



# Mindfulness in Schools: The Connection to PBS

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A PRESENTATION FOR  
EDUCATORS. PBS SUMMER  
INSTITUTE 2026

FROM DR. KURT S. REAM

# What Does He Know?

37 Years in education which includes:

- Middle school science teacher
- Middle school assistant principal
- Elementary principal
- High school science teacher
- Building administrator Missouri School for the Severely Disabled
- UCM RPDC
- Trained by Yoga International Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training

**HE WHO KNOWS DOES NOT SPEAK.  
HE WHO SPEAKS DOES NOT KNOW.**

- LAO TZU -

# Outcomes of Today's Presentation

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1. How Mindfulness connects with PBIS and Social-Emotional Curriculum.
2. Define "Mindfulness".
3. The Brain Connection of Mindfulness
4. The Who What When and Where of Mindfulness.
5. Implementing Mindfulness in school.
6. Breathing Techniques
7. Implementing Mindfulness for YOU: Self Care

**POSITIVE  
THINKING**  

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**POSITIVE  
OUTCOME**

# Share What You Know!

Turn to the person next to you, share what you know about these two questions:

1. Does the school in which I work in have a strong social-emotional learning (SEL) program?
2. What do I know about mindfulness?

Your value will be not what you know;  
it will be what you share.

Ginni Rometty, CEO IBM

# What is Mindfulness?

Kabat-Zinn (1994) “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Langer (1989) “... the process of noticing new things and drawing novel distinctions which keeps us situated in the present.”

Saltzman (2008) says mindfulness is simply paying attention in the present moment, with kindness and curiosity, and responding rather than reacting to the circumstances.

# What Mindfulness IS and IS NOT

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## Mindfulness

is 

evidence-based


a way to be in control of your thoughts

for everyone

a practice that is thousands of years old

shown to increase happiness, creativity, focus, and self-control, reduce anxiety & improve sleep

being in the present moment using your senses

is not 

a religion

having no thoughts

only for hippies, yogis, and Buddhist monks

a trend

a state of bliss

the same as meditation

WE ARE STARTING WITH YOU!!!

Say quietly to yourself:  
**I AM STARTING WITH ME!!!**

Dr. Richie Davidson says...

5 minutes a day of meditation for 30  
days!

# 5 Minutes...Right Now

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Sit comfortably where you are.

Close your eyes.

Breathe naturally, pay attention to your breath.

When thoughts enter from out of nowhere, re-focus on your breath.

Recognize the thought, re-focus on your breath.

Pay attention to the physical sensations in your body.

Pay attention to feelings and emotions

Listen.



# Seven Ways Mindfulness Can Help Teachers

Jennings (2015)

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## *MINDFULNESS HELPS US....*

1. ...understand our own emotions better
2. ...us communicate more effectively with students
3. ...manage students we find difficult
4. ...set up a positive learning environment
5. ...strengthen our relationship with students
6. ...slow down when we need to
7. ...build community

Consider this...

**"A DYSREGULATED  
ADULT CANNOT  
REGULATE A  
CHILD"**

- DR. LAURIE DESAUTELS

# 5 Ways to Regulate Your Nervous System

Feeling anxious, frustrated, mad or sad? **Try these 5 activities!**

01

## Breathing

Take a deep breath in, then slowly exhale, emptying your lungs. Try counting how long you can make your exhale. Longer exhales can help calm your mind and body!



02

## Humming

Hum your favorite tune or try a simple "mmm" sound. The vibration created by humming can help soothe your nervous system, making you feel more centered and calm.



04

## Swinging

Find a swing or gently sway back and forth. The rhythmic movement can help your body feel grounded and relaxed, reducing feelings of anxiety or stress.



03

## Nature Walk

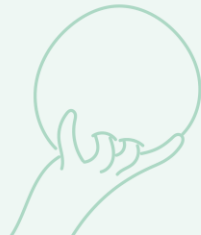
Take a walk outside and pay attention to the sights, sounds, and smells around you. Connecting with nature can help reset your nervous system, bringing a sense of peace and clarity.



05

## Sensory Bin

Explore a sensory bin filled with soft, squishy, or textured objects. Focusing on the different sensations can shift your attention away from stressful feelings and help you feel more present.



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TRANSITION  
THINKING...  
HOW DO I  
TRANSFER  
*MINDFULNESS*  
TO A SCHOOL  
SETTING?



I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. I MOONED THE WHOLE CLASS.



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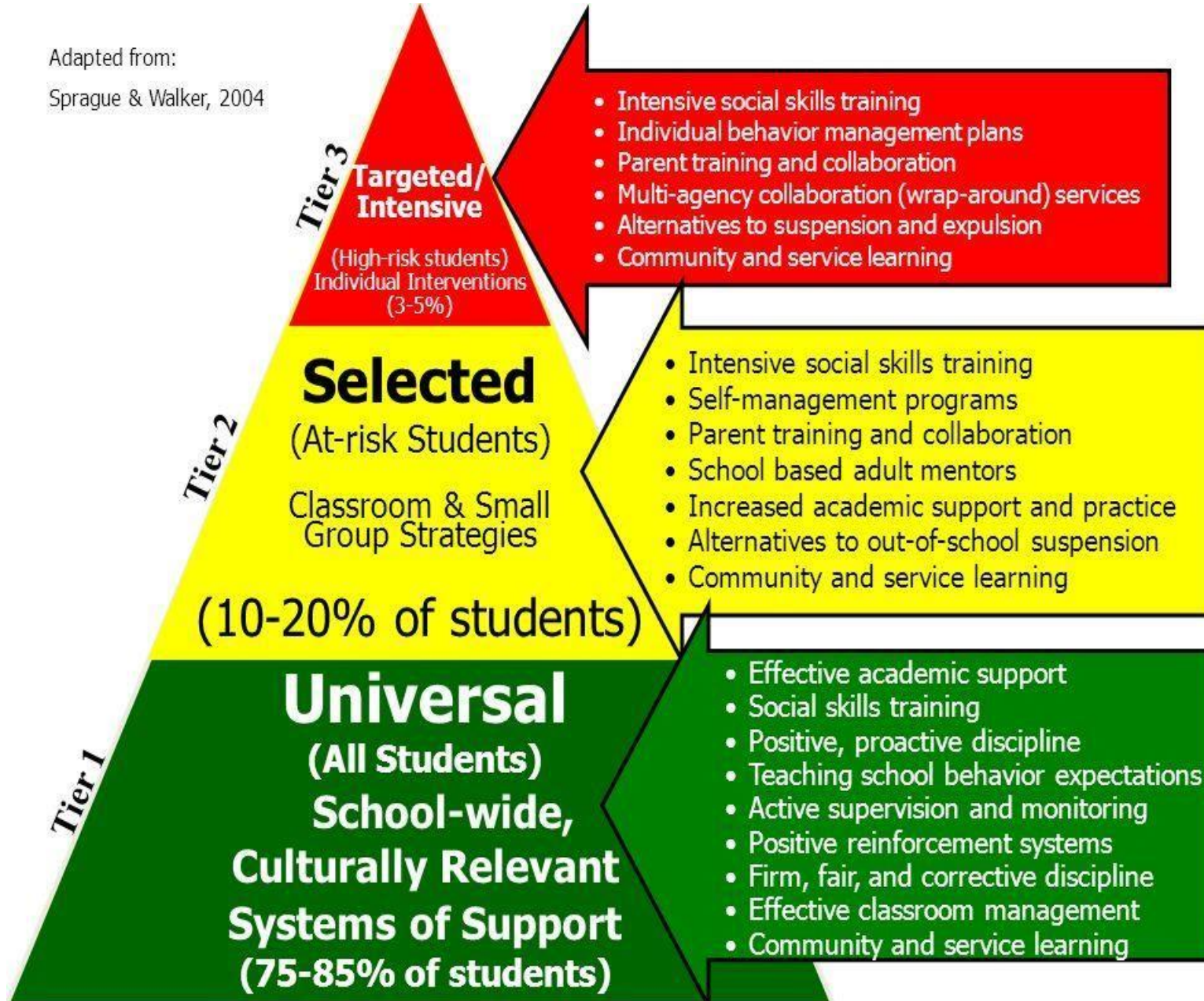
## PBIS...SEL...MINDFULNESS

**PBIS** focuses on external supervision of conduct,

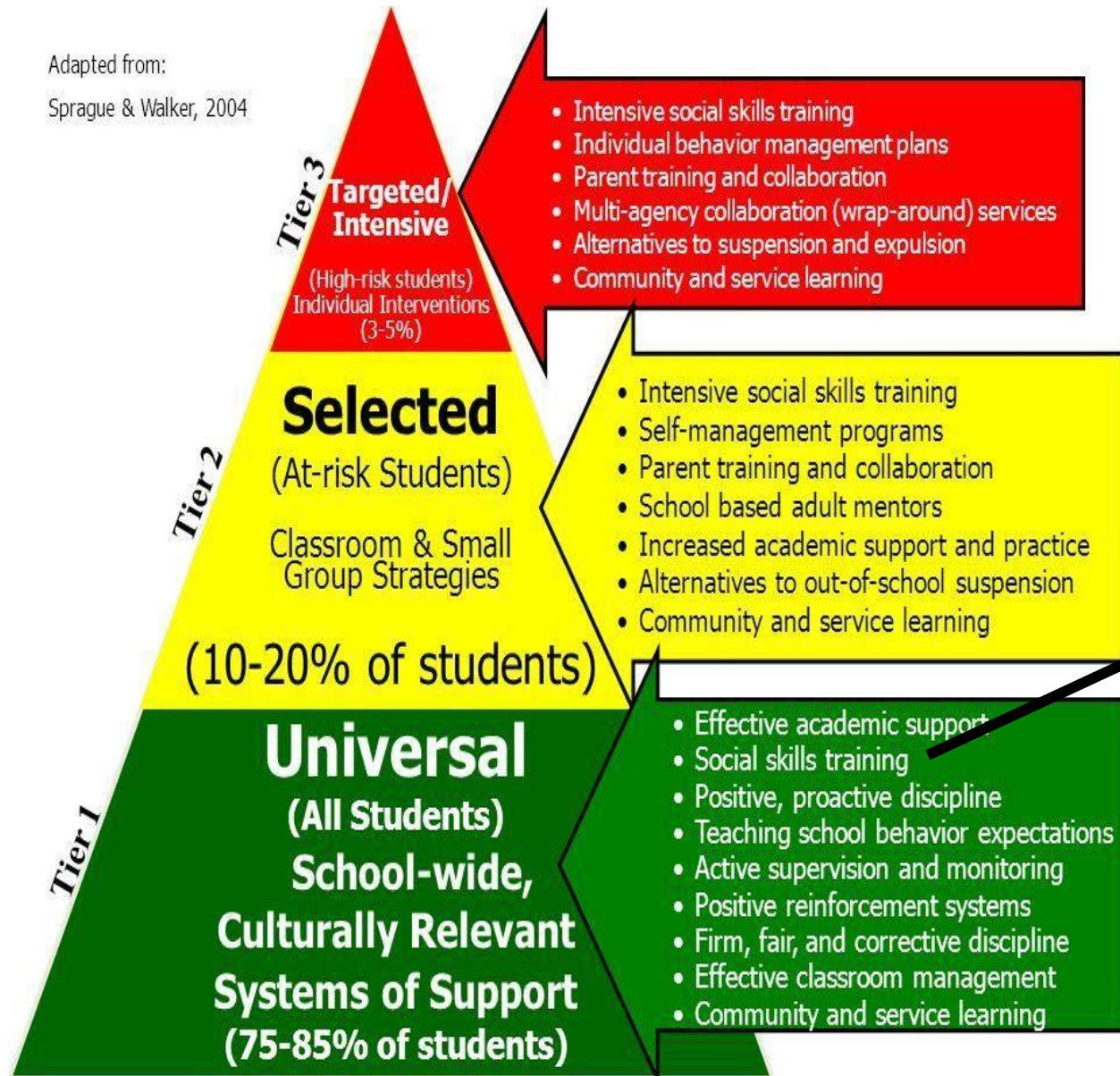
**SEL** nurtures internal growth.

**Mindfulness** is the focus of awareness of thoughts and emotions, the internal growth.

Adapted from:  
Sprague & Walker, 2004



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Sprague & Walker, 2004



PBIS  
Tier 1, 2, 3  
Social Skills Training

Self-awareness  
Recognize ones emotions, values, strengths, and limitations.

Social Emotional Learning

Self-management  
Manage emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals.

Self-regulation of attention is the ability to purposefully attend to elements of one's thoughts, sensations, and emotions while ignoring others. (NASP)

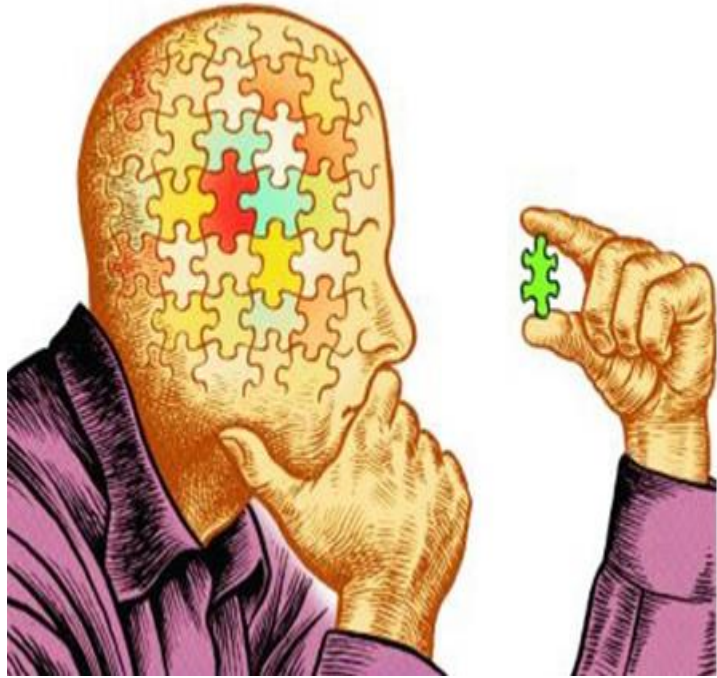
Mindfulness  
Guides students towards self regulation and an attitude of acceptance of current experience (NASP).

Identifying and using stress management strategies.

FOLLOW  
ME  
DOWN  
THE...



Focus on Self-awareness: Recognize one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations.



Focus on Self-Management: Manage emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals.

Self-management skills include:

1. Regulating and expressing one's emotions thoughtfully.

2. Demonstrating perseverance and resilience to overcome obstacles.

3. Sustaining healthy boundaries.

4. Identifying and using stress management strategies.

5. Setting personal and collective goals.

6. Using planning and organizational skills.

7. Showing the courage to take initiative.

8. Demonstrating personal and collective agency.

9. Maintaining attention.

10. Using feedback constructively.

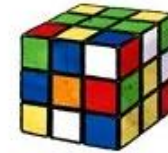
11. Practicing self-compassion.

# Strategies For Kids With Executive Functioning Challenges

[www.thepathway2success.com](http://www.thepathway2success.com)



Start the day in a calm way



Practice problem-solving



Build a strong relationship



Use planners and calendars



Teach EF skills explicitly



Teach study skills and habits



Give clear and concise instructions



Give think time for processing



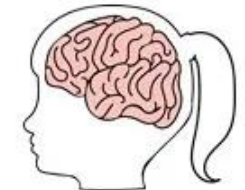
Use checklists



Establish routines



Incorporate movement



Model "think alouds"

# Identifying and using stress management strategies

1. Getting enough sleep.
2. Using guided imagery.
3. Exercise regularly.
- 4. Practicing deep breathing.**
5. Using progressive muscle relaxation.
6. Listening to music.
7. Finding social support.
8. Eating a healthy diet.
9. Eliminating sources of stress.
- 10. Trying mindfulness.**



WHY

*Deep Breathing*



BECAUSE OF...

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AND

HOW WE MANAGE STRESS

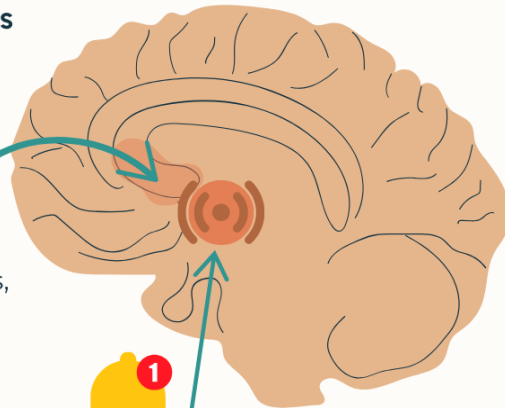
# Did You Know? Chronic Stress Can Actually Change Your Brain?

@primaltrust\_official

1: When stress becomes long-term, it can:



Shrink the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory...



While enlarging the amygdala, the fear center.

2: Leading to...



But don't worry! Your brain is capable of bouncing back – it's called **neuroplasticity!**

Stress doesn't just alter brain chemistry – it changes the brain's physical structure.

The hippocampus, already vulnerable due to its role in memory, is one of the hardest-hit areas.

The amygdala becomes overactive, heightening fear and anxiety, while the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex struggle to keep up.

# BRAIN BREAK!! STAND UP!!!

Homeostasis is a term that refers to symmetry, balance, and smoothness that exist within our body and supports the deep learning processes. (Nussbaum, 2010).

Turn to your neighbor and tell them what homeostasis looks like in your classroom.

# BRAIN FLASH!!!!

The pre-frontal cortex part of the brain that controls thoughtful actions and executive functioning, like planning, goal setting, self-control, metacognition, etc. is not fully developed until the age of 32!

The impulsiveness of teenagers is completely normal!

Just remember that the mistakes and repeated events are 100% expected!



# When can Mindfulness occur?

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Mindfulness can happen when a person is static or active.

Mindfulness can be accessed and cultivated through practices like seated, walking, standing, or moving meditation.

Mindfulness is not meditation as meditation is a practice that requires physical action from you. Meditation is done at a specific moment and in a designated place with no distractions.

(American Institute of Stress, 2022)

# What does the research say about mindfulness?

A review of literature by the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools (2024) found the following:

## STUDENTS

- Sustained attention and executive processing efficiency on different cognitive tasks.
- Improved performances on quizzes.
- Resilience to stress, cognitive performance, and emotional issues.
- Improved students' prosocial behaviors, executive functioning, attention, and decreased students' anxiety symptoms, attention problems, and conduct behaviors.

# Benefits of Mindfulness for Students

A systematic review of current literature (2022) on mindfulness-based school interventions (MBSIs), evaluating evidence across specific outcomes for youth found:

“The highest quality evidence (‘A Grade’) across outcomes indicated that MBSIs increased prosocial behavior, resilience, executive function, attention and mindfulness, and decreased anxiety, attention problems/ADHD behaviors and conduct behaviors.”

Enhances focus and performance

Reduces stress

Deepens self-insight

Fosters compassion toward oneself and others



Image Credit: WavebreakmediaMid

## APA PsycArticles: Journal Article Mindfulness training reduces stress and amygdala reactivity to fearful faces in middle-school children.

### •RESULTS SUMMARIZED:

Students who practiced mindfulness reported less stress than those in a control group.

Students showed higher levels of prefrontal cortex (stress management portion of the brain) connectivity with the amygdala (fight or flight response of the brain).

Students showed lower levels of amygdala activity when they looked at angry faces.

# Benefits of Mindfulness in Schools

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- Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Concentration and Cognition
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Behavior (Leland, 2015 Mindfulness and Student Success)

# Integrating Mindfulness in School-Transforming School Culture

1. Do research as to what is best for your school. Start small with pilot classrooms.
2. Find professionals who can train staff...and parents.
3. Emphasize that mindfulness is completely secular with not religiosity.
4. Mindfulness is based on research. Mindfulness is teaching how to pay attention and be more aware.
5. Teachers and administrators need to determine where and how mindfulness can fit in.
6. Elect a committee or point person who will move the action forward.

# Mindfulness in School and how it fits in with Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 with PBS

Quickly read the paragraph in your packet. Write down on a T-chart (provided) any of the positives or roadblocks of implementing mindfulness in your school.



The Future of  
Education:  
Mindful  
Classrooms  
A guide for schools  
with resources.

# Frequently Asked Questions to Consider when Implementing Mindfulness Based Interventions in Schools

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## Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

“Some innocent missteps have taught us that when bringing MBSR into a school setting, it is essential to clearly convey the secular and universal nature of mindfulness and to be proactive in eliciting support of the school administration, teachers, and parents.”

# H-E-A-L: The Four Stages of Wholesome Learning

- H reminds us that we need to *have* positive experiences first of all.
- E reminds us that we are more likely to register and install them if we *enrich* that experience.
- A reminds us that we need to *absorb* the experience.
- L reminds us that we can more fully install the experience if we *link* it to other experiences which are significant to us.



# Mindfulness Tips for Educators

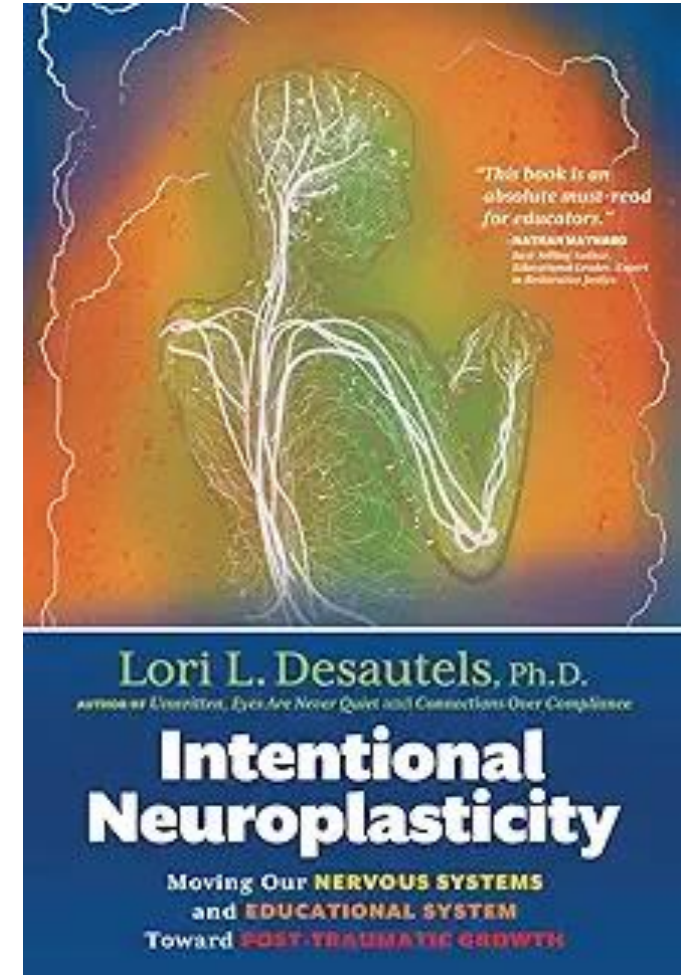
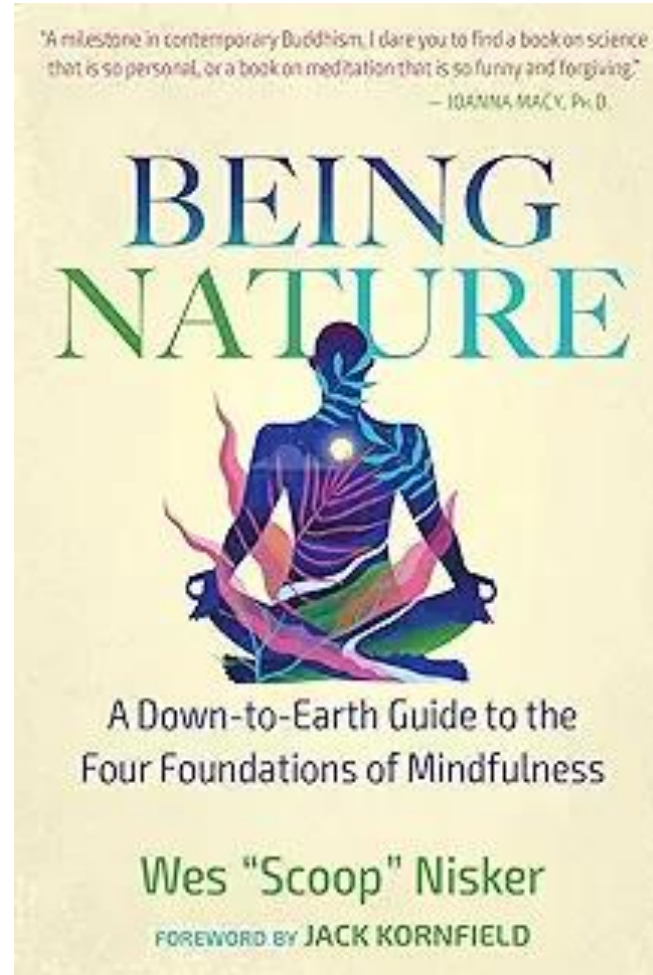
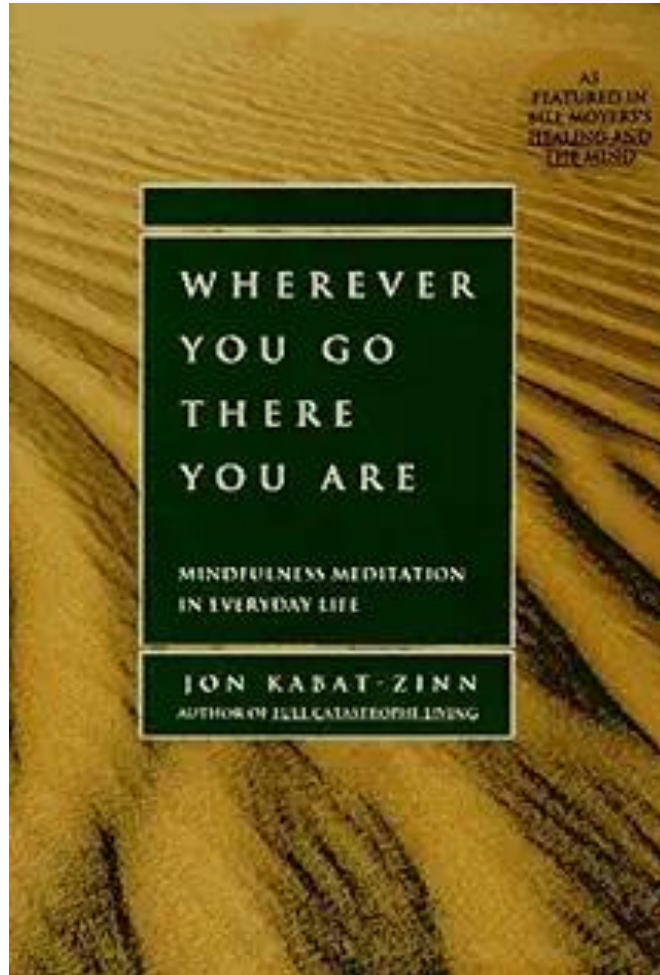
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Use these five tips on how to be mindful as an educator and reap the benefits for yourself and for your students:

- Before class starts each day, take five to ten minutes and put on a recorded meditation or practice a few breathing exercises
- Start keeping a journal and try to write in it at least a few times a week. Keeping track of your experiences can help you recognize thoughts and feelings as they come during the day
- To make mindfulness a part of your routine, set daily reminders on your phone to do a mindful activity
- Gratitude is a great way to become more mindful while cultivating a positive attitude. Once a day, try to make a mental list of ten different things that you're thankful for
- For a mindfulness activity that involves your body as much as your mind, join a yoga class or do a few poses in the morning before your classes begin

# RESOURCE BOOKS

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# A Quote to Consider

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**"The real treasure offered by mindfulness – its most amazing gift – is that it provides us with the opportunity to respond rather than simply react."**

– KRISTIN NEFF

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# Thank you!

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