



Counselor's Corner

Summer 2017

Mindfulness in Warren Township Schools

If there was a way to potentially help kids pay better attention, exercise more generosity with their peers, perform better in school, and be more aware of themselves and others, would you try it? What if it was free, relatively easy and cost only a bit of your time and focus? Practicing mindfulness can help you achieve all those benefits! After a successful pilot program at Woodland Elementary School, mindfulness will be taught throughout the district next year.

Mindfulness is the development of our ability to be fully aware of the present moment: our thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and surrounding environment. It is the ability to be aware of where we are and what we're doing without being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

For children and adults alike, practicing mindfulness in moments of relative calm can help strengthen the ability to make use of these strategies when emotions run high or challenges arise.

Here are some tips from the *Center for Healthy Minds* to begin practicing at home:

Create a Quiet Space: To balance the busyness of our lives, dedicate some time and space for quiet. Find a spot in a bedroom, a chair in the house or a bench in a local park where you and your children can pause for a few moments and develop a sense of familiarity with quiet. Notice how, when we allow our bodies to rest in quiet, our minds can settle and we may become aware of things around us and in us in a new and different way.

Pay Attention with Purpose and Curiosity: We adults often tell kids to "pay attention," without really explaining what we mean or even how. With mindfulness, we bring our attention to whatever is happening in the present

moment in the environment around us (like sounds or sights), and in our internal experience (like sensations or emotions). For example, take a walk outside and try to notice sounds of all types. Or try a mindful eating exercise and slowly, with quiet attention, explore a food item with all of the senses before eating.

Pause and Notice the Breath: The breath is a resource that we may not always notice, but one that is always with us. Bringing attention to the sensations and movement of the breath in the body can be calming and quieting. With children, explore the breath by having them lie on their back and notice the movement of the chest or belly as the breath moves in and out of the body.

Practice Gratitude: Asking ourselves what we are grateful for opens our eyes to the goodness around us and supports our overall sense of well-being. We can cultivate gratitude in simple ways. For example, we can take a few minutes to reflect on the good things that happened during the day, keep a list of people and things for which we are grateful and/or create a gratitude journal using words and pictures.

Mindfulness is a vital component to maintaining overall health and wellbeing. Mindfulness develops a fit mind much like exercise develops a fit body.

Source: "Wellbeing Tips for Children and Families" by the Center for Healthy Minds.

Resources:
mindfulschools.org
centerforhealthminds.org
mindful.org
learning2breathe.org

Apps:
Relax and Rest
Headspace
The Mindfulness App
Mindfulness for Children

For further details or information, please contact your child's guidance counselor:

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