Lowering the Affective Filter of ELs Through Mindfulness

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Welcome!
Thank you for tuning in!

Goals for Today

- Affective Filter
- Mindfulness
- Research on the relationship between Mindfulness Practices & Affective Filters
- Engage with Mindfulness Practices
- Mindfulness Themed Literature
  - Child / Student
  - Adult / Teacher
- Share resources for further exploration
What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way:
  - On purpose
  - In the present moment
  - In a non-judgmental way.

- Mindfulness is noticing what’s happening right now.

- Mindfulness is living in the present and not on autopilot.
No Living on Autopilot!
The goal of practicing Mindfulness is to tune into our thoughts and what we are sensing in the present moment, in a non-judgmental way, rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

One of the primary ironies of modern education is that we ask students to “pay attention” dozens of times a day, yet we never teach them how.
Mindfulness and the Car Analogy

- Cars are complex systems like humans.
- Cars come with owner’s manuals but there is no owner’s manual for our human body and mind.
- When cars break, it’s not personal; non-judgmental.
- Knowing how to shift our attention is like knowing when to shift gears.
- Past = reverse
- Present = neutral
- Future = over-drive
Mindfulness is not . . .

- **About being calm**
  - Although cultivating a sense of calm is a by product

- **Absence of thought**
  - But rather noticing and becoming aware of your thoughts

- **Discipline**
  - However it does foster self-regulation

- **A silver bullet**
  - It supports and works in conjunction with effective strategies

- **Religious**
What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is **paying attention** in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and **non-judgmentally**.
  - Jon Kabat-Zinn

- Mindfulness is **noticing what is happening right now**.
  - Mindful Schools

- Mindfulness is being **present**.
Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition

- Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
- Monitor Hypothesis
- Natural Order Hypothesis
- Input Hypothesis
- Affective Filter Hypothesis
Affective Filter Hypothesis

- Affective variables play a role in Second Language Acquisition
- Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety raise the affective filter
- Prevent input from reaching Chomsky’s LAD
  - Language Acquisition Device
- Form a mental block to comprehensible input

*If you are not emotionally comfortable, your brain will prevent you from trying to speak a new language.*
The best methods are therefore those that supply ‘comprehensible input’ in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear.

Stephen Krashen
Challenges Our Students Face

- Living in a new country is challenging!
- Being immersed in a new culture is uncomfortable!
- Learning a new language is difficult!
Enter Mindfulness

Mindfulness Practices

- Improved Attention
  - Tasks with extensive concentration span

- Greater Compassion
  - More likely to help someone in need

- Reduction of Stress and Anxiety
  - Improves anxiety & distress in stressful social situations

- Emotional Regulation
  - Changes in the brain
    - Less reactivity
    - Better able to engage in tasks when emotionally activated

*Mindful Schools*
Mindful Schools Research Study

- Partnered with University of California Davis
- 3 Oakland, CA public elementary schools
  - 2011-2012 School Year
- 937 students & 47 teachers
  - English Learners = 68%
- 4 hours of mindfulness instruction – 6 weeks
- Statistically significant increases in:
  - Paying attention
  - Calming & Self-Control
  - Self-Care & Participation
  - Showing Care for Others
Mindful Schools Research Study
Mindfulness and Depression

- 2010
- 18 children at summer camp
- Caribbean & Central American Countries
- Ten 15 minute Mindfulness lessons
- Reduction in depressive symptoms & anxiety
Mindfulness at a University Bilingual Program

- 3 weeks of guided meditations
- Pre and post surveys
- Students demonstrated more motivation, less anxiety
- Acceleration in learning, higher retention & focus
- I was hesitant when we first started, but I soon realized that I was able to relax in class. I noticed that the other students also seemed relaxed and the classroom was much quieter and with this I was able to focus more on English.

Garcia, 2018
The Limbic System

- Responsible for our emotions, reflexes, instincts, and basic functions
  - hippocampus – memory
  - amygdala – reacts instantly to fear or strong emotions
- Amygdala reacts!
- Sends signals to the hippocampus to record memories
- Reach safety and happiness immediately
- Take thoughtless actions and overlook the use of reasoning, planning, and thinking
- Bypass the prefrontal cortex 🌐
Fight – Flight – Freeze

- *Amygdala* - The Dinosaur
- *Hippocampus* - The Scrapbook
- *Prefrontal Cortex* - The Video Game Controller
Brain Fact: Neurons that fire together, wire together i.e. repeated behaviour, good or bad, gets wired into the brain and becomes more likely to be triggered in the future.
The Power of the Pause

- The life span of feelings related to any particular emotion is only 90 seconds. After that we have to revive the motion and get it going again.

- Mindfulness breaks the cycle.

- The pause gives us the chance to respond and not react.
Hand Model of the Brain

- Growth in Prefrontal Cortex
- Executive Functioning
- Command & Control Center
- Analytical Thinking
- Suppress Impulses
- Focused & On Task
Emotions Hit Our Brain

- When we develop mindfulness
  - Our mind is stronger
  - Emotions & situations push us off a little
  - We come back to the center more quickly 😊
Mindful Behavior

Being mindful creates space to pause...
Replacing impulsive reactions with thoughtful responses.

Autopilot/Reactive Behavior

- Stimulus
- Reaction

Mindful Behavior

- Stimulus
- Pause
- Response
Mindfulness Practices
Glitter Wands

How does your body feel when you are stressed?

What is your mind like when you are stressed?

Can you think clearly?

Shake up your glitter stick.

This is your body & mind when you are stressed.

Can you see clearly?

Hold your glitter stick still and use calming breaths.

Do things settle down?

Can you see clearly?

What happened to the size of your “stress”?
Use a Hoberman Sphere to visualize breathing in and breathing out.

The visualization connects body, breath & mind.

It is relaxing!

And fun!
Breathing on Purpose

 Blow on your pinwheel using **long, deep breaths. Notice.**

 Blow on your pinwheel using **short, quick breaths. Notice.**

 Can you think of a situation when breathing deeply would be useful?

 Can you think of a situation when breathing quickly would be useful?

 **To calm down, lengthen the exhale.**

 **To energize, lengthen the inhale and exhale with short quick breaths.**
Mindful Listening
Yoga Chimes - One Tone Chime
With a Mindful Body, close your eyes or have a soft gaze toward the floor. Listen carefully to the chime. When you do not hear it any more, raise your hand.
Setting Up the Container

- Beyond teaching Mindfulness, we need to be **Mindful Teachers**.

- As we all know, our mood, tone, energy transfers to our students.

- Cultivating a personal Mindfulness Practice is so important.

- I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather.

  – Haim Ginott
Children’s Literature

- *I Am One, I Am Love, I Am Human, I Am Peace, I Am Yoga* by Susan Verde
- *The Hugging Tree* by Jill Neimark
- *Peace* by Wendy Anderson Halperin
- *Charlotte and the Quiet Place* by Deborah Sosin
- *Listening to My Body and Listening With My Heart* by Gabi Garcia

For more information, visit [https://www.susanverde.com/free-teachers-guides-and-activities](https://www.susanverde.com/free-teachers-guides-and-activities)
Mindful Games by Susan Kaiser Greenland (Book and Activity Cards)

Happy Teachers Change the World: A Guide for Cultivating Mindfulness in Education by Katherine Weare and Thich Nhat Hanh

Mindfulness for Teachers by Patricia A. Jennings

Growing Up Mindful by Christopher Willard, PsyD

Mindfulness for Student Athletes by Gina M. Biegel & Todd H. Corbin

Win-Win Games for All Ages by Josette Luvmour & Ba Luvmour

Teach Breathe Learn by Meena Srinivasan
Resources

- **Playworks.org**
  - Games for Social & Emotional Learning
  - Free Download

- **Center for Healthy Minds**
  - A Mindfulness-Based Kindness Curriculum for Preschoolers
  - Free Download

- **Mindful Schools**
  - Blog, Videos, Articles

- **Greater Good Science Center**
  - Topics – Education
Act I

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in... I am helpless... It isn’t my fault... It takes forever to find a way out.

Act II

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend that I don’t see it. I fall in again. I can’t believe I am in the same place, but it isn’t my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

Act III

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall. It’s a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Act IV

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

Act V

I walk down another street.
Moments

Oh, I’ve had my moments and if I had to do it over again, I’d have more of them. In fact, I’d try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day.

Nadine Stair, 88 years old

Full Catastrophe Living

By Jon Kabat-Zinn
You can't stop the waves from coming, but you can learn how to surf.
- John Kabat-Zinn
References

Garcia, T. C. (2018). The Practice of Mindfulness to Lower the Affective Filter in English Language Learners. Claremont Lincoln University.


Gratitude

Thank you!
Thank You!

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Hope to see you at the Q & A for some interactive fun!