

Mindful Bottle Toolkit

A toolkit for teachers

Introduction to the Mindful Bottle Toolkit

The **Mindful Bottle Toolkit** was developed to help teachers address issues of stress and anxiety in their students and promote positive well-being in the classroom.

Why Focus on Stress and Anxiety?

While stress is a normal part of life, excessive stress can have a dramatic effect on learning and social development. It can interfere with a student's ability to focus and pay attention, and hinder their memory and decision-making. Too much stress can negatively affect a student's health and their interactions with others. An action that might be judged as intentional misbehaviour may in fact be a stress reaction (*Kids Have Stress Too, Psychology Foundation of Canada, 2013*).

While not all students who experience significant stress at school will develop anxiety-related symptoms, they are at risk of doing so and would benefit from strategies to create classroom environments that reduce potential sources of severe stress for all students (*Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-Being, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013*).

In the Cochrane District, all school boards have identified anxiety as a top priority of concern (*Source: Board scans and student surveys, 2012-2013*). Comprehensive strategies are being developed and promotion and prevention programs are being introduced to schools. The **Mindful Bottle Toolkit** was developed to support initiatives that are planned or underway in district school boards.

How Mindfulness Can Help

Research has shown that programs that directly train students in mindfulness demonstrate a range of cognitive, social and psychological benefits to both elementary and high school students (*Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students, J.Meiklejohn et al, 2010*).

“These benefits include improvements in waking memory, attention, academic skills, social skills, emotional regulation, and self-esteem, as well as self-reported improvements in mood and decreases in anxiety, stress and fatigue” (ibid).

The Mindful Bottle was developed as a simple, visual tool for teachers to introduce the practice of mindfulness to students. The activity of using the bottle, as outlined in the toolkit, is 3-5 minutes in length and therefore can easily be incorporated into a teacher's existing curriculum.

Teachers within the Cochrane District who have introduced the Mindful Bottle in their classrooms identify that students' behaviour is improved. When asked, all agreed they plan to continue to use the Mindful Bottle in their classrooms on a regular basis. While these are preliminary results, future evaluations are planned to measure effects on a longer-term basis.

The **Mindful Bottle Toolkit** includes:

- ✓ An introduction to mindfulness which will help teachers and students understand the concept of mindfulness and its benefits;
- ✓ An introduction to the Mindful Bottle which will help teachers understand how this tool can be introduced in the classroom;
- ✓ Instructions to make a Mindful Bottle;
- ✓ A ready-to-use 3-minute Mindful Bottle.

The **Mindful Bottle Toolkit** may be found online at

<http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca/en/audiences/educators/mindful-bottle.pdf>

or in French at

<http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca/fr/groupes-cibles/educateurs/trousse-de-la-bouteille-de-conscience.pdf>

We are pleased to offer this toolkit and hope it will become a regular part of your classroom activity and contribute to the well-being of you and your students.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

(Excerpted from greatergood.berkeley.edu)

I. What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Though it has its roots in Buddhist meditation, a secular practice of mindfulness has entered the mainstream in recent years, in part through the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which he launched at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. Since that time, thousands of studies have documented the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness in general and MBSR in particular, inspiring countless programs to adapt the MBSR model.

Jon Kabat-Zinn: What is Mindfulness? 2 ½ minute video: <http://youtu.be/xoLQ3qkh0w0>

II. Why Practice Mindfulness?

Studies have shown that practicing mindfulness, even for just a few weeks, can bring a variety of physical, psychological, and social benefits. Here are some of these benefits, which extend across many different settings.

- ❖ **Mindfulness is good for our bodies.** A seminal study found that, after just eight weeks of training, practicing mindfulness meditation boosts our immune system’s ability to fight off illness.
- ❖ **Mindfulness is good for our minds.** Several studies have found that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and stress.
- ❖ **Mindfulness changes our brains.** Research has found that it increases density of gray matter in brain regions linked to learning, memory, emotion regulation, and empathy.
- ❖ **Mindfulness helps us focus.** Studies suggest that mindfulness helps us tune out distractions and improves our memory and attention skills.

- ❖ **Mindfulness fosters compassion and altruism.** Research suggests mindfulness training makes us more likely to help someone in need and increases activity in neural networks involved in understanding the suffering of others and regulating emotions. Evidence suggests it might boost self-compassion as well.
- ❖ **Mindfulness helps schools.** (*greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindful_education*)
- ❖ Some research shows that teaching mindfulness in the classroom reduces behaviour problems and aggression among students, and improves their happiness levels and ability to pay attention (*greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindful_kids_peaceful_schools*).
- ❖ Teachers trained in mindfulness also show lower blood pressure, less negative emotion and symptoms of depression, and greater compassion and empathy.

Jon Kabat-Zinn: The Science of Mindfulness 2½ minute video: <http://youtu.be/AJ2kbOPbrNI>

III. How to Cultivate Mindfulness?

Jon Kabat-Zinn emphasizes that mindfulness is “about living your life as if it really mattered, moment by moment by moment by moment.”

Here are a few key components of practicing mindfulness:

- Pay close attention to your breathing, especially when you’re feeling intense emotions.
- Notice—really notice—what you’re sensing in a given moment, the sights, sounds, and smells that ordinarily slip by without reaching your conscious awareness.
- Recognize that your thoughts and emotions are fleeting and do not define you, an insight that can free you from negative thought patterns.
- Tune into your body’s physical sensations, from the water hitting your skin in the shower to the way your body rests in your office chair.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MINDFUL BOTTLE

The Mindful Bottle was developed as a practical tool to assist teachers in addressing issues of stress and anxiety in students and help promote overall mental well-being.

The Mindful Bottle is a simple and effective visual method for demonstrating mindfulness to students and teaching them how to build that skill. Studies have shown that practicing mindfulness can bring a variety of benefits in the classroom. The Mindful Bottle can be used to help students who are agitated or in distress, to calm down and refocus.

The presence of the Mindful Bottle will signify that the classroom is a safe space to talk about mental health issues. It can also act as a reminder to students that taking time to nurture their mental well-being is important and encouraged.

The glitter in the Mindful Bottle can be imagined as the child's thoughts, swirling around. By sitting still, focusing on the Mindful Bottle and watching it settle, students become calmer. They begin to learn how it feels to be still inside. It is a visual reminder to students of how important it is to be still and allow their thoughts to settle before engaging in school work or other activities.

This video illustrates how the Mindful Bottle can be used and you may find it helpful:
<http://youtu.be/V2nBT9NsxWg>.

MINDFULNESS FOR PARENTS AND KIDS

The practice of mindfulness has been found to be an effective way to help children deal with anxiety, improve concentration and handle difficult emotions.

Mindfulness is simply about paying attention in the present moment, without judging or trying to change anything. It is just about being with whatever is happening, exactly as it is, without having to do anything about it.

Mindfulness can help children shift their attention away from the swirling thoughts in their heads. In doing so, they can develop physical and mental calm. They can learn to pause for a moment, to catch their breath, and to get a sense of what they need in that moment.

The **Mindful Bottle** is a practical tool parents and children can use to practice mindfulness. The glitter in the Mindful Bottle can be imagined as the child's thoughts, swirling around. By sitting still, focusing on the Mindful Bottle and watching it settle, children become calmer. They begin to learn how it feels to be still inside.

Practicing mindfulness, even for just a few weeks, has been found to reduce stress, increase positive emotions and improve memory, concentration and attention skills.

Mindfulness Resources

<http://www.mindful.org/at-home/tips-for-teaching-mindfulness-to-kids>

[Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids](#), by Eline Snel. Shambhala Publishing, 2013.

HOW TO MAKE A MINDFUL BOTTLE

Suggested Materials:

- ✓ 1 591 ml bottle (e.g., Smart Water[®], Voss[®], [Clear cylinder bottles](#))
- ✓ 110 ml clear liquid glue [20% of volume] (e.g., Elmer's[®] Clear School Glue)
- ✓ **Note:** This amount of glue will make a 3 minute Mindful Bottle. Use 120 ml glue for a 4 minute bottle; 135 ml for a 5 minute bottle.
- ✓ 0.5 oz. fine glitter [2.5% of volume]
- ✓ 1 tube original Crazy Glue[®]

Directions:

1. Fill one-third of the bottle with room temperature water. Add hot (boiled, then slightly cooled) water to just over half the bottle.
2. The bottle should be warm to the touch. Add the desired amount of glue.
3. Gently stir with long stick or skewer to mix glue and water, trying to avoid creating bubbles.
4. Add glitter, by directly pouring into bottle or using a funnel.
5. Add room temperature water to fill bottle to the neck.
6. Gently stir with stick or skewer to raise bubbles and mix glitter.
7. Gradually fill to the top with water.
8. **Let cool without cap.**
**May need to remove some bubbles and add more water to top off.
9. Glue cap onto completed bottle by applying Crazy Glue[®] in ridges along top of bottle.
Let set.

Please keep in mind if using other sized bottles than the one suggested, the amount of glue, water and glitter will change. Adjust the quantities of each as you see fit. Try leaving a 2-3 cm gap from the neck of the bottle and shaking it to determine if the rate at which the glitter falls is suitable for you.

Smaller bottles require a larger percentage of glue, in relation to water. If the glitter falls too quickly add more glue to slow its descent. When the desired level is achieved, fill the bottle up to the neck and continue with step 6 of the directions.

You may find it helpful to view this video on making a sparkle bottle:
<http://youtu.be/687Ww8Y3oeM>

Practicing Mindfulness (3 minutes)

- Put away any distractions (books, iPods, smartphones).
- Sit in an upright posture (no slouching).
- Pay attention to your breathing and the moment.
- Use your breathing as an anchor for your attention.
- Repeatedly count the **number** of consecutive exhalations you take.
- Pay attention to your body and pleasant moments.
- Allow your mind to rest naturally (no thoughts of what has or what could happen).

THE MINDFUL BOTTLE PILOT PROJECT

The effectiveness of the Mindful Bottle is currently being evaluated. The project was initially piloted in April 2014 with students and school staff at Northern Lights Secondary School in Moosonee.

In the following video, Angela Tozer, Principal and Student Success Board Lead, as well as Katheryn Kapashesit, Student Success Counsellor, will share their personal experience with the Mindful Bottle.

The following video will entail:

- How the Mindful Bottle was introduced to staff through a professional development session.
- How the Mindful Bottle was tied-in with Mindfulness and Growth Mindset.
- The process for a school-wide project roll-out.
- A demonstration of a mindfulness exercise with use of the Mindful Bottle tool.
- Personal observations and feedback.

You may view the video by visiting: <http://youtu.be/NGJ-9OnUBQE>

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