



A Starter Kit for Sharing Mindfulness with Children and Youth

When I think about sharing mindfulness with children and youth, I'm reminded of research pointing to the importance of a mindfulness teacher's "embodiment" of mindfulness in their daily life. As with the flight attendant's instruction, "...secure your own oxygen mask before helping others with theirs." In order to be effective in teaching mindfulness, perhaps we should first cultivate these skills and integrate them into our daily life and overall lifestyle.

This notion is supported by a number of researchers exploring the various components of teaching mindfulness. They have concluded that a teacher who "embodies" mindfulness is much more effective in sharing it than a teacher who has an intellectual understanding but little personal practice (McCown, Reibel & Micozzi, 2010).

"The thing with teaching mindfulness to teenagers, is that you have to be totally authentic, you have to speak from the truth of your experience when you're teaching. You can't just offer an intellectual understanding. Teens will catch you with their BS meter.... It's important to share about the benefits of your personal mindfulness practice." (Morey, 2014)

While such research claims may impress adults, they likely will not impress an average child or teen. So, if you're working to engage youth in sharing mindfulness with other children or other youth (e.g. a summer camp, school mentoring), you may want to share this Starter Kit with them.

In an article on a teen camp offered by Inward Bound Mindfulness Education, a teen camper sums it up nicely with,

“When adults lead with words but not by example, it’s less effective. You see them as authority figures instructing instead of living their own lives. The great thing about the mindfulness teachers I’ve had during my retreats is that they’re always learning, developing their minds. I’m inspired to follow that example.” (Dowson, 2016).



So, if you don’t already have a mindfulness practice, you might consider going back to this page and working through the “Starter Kit for Establishing a Mindfulness Meditation Practice.”

<http://www.bemindful.org/freedownloads.htm>

If you feel your practice just needs some development and fine-tuning, it’s fine to move ahead and begin sharing mindfulness with others, learning as you teach – what an excellent way to develop these life-enhancing skills ☺

There are many resources currently available for those interested in sharing mindfulness with children – their own, students they teach or children of family members. It can take a bit of digging to find just the right fit for your situation.

It is important to have a “road map” of the territory you will be traveling, a way to understand how the mind of children and teens are different from adults and how this will impact how mindfulness will be best brought into their everyday life. I’ve provided a few starting points for you. I hope they are useful.

Best of luck in this rewarding adventure you are undertaking with these amazing creatures who are moving from childhood into adolescence and beyond... ☺

- Watch these excellent videos by Dan Siegel –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqUNtLbwoj4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr4Od7kqDT8>

And a brief article he published in Mindfulness Magazine <https://ibme.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/iBme-Mindful-Magazine-DanSiegel-Jun14.pdf>

- Consider reading this book (should be available at your public library): *The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder and More Compassionate* by Susan Kaiser Greenland. https://www.amazon.com/Mindful-Child-Manage-Happier-Compassionate-ebook/dp/B003IGDD8E/ref=dp_kinw_strp_1

And or, another excellent book by this teacher and researcher, https://www.amazon.com/Mindful-Games-Mindfulness-Meditation-Children-ebook/dp/B01LY24FSA/ref=dp_kinw_strp_1

- A Ted Talk about the impact of technology (texting, phones, social media, emails, etc) on our children and our culture. https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together

Also, here's another engaging video on this topic: *Teens and Their Smartphones: A Summer Camp Experiment* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISL8hQgLOF0>

- Google “mindfulness and children pdf” and you’ll find a rich assortment of resources from scholarly articles to fun activities.
- Check out these resources for Teens: <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/resources/>

And this article about an innovative camp program https://ibme.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Mindful_Dec2016.pdf

- If you live in an area that she serves, consider taking one of Shelly Sowell’s parenting or teen programs or consult with her individually for support and guidance - <https://www.shellysowellwellness.com/>
- A brief article outlining 5 ways to get started teaching mindfulness to teens. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-rudell-beach-/teaching-mindfulness-to-teenagers_b_5696247.html

A 3-minute video of teens in British Columbia talking about how mindfulness has helped them along with a brief description of mindfulness. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk7IBwuhXWM>

- Consider this phone app both for yourself and your child – you can practice together: <https://www.headspace.com/>

Also, you might benefit from some of the current research concerning the connection between diet and health. Here's some engaging videos on the topic. Sit down with a bowl of popcorn and enjoy!

Michael Gregor 2016 talk 1.5 hour video "How Not to Die"

<http://nutritionfacts.org/video/how-not-to-die/>

Foods for Protecting Body and Mind - 1 hour presentation with Neal Barnard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnHYHjehn6w>

Michael Gregor 2013 talk 1 hour video "More than an Apple a Day"

<http://nutritionfacts.org/video/more-than-an-apple-a-day-preventing-our-most-common-diseases/>