



## **Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Introduction to Mindfulness for Stress Reduction**

May 12, 2020

Dear Epping School Community,

For the next few editions of this newsletter, we are going to be focusing on something called mindfulness. Some of you may have heard of it, a few may even be well-versed on the topic. There are likely a number of you, however, if you were being honest, would say that “mindfulness” sounds like some hippy-dippy notion better reserved for yoga studios and meditation retreats. While, yes mindfulness can involve meditation, it does not have to. There are very simple, easy ways to include mindfulness into your everyday life. And there is solid research showing that practicing mindfulness for even just 5-10 minutes every day can reduce stress and anxiety, improve attention, focus and memory, help with sleep, and help us feel more content and balanced. That sounds pretty good right about now, doesn't it?!

What follows is a brief explanation of what mindfulness is and tips for getting started. We suggest that you give it a try to help you manage your own stress. In addition, we will be sharing strategies for practicing mindfulness with your children as it can be a powerful coping strategy for them, as well, and can help them stay motivated and engaged in remote learning. I thought I should also share that even though I have taught about mindfulness for years and frequently do mindfulness activities with students, I had not practiced it consistently myself until recently. When the Stay at Home order was put into place and we moved to remote learning, I knew that I was going to need to do something to help myself stay centered during this difficult time. I have been finding different ways every day to stay present (which is the goal of mindfulness) and it has helped me enormously. Our hope is that it will help you and your children as well.

As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Wagner and the Epping Counseling Department

### INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS FOR STRESS REDUCTION

#### **What is Mindfulness?**

Put simply, mindfulness is purposefully paying attention to the present moment without judgment. But what does that really mean? Mindfulness is focusing on the here and now. It is using your senses to notice what is going on around you. It is being aware of how you are feeling and what you are thinking, without being critical or judgmental of those thoughts and feelings.



## How does mindfulness help?



Our minds are busy places, especially when we are feeling anxious or stressed. More often than not, difficult feelings come from thoughts we are having about the past or the future – we worry about what might happen and we feel sad or angry about something that has happened. When we can focus our thoughts on the here and now, we are less likely to dwell on the things that upset us, and we are more likely to feel calm and relaxed.

## How do I get started?

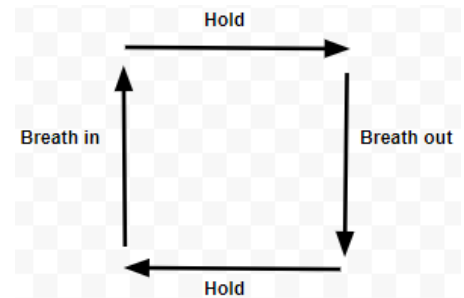
While meditation can be a very effective way to practice mindfulness, it can feel intimidating to start there. Instead, we can incorporate mindfulness exercises into our everyday experiences. Try the following:

- Take a minute to sit with your eyes closed. Listen for the different sounds around you. Name five different things that you hear.
- As you are going for a walk in your neighborhood try to find every color of the rainbow. How many rainbows can you find?
- While you are washing dishes notice how the warm water feels on your hands, observe the soap bubbles, the texture of the sponge and hear the clinking of the silverware and the sound of the water coming out of the faucet.

Try these with your children too!

Focusing on your breath can help you bring your attention to the present moment. Try these simple breathing exercises:

- Take 3 deep breaths. Notice how the air feels coming in and out of your nose, and how your ribs expand with each breath.
- Trace a square with your finger in the air, on a table or on your palm, breathe in as your finger traces one side, hold your breath as you finger moves along the top of the square, breathe out as you trace the other side and then pause again along the bottom of the square. Repeat a few times.



## Where can I learn more?

Here are some short videos to watch for more information.

Why Mindfulness is a Superpower:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4&t=64s>

Headspace. Meditation. Changing Perspective:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN6g2mr0p3Q&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN6g2mr0p3Q&feature=emb_logo)

3 Minute Mindful Breathing Meditation to Relieve Stress:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEfs5TJZ6Nk&t=7s>

## RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Families First is offering opportunities for parents to connect with other parents online to help decrease the feeling of social isolation we are all facing. These groups are informal with no agenda except for sharing stories and ideas, venting frustrations and reminding ourselves that we are not alone as we get through this challenging time together.



Tuesday Evening Parent Recharge  
weekly at 6:30 p.m.  
Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/540259112>  
Meeting ID: 540 259 112

Thursday Morning Parent Recharge  
weekly at 9:30 a.m.  
<https://zoom.us/j/334557303>  
Meeting ID: 334 557 303

### Counselor/Psychologist email and office hours:

#### **EES**

Julie Kratimenos: [Julie.kratimenos@eppingsd.org](mailto:Julie.kratimenos@eppingsd.org),  
9:00am-12:00pm

Marianne McDonough: [mmcdonough@eppingsd.org](mailto:mmcdonough@eppingsd.org),  
8:30am-10:00am, 2:00pm-3:30pm

Kathy Stanley-Berting: [KStanley-berting@eppingsd.org](mailto:KStanley-berting@eppingsd.org), 8:00am-10:00am, 1:00pm-  
2:00pm

#### **EMS**

Sarah Wagner: [swagner@eppingsd.org](mailto:swagner@eppingsd.org), 8:30am-  
10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Nick Degruttola: [ndegruttola@eppingsd.org](mailto:ndegruttola@eppingsd.org), 9:00am-  
12:00pm

#### **EHS**

Sarah Wagner: [swagner@eppingsd.org](mailto:swagner@eppingsd.org), 8:30am-  
10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Julie Morin: [jmorin@eppingsd.org](mailto:jmorin@eppingsd.org), 9:00am-10:30am,  
1:00pm-2:30pm

Melolah Bisallion: [mbisailion@eppingsd.org](mailto:mbisailion@eppingsd.org)  
10:30am-1:30pm

### Community Resources:

Dial 211 for statewide resources

Waypoint confidential support and advice for  
families: 1-800-640-6486

Seacoast Mental Health Center: 431-6703  
and 772-2710

Unemployment assistance: [www.nhes.nh.gov](http://www.nhes.nh.gov)

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-237-TALK  
(8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text 741741

Community Partners: 516-9300

HAVEN: 994-SAFE (7233)