

TEACHER'S DIGEST

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Mindfulness

Why you should practice this

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Five places to holiday this June!

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5 pairs of tickets worth over \$2500 to be won!

Catch Nick Vujicic this May, LIVE in Singapore!



'Mindfulness' seems to be in the news everywhere these days. Driven by a series of research-backed projects and trials that validate ancient approaches to developing focused attention, mindfulness is making inroads into many areas of public and personal life.

Jon Kabat-Zinn is generally attributed with introducing mindfulness to Western mainstream medicine as a secular approach to wellness and greater mental health. Whilst doing his Ph.D. in molecular biology at MIT in the 70's, he was also learning to meditate and he realized that the techniques he was acquiring could be used to help people work with chronic pain. He set up a Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and now, 30 years later his work – namely the 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course (MBSR) - is highly respected and replicated in various clinical settings around the world.

Educators around the world are beginning to see the potential that mindfulness can have for their students. At a time when there are growing concerns about children's capacity to pay attention, depression and anxiety rates are rising, and the wonders of technology may be adding to our propensity for distraction, courses in mindfulness can help students cultivate focusing skills. In addition, mindfulness increases self-awareness and contributes to emotional regulation – skills that are integral to sound learning and healthy mental development.

BEING MINDFUL, TEACHING MINDFULLY, TEACHING MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is not just for students, it is also beneficial for teachers. Every teacher can learn to develop a greater sensitivity to their own presence and that of their students.

By heightening this awareness they can help create a space that is more conducive to focused learning. In order to teach mindfulness effectively teachers can develop their own mindfulness practice.

If you are interested in mindfulness but have never been involved in formal meditation there are many avenues you could explore. It is possible to enroll in an 8 week MBSR or MBCT (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy) course in your local area or find one online. Many teachers find these courses transformative in helping them manage stress and understand themselves better.

The growing interest in mindfulness is an indication that there is a need to slow down, create space and reduce stress. Perhaps the fact that this resonates with many teachers, parents and students is also an indication that we are beginning to revisit our understanding of what really matters in schooling and learning in the 21st Century – wellbeing, resilience and self-awareness are increasingly recognised as being as important as academic success.

SOME BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS IN GENERAL:

- **Better focus and concentration**
- **Increased calm**
- **Decreased stress and anxiety**
- **Improved impulse control**
- **Skillful ways to respond to difficult emotion**
- **Increased self-awareness**
- **Increased empathy and understanding of others**
- **Greater overall well being**

Kevin Hawkins has worked as a teacher, principal, school head, and social worker in the UK, Africa, and Europe. He supports the development of young minds through enhancing students' self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Kevin has taught mindfulness to teenagers at the International School of Prague since 2009, where he is the Middle School Principal. He also manages international programs for the Mindfulness in Schools Project from the UK. For more information, visit <http://mindfulnessinschools.org>

