Mindfulness with Teens

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Learning Objectives

– Learn about the developmental processes of teens’ brains that can benefit from mindfulness.
– Explore approaches to increasing motivation for teens to practice mindfulness.
– Identify specific mindfulness techniques that are both interesting and accessible to teens.
Disclosures and Disclaimers

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Mindful Moment

- Rest & Balance: For cultivating calm and peacefulness
- Curiosity & Joy: For exploring the world around you with open eyes and an open heart
- Insight & Awareness: For bringing your attention to subtle details, emotions, and experiences you might otherwise overlook
- Kindness: For practicing kindness, generosity, and acceptance toward yourself and others

https://www.chroniclebooks.com/products/mindfulness-cards
Mindfulness:
a synonym for awareness or pure awareness.
Mind full

or Mindful?

https://vanbilsen.help/mindfulness/
Please respond in the chat:

When was the last time you practiced mindfulness?
Definitions of Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.

- Mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we’re doing at the moment – free from distraction or judgment, and aware of our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them.

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
Paying Attention

- Without judging or rejecting the moment:
- Noticing consequences, discerning helpfulness and harmlessness
- Letting go of evaluating, avoiding, suppressing or blocking the present moment.

On Purpose

- Intentionally living with awareness in the present moment.
- “Waking up from automatic or rote behaviors to participate and be present to our own lives.”

In the Present Moment

- Without attachment to the moment:
  - “Attending to the experience of each new moment, rather than ignoring the present by clinging to the past or grabbing for the future.”

Non-judgmentally

- Doesn’t mean there won’t be any judging and evaluating
- Being aware of how judgmental the mind can be
- Not getting caught up in it
- Recognition of judgments
- Not judging our judging

Mindfulness or meditation?

- Mindfulness is **not** a temporary state of mind that is present during meditation and then vanishes for the rest of the day. Rather, mindfulness is a *way of living* in which — when we remember — we are able to step back and be in the present moment in any situation.

- Mindfulness does not eliminate stress or other difficulties; instead, by becoming aware of thoughts and emotions that arise, we have more choice in how to handle them in the moment – and a better chance of reacting calmly and empathetically when faced with stress or challenges.

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
Mindfulness or meditation?

“Meditation is the training ground for learning mindfulness. At first, we meditate to become familiar with the here and now for a limited period of time. Over time, however, regularly practicing mindfulness helps us develop the ability to be present throughout the day, every day. “

- Headspace

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
Mindfulness + Meditation

- Allows us to move from high-frequency brain waves to a lower frequency
  - *This activates (or deactivates) certain areas of the brain*
- Build new pathways to parts of the brain responsible for traits like focus and decision-making
- Neuroplasticity: gray matter (emotion regulation, planning & problem-solving) & cortical thickness (learning & memory) increase with regular meditation practice

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
Meditation's Impact on the Brain | Expert Videos

https://youtu.be/rZN6DcV5chA
Mindful Moment

https://vanbilsen.help/mindfulness/
Let’s Take a Pause

https://youtu.be/gxy6VQWRBlc
Please respond in the chat:

- What did you think of the video?
- Is this something you’d use with a client?
- Did you like or dislike parts of the video?
Benefits of Mindfulness

- Heightened levels of: happiness, patience, acceptance and compassion
- Lower levels of stress, frustration and sadness.
- Self-control, objectivity, affect tolerance, enhanced flexibility, improved working memory and concentration and mental clarity, emotional intelligence

“Researchers theorize that mindfulness meditation promotes metacognitive awareness, decreases rumination via disengagement from perseverative cognitive activities and enhances attentional capacities through gains in working memory. These cognitive gains, in turn, contribute to effective emotion-regulation strategies.”

https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner
Considerations for Mindfulness

- The acceptance component of mindfulness is specific to this practice
  - Doesn’t take us out of our role of advocacy
  - Power dynamics/interpersonal dynamics
  - We’re not encouraging clients to be okay with things that aren’t okay.
Increasing Motivation: Be youth-driven

- Common traps that take away from being youth-driven:
  - Leading the conversation too much
  - Making suggestions
  - Offering Advice
  - Favoring one of the young person’s ideas over another
  - Asking leading questions

Examples of my own experiences

- Mindfulness activities that didn’t go well
- Use of self
- Doing with instead of introducing and over-explaining
- When in doubt, mindful it out
What are some mindfulness practices?

1. **Focused Attention**: use of breath to ground the mind and maintain awareness
2. **Body Scan**: connect with your body to bring awareness of any discomfort, sensations or aches
3. **Noting**: practice of noting a particular thought or feeling when you become distracted during meditation
4. **Loving Kindness**: directing well-wishes and goodwill to ourselves and then others

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
5. **Skillful Compassion**: opening our hearts and minds for the benefit of other people

6. **Visualization**: hold attention by using a familiar image to create and maintain focus

7. **Resting Awareness**: letting the mind rest, allowing thoughts to enter and leave

8. **Reflection**: asking yourself a question and being aware of feelings (not thoughts) that arise when you focus on the question

https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-101
Practicing Mindfulness Together
Simple Breathing exercise

- Get in comfy position
- If comfortable, close your eyes or have a soft gaze
- Take a deep breath
- There’s no need to change or alter your breath in any way
- As you continue, you’ll notice your mind wander or become distracted
- When this happens, bring your attention back to your breath
- Insight Timer: 2 minutes
Debrief/ Check In

[Please put responses in the chat]

- Have you done anything like this before?
- Did you notice anything new (ie. physical sensations)?
- What do you think this would be like for teens?
- Did it feel too long or short?
- Which of the 4 components (paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, without judging) was the most challenging?
Mindful Movement Activity

- Grab a piece of paper and something to write with
- You’ll be continuously drawing one circle over and over for the allotted time
- Do not pick up your pen/pencil/marker at any point
- You will continue to trace over the original circle you made until you notice your mind wandering or becoming distracted
- If your mind wanders due to an internal distraction, you’ll draw a line inside the circle; if it wanders due to an external distraction, you’ll draw a line on the outside of the circle
### Examples of distractions

**Internal**
- Stomach growling
- Thoughts
- Breathing
- Worry
- Planning or time watching
- Daydreaming

**External**
- Noises
- Pets or humans
- Visual images
- Phone notification
- Email notification
Reflection

- What was that activity like for you?
- Did you have more internal or external distractions?
- Where did your mind wander? Any judgments?
- How or when might you implement this activity?
Mindful Moment
Teaching Mindfulness to Young People

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBSh9vbasQ
Mindful Eating
Reflections of Mindful Eating

Small Group Discussions
- Identify someone to report back to the large group
- If no one volunteers, pick the person who has the next birthday coming up
- Things you’d change or keep for use with teens
Larger breakout group

- All people must unmute in the group
- One at a time, the group members will count off to 15
- If people say the same number at the same time, then you start back at 1
- If you get to 15, start back at 1 and repeat
Numbers debrief

- What did you notice in your group experiences?
- Did you feel present and alert?
- What’s your biggest take away, how could you adapt this for teens?
- Which of the 4 components (paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, without judging) was the most challenging?
- Judgment toward self vs. others
Closing Video Reflection

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ptFVCPNgCg
As we wrap up for today, I’d like you to think about the following:

- What’s the most important thing you learned today?
- What’s one thing you plan to implement?
- What’s something you’re already doing well?
RESOURCES

- Mind for Better Mental Health
- Mindfulness Resources for Young People
- My Life App: Stop. Breathe. Think
- Mindful Meditations Soundcloud
- Headspace Mindfulness 101
- Mindful Attention Awareness Scale
- Mindfulness Cards
- Calm App

*Commercial resources are not endorsed or promoted by the department.*
REFERENCES


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