



A New Educational Paradigm for Youth Mindfulness

This “course” is a resource based on the book, *The Way of Mindful Education* by Daniel Rechtschaffen. It follows the same schedule in five parts. Although the book is recommended as a foundational reading, you can also just read what is written in this course since much of the book is summarized and applied to the home setting. As with all the Uplifting Education resources, nothing is required. Our resources are available to you IF you find them valuable and a supporting asset to your learning environment.

Here is what the Amazon summary says about this book:

With attention spans waning and stress on the rise, many teachers are looking for new ways to help students concentrate, learn, and thrive. *The Way of Mindful Education* is a practical guide for cultivating attention, compassion, and well-being not only in these students, but also in teachers themselves. Packed with lesson plans, exercises, and considerations for specific age groups and students with special needs, this working manual demonstrates the real world application of mindfulness practices in K-12 classrooms. (Note: we’ve tweaked what is in the book to be applied in the home setting.)

- **Part I, Why Mindful Education Matters**, explains what mindfulness is, the science behind its benefits for students and educators, and the inspiring work that is already underway in the Mindful Education movement.
- **In Part II, Begin with Yourself**, we are reminded that in order to teach mindfully, we need to be mindful. Here teachers will learn the when, where, and how of mindfulness so they can effectively embody its practices with their students. Mindfulness practices offer teachers self-care and attention skills that prepare them to teach with greater energy and mastery. Discover how simple exercises can help manage stress, focus attention, develop compassion, and savor positive experiences in everyday life.

- **Part III, Cultivating a Mindful Learning Environment**, explores the qualities of a mindful teacher, the ingredients of a mindful learning environment, and helpful skills for appropriate, supportive work with cultural diversity, student stress and trauma, and varying age groups and developmental stages.
- **Finally, in Part IV, Mindful Education Curriculum**, we learn eighteen ready-to-use mindfulness lessons for use in schools. These practical exercises, designed to foster skills like embodiment, attention, heartfulness, and interconnectedness, can be readily adapted for any age group and population, and the author draws from his extensive personal experience to offer a wealth of tips for introducing them to students in real-time.

Decades of research indicate the impressive benefits of mindfulness in social, emotional, and cognitive development, and as an antidote to emotional dysregulation, attention deficits, and social difficulties. This book invites teachers, administrators, and anyone else involved in education to take advantage of this vital tool and become purveyors of a mindful, compassionate, ethical, and effective way of teaching.

How to Cultivate Well-Being in Teachers and Students

(Original Source for this article.)

Children who for one reason or another can't sit still, focus, or get along with their peers continue to fall behind academically, while concerned parents and teachers feel overwhelmed, not knowing how to intervene effectively.

In his new book, *The Way of Mindful Education*, Daniel Rechtschaffen argues that there is something simple that can be done to help change this: teaching mindfulness in schools. Rechtschaffen, a leading mindfulness educator and founder of the Mindful Education Institute, believes that mindfulness training can increase social-emotional skills—like attention, empathy, forgiveness, and impulse control—that help improve the classroom social climate and increase academic performance for kids.

Research on mindfulness has proliferated in recent decades, and the results are promising, according to Rechtschaffen. Practicing mindfulness has been shown to decrease pain, stress, depression, and anxiety, while increasing happiness and improving interpersonal relationships...at least in adults. Research with children, though more preliminary, suggests that teaching kids mindfulness skills may help decrease symptoms of ADHD, depression, anxiety, and hostility, while increasing self-esteem and sleep quality, all of which has an impact on learning.

Rechtschaffen's book is primarily a "how-to" for creating a mindful classroom. He suggests ways that teachers can become more mindful themselves so that they can role model the type of attention, self-control, and consideration they wish to see in their students. He also provides guidance for how mindfulness can be incorporated into classrooms of different age groups and needs, along with examples of mindfulness curricula that teachers can use in various settings.

However, Rechtschaffen warns against teachers using mindfulness exercises in their classrooms without first developing their own practice. “We often leap forward, wanting to help our kids relax, forgetting to notice how anxious and in need of relaxation we are,” he writes. “A teacher would never try to lead a math lesson if she didn’t know the multiplication tables.” Similarly, teachers trying to teach mindfulness won’t get far with their students if they first don’t model good emotional regulation and sensitivity toward their students’ needs, he argues.

In fact, Rechtschaffen claims that teachers may need mindfulness training more than their students. “Year after year I have watched schoolteachers entering the classroom on the first day as hopeful and inspired as a child taking its first steps” he writes—only to give up soon after. Mindfulness can help teachers feel reinvigorated and provide benefits to students indirectly, since teachers who are more mindful may be more attuned, compassionate, and flexible with their students.

Still, a large part of his book is devoted to providing sample mindfulness lessons that can be used in classrooms or youth programs. The lessons progress through four areas of mindfulness:

- **Embodiment:** learning how to feel comfortable and relaxed in one’s body;
- **Focused attention:** attention to sensory phenomena, such as one’s breath or sounds in the environment;
- **Heartfeltness:** learning to feel one’s emotions and to regulate more difficult ones;
- **Interconnection:** bringing compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude into one’s life.

For each area, there are suggested exercises for developing these skills in kids, along with reasons why it is important to learn.

Though some educators may feel that it’s too much to add on to their already overcrowded lesson plans, Rechtschaffen suggests that teaching mindfulness saves time and aids students in the long run. “When students don’t know how to pay attention or regulate their emotions, they easily fall into distracting behavior, often out of sheer frustration,” he writes. “As teachers, if we can offer these students the inner resources that they are lacking rather than penalizing them over and over, they have a much greater chance of thriving.” And, ultimately, teachers save time, because they don’t have to continually work to bring distracted, disruptive kids back into the learning fold.

Is there any reason *not* to integrate mindfulness into schools? Rechtschaffen doesn’t seem to think so, even though the research on mindfulness in children is still in its infancy, suggesting that its universal application in schools could be a bit premature. Even so, if **current research trends** continue, we may all be clamoring to get mindfulness into our schools.

This is an optional resource for those families who find it beneficial for their learning environments.

[Daniel Rechtschaffen "Mindfulness & Education" Introduction on YouTube](#)