

MINDFULNESS AND STRESS REDUCTION

*Care take this moment.
Immerse yourself in its particulars.
Respond to this person, this challenge, this deed.*

*Quit the evasions.
Stop giving yourself needless trouble.*

*It is time to really live,
to fully inhabit the situation you happen to be in now.
You are not some disinterested bystander.*

*As concerns the art of living,
The material is your own life.*

*No great thing is created suddenly.
There must be time.*

*Give your best
and always be kind.*

*Epictetus
Greek Stoic Philosopher
55 AD – 135 AD (Born a slave....)*

Mindfulness 10 - Present moment awareness of our experience as it unfolds without judgment. This awareness is not for or against but accepting things as they are in this moment. There is a compassionate quality to awareness. If there is judging or comparing, it is simply the judging or comparing mind and can be held in awareness as well.

Mindfulness is a way of being, rather than a way of doing. Innate. Our birthright.

Where does it come from?

Mindfulness originated with the Buddha in India about 2500 years ago. The Buddha said, "I teach only one thing: suffering and the end of suffering." One of the Buddha's most important teachings toward freedom from suffering is

mindfulness – of the body, of feeling tone, of mental and emotional events like thoughts, emotion, mind states, memories, etc., of the nature of things and the teachings.

In the 70's Jon Kabat-Zinn realized mindfulness is our birthright, accessible to everyone. Would be more helpful to people in the west as a secular practice – without robes, rituals, or Buddhist references and words. He created a program called **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)** that is being taught to this day. He and others began to study mindfulness and found it beneficial for a number of physical and psychological conditions.

What is Stress? 10 min.

Stress is a biological and psychological response experienced on encountering a threat that we feel we do not have the resources to deal with.

- "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being." *Full Catastrophe Living (JKZ: Lazarus) 292.*

- Reaction of an organism to stimuli it doesn't like and can't control. Not everybody feels stress from the same stimuli. Study of people in high stress jobs – some were fine, some were not so fine.

- Much of the stress humans experience comes from threats real or imagined to our social status, to our sense of how others perceive us. This is especially acute with teenagers. Fight or Flight reactions kicks in all the time. (FCL P. 319)

"It is not the potential stressor itself but how you perceive it and then how you handle it that will determine whether or not it will lead to stress." *Full Catastrophe 290*

The Impact of Toxic Stress on School Communities

(from <https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/mindfulness-in-education/>)

Healthy stress is a natural part of life, including childhood. Children and adults alike need to be challenged in order to grow and develop. However, in the modern

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education system, healthy stress is frequently displaced by toxic stress. Toxic stress occurs when life's demands consistently outpace our ability to cope with those demands.



STUDENTS

Toxic stress impairs attention, emotion and mood regulation, sleep, and learning readiness daily in American classrooms. Even more troubling, prolonged exposure to childhood toxic stress has lifelong impacts on mental and physical health.



EDUCATORS

Toxic stress starts as decreased productivity and creativity, escalating to more serious symptoms like frequent anxiety, dissociation, frustration, and, eventually, *burnout*. Roughly *half a million* U.S. teachers leave the profession each year – a turnover rate of *over 20 percent*.



PARENTS

Toxic stress can lead to a parenting style that looks more like a “to-do” list, rather than an empathic, present-centered relationship with a developing child. Exposure to parental stress in early childhood has been shown to *impact gene expression* even years later in adolescence.

Perception

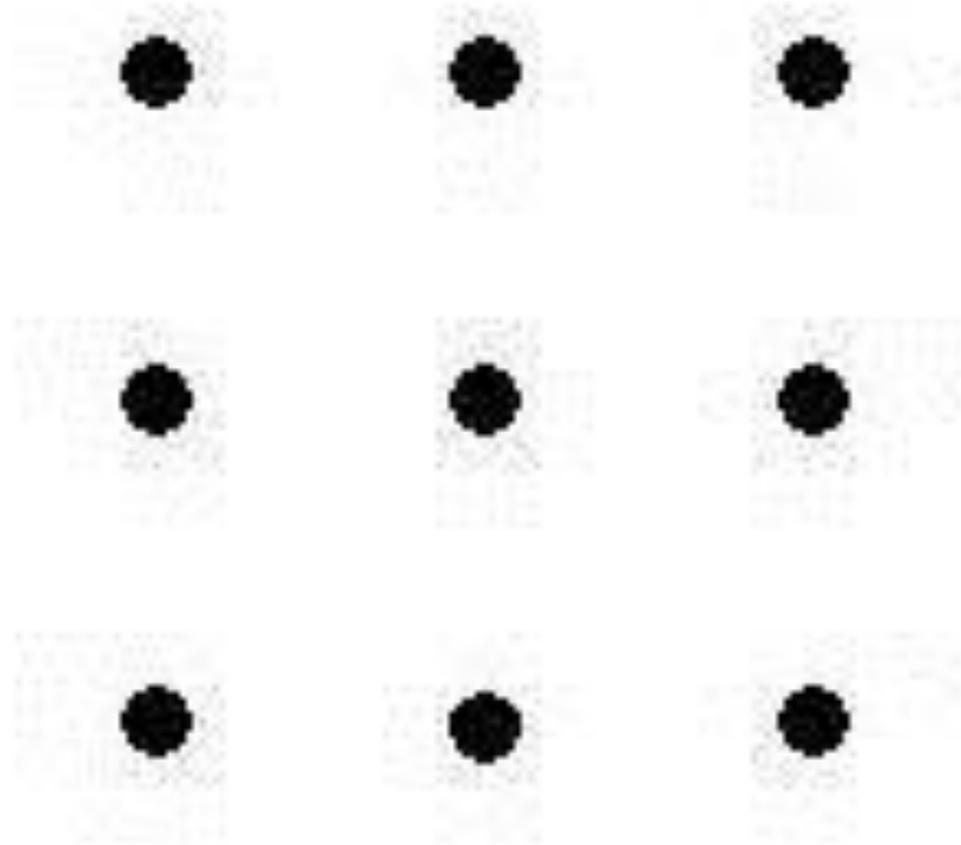
How thinking can influence Stress:

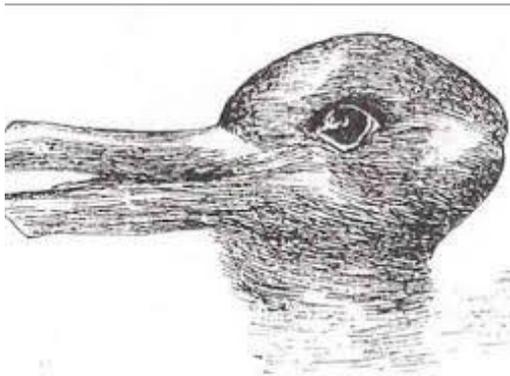
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1. Negative self-talk and rumination – can lead to depression
2. Habitual Styles of thinking –
 - Catastrophizing (imagining a future that probably won't be)
 - Exaggerating the negative and discounting the positive
 - Mind reading – “knowing” what other people are thinking and imagining it is negative about us
 - Being the eternal expert – also perfectionism.
 - Shoulds – unbreakable rules for self and others.
 - Blaming self and others

Nine Dots

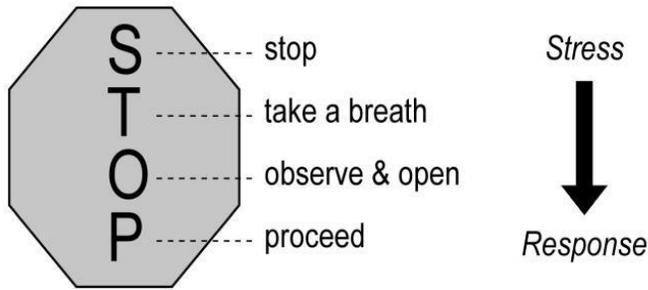
Connect the 9 dots using four straight lines without lifting the pencil from the paper.





The Mindfulness Toolkit

1. Meditation, Mindfulness Movement, the Body Scan, Walking Meditation, Mindful Eating, Loving Kindness or Compassion Practice
- 2.



3. R.A.I.N.

RAIN is an insightful self-inquiry practice that you can bring into your daily life to help you discover deeper threads of what triggers strong emotional reactions.

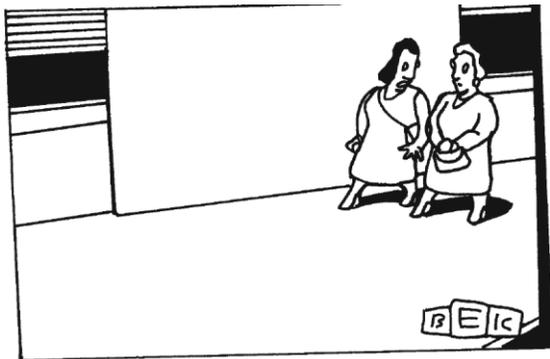
*A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook
Bob Stahl, PH.D. & Elisha Goldstein, PH. D.*

R – Recognize when a strong emotion is present.

A – Allow or acknowledge that it's there. Awareness.

I – Investigate the bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts.

N – Non-identification with whatever is there. Notice. Name. Also Nurture.



"I've never forgiven him for that thing I made up in my head."

Benefits

(from <https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/mindfulness-in-education/>)

Solid scientific evidence suggests that mindfulness interventions improve attention, self-control, emotional resilience, recovery from addiction, memory and immune response. Here's a summary of benefits particularly relevant to educators:



Attention

Strengthens our "mental muscle" for bringing focus back where we want it, when we want it.



Emotional Regulation

Observing our emotions helps us recognize when they occur, to see their transient nature, and to change how we respond to them.



Adaptability

Becoming aware of our patterns enables us to gradually change habitual behaviors wisely.



Compassion

Awareness of our own thoughts, emotions, and senses grows our understanding of what other people are experiencing.

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Calming

Breathing and other mindfulness practices relax the body and mind, giving access to peace independent of external circumstances.



Resilience

Seeing things objectively reduces the amount of narrative we add to the world's natural ups and downs, giving us greater balance.

Love after Love

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.

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Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you have ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,

peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

~~ *Derek Walcott*

Resources

1. Full Catastrophe Living (Revised Edition): Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness
Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2013 Bantam Books Trade Paperback Edition, 1990, 2013.
2. The Craving Mind: From Cigarettes to Smartphones to Love – Why We Get Hooked and How We Can Break Bad Habits
Judson Brewer, M.D., Ph.D.; Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Yale University Press, 2017
3. Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body
Daniel Goleman, Richard J. Davidson, 2017

Teen program:

<https://ibme.info/>

Mindful schools:

<https://www.mindfulschools.org/home-quickstart>

Talks with *Altered Traits* authors Richie Davidson and Dan Goleman:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWfa34u1hqw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBg2i7ZsXgk>

[https://www.ted.com/talks/judson brewer a simple way to break a bad habit](https://www.ted.com/talks/judson_brewer_a_simple_way_to_break_a_bad_habit)