“Mindfulness in the Education System”

Day: Thursday 12th July 2018  
Time: 3:30 – 4:45 pm  
Track: Mindfulness in Society

Schools play a major role in the development of cognitive skills of their students. However, the conditions found in schools often seem to cause stress and even anxiety for both students and teachers alike. Mindfulness has been taught in schools and universities to help to improve the cognitive performance and resilience to stress of students (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014) and the wellbeing and mental health of teachers (Lomas, Medina, Ivtzan, Rupprecht, & Eiroa-Orosa, 2017). In this symposium, we aim to give an overview of different studies in school settings in Germany, England and the United States of America.

Symposium overview

**Presenter 1**  
Marie Ottilie Frenkel - Does Mindfulness Benefit Fifth-Graders’ Psychological Being?

**Presenter 2**  
Tammy Gilligan - Student Outcomes, Teacher Feedback, and Best Practices for Implementation of Mindfulness Interventions in K-12 Settings

**Presenter 3**  
Nils Altner - Taking Mindfulness to Town - How mindful teachers change the school system

**Presenter 4**  
Jesus Montero-Marin - Teachers ‘Finding Peace in a Frantic World’: the mediating role of mindfulness and self-compassion to reduce Type-A behaviours and burnout

**Chair:** Silke Rupprecht
Does Mindfulness Benefit Fifth-Graders’ Psychological Being?

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Background and Objectives: James (1891) considers the improvement of the self-regulatory ability to constantly bring back one’s wandering attention crucial for excellent education. Mindfulness is a special form of attention allocation, which trains this ability. Empirical studies with children and adolescents show that mindfulness training optimizes attention and emotion regulation (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This can be explained by the improvement of self-regulatory skills in early childhood (Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). The present study adapts a mindfulness training developed for children to the curriculum of a German high school. Feasibility, acceptance and efficacy of this training were examined. The mindfulness training was hypothesized to improve attention and stress resilience, reduce stress-related health problems and increase social skills.

Methods: The sample consisted of 92 fifth-grade students (m = 10.38; sd = 0.51). In the 4-week program (8 x 45 min) the intervention group (n = 48) practiced the awareness of senses, body and breath as well as the perception and handling of thoughts/emotions in guided classroom sessions and at home (Frenkel, 2014). The other group served as an active waiting control group undergoing a social and emotional learning program (LionsQuest). Physiological (cortisol, heart rate variability), psychological (mindfulness, health-related quality of life, stress experience, anxiety) and behavioral measures (d2, mind wandering paradigm) were assessed before and after the intervention as well as 14 weeks later. Additionally, parents, class teachers and peers rated students’ mindfulness, health-related quality of life and prosocial behavior.

Results: The mindfulness training has been well received among students, teachers and parents and has proven to be both feasible and effective. The intervention group showed higher scores in mindfulness and self-esteem and lower cortisol levels after the intervention.

Conclusion: The results offer implications for future research and the development of mindfulness training programs with children. Furthermore, the implementation of mindfulness training in everyday school life promises to support self-regulation processes and resilience in children and adolescents.
Student Outcomes, Teacher Feedback, and Best Practices for Implementation of Mindfulness Interventions in K-12 Settings

Tammy Gilligan, Renee Staton

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Background and Objectives: The researchers have spent the last many years developing our local, state, and national expertise on the topic of mindfulness in the United States. After receiving Mindful Schools and MindUp trainings and implementing various lessons in schools, we created a curriculum that is child-centered and responsive to the needs of diverse learners. We have implemented a six-session mindfulness program, based on: teaching the principles of neuroscience, teaching core mindfulness-based practices, and applying practices to school and home-based scenarios.

Methods: We have completed several research studies in K-12 school settings through which we have examined outcomes for students and teachers (i.e. levels of mindfulness, teacher perceptions). Based on our studies of student and teacher outcomes (see list of relevant publications below), we have compiled reflections on best practices of implementing mindfulness-based interventions in K-12 settings.

Results: We will succinctly review best practices, relevant outcomes of student mindfulness and teacher feedback, and ideas for future directions in research and program sustainability in K-12 educational settings.

Discussion: Best practices we will expand on during the symposium include: developmentally appropriate core practices for children; differentiating the mindfulness curriculum for the diverse learner; teachers as constituents; teacher training; and social acceptability of procedures and outcomes.

Conclusion: Outcomes to be discussed include: students’ reported levels of mindfulness pre and post intervention; teachers’ responses to the curriculum’s efficacy and impact on classroom climate; teacher burnout; and student focus and behavior. Finally, we will summarize relevant tools for implementation of mindfulness in K-12 education, review our outcomes, and share ideas for future directions.
We are presenting first results of a reference project for the state of Northrhine Westphalia that brings mindfulness into the primary school system of the town of Solingen, Germany. We adapted the MBSR program to the needs of primary school teachers and taught it in 21 schools to 324 teachers and principals with the focus on self care. Afterwards we now work together with them in an open format on including mindfulness into the classroom. At the conference we share the dos and dont’s of such a project and present first evaluation results at the levels of self care, inter-personal relationships and team development, relationships with the children, teaching style and the development of school culture. Implications for the development of a caring culture within an urban community are also discussed.
Teachers ‘Finding Peace in a Frantic World’: the mediating role of mindfulness and self-compassion to reduce Type-A behaviours and burnout

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Background and objectives: Teaching is an occupation with a high prevalence of work-related stress and burnout. The ‘Type-A Behavior Pattern’ (TABP) describes how people respond to stress by means of a chronic struggle to achieve goals. ‘Burnout’ is a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced personal accomplishment. The aim of this study was to explore the effects of the ‘Finding Peace in a Frantic World’ programme adapted from Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) on levels of TABP and burnout in teachers, and the possible mediating role of mindfulness and self-compassion.

Methods: Participants were recruited from a broadly representative sample of English schools and teachers. Schools, and the participant teachers within, were randomised to either an instructor-led (n=105 teachers) or self-directed (n=101 teachers) mindfulness course. Participants completed a survey based online battery of questionnaires, including: FFMQ, SCS, MBI and TUS. They were assessed at baseline, post-treatment, and 2-month follow-up. A multilevel linear mixed-effects analysis for repeated measures, including subjects and schools (clusters) as random effect variables was carried out. We explored the indirect effects of mindfulness and self-compassion on Type-A behaviors and burnout by means of bootstrapping multiple mediator models.

Results: Of the instructor-led participants, 74.3% completed ≥ 4 sessions, while 55.3% of the self-directed participants read the whole book. Both groups showed similar formal practice rates. Participants in the instructor-led group performed more informal practice compared to the self-directed group. Within-group analyses revealed improvements in mindfulness, self-compassion and general hurry in both groups with higher ESs in the instructor-led group. This latter group also showed improvements in emotional exhaustion, eating behavior, and competitiveness. Between-group differences were found in mindfulness, self-compassion, eating behavior, general hurry, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, favouring the instructor-led group. Mindfulness and self-compassion’s total sum of indirect effects were significant in all relationships examined. Mindfulness was a stronger mediator compared to self-compassion.

Discussion and conclusion: The ‘Finding Peace in a Frantic World’ mindfulness program seems to promote reductions in TABP and burnout when applied to teachers. The instructor-led group elicits higher completion and informal practice rates. Mindfulness and self-compassion have an important mediating role in improvements observed.