

MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS/TECHNIQUES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Jamie Kurzman



AGENDA

1. Body Scan Exercise (5 mins)
2. **What** is Mindfulness? (5 mins)
3. **Why** Mindfulness? (15 mins)
 1. Research on Mindfulness Based Interventions for children and teens
 2. Specific populations/disorders: ADHD, Autism, Fluency Disorders
4. **How** to make mindfulness kid-friendly (3-5 minutes)
5. Mindful activities (5 mins)
6. Reflection (5-10 mins)

BODY SCAN EXERCISE...

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

- “Paying attention in a particular way on purpose in the present moment nonjudgmentally.” –Jon Kabat-Zinn
- “The **intentional**, accepting and **non-judgmental** focus of one's attention on the emotions, thoughts and sensations occurring in the **present moment**”(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindfulness_%28psychology%29)
- Anything when you are fully engrossed in the present moment (could be biking, running, doing therapy, massage, drinking coffee, cooking... etc!)
- Observation of inner and outer experiences, acting with awareness, and acceptance of internal and external phenomena.
- Can be cultivated through various forms of meditation and informal practice
 - *Focused attention* on something specific (breath, physical sensations)
 - *Open self-monitoring* – alert observation to anything (thoughts, feelings, sensations) without explicit focus any one object (Goldin & Gross, 2010).

MINDFULNESS DOES NOT NEED TO BE....

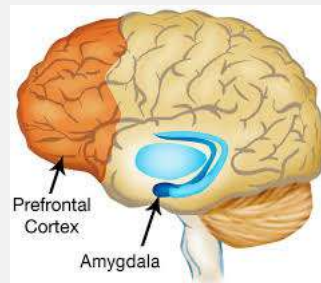
- Silent, seated meditation
- Yoga
 - Can be totally unrealistic with our students
 - Developmentally not appropriate to benefit from the abstract concept of mindfulness.

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGULATION

- Infant: translates touch and soft voices to self-calm; depend on caregivers for reminder signals about acceptable behavior
- Toddler: translates “wait your turn” into inhibition; begin to comply with the caregiver’s expectations in the absence of monitoring.
- Preschooler: attention regulation, behavior regulation--make choices (e.g., clap at the end of a show, but not after teacher gives directions; cognitive flexibility), persist, use language of emotions. Begins to resist temptations and give themselves instructions to keep them focused.
- Predicts school success
- Can be taught

THE A-B-CS OF MINDFULNESS

- A = Focus ATTENTION (practice changes the brain; neuroplasticity)
- B = BALANCE (between the amygdala – fight, flight, freeze - and prefrontal cortex- decision-making and moderating social behavior)
- C = COMPASSION for self and others (return to the focus without judgement) (Kaiser-Greenland)



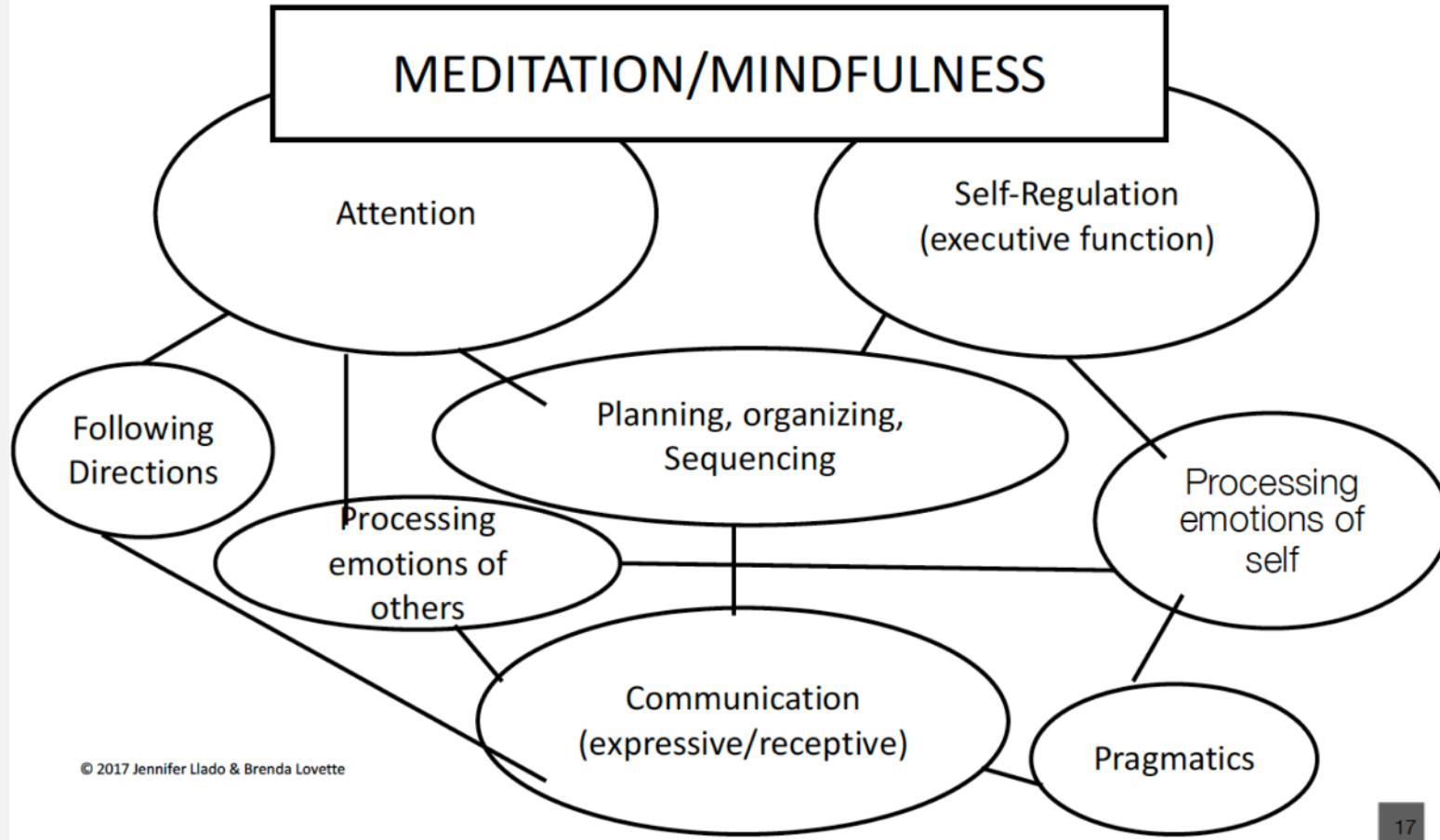
WHY DO CHILDREN HAVE DIFFICULTY LEARNING?

- **Cognitive** - distracted, impulsive, memory issues, difficulty remembering the rules of therapy, disorganized, inflexible, poor language processing (maybe forgot what asked to do), tasks too difficult (issues with problem solving)
- **Emotional** – depressed, anxious, stressed, can't self-regulate or express, give up when frustrated (no tenacity, resilience – not being able to stick with it, or come back to the task)
- **Social**-not in a relationship, not many friends
- **Sensory**- hyper or hypo-sensitive; arousal issues (tigger vs. Eeyore)
- With and without a diagnosis: ADHD, ASD, SLI, bad day, or just immature

WHY MINDFULNESS?

- Regulates nervous system
- Regulates emotions
- Intentional responses (vs. impulsive)
- Promotes compassion
- Increases well-being
- Improved emotional regulation
- Changes in perceptions of thoughts ("just thoughts" vs. absolute truths) and acceptance of one's state or condition
- Increases attentional control

Impact of Mindfulness



RESEARCH ON MINDFUL INTERVENTION APPROACHES

- Growing body of research
- Most research has been done with adults
- More recently: literature reviews and studies on children and teens

RESEARCH ON MINDFUL INTERVENTION APPROACHES

- Mindfulness & Attention
 - Participants: teens
 - Frequency/Duration: 20-30 minutes daily x 2 weeks
 - Results: Increased connectivity between the executive center in the prefrontal cortex and the circuitry for focused attention
 - Patsenko, E.G. et al. (2017) Resting State (rs)-fMRI and Diffusion Tensor Imaging (DTI) Reveals Training Effects of a Meditation-Based Video Game on Left Fronto-Parietal Attentional Network in Adolescents.
 - Method: Literature review of 13 randomized control trials
 - Results: 5 of 13 studies showed statistically significant effects in attention and/or executive functions with a medium to large effect size.

RESEARCH ON MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOL CHILDREN

- **Improved cognition (executive function, memory, attention)**
- **Improved socioemotional skills (anxiety, stress, engagement, social skills, self-esteem, grit)**
- Improved academic performance (standardized tests, measures of content mastery, grades)
- Improved behavior (aggression, disciplinary referrals, compliance, attendance)
- Improved physiological function (cortisol, heart rate, brain activity)

MINDFULNESS & ADHD

- Statistically significant differences in hyperactivity/impulsivity on parent-rated assessment
- Statistically significant improvements in scores for anxiety symptoms
- Significant improvements found for cognitive flexibility, automatic response inhibition, attentional capacity and processing speed (Huguet et al., 2017).
- Recognizing the present moment
- Meditation Bell
- Walking meditation
- Breathing meditation
- Mindful listening
- Body scan
- Sensory awareness exercises
- Mindful eating
- Exploring unpleasant and pleasant events
- Working with thoughts and emotions
- Integrating mindfulness into daily life
- Awareness exercise

MINDFULNESS & STUTTERING

- Effective treatment of stuttering involves treating cognitive and affective dimensions in addition to behavioral components.
- Literature Review (Boyle, 2011) reveals substantial overlap between what is required for effective stuttering management and benefits provided by mindfulness practices.
 - Decreased avoidance, increased emo regulation and acceptance, improved sensory-perceptual processing and attentional regulation skills – all important for successful long-term stuttering management.
- CWS might have more difficulty regulating their emotions and may experience more emotional reactivity than children who do not stutter (Karass et al., 2006; Schwenk, Conture, & Walden, 2007) and decreased use of regulatory strategies is associated with more stuttering.

MINDFUL PARENTING FOR CHILDREN WITH ADHD OR ASD

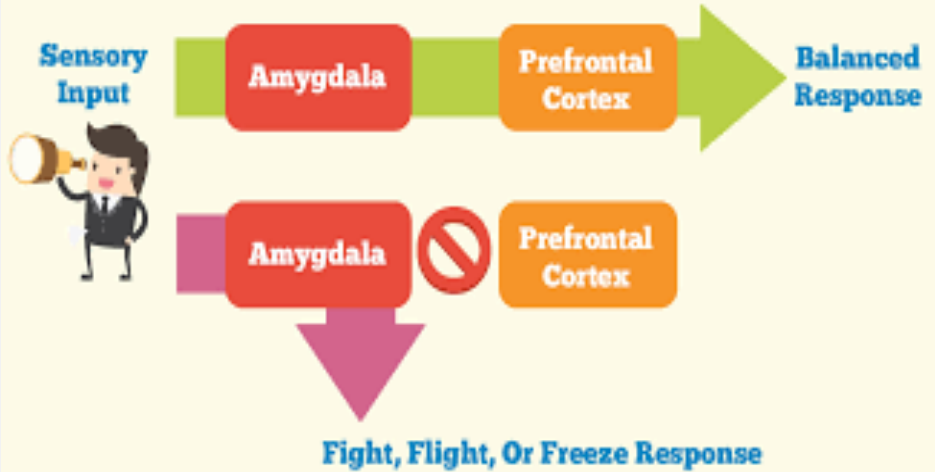
- Be deliberately and fully present in the here and now with your child in a non-judgmental way
- Take care of yourself as this is the basis for parenting
- Accept difficulties of your child
- Answer rather than react to difficult behavior of your child
- Practice meditation exercises for yourself
- Practice meditation exercises with your child

HOW TO MAKE MINDFULNESS KID-FRIENDLY

- Stories/narratives (e.g. Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda by Lauren Alderfer (2011))
- Props (hoberman sphere)
- Meditation bell
- Metaphors (animal names for yoga poses)
- Active engagement (active responses)
- Use simple, concrete language to describe how the body feels (e.g. wiggly, sticky, low)

EXPLAIN HOW THE BRAIN WORKS USING KID-FRIENDLY LANGUAGE

KID FRIENDLY EXPLANATION: AMYGDALA & PREFRONTAL CORTEX



Teach students about their brains, their minds, and what mindfulness can do (Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda)

HOW CAN WE ACTUALLY PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

- Build it into routines
- Learn about it – talk about the brain
 - Teach kids about mindfulness overtly (e.g. guard dog and wise old owl analogy – kid friendly language)
- Develop a personal practice (does not mean sit for an hour meditating each day- just do things more mindfully, or take 5 mins out of your day)
- Model it before or within the session
- Teach kids strategies/practice them together
- Kids don't have to do it perfectly; let go of expectations (self-compassion)
- Different styles for different kids (apps)
- Set the environment if you can (dim lights, soft music, clear the clutter)
- Reflect

MINDFUL-BASED TECHNIQUES & ACTIVITIES

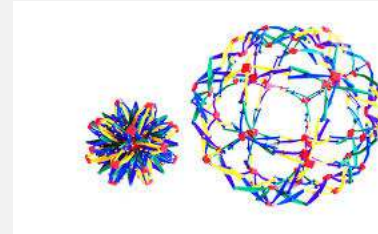
- Mindful breathing
- Mindful movement
- Mindful looking
- Mindful listening

MINDFUL BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- We do breathing in therapy already (added benefits= improve self-regulation)
- Inhale/exhale through the nose (calming)
- Inhale nose/exhale mouth (energizing)
- Equanimous = balancing
- Longer exhale = calming
- Body scan- "sending breath" to certain parts of the body
- Tense/relaxed breathing

MINDFUL BREATHING ACTIVITIES

- Inhale/exhale nose: “take 5” (hoberman’s sphere; use hands; hands on belly; prop on belly)
- Inhale nose/exhale mouth
- bubbles, pinwheels (calm; watch); balloon (energize)
- lion’s breath (energize)
- Breath with sound/occlude ears
- Inhale/exhale nose (calming)
- cool inhale /hot exhale



MINDFUL MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Yoga
- cat/cow chair stretch
- sun (stand or sit)
- balance poses (challenge)
- NOTE: synchronize breath/movement
- NOTE: alt energy/calm with extension/flexion
- NOTE: rhythmic
- Mindful walking (to your session)

MINDFUL LOOKING ACTIVITIES

- Glitter jar or snow globe
 - Mind busy, mind settles
- Lava lamp or fish tank
- Color mandala
- Choose books about seeing (The Eye Book) or practice seeing (I Spy or Wacky Wednesday)

MINDFUL LISTENING ACTIVITIES

- Bell or Rainstick (make your own)
- Raise hand when you hear or no longer hear...and then listen to breath
- Talk about sounds you hear (outside, inside room, in your own body)
- Choose books about listening, with sound effects, or sound vocabulary
- Polar Bear, The Ear Book, We're Going on a Bear Hunt
- Read responsively or echo read
- Put different items or ingredients in easter eggs and match sounds
- Place hands on belly to breathe & raise hand when hear bell stop

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can you add more mindfulness to your favorite speech activity?
- Which practices do you think resonate most with your kids?
- Which of these techniques do you use already?

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

- Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat - "Belly Breathe" with Elmo
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mZbzDOpylA&feature=youtu.be
- Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda book:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nsySCMH36s>
- Meditation for Beginners - Featuring Dan Harris and Sharon Salzberg
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtsdz_jhB7c&feature=youtu.be
- Mindfulness bell
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGFog-OuFDM&feature=youtu.be>

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