



VIRTUAL MINDFULNESS – LETTER TO THE EDUCATOR

LESSON FOUR: MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Dear Educators,

Welcome to week 4 of Virtual Mindfulness Practices. This week we will be focusing on mindful movement. Mindful movement means we are resting our awareness on purpose on our bodies in motion. So far, we have engaged with defining mindfulness and setting up a ritual, mindful posture, mindfulness of sound, mindful breathing, and body scans. This week's practice is a culmination of all of those practices bringing body awareness and breathing together with movement.

Many people have expressed that they find it quite difficult to be still in mindfulness practice, and it makes complete sense that a group of people—young or old—would be squirmy after they have been still for long periods of time. I have found in my own practice, and in facilitating mindfulness practice in classrooms, that it is beneficial to move before a practice of stillness. So, please consider using these movement practices as warmups to support students in becoming still. Mindful movement practices fit really well before a test, or after a lot of focus has been required in the classroom. You can turn any movement into mindful movement by simply endeavoring to rest all of your awareness on the movement. You can put all of your attention on standing up from a chair slowly, walking around a space, feeling your feet on the floor, raising a hand—really any movement at all.

As with the weeks prior, there is a practice session geared towards elementary age students and one for secondary students. The elementary lesson is designed to be more playful and incorporate affirmations. Affirmations light up the part of the brain involved in positive personal values and self-related information processing (Falk et al., 2015; Cascio et al., 2016). Research has shown that affirmations are linked positively to academic achievement by mitigating GPA decline in students who feel left out (Layous et al., 2017). Self-affirmation has been demonstrated to lower stress and rumination (Koole et al., 1999; Weisenfeld et al., 2001). The secondary lesson was designed to help students stay present to physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts as they practice different yoga postures. The benefit of this type of practice is it builds interoceptive awareness and tolerance to different sensations. If a student is strongly resistant to a posture or practice, do not force it. Get curious about what the sensations are eliciting for them, and allow them to make adjustments to the practice so it works for them.

Movement is an essential part of learning and development, and needs to be a part of every day. Movement has been shown to increase neuron growth. Studies link this increased neurogenesis to increased cognition, better memory, and reduced likelihood of depression (Kempermann, 2002). Movement is a birthright and essential to wellbeing, and when it is incorporated with mindfulness it has been shown to reduce levels of depression, anxiety, and increase the ability to focus. So, go ahead and get

in the moment with your students and practice with them. I have also led these types of activities virtually, and have found them to be quite potent. Movement may be more important now than ever.

Please reach out if I can support you in your mindfulness journey in anyway. Wishing you deep peace.

Sincerely,

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