



Counselor's Corner

September/October 2017

Mindfulness

Last year Diane Langworthy introduced mindfulness to students and staff at Woodland School. For the 2017-2018 school year, mindfulness is being introduced to students and staff throughout the district.

Mindfulness is the "quality of paying attention in an open, balanced and curious way. Mindfulness can be applied to all sensory experience, thoughts, and emotions." More than thirty years of research has shown the benefits of mindfulness in adults to range from decreased stress and chronic pain to improved emotional and mental well-being. The application of mindfulness by students may improve academic achievement, mental health and inter/intrapersonal relationships. Mindfulness embraces the "Whole Child" concept. The Guidance Counselors will be utilizing a curriculum from [Mindful Schools](#) in conducting brief mindfulness lessons (5 to 15 minutes) to selected students throughout the district. The lessons will focus on teaching mindful bodies, mindful listening, mindful breathing and "heartfulness" (sending kind thoughts). Some key terms or words that will be used in teaching mindfulness are:

Mindful Bodies: The posture used for practicing mindfulness. A "mindful body" is, still, quiet, calm, relaxed yet upright. **Anchor:** The "anchor spot" is the place where we feel our breath most obviously. It's the place that holds our attention. The three most common places are the stomach, the chest and the nose.

Mindful Breathing: Mindful breathing helps us to see where our attention is focused. It can help calm us down, help us be present and help us remember to notice our experience, whatever it may be at any given moment. **Heartfulness** is anything that develops empathy, kindness, and caring.

As parents we are often on "automatic pilot," mindlessly driven by all the things we need to "do," as well as being preoccupied with a future that never quite arrives and a past that is no longer happening. Embracing mindfulness as a parent is to attempt to be present with our children. One way to do this is to respond using the **STOP** acronym.

S – Stop. Whenever you notice stress or imbalance, simply pause in awareness.

T – Take a breath. Bring your awareness into the breathing body.

O – Observe. Notice how the breath begins to naturally bring balance to the systems of the body.

P – Proceed. Having shifted to a more mindfully responsive mode, take action.

Embrace the model of the "good enough" parent, acknowledging that regardless of our best intentions, moments of imperfection and failure are unavoidable.

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