

# The unique benefits of mindfulness

I am an Early Childhood lecturer. 18 months ago I decided to write a literature review of natural tools to support young people's holistic development, and mindfulness meditation repeatedly turned up in my searches. The more I researched the more I read about the potential benefits of mindfulness.

I did an 8-week MBSR course in February 2018. I had practised Transcendental Meditation for years prior to learning mindfulness meditation so I was used to sitting quietly each day. However, for me mindfulness meditation was unique in that I could feel the benefits of my formal practice spilling into my informal practice.

Both personally and professionally mindfulness has transformed my life. I have toddler twin boys, I teach, I research, I am a homemaker, I do voluntary work, and often my husband is away traveling.

**Mindfulness has allowed me to be more present each day in each moment with myself, and the people that I love.**

Mindfulness has grounded me and reduced the amount of time that my head spends ruminating. It has opened my heart to new possibilities and allowed me to live more compassionately. In work, I am more focused, more capable and calmer. Family and colleagues have noticed the changes in me. I practise breathing techniques with my children and in work I have given mindfulness talks to colleagues.

Through my research I learned about the Mindfulness in Schools Project. It was cited in articles from the University of Exeter and elsewhere.

**In August 2018 I attended a .b course in London. The facilitators were knowledgeable and insightful. Delivery was well planned and the materials disseminated were very useful.**

From September 2018 to December 2018 I delivered a mindfulness pilot project to year 1 Business students in my university. Using the .b curriculum students were given 8 weeks of mindfulness in a set module 'Skills for Success at Third Level'. My head of school and the university president were particularly supportive. Colleagues were very interested as great emphasis is placed on students' self-care and ability to focus in our institution. Participation in the project was voluntary but there was almost full buy in from the 80 students who were invited to participate. Parents were not involved. Their consent was required for students under 18 years of age.

As I designed, delivered and collected data myself little additional funding was required. My head of department bought me out of one hour of teaching each week and any additional time I gave voluntarily. This project has grown organically from a year 1 pilot project to now include workshops for students in the run up to exams, self-care workshops in Wellbeing Week, and a series of 'Introduction to Mindfulness & b.' talks for staff.

In interviews students have spoken about greater self-awareness, stress management and ability to focus.

## Staff have described how participation in workshops has taught them to take greater self-care in the demanding world of education.

To keep the momentum going I intend on holding mindful walks around our beautiful grounds in summer. I have also identified student and staff champions who hope to train in .b

I would change the space in which the pilot project was delivered. We were given computer labs to be in, and traditional classroom space would have been more conducive.

Next year I am to be part of an EU funded project and I will bring .b mindfulness to year 1 university students in two additional campuses.



**Maria Kenneally, Humanities Lecturer  
Technological University Dublin**

## Student Comments:

"For me personally the mindfulness meditation made a big impact on my stress levels in relation to college workload and CA's. I found that we were given different tools to use for us to decide which worked best for us which I liked. Talking to other students it was clear that each student found a different method useful for different reasons. Not only did it impact my college life it also helped me stay calm when I got stressed at home and at work. Subconsciously I noticed myself practising some of the techniques when I began to stress without even noticing I was doing it. I would definitely recommend this programme."

"I can honestly say I would not be in college now if I had not applied mindfulness meditation to my life. I was ready to throw in the towel at week 9, but mindfulness allowed me to step outside my picture and just observe what was going on. I wrote this little jingle.

### MINDFULNESS

Give it a go with an open mind,

You will learn techniques to help you unwind,

When life gets you stressed and things a bit much, its with your mental health you need to get in touch,

You will relax, refocus and reset,

You'll be back in the zone, and with the best mindset ,

So just give it a go, and your mind will be carefree,

And you will thank me, of that I guarantee "