

## **10 Tips For Getting Started With Mindfulness In The Classroom**

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While the scientists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Investigating Healthy Minds (CIHM) at the Waisman Center aren't yet ready to issue evidence-based mindfulness curriculum practices, Flook and CIHM outreach specialists Lisa Thomas Prince and Lori Gustafson offer the following tips for families wishing to engage in mindfulness practices for a more **positive classroom atmosphere**.

### **10 Tips For Getting Started With Mindfulness In The Classroom**

#### **1. Create a quiet space in your classroom**

Find a time and/or place where you and your students can pause for a few moments and develop a sense of familiarity with quiet. Notice how we may become aware of things around us and in us in a new and different way.

This can work for you as a teacher as you design instruction or respond to student work, or the spaces students work themselves. If you're unable to create such a space for students, the use of white noise (simplynoise.com, for example) can help mask background noise or still 'overactive' minds. We even made our own blend of **background noise for reading and writing**, too.

#### **2. Pay attention with purpose and curiosity**

Have students try to notice sounds, textures, colors, shapes, and other characteristics of their environments. (These can be excellent writing prompts, for example.)

As a teacher, if you're able, try a mindful eating exercise and slowly, with quiet attention, explore a food item with all of the senses before eating it — noticing the smells, colors, textures and any sensations of pleasure or displeasure.

Being in the moment is both a cause and an effect of mindfulness. Mindfulness is rooted in the present. Thoughts about yesterday, tomorrow, or even your 'self' in the context of an afternoon or school year or activity is the opposite of presence in the present.

#### **3. Use guided meditation daily**

With students, explore the breath by having them close their eyes and explore a guided meditation each day before class.

#### **4. Offer caring wishes**

Practice caring and compassion for ourselves and others by offering wishes such as, “May we be happy, may we be safe, may we be filled with love.” They might giggle in August, but by May? They may just wish you affection right back.

Caring wishes can be used when we experience discomfort before taking a test, when reading out loud, or simply to send kindness to another person, knowing that we all wish to be happy.

### **5. Practice gratitude**

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. Write about it, talk about it, reflect upon it.

### **7. Be patient**

These ideas will take patience to develop as a capacity in students. Start small—quick activities. Accept challenges as they arise. Help students contextualize what they’re doing and why they’re doing it. There’s no reason mindfulness can’t be successful in any K-12 classroom.

### **8. Model it—or let others do so**

Watch others ‘being mindful’ so that they can see what it looks like in different shapes, contexts, and applications. This can be done live, or through YouTube, or even videos the students make themselves.

Many people misunderstand mindfulness, Zen, meditation, and other ‘mystic’ practices which all often simply boil down to quieting the mind by losing the ‘self.’

### **9. Transfer it**

Help them carry it beyond the classroom by offering tips, resources, ideas, and more to be mindful in their daily lives. (After all, isn’t that the point?)

### **10. Journal about it**

What it is, what it’s not, when it ‘worked,’ when it didn’t, what the benefits have been, what other aspects of growth daily mindfulness practice could lead to, etc.