Mindfulness, Meditation, and Movement for Children with Exceptionalities

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Outcomes

Participants will learn:

❖ What mindfulness looks like in the classroom
❖ How mindfulness benefits children
❖ Some basic strategies for implementing mindfulness
❖ DEC Recommended Practices/best practices that align with mindfulness activities?
Agenda

❖ Introductions
❖ Story
❖ Research
❖ General Strategies
❖ Specific Activities
❖ Scaffolding
❖ Resources
❖ Meditation
❖ Questions/Discussion
Introductions

Who are we?

Who is in the audience?

Who already has some experience implementing mindfulness into their classroom or program?
One Child’s Story
What comes to mind when you think of mindfulness?
Mindfulness and Meditation?

❖ “A self-regulatory method for strengthening attentional processes”

❖ “Deliberate breathing, movement, and meditation”

❖ “Paying attention to the present moment”
What Does the Research Say?
Population

- Typically developing youth
- ADHD
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Elementary school - teenagers
How does mindfulness affect coping and executive functioning skills?
Mindfulness and Coping Strategies

- Mindfulness and meditation training can aid in managing anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems in children.¹⁵
- Mindfulness can be a preventative measure to decrease stress.⁸
Mindfulness and Coping Strategies Cont.

- Reduce negative self-talk \(^{16}\)
- Reductions in “irritable behavior... lethargy... social withdrawal... hyperactivity... noncompliance” \(^{10}\)
- Improved behavior \(^{11}\)
Mindfulness and Executive Functioning

- Mindfulness training improved “selective attention... and social skills”\(^5\)
- Children had increased self regulation after mindfulness activities \(^4\)
- Use of make believe can enhance executive functioning skills by creating “psychological distance” \(^2\)
Other Benefits

❖ Tool to help develop focus and impulse control
❖ Deep breathing supports relaxation and speech
❖ Gross motor skills, fine motor skills, motor planning skills
❖ Build muscle

DEC Recommended Practices

E 6 – Practitioners create environments that provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to maintain or improve fitness, wellness, and development across domains.
DEC Recommended Practices

F 7 – Practitioners work with families to identify, access, and use formal and informal resources and supports to achieve family-identified outcomes or goals.
DEC Recommended Practices

INS 4 - Practitioners plan for and provide the level of support, accommodations, and adaptations needed for the child to access, participate, and learn within and across activities and routines.

INS 5 – Practitioners embed instruction within and across routines, activities, and environments to provide contextually relevant learning opportunities.
NS 9 – Practitioners use functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.
DEDC Recommended Practices

INT 4 – Practitioners promote the child’s cognitive development by observing, interpreting, and responding intentionally to the child's exploration, play, and social activity by joining in and expanding on the child's focus, actions, and intent.
Strategies for Implementing Mindfulness, Meditation, and Movement
❖ Make it a game
❖ Embed it into natural routines
❖ Practice during calm moments
❖ Give choices
❖ Adapt your plan
❖ Visual Schedule
❖ Build in goals and objectives
❖ Use a video as your teacher
How to Scaffold for Children of All Abilities
Foundational Option

❖ Greater strength in receptive language
❖ Working on expressive language, gross motor, and motor imitation skills

Expanded Option

❖ Strengths in expressive, receptive, motor imitation, and gross motor skills
❖ Working on expanding language and academic skills
Mindfulness Activities
Listening

Foundational Option:
❖ Make a sound

Expanded Option:
❖ Make it a listening game
Listening

Skills Targeted
❖ Building attention
❖ Listening skills
❖ Motor skills
❖ Waiting
❖ Flexibility
❖ Social skills
❖ Sharing
❖ Building routine
Breathing

Foundational Option
❖ Using something that allows the breath to be visible

Expanded Option
❖ More abstract, metaphorical thinking
Breathing

Skills Targeted

❖ Regulating and calming
❖ Speech
❖ Building routine
Movement

Foundational Option
- Work on simple movements

Expanded Option
- String together movements around a theme you are studying
Movement

Skills Targeted
❖ Build strength
❖ Learning opportunities
❖ Physical exercise
❖ Cognitive and physical flexibility
❖ Building routine
Games

Foundational Option
❖ Play simple games that target a specific skill

Expanded Option
❖ Play a game that involves your theme
Games

Skills Targeted

❖ Self regulation
❖ Motor planning
❖ Whatever you want to target
Partner Poses

Foundational Option
❖ Do one single, simple pose and stick with it

Expanded Option:
❖ Encourage conversation, switching partners
Partner Poses

Skills Targeted

❖ Trust building
❖ Social interaction
❖ Flexibility
❖ Kindness
Meditation

Foundational Option

❖ Use objects

Expanded Option

❖ Utilize a visualization
Meditation

Skills Targeted
❖ Building attention
❖ Training focus
❖ Building routine
Art Activity

Foundational Option:
- Just don’t do it

Expanded Option:
- Do an art activity that relates to your meditation or theme
Art Activity

Skills Targeted
- Reflection
- Sharing
- Making connections
- Building routine
Using Self-Affirmations

Foundational Option
❖ Model language

Expanded Option
❖ Have students use a self-affirming phrase

Skills Targeted
❖ Positive self talk
❖ Building routine
Discussion
Indicators of High Quality Inclusion

- Predictable & comprehensible routines
- Use of EBP
- Full utilization of peers
- Meaningful ways to participate in activities
- Modification of activities
Do I Need a Personal Yoga or Meditation Practice?

Yes. No.

HeadSpace
Insight Timer
Resources

❖ Global Family Yoga
❖ Radiant Beginnings
❖ Yoga for the Special Child by Sonia Sumar
❖ Spinning Inward by Maureen Murdock
❖ Yoga Pretzels by Leah Kalish and Tara Guber
Resources

- Yoga Therapy for Children with Autism and Special Needs by Louise Goldberg
- Chill Children: Guided Relaxation by Global Family Yoga
- Breathe, Chill: A Handy Book of Games and Techniques Introducing Breathing, Meditation and Relaxation to Kids and Teens by Lisa Roberts
Let’s try it!
References


Questions?
Thank you!

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