced & deepens those survival neural connections.
 - The neurons that fire together, wire together
 - The amygdala (our alarm system and oldest part of the brain) becomes larger, more active, and denser.
 - Fight, flight, freeze, is initiated.
 - The prefrontal cortex (higher level thinking, paying attention, self-regulating, reasoning, etc.) becomes less active, becomes smaller, and less dense.



NEGATIVITY BIAS

- The brain's natural tendency to focus on the negative
- We are 3x more likely to focus on a negative thought rather than a positive one



HISTORY OF MINDFULNESS

- Mindfulness techniques have been used and cultivated for thousands of years in various philosophical and belief systems.
- Over time, components of these techniques began to be used secularly in modern psychology, the healthcare system (since 1979), and in education among other systems.

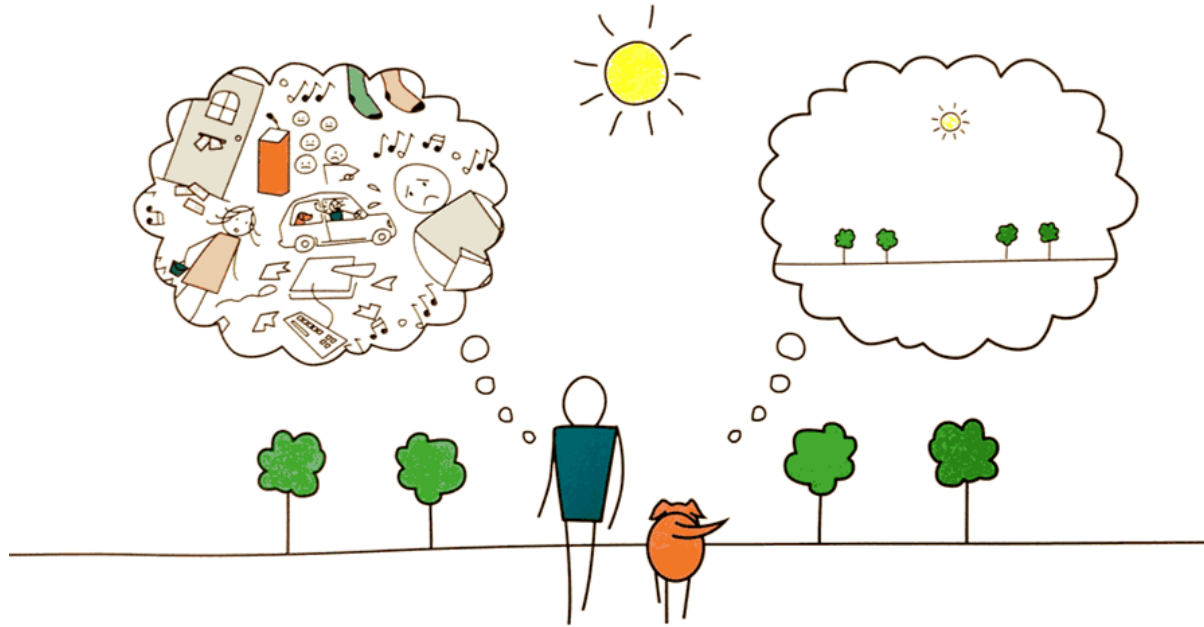


WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

“Mindfulness is paying **attention** on purpose to the present moment **without judgment**. Through focused and specific awareness, mindfulness builds skills to navigate and welcome **ALL** experiences by strategically living in the here and now.”



What is mindfulness?



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Mindfulness is to mental health
what exercise is to
physical health.



And of course they can both deeply help each other.

NEUROPLASTICITY

- Our brains can literally rewire themselves continuously throughout our lifetimes
- New neural pathways are created by pathways are weakened
- “The neurons that fire together, wire together.”



BRAIN SCIENCE OF MINDFULNESS

“MRI scans show that after an eight-week course of mindfulness practice, the brain’s ‘fight or flight’ center, the amygdala, appears to shrink. As the amygdala shrinks, the prefrontal cortex – associated with higher order brain functions such as awareness, concentration and decision-making – becomes thicker”

-Scientific American

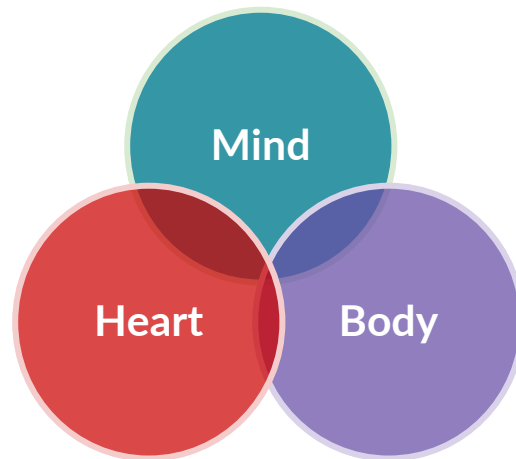


BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Which of these benefits speaks to you personally? (Respond in chat)

- Higher brain functioning
- Reduced stress
- Lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- Increased immune function
- Increased awareness
- Increased attention and focus
- Increased clarity in thinking and perception
- Reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Improved intra and interpersonal relationships

*And much more!!



Ever said any of these?

“Pay attention”

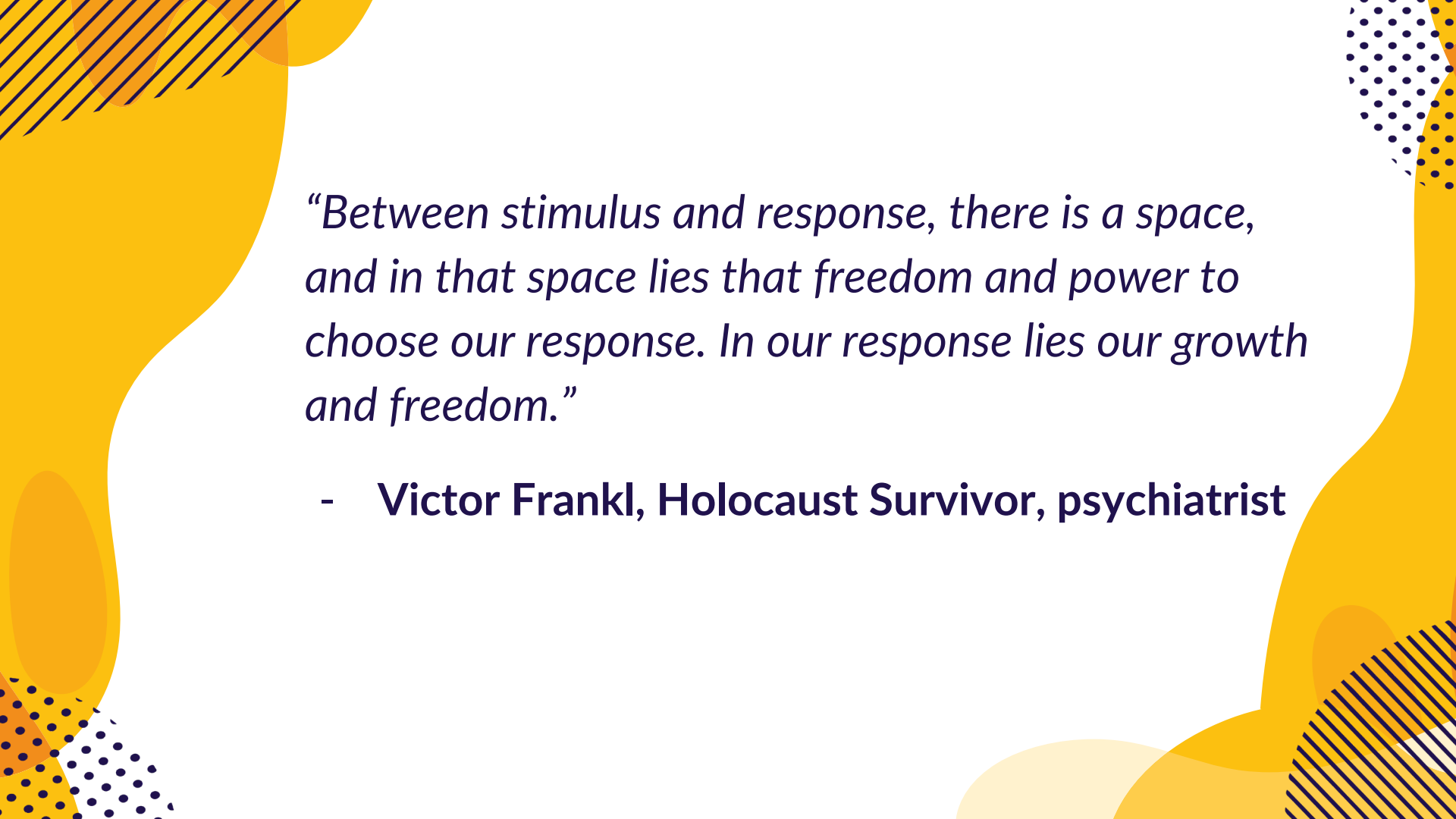
“Focus”

“Calm down”

“Problem solve”

“Relax”

“Critically think”

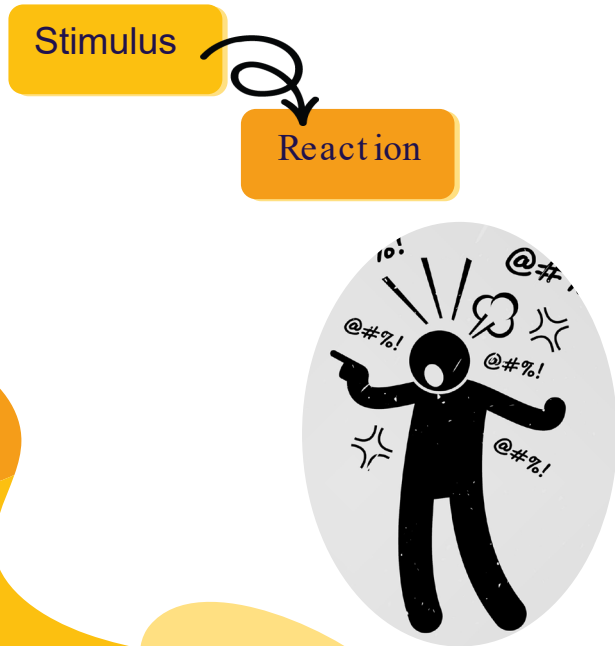


“Between stimulus and response, there is a space, and in that space lies that freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”

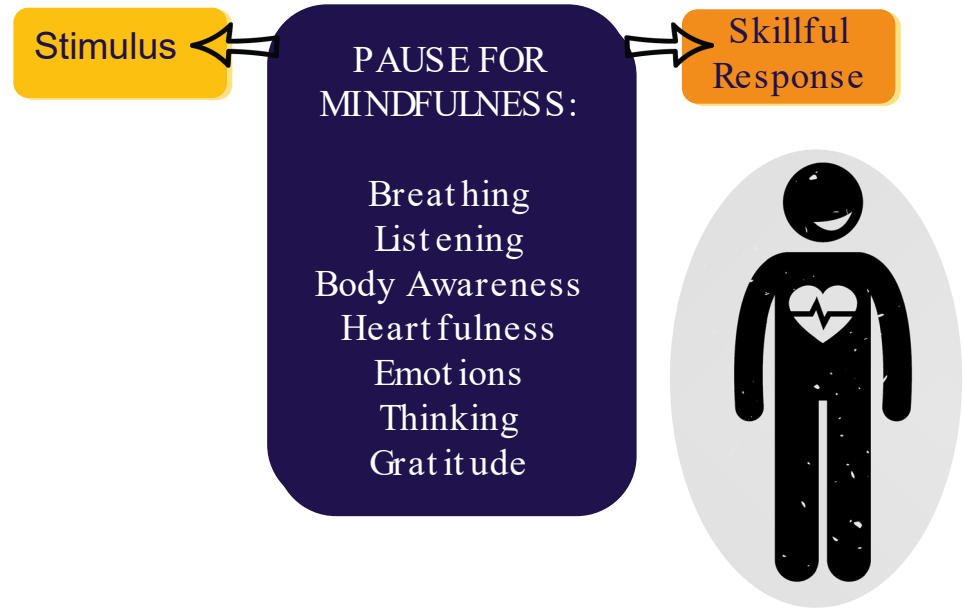
- **Victor Frankl, Holocaust Survivor, psychiatrist**

MINDFULNESS: POWER TO CHOOSE

WITHOUT MINDFULNESS



WITH MINDFULNESS



THE 7 MINDFUL SKILLS

Mindful Gratitude



Moment to moment I show gratitude spreading kindness and peace is my attitude

Mindful Thinking



Not focused on future or past, trying to make each moment last, mindful thoughts keep me on task

Mindful Breathing



To live mindfully, the breath is the key, breathe in...breathe out... release the stress and let it all out

Anchor Spot



My mind was drifting, now it stopped, because I found my anchor spot

Mindful Emotions



What do I feel? Let me see!
Where do I feel? Let me check!
Let me name it, tame it, and take a mindful breath

Mindfulness

I'm here, I'm now, no judgment is found

Non-Judgment

I will not judge myself, my emotions will be felt
I accept our inner wealth, I won't judge anybody else

Mindful Listening



Using mindful listening, sounds are all around. I use my ears and my heart, this moment is found

Mindful Heartfulness



I feel my heart as my love grows, sending heartfulness as my love flows, from me... for me, and everybody I see!

Mindful Body Awareness



From the top of the crown to the feet on the ground, I'm in my body and the world all around!

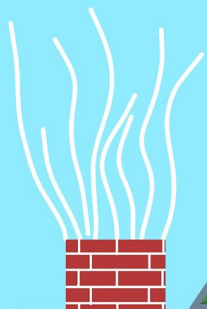


THE FRIENDLY FLASHLIGHT



FOCUS FRIDY

THE BRAIN HOUSE PROJECT



BREATHING & THINKING ROOM

Thinking Theo



Breathing Bruno



Listening Leslie



Name it Nyree

LISTENING & EMOTIONS ROOM

Let it go Letty



Grateful Graciela

Cheering Calvin



Heartful Jamie

HEARTFULNESS ROOM



Body Scanning Sammy



Moving Mauricio

BODY ROOM

UPSTAIRS FRIENDS



Angry Rex



Sad Selena



Nervous Nassir



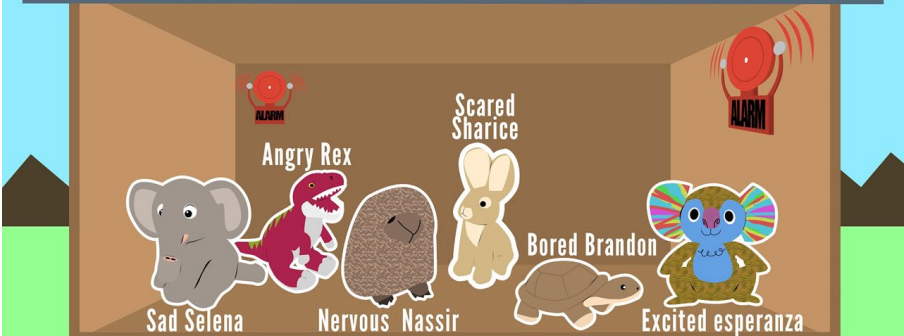
Scared Sharice



Bored Brandon



Excited esperanza



DOWNSTAIRS FRIENDS



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRACTICE

Which of these are easy for you? Which are more difficult? Kindness

- Compassion
- Empathy
- Soft Attention
- Curious (Beginner's Mind)
- Fully present with it all
- In tune with whatever arises
- Noticing without opinion or judgment
- Pure Observation
- Very gentle and always willing to try again.



MINDFUL BREATHING

- The foundational skill! The only thing that is consistently in the present moment.
- Mindful breathing simply means paying attention to our natural breath without trying to control or force it at all, just noticing it as it is.
- We learn how by bringing awareness to the breath we can support prefrontal cortex activity.



ANCHOR SPOTS

- Where we feel our breath the strongest:
 - Belly
 - Chest
 - Nose



MINDFUL LISTENING

- Tuning into the present moment by allowing sounds to come into awareness, float away, and then just allowing the next sound to arise.
- The practice of NAMING sounds as opposed to judging them.



MENTAL NOTING:



- From a place of awareness that is the “watcher”
- Simply noticing when our mind wanders or is distracted is a mindful moment in itself
- Making a mental note of these distractions and simply naming them is key
- No need to judge what is happening or create a narrative of what might be happening

It's like a push up!

THE PRACTICE: What is a MINDFUL SIT?

A mindful sit offers a moment to:

- Pause for self-awareness
- Suspend judgment
- Notice what is present
- Accept whatever is arising
- Trust in yourself

There is no need to question:
“Am I doing this right or wrong?”



3 minutes

MINDFUL SIT REFLECTION

1. What was that like for you?
2. Which was easier to focus on:
Breath or sound?
3. Share out any other experiences from the practice.



MINDFUL BODY AWARENESS

“The body, not the thinking brain, is where we experience most of our pain, pleasure, and joy, and where we process most of what happens to us. It is also where we do most of our healing including our emotional and psychological healing. And it is where we experience resilience and a sense of flow.”

-Resmaa Menakem

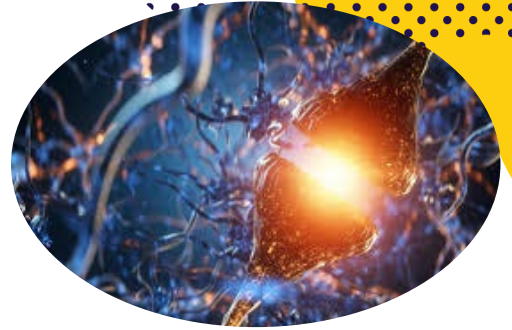


MINDFUL BODY AWARENESS

- Emotions are experienced in the body.
- Body awareness = awareness of subtle moods
- Visceral sensations can alert us to emotions or impulses as they begin to arise before they trigger the stress response fully.



THE SCIENCE OF BODY AWARENESS



- Oxytocin is released with gentle touch/hugs- cortisol decreased
- Engagement of the PFC helps regulate our body and nervous system
- Increases serotonin, which supports mood, sleep, and digestion
- Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system leading to relaxation

MINDFUL BODY SCAN

- Gets us in tune with how our body is feeling in the present moment
- Paying attention to each part of our body so that we can give our body what it needs (water, food, rest, relaxation, heartfulness, etc.)
- Simply noticing temperature, tension/relaxation, heaviness/lightness, or other sensations in each body part



when little people
are overwhelmed by
big emotions, it's our job
to share our calm,
not to join their chaos.

-l.r. knost

Deep Gratitude and Heartfulness!



www.mindfullifeproject.org

jg@mindfullifeproject.org