



Mindfulness
Kelly Mayer, LISW & Joella Gerber, LISW




TANAGER PLACE
 YOUR CHILD : OUR FOCUS

What is Mindfulness?



- ❖ “An operational working definition of mindfulness is: the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” -Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003)
- ❖ “...the ability to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions -- in the present moment -- without judging or criticizing yourself or your experience”
- ❖ Be in the moment
- ❖ Be here now

Mindfulness



- ❖ The ability to be aware of thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions
 - Not easy, and no one is 100% mindful all the time
- ❖ In the present moment
 - Time never stands still and each second of life is different
- ❖ Without judging or criticizing your experience
 - If you're judging yourself, your experience, or someone else in the present moment, then you're not really paying attention to what's happening in the moment

States and Traits



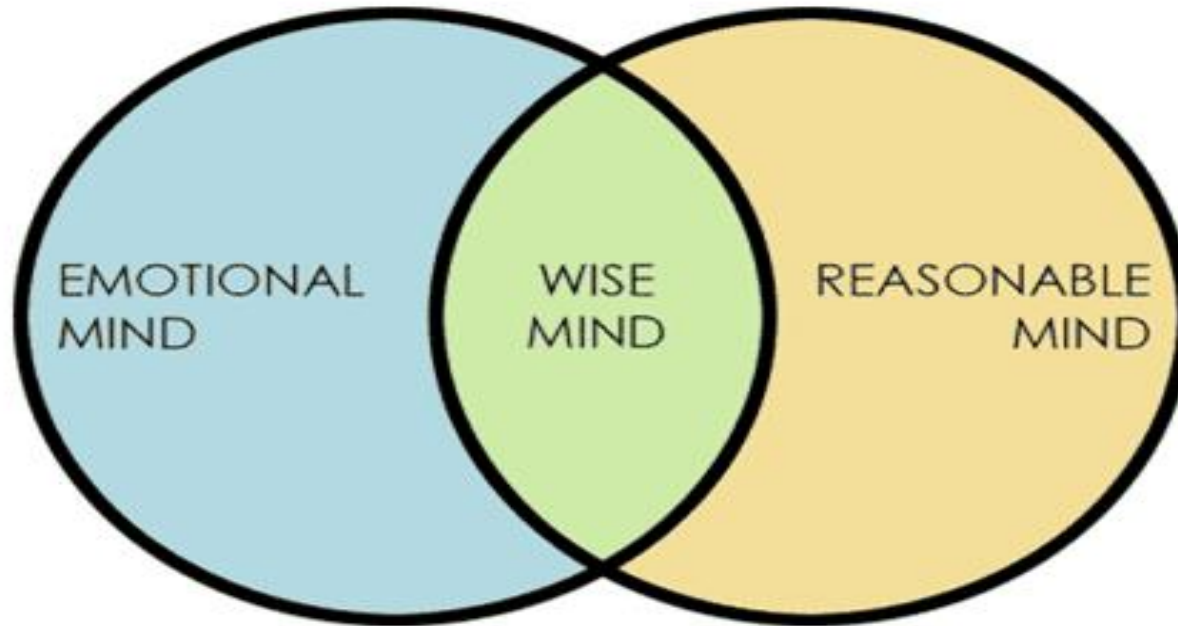
- ❖ Mindfulness can be considered a state, a trait, or a practice.
 - We can have a moment of mindfulness (state) but also have a habitual tendency of mindfulness (trait).
 - We can also do the intentional formal practice of mindfulness using different postures and activities.

Mindfulness: Why Bother?



- ❖ Gives more choices and more control over behavior
- ❖ Allows opportunity to slow down and notice thoughts, feelings, and urges (self-awareness)
- ❖ Helps choose behaviors more thoughtfully and reduce impulsivity
- ❖ Reduces emotional suffering and increase sense of well-being
- ❖ Helps make important decisions (three states of mind)
- ❖ Helps focus attention (i.e., be in control of your mind rather than letting your mind be in control of you) and increase effectiveness and productivity.
- ❖ Increases compassion for self and others
- ❖ Improves overall health (decreased inflammation, lowered heart rate and BP, and quicker recovery from trauma)

Three States of Mind



A person uses their **reasonable mind** when they approach a situation intellectually. They plan and make decisions based off of fact.

The **wise mind** refers to a balance between the reasonable and emotional halves. They are able to recognize and respect their feelings, while responding to them in a rational manner.

The **emotional mind** is used when feelings control a person's thoughts and behavior. They might act impulsively with little regard for consequences.

What Can I do to Practice Mindfulness?



WHAT Skills:

❖ **Observe**

- Wordless watching: Just notice the experience in the present moment.
- Observe both inside and outside yourself, using all of your five senses.
- Watch your thoughts and feelings come and go, as if they were on a conveyor belt.
- Have a “Teflon mind,” letting experiences come into your mind and slip right out (not holding on).
- Allow for distancing between our sensations and our sense of who we are as a person.
 - Example: “I **am** sad” versus “I notice I am **feeling** sad”

WHAT Skills Continued...



❖ Describe

- Put words on the experience: Label what you observe with words.
 - For example: *I feel scared, my face feels hot, I feel my heart racing, I am having the thought that, I am having an urge to...*
- Describe only what you observe without interpretations. Stick to the facts! Instead of *“that person has an attitude,”* you could describe that person as *“rolling her eyes, speaking with a loud voice.”*

WHAT Skills Continued...



❖ **Participate**

- Throw yourself into the present moment fully (e.g., dancing, cleaning, taking a test, feeling sad). Try not to worry about past or future.
- Become one with whatever you're doing: Get into the zone.
- Fully experience the moment without being self-conscious.
- Experience even negative emotions fully to help your Wise Mind make a decision about what to do (instead of acting impulsively)

How Can I be Mindful?



HOW Skills:

❖ ***Nonjudgmentally***

- Notice but don't evaluate as good or bad. Stick to the observable facts of the situation, using only what is observed with your senses.
- Acknowledge the harmful and the helpful, but don't judge it. For example, replace "*He's a jerk*" with "*He walked away while we were talking.*"
- You can't go through life without making judgments; your goal is to catch and replace them with descriptions so you have more control over your emotions.
- When you find yourself judging, **don't judge your judging.**

How Skills Continued...



❖ *One Mindfully*

- Focus your attention on only one thing in this moment. Slow yourself down to accomplish this.
- Stop doing two things at once (the opposite of multitasking).
- Concentrate your mind. Let go of distractions and refocus your attention when it drifts, again and again.
- Stay focused so that past, future, and current distractions don't get in your way.

How Skills Continued...



❖ **Effectively**

- Focus on what works to achieve your goal. Do more of that.
- Don't let emotions control your behavior; separate feeling and doing.
- Play by the rules (which may vary at home, school, work). Do I want to be **right** or **effective**?
- Act skillfully. You have the tools.
- Let go of negative feelings (e.g., vengeance and useless anger) and "shoulds" (e.g., "My teacher should have. . . .") that can hurt you and make things worse.

Mindfulness Resources: Young Children



Books:

- ❖ Moody Cow Meditates
- ❖ Mind-Up Curriculum
- ❖ Sitting Still Like a Frog
- ❖ Zoo Zen
- ❖ Listening to My Body

Websites:

- <http://leftbrainbuddha.com/>
- <https://www.mindful.org/>
- <https://www.mindfulschools.org/>
- <https://www.mindyeti.com/schools>
- <https://ideas.classdojo.com/>

Activities:

- ❖ Mindful Games
- ❖ Mindful Kids
- ❖ Yoga Pretzels
- ❖ Bubbles
 - “Our attention is like bubbles floating away...we can choose to focus on one and it might get stuck or pop all over us.”
- ❖ Belly breathing
- ❖ 5-4-3-2-1 Senses

Mindfulness Resources: Adolescents and Adults



Books:

- ❖ Dr. Dan Siegel
- ❖ Brene Brown

Apps:

- ❖ Calm
- ❖ Headspace
- ❖ Simple Habit

Activities:

- ❖ Guided Imagery
- ❖ Calming Color
- ❖ Nature
- ❖ Massage
- ❖ Sipping Tea
- ❖ Cooking
- ❖ Movement (walk, yoga, swimming)
- ❖ Gratitude exercises
- ❖ Body scans

To Get Started...



- ❖ Begin practicing mindfulness by noticing your attention and how it wanders. Gradually work on doing this practice for 30 seconds, 1 minute and 2 minutes at a time.
- ❖ Your attention may wander to noises around you, worry thoughts, judgmental thoughts such as “this is stupid,” body sensations, urges to talk, and so on). Notice them, let them go, and return your attention to the object of focus.

****Remember, the brain is plastic and able to create new neural networks! It is through regular practice that these networks get strengthened.**

References



DBT® Skills Manual for Adolescents, by Jill H. Rathus and Alec L. Miller.
Copyright 2015 by The Guilford Press.

The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook: Practical DBT Exercises for Learning Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation & Distress Tolerance, by Matthew McKay, Jeffery C Wood, and Jeffery Brantley, Copyright 2007 by New Harbinger Publications