

**Developing Mindfulness
in
Young Children**

Shanti Hyacinth Senadeera

**The Corporate Body of
The Buddha Educational Foundation
Taiwan
2021**

Copyright © 2020 by the author

Printed for free distribution by
The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation
11F., 55, Sec.1, Hang Chow South Road, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Tel: 886-2-23951198 , Fax: 886-2-23913415
Email: overseas@budaedu.org
Website: <http://www.budaedu.org>
Mobile Web: m.budaedu.org
This book is strictly for free distribution, it is not to be sold.
Printed in Taiwan

*

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated
to my parents who consistently encouraged and supported me in
my life
and
for all young the children in this world who need assistance and the
teachers who dedicate their time and energy for this noble cause

Table of Contents

Preface	vii
Foreword	xi
Chapter 1 What is Mindfulness?	1
Introduction	1
Mindful Awareness	3
Mindful Practice	5
Formal and Informal Practices	7
The Four Foundations of Mindfulness	7
Chapter 2 Why Mindfulness Meditation is More Important Today than Ever	9
Today’s Lifestyle.....	9
Use of Mindfulness for Health and Well-being.....	10
Secular Mindfulness	11
Traditional Mindfulness and Contemporary Mindfulness	12
Chapter 3 Introducing Mindfulness Meditation to Young Children	14
Why Introduce Mindfulness Meditation to Young Children?	14
How Early Can I Start?.....	15
Practical Exercises.....	16
Chapter 4 Regulating Emotions through Mindfulness training	17
Eight Worldly Conditions.....	17
Mindfulness to deal with Emotions in Young Children	18
To accept Victory and Defeat: Emotions and Motivation	19
Benefits in developing Mindfulness in Young Children	20
Chapter 5 Meditation: Let’s Get Started	22
Sitting Meditation.....	22
Introducing the Singing Tone Bowl	24
Bead Necklaces: A sensory experience	25
Chapter 6 ‘Patience is gold’	26
Developing Patience in Young Children	26
Learning about the Monkey Mind	27
Reading stories	28

Chapter 7 Developing Loving-kindness through Mindfulness: The Power of <i>Mettā</i>	30
What is Loving-kindness Meditation?	30
Introducing Loving -kindness Meditation to Young Children	31
Benefits of Loving-kindness Meditation	33
Chapter 8 Walking Meditation	34
What is Walking Meditation?	34
Developing Mindfulness Walking Meditation in Young Children	35
Chapter 9 Body Scan Meditation	38
What is Body Scan Meditation?	38
Chapter 10 Developing Mindfulness in Eating	40
The digestive system	40
Some tips to increase the child’s awareness when eating	42
Chapter 11 Integrating Mindfulness Training into Education	43
Rationale for offering Mindfulness Training to Children	43
Rationale for offering Mindfulness Training to Teachers	44
How to bring mindfulness into schools?	45
Chapter 12 Conclusion	47
Appendix 1 The Power of Loving-kindness (<i>Mettā</i>)	49
Appendix 2 Mindful Eating	50
The grape story	51
Appendix 3 - Notes	52



Preface

‘Developing Mindfulness in Young Children’ is based on my experience in teaching children mindfulness through breathing exercises. As an Early Childhood Teacher, I plan and implement educational programmes for children between the ages of three to five years.

At the beginning, I used breathing exercises in my class to help transition the children’s mindset from morning to afternoon play sessions. It was difficult at the beginning as the children were very young, but their ability to concentrate and focus on their breathing gradually improved. I received positive feedback from the children, as well as from their parents on the benefits of these exercises. I realised that the children were capable of understanding far more than what would normally be expected of young children.

The Chairman of the Buddhist Council of New South Wales has said that there are many public school students, across the State, practising meditation during their Buddhism lessons instilling values and life skills aiming to help children lead happy and healthy lives. There is growing evidence from research to prove that teaching children mindfulness practices can build their attentiveness and self-control. It also helps to reduce stress, hyperactive behaviour, anxiety and improves overall academic performance. Recent research carried out by neurobiological scientists has shown that regular meditation practice enhances the prefrontal cortex area of the brain that controls the cognitive functions.

The research, coupled with my 35 years of teaching experience, encouraged me to introduce mindfulness to children. I observed that developing mindfulness through meditation assists young children to deal with their emotions, mental stress and behavioural problems as well as develop patience, and calmness. These are the main areas emphasised in this book. Further, building self-confidence, respect for others and developing cognitive skills are the long-term benefits that could be achieved through continuous practice.

It is important for adults to acknowledge that young children learn through hands-on experience. The parent’s nurturance and stimulation are the primary factors to develop mindfulness in them. They develop dispositions for learning through creativity, experimentation, curiosity, exploration and imagination. These were considered when writing this book.

I feel that we often underestimate the capabilities and intelligence of our children because of their young age. I would encourage parents to introduce mindfulness training into the daily activities. It is best to commence meditation at a very young age. Do not feel that they are too young or immature for mindfulness training. Encourage your children to ask questions. They learn to think and participate better through their questions.

To benefit from mindfulness meditation, one should practice regularly. Consistency and determination are very important in this endeavour. It is a gradual process and could be enjoyed by all, regardless of age.

The best way to teach a child to be mindful is for the parents, teachers, and caregivers themselves, to have a sound knowledge and experience of the theory and practice of mindfulness. Therefore, I have attempted to explain at the beginning what mindfulness is and its importance in the present day world in a nutshell with references for further reading. This knowledge will give confidence about the subject matter of mindfulness. Further, it will allow them not only to share the happiness and acceptance with a new generation, but also take better care of themselves at the same time.

The concept of mindfulness is most often associated with Buddhism and also in other religious and spiritual traditions. While young children are not mature enough to understand the religious aspect of mindfulness meditation, Buddhist literature can provide relevant context which would be beneficial to parents and teachers. It is not possible to explain such a vast and complex subject like the Buddhist concept of mindfulness and secularised mindfulness in a few pages. However, I have made an effort to give some basic concepts of both traditional mindfulness and contemporary mindfulness of the West.

In this book, I draw from Buddhist teachings, current Western philosophical and psychological research and applications, as well as my own experience as an Early Childhood Teacher.

My intention is to present mindfulness so that it can be understood by teachers, parents, guardians, and other interested parties irrespective of any religious beliefs. I hope this will be a foundation to integrate mindfulness into early childhood education curriculum and into the lives of children. Then my efforts will have been amply rewarded.

I am most grateful to Rev. Dr. H. Punnaaji Thero, the Founder of Sāma Buddhist Society in Taiwan for initiating this task and for his encouragement.

I wish to express my gratitude to my husband who helped me to make this book a reality. His encouragement and assistance was an inspiration for this venture. I am also grateful to my son and daughter for the assistance given to me in completing this task. I wish to thank Dr. Seneviratne Banda, Dr. Ubeyasiri Wickrama, Dr. Nimal Chandrasena and Dr. Cicil Fonseka who helped me in numerous ways to complete this book.

I wish to thank the publishers, The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taipei for undertaking to publish this book free of charge in a beautiful, high quality print.

Readers are invited to email the author with any comments or suggestions.

Shanti Hyacinth Senadeera

Sydney, Australia

October 2020

E-mail: mindfulnessbyshanti@outlook.com



Foreword

Mrs. Shanti Senadeera should be congratulated on her skilful attempt to present to the early childhood educators with her book *‘Developing Mindfulness in Young Children’*.

As we know, ‘Mindfulness’ is therapeutic to both mind and body, irrespective of whether we are children or adults. It is a process to eliminate or reduce stress levels we inevitably experience in our complex lifestyles. In order to obtain positive results towards greater insight ‘*sati*’ meditation should be an integral part of daily life.

‘Breathing’ is a living phenomenon in life and a natural progress of life. In Buddhist meditation of ‘Mindfulness’ or ‘Sati’, breathing is used extensively as a very effective method to train the mind. Buddhist Meditation, based on ‘rising and falling of the breath’, when practiced with proper guidance, leads to inner-tranquillity, harmony, and peace.

As stated in the book *‘Meditation benefits young children to develop patience, relaxation, and calmness.’* It is well-known that the regular practice of Buddhist meditation can be of immense benefit to those suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure and psychological disorders to name a few. According to the modern scientific research, it is the ‘mind’ that controls and dominates the physical organism and operates its vibrations to natural harmony of health, wellbeing and happiness.

Activities of the mind have no limits and they form the environment for life. An impure mind is surrounded with impure thoughts and objects, while a pure mind surrounds pure thoughts and objects. Hence, surroundings have no more limits than the activities of the mind. There is nothing in the world that is not created by mind.

Let us be mindful and conquer our world!

Dr. Ubeyasiri Wijeyananda Wickrama, Ph.D. (OAM)

Sydney, Australia

November 2020

Chapter 1

What is Mindfulness?

“Mind is a forerunner of all actions. All deeds are led by mind, created by mind...”

~The Buddha

Dhammapada Verse 1

Introduction

Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, a natural human capacity. We just have to learn how to access it. We can cultivate and strengthen this inherent human capacity with simple practices that are scientifically demonstrated, to benefit ourselves and others as well. Mindfulness practice cultivates universal human qualities and does not require anyone to change his or her cultural beliefs or religious faith. Mindfulness could be realised by individuals for themselves, by themselves and not depend on an external authority.

The ‘Mind’ is not tangible and therefore it is not an organ in our body. However, it has the ability to analyse and process information received through the five senses. Mindfulness is the quality of being present and has a conscious awareness with whatever we are doing at the moment, free from distraction or judgment. We train in this moment-to-moment awareness through meditation, allowing us to build the skill of mindfulness, so that we can then apply it to everyday life. Mindfulness is for everyone who wants to live a happier life.

Mindfulness can be practiced by anyone at any time without special equipment or memberships. Trying out a style of meditation suited to your goals is a great way to improve your quality of life, even if you only have a few minutes to do it each day.

Different people, whether ancient Buddhists or contemporary neuroscientists, may use and define mindfulness in different ways. The term ‘mindfulness’ encompasses a range of concepts and practices, all of which have important aspects in common but also differ in significant ways. The word Mindfulness

has many synonyms. You could call it awareness, attention, focus, presence, vigilance, alertness, or remembering ¹.

Historically, mindfulness has been associated with the practice of Buddhist meditation. It is exciting that a practice that heralds from a more than 2600-year-old Buddhist spiritual tradition is now secularised and widely practiced in the US and Europe with scientific evidence to prove its effectiveness. ²

Mindfulness is a relatively a new concept to the West. Therefore, the field of mindfulness is still in its infancy to the Western world. There were very few publications and research on Mindfulness in the 1980s and 1990s, but have increased exponentially since early 2000s. ³

In 1881, Thomas William Rhys Davids (Appendix 3- Note1) first translated *Pāli* (language of the earliest Buddhist scriptures) word *sati* into English ‘Mindfulness’, although it does not correspond precisely with that of the English word ‘Mindfulness’.

In Sanskrit it is called *smrit*, “to remember”, in Chinese *nian* – “to be mindful” and in Tibetan *dran pa*. Mindfulness, as mentioned before is most often associated with Buddhism, although it is also embedded with Hinduism and other spiritual traditions.

The fact that most modern Western practitioners and teachers of mindfulness learned about mindfulness’ under Buddhist teachers, shows that the Western concept of mindfulness is largely indebted to Buddhism.

¹ Gethin, R. (2015). Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness. In Brown K. W., Creswell J. D. & Ryan. R. M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice*. The Guilford Press. New York p. 9.

² Zerbo E., Schlechter A, Desai S, Levounis P. (2016). *Becoming Mindful: Integrating Mindfulness into Your Psychiatric Practice*, American Psychiatric Association (APA). p.106.

³ Brown, K W., Creswell, J. D and Ryan. R. M. (Eds.). (2016). Introduction: The Evolution of Mindfulness Science. *Handbook of Mindfulness Theory, Research, and Practice*. The Guilford Press, New York. p 2.

There is no single definition of ‘Mindfulness’. One of the operational definitions and most widely cited definition of mindfulness is: “*The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally*” –Jon Kabat-Zinn.⁴

Another useful definition of mindfulness is: “*...maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens*” Greater Good Science Centre, University of California CA. U.S.

“*Mindfulness shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others.*”- Thich Nhat Hanh⁵

“*...Two thousand five hundred years ago in the texts of the ‘Satipaṭṭhāna’ and Ānāpānasati Sutras, Buddha taught the basic principles of what we today call “mindfulness...”*”⁶

Guided by these definitions, mindfulness can be referred to as both an outcome (mindful awareness) and a process (mindful practice).⁷

Mindful Awareness

To simplify this concept, let us focus on our breathing. You are breathing as you read this book. Do you know you are breathing? To know with your whole being when you 'breathe in' and 'breathe out' is mindfulness.

⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), pp 144–156. (See also: Appendix 3- Note 2).

⁵ What is mindfulness? Source: <https://kensho.life/articles/what-is-mindfulness-and-what-isn't>. (See also: Appendix 3- Note 3).

⁶ Zerbo E., Schlechter A, Desai S. and Levounis P. (2016). *Becoming Mindful: Integrating Mindfulness into Your Psychiatric Practice*, American Psychiatric Association (APA).p 3.

⁷ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions* American Psychological Association (APA). Washington DC. p 4.

Mindful Awareness is a way of inhabiting or occupying one's mind, one's body, one's moment-by-moment experience right now, in the present moment without judging it or trying to change it.⁸

The human mind is filled with constantly changing thoughts. They pass through the human mind at every moment. Mindfulness simply knows and accepts what is here and now. Acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'bad' so that we can be totally present without distraction. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we are sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past - what if's or imagining the future - what may be's.

Mindful awareness is a way of relating to all experiences - positive, negative, and neutral in an open-minded and receptive way, but with discerning attention and good understanding or insight. Therefore, apprehending the present moment with acceptance does not mean passive resignation. This allows a person from a place of clarity to discern what is necessary and respond, objectively, consciously, and skilfully, rather than react out of habitual pattern.

It is useful to have a good understanding of 'The Three Marks of Existence' or 'The Three Basic Facts of Existence' of the human condition which is helpful in practicing mindfulness meditation. By deep insight into the nature of the human condition, one will realise three characteristics (*Ti-lakkhana*) of this condition; (a) impermanence/change - *Anicca* (b) suffering/ unsatisfactoriness - *Dukkha* and (c) no-self/no soul - *Anatta*.

Impermanence means that everything is in a constant state of change. As they say, the only thing certain in life is uncertainty! Unsatisfactoriness arises because of our false expectation of permanence and we resist impermanence, by trying to cling to the "Five Aggregates" (Appendix 3- Note 4). Because of this craving, people force the reality. Even if they get what just the way they want, the next moment things change. So, they resist and continue suffering. No-self (otherwise known as ego or identity) does not mean that people are not real, but rather that there is no discreet entity which can be identified as the distinct self. With the modern-day focus on individualism, many people have

⁸ Shapiro & Carlson (2006). p. 5 [See Note 7 (p. 3)].

difficulty with this concept. It is believed that suffering occurs when individuals perceive themselves as a separate individual, and ignore the impermanent nature of life. Simply put, everything changes, including one's sense of self. There is no stable, solid, unchanging entity that can be labelled as self.

This 2600-year-old the Buddha's teaching of 'no-self'- *Anatta*, is now receiving recognition from the current scientific findings.⁹ Appreciation of the above three characteristics irrespective of any religious belief will help anybody to understand the true nature of the human condition and live with less stress and contentment.

As psychotherapist and author, Dr Thomas Bien wrote “when you look deeply into the river of yourself, there is nothing to hold on to, nothing permanent and unchanging. Your body, your feelings, your thoughts, and your perceptions—all are flowing and changing from moment to moment.”¹⁰

Mindful Practice

Mindful Practice involves cultivating the skills of sustained attention on purpose with acceptance. It is intentional training of the mind. Shapiro and Carlson (2006) identified three core elements in mindfulness practice: Intention, Attention and Attitude (IAA). They are not separate processes or stages - “they are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously, the three elements informing and feeding back into each other.”¹¹

Intention is fundamental to develop mindfulness meditation. When one begins to practice meditation, the intention should be clear. When we have discerned our intentions, they help to motivate us, reminding us of what is truly important if one gets distracted. Intention, in the context of mindfulness is not the same as striving or grasping for certain outcomes or goals. As

⁹. Shapiro & Carlson (2006). p. 36 [See Note 7 (p. 3)].

¹⁰ Bien, Thomas (See Appendix 3-Note 5)

¹¹ Shapiro & Carlson (2006). p. 8 [See Note 7 (p. 3)].

psychotherapist Jack Kornfield puts it “*Intention is a direction not a destination*”.¹²

As meditators continue to practice, their intention may shift from self-regulation, such as stress management to more spiritual aspects as self-exploration and finally to self-liberation. Therefore, intentions are dynamic and evolving with deepening practice, awareness and insight. Intentions should be 'wholesome 'or 'skilful ' for the benefit of self and others not 'unwholesome' or 'unskilful' that will harm self and others. Some are interested in meditation in order to gain some spiritual or mystic powers. This kind of intentions is unwholesome as it is greed or thirst of power.¹³

‘Wholesome’ and ‘unwholesome’ intentions can be interpreted based on universal values or ethical and moral framework. For example, commitments to ‘generosity,’ ‘compassion’ and ‘kindness’ are wholesome and ‘greed’, ‘aversion’ and ‘delusion’ are unwholesome. These values or ethics fit comfortably into both Buddhism and Western philosophy.

Attention. The meditator should gradually cultivate the ability to sustain his/her attention on an object to obtain positive results from meditation. One should protect and guard the mind by being aware of one’s mind when it strays away. If one is paying good attention in meditation, one should stand guard and notice if unwholesome thoughts threaten to distract the mind. Attention is about deliberately and purposefully holding the awareness on a chosen object for meditation. It should be sustained and concentrated in the present moment and non-judgmental. Therefore, attention is the component of mindfulness that facilitates a focused and clear seeing of what arises of one’s moment-to-moment, internal and external experience.

Attitude A positive attitude towards mindfulness meditation lays a foundation to progress in meditation. Attitude is how we pay “*not just as a bare attention*

¹² Kim Aikens and Shauna Shapiro. (2017). The Concept of Mindfulness in Integrative Preventive Medicine. Edited. Carmona, Richard H and Liponis, Mark. *Integrative Preventive Medicine*. Oxford University Press. (Appendix 3-Note 6)

¹³ Venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula (1990) *What the Buddha Taught*. The Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd. London. P. 61.

but as an affectionate attention” Jon Kabat-Zinn.¹⁴ The qualities one brings to attention have been referred to as the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness. Attending with attitudinal qualities of compassion, curiosity, openness, acceptance and kindness with sustained attention is crucial for mindfulness practice.¹⁵

Formal and Informal Practices

Mindful Practices can be categorised into formal and informal practice.

Formal practice involves systematic meditation practices to cultivate mindfulness skills. Formal practice can be brief daily meditation practice or can be an intensive retreat for a week, a month or longer.

Informal practice tends to differ depending on the context in which it is practised. Informal practice refers to the application of mindfulness skills in everyday life. This involves intentionally bringing attention to whatever one is doing in daily life, such as mindful walking, conversing, drinking tea, washing clothes, housekeeping, bathing, eating, mindful reading, mindful driving etc. The purpose is to incorporate mindfulness as a way of life.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

During meditation, it is important to focus on an object, be aware of the object and repeatedly recall the object without getting distracted. With practice, the meditator will develop the ability to hold their awareness of the object for a prolonged period of time.

The Four Foundations or the Four Establishment of Mindfulness provides a useful framework for the practice of mindfulness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are a system of contemplation. They are domains or objects towards which one applies mindfulness. They are known as ‘*Satipaṭṭhāna*’ (*Sati* means mindfulness, awareness, attention and memory *Pratthana* means

¹⁴ Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), pp. 144–156.

¹⁵ Kim Aikens and Shauna Shapiro. (2017). The Concept of Mindfulness in Integrative Preventive Medicine. Edited. Carmona, Richard H and Liponis, Mark. *Integrative Preventive Medicine*. Oxford University Press.

foundations, establishment, or objects) in Buddhist teachings which have become the basis of all mindfulness meditation. The practice of contemplating (or as we might say, meditating) the Four Foundations is recommended for people at every stage of the meditation practice from trainees who have recently become interested to advanced meditators.

The four objects are:

- Mindfulness of the body (*kaya*)
- Mindfulness of feelings and sensations (*vedanā*)
- Mindfulness of mind or consciousness (*citta*)
- Mindfulness of dhammās. (*dhammās*)

Mindfulness of the body recognises the reality of the human form as a collection of various parts, not a solid unifying entity.

Mindfulness of feelings or sensations is being aware of feeling as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, whether worldly or spiritual.

Mindfulness of mind means understanding the quality of the mind - is it greedy or not, is it with hate or not, is it delusion or not.

Mindfulness of dhammās involves observing the physical and mental phenomena that constitute thirty-seven qualities known as *bodhipakkhiyā dhammā* in Buddhist teachings.

Modern day applications of mindfulness maintain origins stemming from the concepts, techniques, and contemplative framework outlined in the Buddhist discourse of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

The details of The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are beyond the scope of this book. For further reading, refer to *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Plain English* Paperback 2012 Wisdom Publications, U.S. by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana.

Chapter 2

Why Mindfulness Meditation is More Important Today than Ever

“...In today's rush we all think too much, seek too much, want too much and forget about the joy of just Being...”~Eckhart Tolle

Today's Lifestyle

Today's world is a very demanding one. With rapid development of electronic media and digital lifestyles, there is 24-hour connectivity to work and constant digital overload resulting in tension between work and family life. In the era of the smartphone, the ability to focus is more difficult than before.

The technology in our pockets has stolen the many relaxed moments we used to have in our lives and human connections are sorely missing in modern society. As the twenty-first century progresses, fast developing technology, media, and virtual connectedness are drawing people away from interpersonal and personal connectedness.

Today, globalisation has created a perfect competition among economies, businesses and individuals that has changed to an increasingly frantic and competitive lifestyle.

We are under more pressure and stress than ever before. Medical and social researchers have shown that levels of stress in our modern society have increased dramatically. As a result, we are having various short and long-term health problems, both psychological and physiological such as anxiety, depression, poor immunity, digestive problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, poor sleep, fatigue, burnout and so forth. Today medical scientists accept that the primary cause of illnesses is due to the effects of stress. The World Health Organisation predicts that this will become a global pandemic within a decade

In disasters or emergencies such as tsunamis, earthquakes, fires, pandemics, mindfulness is more important than ever in our lives. With things changing so quickly, such uncertainty and unpredictability can take a toll on our mental and physical health. Practicing mindfulness and meditation can help us to cope with these constant changes and the stress that we are feeling.

Use of Mindfulness for Health and Well-being

Mindfulness meditation has gained enormous popularity in the last two decades, in the Western world. Publications, research papers, online training and workshops, an abundance of guided-meditation Apps on Mindfulness, conferences, retreats and items used in mindfulness practice have increased exponentially in recent years.

Mindfulness continues to evolve at a great pace and continues to incorporate knowledge and techniques from many other disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, cognitive behavioural therapy and philosophy thereby becoming a dynamic integrative discipline. However, the fundamentals of the practice have not changed much since the Buddha's time almost 2,600 years ago.

Studies have shown that mindfulness meditation can have beneficial effects that can alleviate the stress of modern living and bring some relief back to our world. Fundamentally, we view mindfulness as a natural human capacity that can be cultivated and strengthened. Seen through this lens, mindfulness can become an important component in integrative preventive medicine since mindfulness has the potential to help prevent illness and increase optimal health¹⁶.

Apart from health benefits of mindfulness, it is also a useful tool for overall well-being for everybody. Mindfulness practice helps a person to become free of any egocentric perspective and to develop greater empathy, compassion, awareness, equanimity, and insight which are the original intentions of mindfulness practice.¹⁷

Practicing mindfulness is seen not only as a way of protecting oneself but as a way of protecting others. The Buddha said, *'You must practice arousing of mindfulness to protect yourself. By protecting oneself, one protects others; by*

¹⁶ Kim Aikens and Shauna Shapiro (2017). Chapter: The Concept of Mindfulness in Integrative Preventive Medicine. *Integrative Preventive Medicine* Edited by Carmona, Richard H. and Liponis, Mark, Oxford University Press, p 6.

¹⁷ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E, (2006). *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC. p.120.

protecting others one protects oneself."¹⁸ The person, who is mindful, is conscious of his thoughts, words and deeds. Therefore, practicing mindfulness is conducive to happiness and a feeling of well-being for the whole society.

Mindfulness is also linked to increased focus and self-control, creativity, productivity, physical health, self-esteem and quality of relationships. According to research studies carried out by neurobiological scientists, led by Dr. Richard Davidson of the University of Wisconsin (Appendix 3-Note 7), long term mindfulness meditation practice enhances the development of the left Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) (Appendix 3 - Note 8) of the brain that builds better memory, positive emotions, understanding and comprehension.

Secular Mindfulness

Though mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist meditation, in late 1979 it was adapted into a secular context by Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn that entered the American mainstream of medicine and health care. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, went on to study meditation with Buddhist teachers, such as Thích Nhất Hạnh and Zen Master Seung Sahn. He designed a secular program at Massachusetts Medical School to assist people to cope with stress, anxiety, chronic pain, and illness, harnessing the fundamentals of mindfulness meditation as taught by the Buddha. It was called 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction' (MBSR) program.

This MBSR program has proved that mindfulness meditation is a very effective therapy for mental health conditions and also for some physiological illnesses, such as chronic pain, cancer, cardiovascular disorders. Since then, thousands of studies have documented the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness, inspiring several other mindfulness-based intervention programs (MBIs), such as Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT; 1993), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; 1999), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; 2002).

Today, these mindfulness meditation programs are widely used in many organisations such as hospitals, businesses, schools, universities, prisons, age-

¹⁸ Venarable Piyadassi Thera (1974). *The Buddha's Ancient Path*. The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation. Taiwan. p. 179.

care centres, army, athletic training programs and so forth. Most of Western countries are integrating mindfulness into their educational curriculum. Many multinational companies (MNCs), such as Google, Apple, Proctor & Gamble, General Mills and also small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are offering mindfulness training to their staff to reduce absenteeism and health care costs as well as increase productivity, interpersonal relationships and creativity.

The "secularised" MBIs programs in health care have benefited a wide range of the population in the Western world irrespective of their religious or spiritual beliefs. With enormous popularity in mindfulness meditation in the Western world, it has now been used as a commercial product with a growing market value without much of its ethical and spiritual elements that of the teachings of Buddhism. Now there are many “mindfulness or meditation gurus” in the USA, UK and other Western countries. Consequently, some have raised concerns about the manner in which Buddhist meditation techniques are being taught and practised in Western settings, bearing little or no resemblance to which it was originally developed.

Traditional Mindfulness and Contemporary Mindfulness

The contemporary secular mindfulness practice is mostly ethically neutral. In contrast, traditional Buddhist mindfulness is ethically wholesome and emphasis an ethical lifestyle. This is considered as an essential foundation for the practice.¹⁹

While liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) or achieving ‘Enlightenment’ or *Nibbāna* constitutes the ultimate goal of Buddhist mindfulness, the secular/psychotherapeutic mindfulness with the goal of self-improvement, keeps the practitioner in these bonds and even makes him more comfortable in it. The idea of mindfulness in these psychotherapies relies on bettering one’s *saṃsāra* rather than realizing *Nibbāna*.

However, both have a common goal - in the service of reducing suffering and enhancing well-being. The secular mindfulness has done a great service to the general public by spreading the benefits of mindfulness to a wide variety of

¹⁹ Huxter, M. J. (2016). source: <https://insighttimer.com/blog/mindfulness-in-buddhism-secular-meditation/>.

people, irrespectively of religious beliefs while traditional mindfulness was confined mostly to monasteries and some layman groups till recently.

The West is now exploring use of mindfulness meditation to cultivate the positive qualities and spiritual development for long term well-being, which was the original intention of mindfulness in Buddhist practice such as moral development, compassion and wisdom. In this regard, knowledge and some experience of the traditional context of mindfulness of Buddhist teachings will be most useful to deepen one's understanding of the spiritual aspect of mindfulness. Therefore, in its efforts to bridge and draw the best from both, an integrative and collaborative exploration by secular mindfulness approach and Buddhist mindfulness approach is necessary. This holistic approach will benefit everybody in the society.



Chapter 3

Introducing Mindfulness Meditation to Young Children

“...When we get too caught up in the busyness of the world, we lose connection with one another and ourselves...” ~Jack Kornfield

Why Introduce Mindfulness Meditation to Young Children?

Most parents might be surprised to realise is that growing through the stages of childhood is actually quite difficult and stressful in its own right. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, 70 percent of mental health cases are reported to begin during childhood or adolescence.²⁰ The Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2013–14), showed almost 1 in 7 (13.9%) children and adolescents aged 4–17 years were assessed as experiencing mental health disorders.²¹

As parents and caregivers of children of all ages, we have a responsibility to help our children learn to cope with stress and emotions by teaching and demonstrating mindfulness to them. If we teach kids how to deal with their thoughts and emotions, we may see some pretty healthy young adults.

Part of the reason why mindfulness is so effective for children can be explained by the way the brain develops. While our brains are constantly developing throughout our lives, connections in the prefrontal circuits are created at their fastest rate during childhood. Therefore, skills that are controlled by the prefrontal cortex (PFC), like focus and cognitive control, can have a particular impact on the development of skills including self-regulation, judgment and patience during childhood. (Appendix 3 - Note 9)

²⁰ Source: <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>.

²¹ Source: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/9DA8CA21306FE6E>.

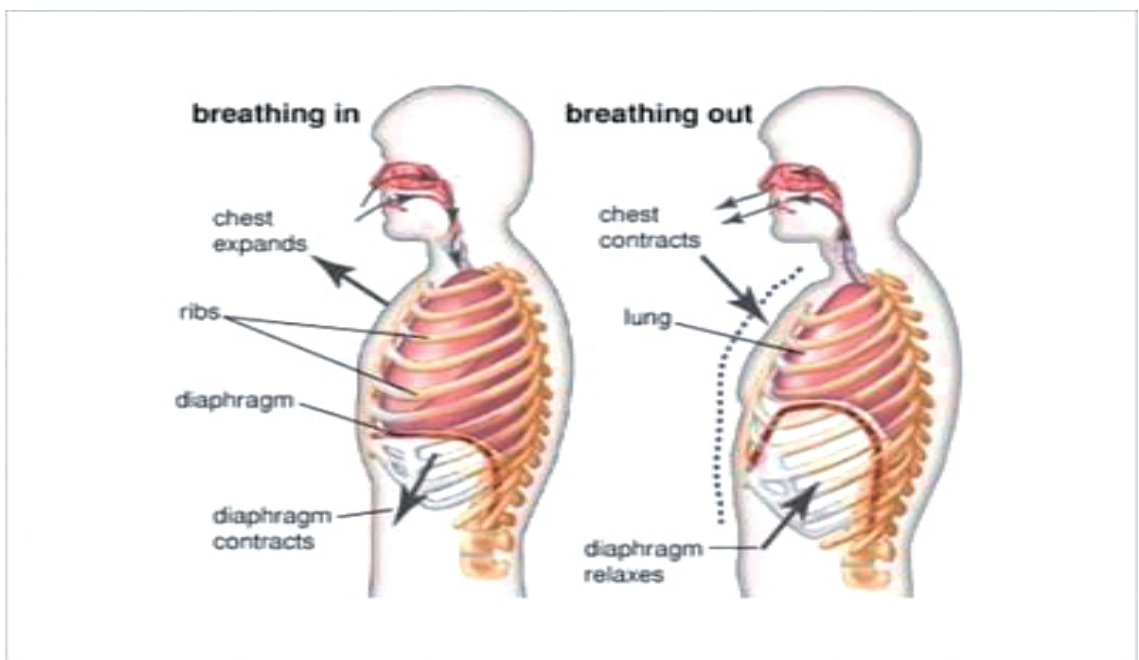
Concentrated mindfulness allows the cortex to influence the Limbic system and as a result we achieve a state of calm, purposeful thought that helps to guide us through the emotions that we are feeling.

How Early Can I Start?

What is the best age to teach mindfulness to a child? When is it too early or too late to begin? The answer to this is that whatever the age of your child is the perfect age to start. Even babies, who cognitively are not capable of that type of control over their emotions can learn soothing techniques, such as a gentle massage, or swaying to help keep calm. The best time to introduce practiced mindfulness to your child is right now.

The Breathing Process

Before starting mindfulness practice with children, it is better to give them some understanding about the process of breathing and the respiratory system. Our bodies need air to stay alive. The air is taken into the body through breathing. As you breathe in, your chest expands, and your lungs are filled with clean fresh air. This air travels down the windpipe and into the two lungs.



The respiratory system

When you breathe out, the ribs sink back, and the stale air passes out through the nose and mouth. When explaining breathing to children, it is a good opportunity to teach them about the respiratory system (lungs, windpipe, nose, and mouth).

Practical Exercises

Breathing is necessary when talking, laughing, shouting, singing, whispering and whistling. The children can experiment these actions with their friends.

Let the children put their hands on their chest or stomach and take a deep breath. They will feel the movement of their chest/stomach through their hands. As they exhale, they will feel the movement again. They will understand the rise and fall of the chest/stomach through their hands when breathing. This is the first step in developing mindful breathing.

- Children can use their lung power to move paper boats in water with a straw or blowing balloons to understand the movement of air leaving their body.
- The children can lie down on their backs with a pencil on their chest and watch their breathing through the movement of the pencil. This could be done in front of a mirror.



Chapter 4

Regulating Emotions through Mindfulness training

“...The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion...”

~Thích Nhất Hạnh

Eight Worldly Conditions

Emotions are feelings that occur in one’s mind from the day that you are born into this world. Feelings are responsible for one’s behaviour. When someone is experiencing positive feelings such as joy, happiness, contentment, and satisfaction, it will be reflected in their behaviour. Similarly, negative feelings such as anxiety, mood changes, anger and frustration also impact on behaviour.

Mindful awareness assists us to embrace life experiences and provide resilience to the ups and downs of life with patience and equanimity. These emotions are known as the “*Eight Worldly Conditions*” -Vicissitudes of Life (*aṭṭhalokadhamma*) in Buddhism. Living in this world, we constantly encounter these conditions - nobody is exempted from them. Like the pendulum that perpetually swings to the right and left, four desirable and undesirable conditions prevail in this world. They are:

Gain (<i>lābha</i>);	Loss (<i>alābha</i>)
Fame (<i>yasa /yaso</i>)	Infamy/Disgrace, (<i>ayasa/ayoso</i>)
Praise(<i>pasaÑsà</i>)	Blame (<i>nindà</i>)
Pleasure (<i>sukha/ sukka</i>)	Suffering/ Pain (<i>dukkha/dukka</i>)

These conditions among human beings are inconstant, impermanent and subject to change. It is important that we learn to cope with these eight mental states. But, unfortunately most of us do not know how to manage them. We find it difficult to handle these situations properly and most times we are carried away by our emotions. When we are troubled by our emotions, our mind will also become disturbed and we will not be able to think properly.

These emotions are intrinsically linked with the concept of impermanence, one of the major tenets of Buddhism. Impermanence is a universal truth, and negative emotions arise based on the expectation that everything is permanent. Mindfulness reminds us that the suffering arises out of this mistaken view that things are permanent. We suffer not because of things are impermanent, but because we resist impermanence.

Many Western theories on emotion particularly those based on Darwinian evolutionary theory, argue that emotions, even negative ones, communicate important and adaptive information essential for survival. For example, emotions play a key role in making decisions, readying behavioural responses, and facilitating interpersonal interactions.²²

Emotions, particularly negative emotions, create behaviours that foster poor decisions, unhelpful behavioural responses and interpersonal conflicts. For example, a minor incident can lead to anger which can then escalate into a verbal or physical conflict. Research suggests that cultivating mindfulness reduces the effects of negative emotions. Practising mindfulness may help people to recognise the right and the wrong. It is known as wholesome and unwholesome actions in Buddhist teachings.

“The Buddha’s teachings did not stop with the reduction of suffering; it also emphasized the capacities of mindfulness–based and other forms of contemplative training for the development of wisdom, compassion, and other embodied qualities carrying both personal and interpersonal benefits.”²³

Mindfulness to deal with Emotions in Young Children

Young children experience various emotional feelings in their day-to-day lives. To grasp this phenomenon, they need guidance and support from teachers, parents and carers. It is mainly about becoming aware of the pleasant

²² Joanna J, Arch and Lauren N. Landy ((2015).Emotional Benefits of Mindfulness, Edited by: Brown, Kirk W., Creswell J. David, and Ryan Richard M. *The Handbook of Mindfulness, Theory, Research and Practice*. The Guilford Press. p. 208.

²³ Kirk Warren Brown - Mindfulness Training to Enhance Positive Functioning (2014): Edited: Brown, Kirk W., Creswell J. David, and Ryan Richard M. *The Handbook of Mindfulness, Theory, research and Practice*. The Guilford Press. p. 311.

and unpleasant things that happen in their daily life. Adults can help children to understand these experiences by discussing distressing situations e.g. death of a pet they could face and coping mechanisms they could use. The young children understand life and death to some extent and they often dramatize death.

Sara, a child in my class, was lying down on the ground one day. It was soon after her grandmother's death. She said that she was dead and expected her friends to be emotional and offer flowers.

Young children learn through hands-on experiences. The concept of 'change' could best be explained by talking about the life cycle of a flower. A beautiful flower starts as a bud and then blooms and gives fragrance. It attracts butterflies and bees. But after a few days, the flower starts to fade, loses its petals and fragrance. It no longer attracts butterflies or bees. The flower eventually rots and becomes compost for new flowers.

Children realise that they grow older each year when they celebrate their birthdays. They grow out of their shoes and clothes each year and have to replace them with new ones. One day, Simon, a student in my class, said to his friends, *'look I am big boy now, I am five years old'*.

These are simple examples that assist young children to understand the concept of change. As they are curious and eager learners, it is important to teach them the concept of impermanence. As adults, we should not underestimate a child's ability to understand these concepts.

To accept Victory and Defeat: Emotions and Motivation

Young children live in the present moment and are very sensitive. They freely express their frustrations, anger and fear by crying, shouting or having tantrums. They experience many types of fears in their lives; physical danger, fear of not being accepted by peers, desire to have a sense of belonging, loneliness, and isolation. Adults have to understand that their feelings are real and also difficult for a child to manage.

Punishment is a negative approach to resolve problems and creates negative emotions in a child's mind. When children are punished for doing something wrong, they develop hatred. As a result, they develop low self-esteem and high anxiety. They cannot comprehend the relationship between the punishments with their wrong action and get frustrated. A child's emotions are

a source of information to understand their needs and to support them accordingly. Adults should try to understand the reason why they are experiencing a negative emotion and act with empathy and compassion without hurting the child's feelings.

When a child is distressed, they should be given time to recover in their own space. Adults should have conversations with these children in their comfort zones. Stories can assist children in finding solutions they may face. Examples of positive stories include; a brave child overcoming their fear, how a lonely child uses kindness to make friends. Bedtime stories can also develop very good relationships with parents and guardians.

Benefits in developing Mindfulness in Young Children

Research shows mindfulness training can develop the ‘executive function’ of the brain which includes working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control in children to improve anxiety symptoms, anti-social behaviour, and sleep quality.²⁴ It is also reported that mindfulness training helps in relationships, school activities, physical health, and stress.

Developing mindfulness to obtain positive results involves training the mind to be aware of its actions. A sustained and daily practice is needed for the mind to pay attention. Today, external forces such as technology, media and peer pressure easily distract young minds. If they do not obtain guidance in managing these stimuli, they may struggle to live a wholesome life and could suffer from mental and physical illnesses.

Young children are very curious and enthusiastic, but are very innocent and vulnerable. They are also very self-centred and are attached to their sense of self - *me, my and mine*. Developing mindfulness is an excellent tool for them to understand the concept of *self*, in relation to other beings and recognise the world beyond themselves and their needs.

As young children do not worry about the past or future and live in the present, they can grasp the concept of mindfulness easily. Mindfulness is a

²⁴ David S. Black (2015). Mindfulness Training for Children and Adolescents’ a State-of-the –Science – A Review. In: *The Handbook of Mindfulness, Theory, Research and Practice*. Edited Brown, Kirk W., Creswell J. David, and Ryan Richard M. The Guilford Press. pp. 283-305.

way of openly relating to experiences, instead of closing down and resisting. “It involves a radical acceptance of whatever is here because it is already here. Mindfulness teaches us to stop struggling against our experience, to stop resisting what is. When we simply rest with what is, we have an opportunity to perceive and relate to our circumstances directly, with greater clarity and freedom”.²⁵

A good example of this is:

Twelve members of a football team in Thailand, aged eleven to sixteen, were trapped inside a cave in June 2018 for 18 days with their football coach, Ekapol Chanthawong, a former Buddhist monk. The coach, Ekapol taught the boys meditation to help them handle the stress and to keep them calm.

They were without food and cramped on a dark, muddy ledge, unsure if, or when, anyone would save them. The meditation helped them to preserve their energy until they were found. When they were found, instead of screaming and crying, they were relaxed and smiling.

Stanford University meditation expert Dr. Leah Weiss, who was taught by the Dalai Lama, says that meditating was crucial to keeping the group alive.

²⁵ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington (APA). DC. p.36.

Chapter 5

Meditation: Let's Get Started

“...*Mindfulness isn't difficult; we just need to remember to do it...*”

~Sharon Salzberg

Sitting Meditation

Now that we have a good understanding about the breathing process, the respiratory system and its functions, we should proceed to mindfulness meditation.

There are many types of meditation. This book will focus on the practices I have used with children in my classes. They are: (a) Sitting Meditation, (b) Loving–Kindness Meditation, (c) Walking Meditation (d) Body Scan Meditation and (e) Mindful Eating.

As we have already learnt, the first step is to set the *intention* of the practice. The intention can be whatever feels most true for you in that moment. For example, you may choose to focus on your breath. Once you have set your intention clearly, perhaps whisper it to yourself and then gently let it go as you consciously focus your *attention* on your body.

Sitting meditation emphasises the refocusing of the mind towards breathing awareness. Children should be instructed to feel the flow of the breath in-and-out and notice whenever their attention strays away from their focus. Should this happen, encourage them to refocus on the breath and start again. Refocusing the mind is seen as the heart of the practice. The positive *attitude* towards the experience is also a good motivation to begin again.²⁶

Posture is a very important factor to consider when settling children down for meditation. Our body and mind are very closely connected, and the body takes commands from the mind. Therefore, posture can either help concentration or act as a distraction.

²⁶ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington (APA). DC. p. 50.

The key is to choose a posture that lets you be comfortable and relaxed, at the same time be alert. So, you can really do mindfulness in any position; whether you're sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. However, for cultivating mindfulness of in-and-out breathing connected with the body one should sit cross-legged or in a chair keeping the body erect.

The sitting meditation posture:

1. Sit on the floor or in a chair with your spine straight
2. Close your eyes, but not too tightly or gaze at tip of your nose
3. Relax the muscles in your body – slowly go through your head, forehead, face, ears, cheeks, throat, upper body, arms and hands. Then, relax your lower body, legs and feet. When you are completely relaxed you are then ready to proceed with your meditation.
4. Bend your head forward a little so all the parts of your body are resting and relaxed. Your body is now a cushion for your mind.

Posture: The Lotus Posture



The *Lotus posture* is considered the most suitable for breathing or meditation exercises.

First, find a comfortable seat, cushion or mat to sit on. It is important to keep your back straight. To do this, the rear back of the cushion should be slightly higher than the front.

It is a good idea to get accustomed to sitting crossed legged when doing these exercises.

Once you are seated on the floor or cushion, get a sense of your feet connecting to the earth. Then, notice the connection of both legs to your spine and torso.

You should also become aware of your arms and your hands resting in your lap. Relax your shoulders, neck, and face.

Once the children are sitting in a comfortable posture, it is recommended for the teacher to read a short story to help focus their attention.

Using the steps shown below, the teacher or adult should lead the meditation session, so the children find it easy to follow.

- The teacher/adult should sit with the children in the correct posture.
- Demonstrate inhaling and exhaling by taking deep breaths.
- Ask the children to follow.
- Ask the children to place their hands on their chest and continue breathing.
- Tell them to focus their attention on the movement of their hands.

After practicing a few times, ask everyone to close their eyes and concentrate on their breathing. Encourage the children to feel the rise and fall of the hands on their chest. They can also put their fingers under their nostrils to feel the warm air coming out from their nostrils.

For a more advanced technique, ask the children to inhale and hold it for five counts and exhale and wait for another five counts before inhaling again. The counting could be increased once the children become more familiar with the exercise.

Introducing the Singing Tone Bowl

The *Singing Tone Bowl* is used worldwide for meditation purposes, particularly in Buddhist monasteries. They are mainly seen in Asia.

The bowl is accompanied with a wooden striker and when it is struck, it produces a sound similar to a chime. The sound helps meditators to enter a deep state of relaxation and a sense of calmness.

The bowl can motivate children to meditate.



The soothing sound it produces assists children to enter into meditation smoothly. First, ask the children to count how long the reverberation tone lasts from when it is struck.

After a few practices, encourage the children to close their eyes and listen to the sound of the bowl. Gradually, they can be trained to keep their eyes closed and wait until the sound ceases.

The children may even take turns to strike the bowl. They can be encouraged to do long strikes and short strikes. By focussing on the ringing sound, it will develop the children's ability to hold attention.

Bead Necklaces: A sensory experience

Bead necklaces, which are known as *mala beads*, have been used for centuries for meditation purposes in Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhist *mala beads* are made out of sandalwood and rosewood. Hindu beads are made out of 'rudraksha', which is a type of seed.



As young children learn through sensory experiences, the next step is to introduce *mala beads* to them.

These beads are used to keep track of the repetitions in breathing meditation.

The use of these beads would assist children to further develop their mindful breathing.

Each time they breathe in and out, they shift one bead across in their hands.

They can do this with their eyes closed so they are more mindful of the tactile sense through their fingers. They should continue until they finish moving all the beads in the same direction while paying attention to their breathing.

Start with a necklace with 10 beads. The children can also make their own bead necklace if the materials are provided.

Chapter 6

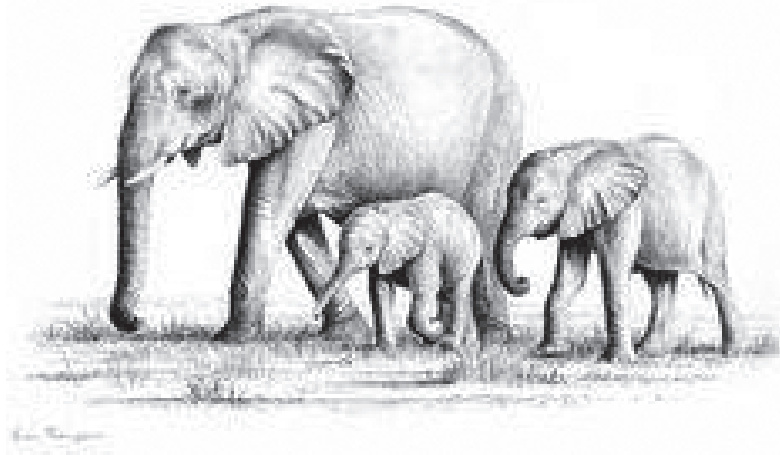
‘Patience is gold’

“Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment” ~ The Buddha

Developing Patience in Young Children

“Patience means the ability to delay gratification and wait quietly for things to happen in their own time. It is a waste of energy if you try to force something to happen sooner than it is able to. This is always detrimental to what is trying

to be achieved.” Dr. Dave Logan, author and Co-Founder, CultureSync.



The elephant is a symbol of patience. They are very strong and patient at the same time. Patience is one of the elephant’s attributes.

The elephant has a large body and

moves at a slow pace. It relies on conscious thought and patience in meeting its needs. Patience of an elephant makes up for its lack of speed.

This symbolic quality of an elephant inspires us to be strong and patient at all times. This is seen when children are encouraged to count up to 10 and breathe slowly when they are angry. This is a positive way to develop patience in young children.

Patience is a powerful quality when it is understood. Patience slows time and makes it easier to make the decision, objectively, consciously and skilfully in all situations in a calm and confident manner. Therefore, it is very important to develop patience in young children, with the aid of the mindfulness meditation.

Learning about the Monkey Mind

In contrast to the elephant, a monkey's characteristics are inconsistent, unsettled, restless, fanciful, confused, and uncontrollable.

The Buddha was a very smart psychologist who taught the world about the human mind more than 2,600 years ago.

He compared it with the monkey mind. He described the human mind as being filled with drunken monkeys, jumping from place to place, screeching, chattering and carrying on endlessly.

According to the Buddha, we all have monkey minds. The tool to tame the 'monkey mind' is through meditation. By doing this, one can overcome fear, anxiety, worry and other negative emotions.

The first step to live amiably with your monkey mind is, becoming aware that it exists, that it is part of you but doesn't define you and doesn't need to result in suffering every time it swings through your forest. The monkey lives within us, but it does not control us if we are aware of its presence.

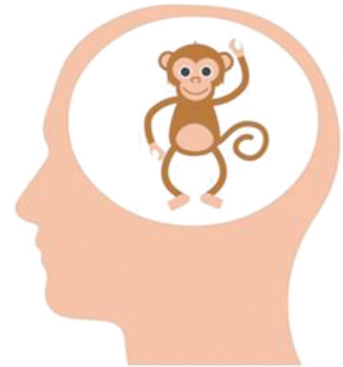
Further, for young children, engaging in general conversation would help to overcome these emotions. Keeping open communication is very important.

Some useful activities to Develop Patience in Young Children

Planting seeds

Planting seeds is a good experiment to do with the children. The children can plant seeds in a cup filled with cotton balls, pour water and leave them to germinate.

The children can take care of the seeds and watch them grow slowly. As the seeds take time to germinate and grow, the children have to be patient. This will increase their capacity for self - regulation.





They can be encouraged to make a chart of the progress they see each day.

This is also a very good activity to develop caring and nurturing qualities in young children.

Apple seeds will grow apples plants, mustard seeds will grow mustard plants, and mango seeds will grow mango plants.

“That one plant should be sown, and another be produced cannot happen; whatever seeds is sown, a plant of that kind even comes forth” Guru Nanak.²⁷

The same way it is important to remember that cultivating seeds of wholesome actions in your mind, will give positive results and the seeds of unwholesome actions would give you negative results. Good actions will not give bad results and bad actions will not give good results. Therefore, you should sow wholesome seeds in your mind to grow wholesome plants throughout your life.

Reading stories

There are good stories that would help children understand and learn the importance of developing patience. A very famous story that comes to my mind is the story of the ‘Hare and the Tortoise’.

The 550 ‘*Jathaka Stories*’ found in Buddhist literature and Aesop Fables teach valuable morals to children and could be very useful for them to understand many social, emotional and spiritual teachings.

Listening to rain falling

Listening to the rain is a simple activity, which children can do at their homes. Rain falls on rooftops, trees, roads and various other places. Children can go to

²⁷ Source: <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/211462>. (Appendix 3 - Note 10)

a place of their choice when it is raining and close their eyes and listen to the rain. They can also reach out to the rain with their hands, and feel the raindrops falling into their palms. This is a good sensory experience helping them to develop their concentration. This could also be incorporated with breathing and counting. It is a fun activity for children and will enhance their ability to develop patience and tolerance.



Chapter 7

Developing Loving-kindness through Mindfulness: The Power of *Mettā*

“...When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace...” ~ Dalai Lama

What is Loving-kindness Meditation?

Loving-kindness meditation also called *Metta* meditation is one of the most commonly practiced form of meditation. Quite simply, it is the practice of directing positive thoughts and well wishes to ourselves and others.

Loving-kindness meditation is a type of practice that purposefully cultivates feelings of kindness and compassion towards different objects of attention. The process begins with sharing positive well-wishes towards oneself and gradually expands to others in one's life and eventually to all beings. That is, one's family members, relations, friends, acquaintances, people you do not know and eventually sharing the same well-wishes to those you may dislike or even enemies. In mindfulness practice, the development of compassion begins with learning to relate to oneself with compassion and kindness.

Metta is a very valuable tool to cultivate in young and youth today. We hear in the news about school shootings and youth gang violence. According to statistics, youth suicides are increasing in our society. This is very unfortunate, but it's the reality. Youth are suffering from mental health issues and using various dangerous drugs for relief. This is due to the hatred and anger they have accumulated in their minds.

Metta is a very useful life skill to introduce at a very young age, to develop and cultivate Loving-kindness in their minds and prevent them from harming themselves and others. They will learn to love themselves and heal their minds from hatred.

As the Buddha said, *'Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by Loving-kindness. This is the eternal law.'*²⁸ 'Loving-kindness meditation' or '*Metta* meditation' is an ultimate form of generous and selfless love towards us, and others.

It is very important for you to care and love yourself before caring for others. We should have enough strength and love for ourselves before we extend love and care to others. We all yearn for health, safety, happiness, and love. We all deserve kindness, attention, and love.

According to the Buddha: *"You can search the whole world for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere, you, yourself as much as anyone in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection"*.²⁹

His teachings require us to see that everyone is equally deserving of kindness, attention, and care, including ourselves. *"There is no one more or less deserving because we are all interconnected"*.³⁰

When you practice Loving-kindness or compassion meditation, it is important that you give without expecting anything in return.

Introducing Loving -kindness Meditation to Young Children

Children can sometimes display selfishness, aggressiveness, and disregard for others. Children with negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, cruelty and hatred will not wish goodwill for others. Children also experience stress, unhappiness, loneliness, depression and suffering from various illnesses or various difficult situations.

We also know that children have great capacity to love. They initially experience love from their parents. Young children can be taught to interact with each other with empathy, care and respect. They also show concern about animals that they see around them. Through stories and various life

²⁸ Dhammapada Verse 5: *Kalayakkhini Vatthu* .

²⁹ Shapiro S.L .and Carlson, L.E.(2006), *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC. p. 109

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 109.

experiences, children can be taught that harming others is not acceptable. Recent studies reveal that young children understand much more than we previously believed. They do not like anybody harming them. Therefore, it is not difficult to cultivate goodwill in their hearts.

Guide to Loving-kindness Meditation

It will be useful to calm yourself with mindfulness breathing meditation, before focussing on loving kindness meditation.

When you are ready, start by directing the following phrases to yourself:

- *May I be free from hatred*
- *May I be free from anger*
- *May I be free from jealousy*
- *May I be free from stress and suffering*
- *May I always be well and happy.*

Next, direct the *Mettā* towards your parents, who you feel thankful for what they have done for you. "*May my parents be free from hatred*" Repeat the stanza as above.

Then, extend this *Mettā* towards your relatives, grandparents, teachers and friends. Each time direct your thoughts to that person.

Then, direct your thoughts to a difficult person or a person with whom you have a problem with, direct your *Mettā* towards of that person.

Also, you should make an effort to include all the animals both seen and unseen, in your thoughts and direct your *Mettā* towards them.

Finally, extend the *Mettā* towards everyone in the universe. May all beings everywhere be well and happy.

This type of meditation allows children to get in touch with their feelings. It can help guide them in sending positive and healing energy to people and children in other places, even those who have hurt them, like a bully at school.

Children can develop a sense of power as they gain self-love and compassion for others. The practice is special since it goes beyond cultural barriers, socio-economic situations, educational backgrounds, and geographic locations.

We can teach our children about Loving-kindness by helping them to send wishes to different people in their lives. Ask your children to come up with

their own loving thoughts. They can also send their wishes to other favourite objects in their lives such as a pet, book character, toy, or stuffed animal.

Benefits of Loving-kindness Meditation

Once you start practicing Loving-kindness meditation, you will be happy knowing that you have tried to spread unconditional love towards everybody, including yourself. Research shows that Loving-kindness meditation has many benefits from greater well-being to providing relief from illness and improving emotional intelligence. These include:

- You can sleep well and wake up well, as you have reduced stress and anxiety.
- You can make friends easily as you become a person with more acceptance, tolerance and compassion.
- You will feel healthy and full of energy to do daily work with positive emotions, including love, gratitude and hope.
- Your blood circulation will improve, thereby improving your physical health.
- You will develop a positive attitude about yourself, and your self-esteem will improve.
- Your concentration will improve, and you can focus better on studying.
- You will easily retain what you have studied.

You will experience the power already existing within yourself. Develop the equanimity needed to face difficult emotions. When your mind is calm, you will then have the confidence to overcome many hurdles in your life. You will also improve your social connections.

Chapter 8

Walking Meditation

“...You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf...”

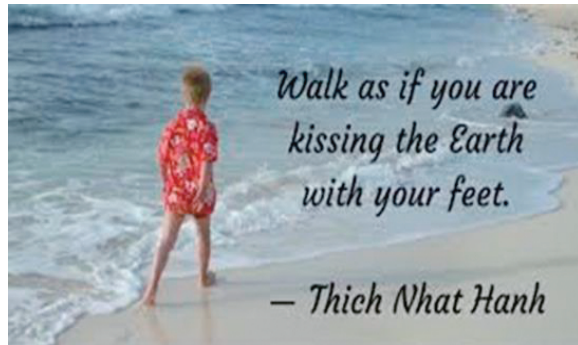
~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

What is Walking Meditation?

We know that most animals can walk at birth. However, human babies cannot walk at birth. It is a gradual process, which starts with crawling. We learn to walk as it is necessary for survival.

We run to escape from danger. With technology taking over our lives, we also run constantly to gain various things in life. We sometimes forget our responsibilities and our own health. Most of all we forget to live our lives.

Walking is very important to maintain a healthy life. The body loves movement, and it is a tremendous experience to be aware of walking. Walking is a sensory experience.



Walking meditation can be just as profound as sitting meditation. It can easily be integrated into our schedules since walking is something most of us do every day. We have seen that even the most busy and important people never forget to do their morning walk (though may not do meditation) before starting their busy daily schedules, such as some Australian Prime Ministers.

Walking meditation involves mindfully noting the sensations in the body while standing and walking. It is an opportunity to intentionally train the mind to pay attention in an open, curious, and non-judgmental way, through the process of walking.

To begin a period of walking meditation, it is helpful to find a quiet place, 10 to 20 feet in length, in which to walk back and forth. It is important to remember that you are not trying to get somewhere, or to walk for exercise but you are walking to develop mindfulness.

First make your *intention* clear, that you are going to experience walking meditation. Focus your *attention* on the sensation of standing; be aware of your weight, the sensation in your feet, all the subtle movements and shifting in maintaining the balance of your body.

When you are ready, begin to slowly walk to the end of the path, keeping your attention on the experience of walking. You can mentally note '*lifting*,' '*stepping*' and '*placing*' as you actually experience each of these movements. Once you have reached the end of your path, pause and re-establish the body in the standing posture and reconnect with your breathing.

When you are ready, turn and begin to slowly walk back along the path. You can repeat this pacing back and forth a number of times for 15 to 30 minutes. If at any time during the walking meditation you notice your mind has wandered off, refocus your attention on the physical sensations and movement of walking. Also check with the quality of your attention. Is it becoming tense and rigid, or are you able to keep it soft, fluid, and open? When you have completed the walking period, once again reflect on your intention, and thank yourself for taking this time to cultivate mindfulness.³¹

Developing Mindfulness Walking Meditation in Young Children

Most of us lose our connection with the natural world, but we are always surrounded by nature. Young children love nature and love walking in nature.

³¹ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). Appendix C: Walking Meditation. *The Art and Science of Mindfulness. Integrating Mindfulness Into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC pp. 149-150.

Nature nurtures the child's mind to calm down and relax. Children get the opportunity to observe the natural environment and also meet people in the community while walking. Therefore, a mindful walk will enhance a sense of belonging to the environment and community.

They can walk barefoot, walk on grass, at the beach or even bushwalking. Each time they get to feel different sensations through their feet.

A guided mindfulness walk would be a very good sensory experience for young children. They could feel the rough, smooth, wet or dry surfaces under their feet.

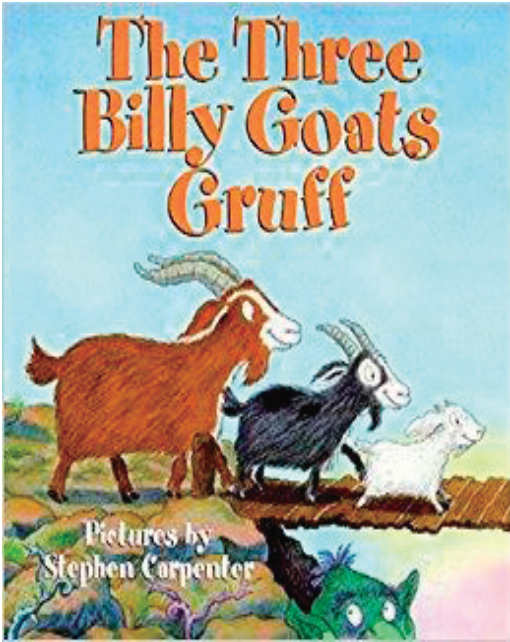


The simple experience of alternating steps with the left and right foot naturally helps create a meditative state for young children. Paying attention to the body as they walk will help them to realise that they are alive and to enjoy it. Nature walks will help them to learn about nature too.

Young children enjoy music and movement. Through music and movement, they learn about rhythm. They dramatise various rhythms from familiar stories such as 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' and 'Going on a Bear Hunt' where they learn various sounds when they pass through different situations (grass, river, snow, forest, etc.).

Walking meditation is also a rhythmic experience. The rhythm is *lift, drop and land*. First, children can experience this rhythm by alternating feet very slowly. When they land their foot each time, they should remember to land it a little forward. It is important to find a good location for walking meditation.

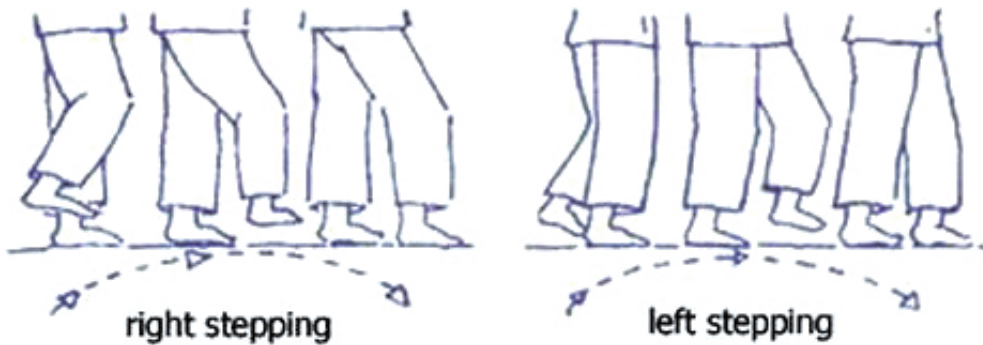
There should be no obstacles in the way when the children are walking. Most importantly, this is a barefoot experience so the children can feel the different sensations under their feet.



For the first time, draw a line on the ground and encourage the children to walk on the line using the *lift, drop and land* rhythm. These short rhythmic words work well with young children. The children should look forward and repeat these words continuously.

When they reach the end of the line, they can repeat the words *turning, turning, turning* and be ready to go back again. This simple experience with alternating their feet will develop a meditative state of mind in young children.

The 1st Stage of Walking Meditation



Chapter 9

Body Scan Meditation

"...Living 24 hours with mindfulness is more worthwhile than living 100 years without it...." ~ The Buddha

What is Body Scan Meditation?

Body scan meditation is a guided somatic sensory awareness exercise in which the facilitator directs participants' attention through the body parts starting from the feet and finishing at the head. It is important to pay close attention to the sensations that arise in each area from moment to moment.³²

Similar to other forms of meditation, the participant should refocus the mind if it has wandered and continue with the instructions delivered by the facilitator. Participants should apply mindfulness attitudes of kindness, acceptance, and non-judgment to the experience. When introducing body scan meditation, children need a facilitator to direct them through the body parts. The meditation usually takes about 45 minutes. Therefore, a break is necessary.

First, have a discussion with children about the body. Explore the body parts and their functions and talk about the various sensations that could be experienced in the body. For example, hot, cold, tension, and pain. When the children are ready, ask them to lie down on the floor to begin the meditation. They should be relaxed with their hands by their sides and eyes closed. They should breathe in and out with intention. While breathing, they should let go of any negative thoughts and worries.

The facilitator should talk to them softly in the background. Soft background music is recommended. Utilising the children's imagination will make the practice more playful. For example, ask them to imagine there's a beetle on their right toes tickling them gently.

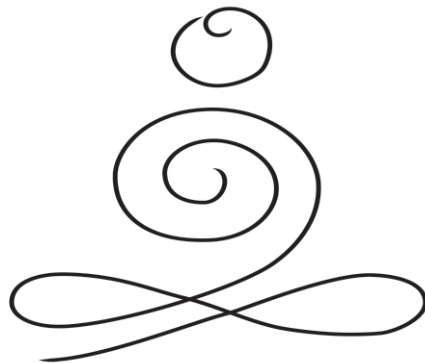
Bring their attention to the beetle on their right toes. Ask them to squeeze and relax the muscles in the toes so the beetle can crawl to the foot. Repeat the

³² Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). *Mindfulness-based Psychotherapy, The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. Washington DC. p. 49.

exercise for the knees, thighs and hips. Then, do the same on the left side starting from the toes.

Now, let the beetle move to the right hand starting with the fingers. Let the beetle crawl from one finger to another. Then, squeeze and relax the muscles to let the beetle crawl into the right palm. It should feel very ticklish. Repeat the exercise for the elbow, shoulder, neck and finally the nose. Do the same on the left side, starting with the fingers.

When completed, ask the children to take a deep breath and relax the whole body for few minutes before returning to the present moment. Once the children are familiar with the experience, do the exercise without the beetle using the same sequence from toe to head.



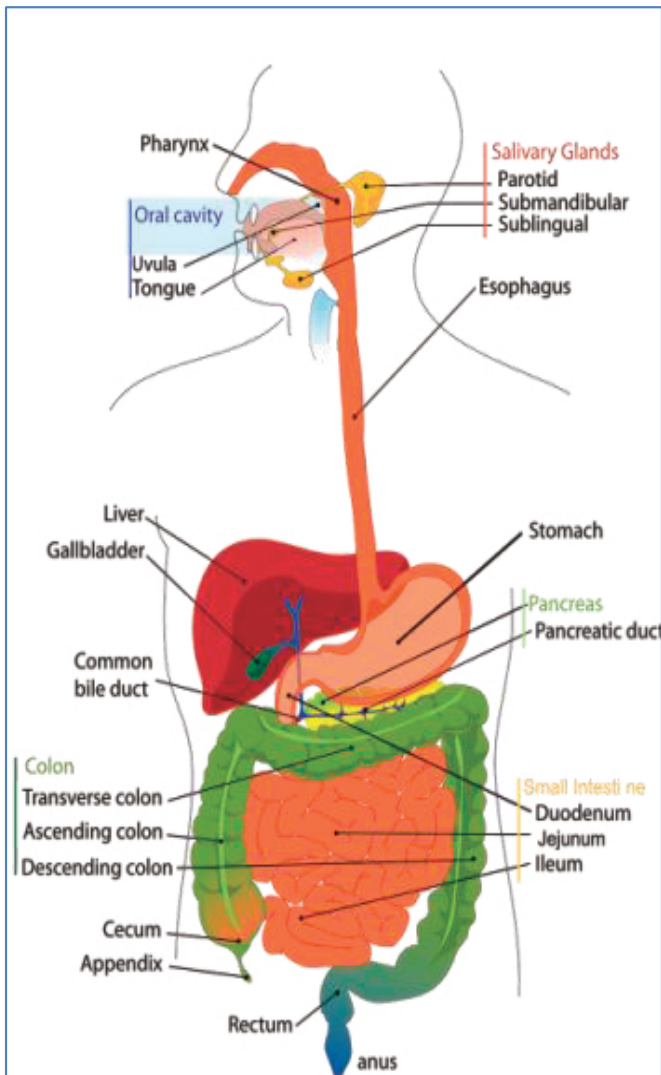
Chapter 10

Developing Mindfulness in Eating

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food. ~ Hippocrates

The digestive system

Before we discuss developing mindfulness in eating, let us look at the digestive system, to know what happens to the food we consume every day.



Our digestive system breaks down the food as it moves through the body. Imagine taking a bite of an apple, which is broken down into pieces by the teeth and mixed with saliva, so it is small enough to swallow. The broken-down apple slides down the food pipe and reaches the stomach.

This breakdown of food is called digestion. In the stomach, the apple mixes with various acids and turns into a thick chunky liquid. The liquid then flows through the intestines.

The nutrients, such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals are then absorbed into the body.

What is Mindful Eating?

Now that we know how the digestive system works, it is important for us to consume our food mindfully to get the full benefit from the nutrients in the food. Eating mindfully is as important as the other mindfulness activities. Inappropriate eating habits could create many problems for children. If not addressed, they could cause serious psychological and health problems.

Today most of us, including children, eat in front of the TV, while using mobile phones or computers, and do not enjoy the taste of food. Sometimes, we are in a rush to do other things and do not eat mindfully. We rush to finish the food. We are not focused on our food that we are eating. Most of the time we do not know who prepares it for us, and take it for granted that it is their duty to prepare the food for us.

It could be your mum, dad or partner who spent time, money and energy to prepare the food. We should learn to pay attention to the farmers who struggle and work very hard to cultivate grains, vegetables, dairy and meat products. This would help us to minimise food wastage.

Mindful eating encourages us to take note of all the sensory experiences involved in the eating process. We see the food with our eyes, we can smell the food through our noses, we can feel the food with our fingers, we can taste the food with our tongue and hear with our ears when we are eating the food. All the five senses are involved in eating.

At mealtimes, it is important to be in the present moment. You should not get distracted by other things, such as the TV, toys, mobile phones, etc. Full attention should be on the food that you are consuming at that moment. Adults should be role models to children, and teach them to develop positive relationships with food without getting distracted.

This would help children select healthy food and avoid childhood obesity. The other extreme of obesity are fussy eaters, who do not eat at all or eat very little. This happens because they eat without mindfulness.

An example of a child eating without mindfulness:

There was a young child who was in my class few years ago. She was new to Australia and had no knowledge of English. She was not interested in eating food. At mealtimes, all the other children enjoyed their food and ate well. When I spoke to the mother, she said “not to worry as she ate well at home”.

She was a healthy and active child. Later, we found that since the child was a baby, she ate while playing with her mother's mobile phone. Therefore, she only associated food with the mobile phone and didn't recognise the taste of the food. Since then, we put her with a group of children with good eating habits and made mealtimes an enjoyable social event.

We have had discussions about the health food pyramid, where healthy food comes from and who prepares the food. This child gradually started eating with a piece of banana. We also played games like asking the children to remember two items on their lunch plate, and draw them on a piece of paper to encourage them to eat mindfully. These games helped the children to eat mindfully. This child improved her eating habits gradually.

In this instance, the anxious mother forced the child to eat by using the mobile phone as a bribe. Some parents make mistakes like this without knowing the harm it could do.

Some tips to increase the child's awareness when eating

- Have them take a deep breath or take a second to be thankful for their meal before eating.
- Ask them how hungry they are before a meal.
- Allow them to serve themselves, this will allow them to become familiar with appropriate serving sizes.
- Eat without distractions such as the television or computer. Have them put down their fork in between bites.
- Wait 15 minutes after eating to decide if they are still hungry for seconds (it takes about 15 minutes for your brain to register if you're full or not).
- Allow enough time to eat.
- Grow your own garden and let them be a part of that experience.³³

³³ Teaching kids the art of mindful eating (2016) Dawn Earnesty, Michigan StateUniversityExtension.Source:https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/teaching_kids_the_art_of_mindful_eating.

Chapter 11

Integrating Mindfulness Training into Education

The mind is just like a muscle – the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets and the more it can expand.”~ Idowu Koyenikan

Rationale for offering Mindfulness Training to Children

Children today are faced with an unprecedented amount of stress and anxiety with heightened academic pressure trickling down to kids as early as kindergarten, resulting in less time for extracurricular activities, such as performing arts, visual arts, community service, sports.

In addition to the challenges of learning and achievement, students come to school with other stressors arising from many sources including family-system disturbances, peer-interaction conflicts, socio-cultural differences and vulnerabilities to physical and mental health.

The science of child development informs us that the brain is built over time and that excessive stress damages the architecture of the developing brain leading to vulnerability to lifelong problems in learning, behaviour, and overall health.³⁴

Sustained childhood stress is likely to impact on factors specific to learning, such as the ‘executive function’ and working memory which can negatively impact both physical and mental health. In the United States, diagnostic interview data shows lifetime prevalence of any anxiety disorder among adolescents is estimated at 31.9%.³⁵ According to Children’s Mental Health Report 2016 one in five children suffer from a mental health or learning disorder, and 80% of chronic mental disorders begin in childhood according to

³⁴ Meiklejohn, J., et al. (2012). Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students, *Mindfulness*, DOI 10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5. Springer.

³⁵ The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/any-anxiety-disorder.shtml>.

Child Mind Institute in U.S.³⁶ There is an urgent need to identify the signs of these conditions in early childhood, if children are to get the care and support they need to succeed in life.

The school setting offers an ideal environment for utilizing interventions that promote healthy brain development and function, and foster stress resilience. There is evidence that mindfulness training is an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve this goal.

“Mindfulness is a powerful tool that supports children in calming themselves, focusing their attention, and interacting effectively with others, all critical skills for functioning well in school and in life,” said Amy Saltzman, M.D., Co-founder and director of the Association for Mindfulness in Education

Rationale for offering Mindfulness Training to Teachers

Teachers are the vehicle for integrating change into a school’s culture. According to research, more than 75% of teachers’ health problems are attributed to stress.³⁷ The teachers need and deserve support to maintain professional standards in the current competitive educational environment. The teachers all too often encounter a stream of stressors and warrant interventions that support their resilience and competence. Such interventions can lower the risk of stressors and/or burnout.

Therefore, there is a need for training teachers in mindfulness meditation to support them in dealing with the stress when working with children and parents. *“Teachers are really under a lot of stress and we know their stress affects our kids, so supporting them is a win-win,”* said Tish Jennings, associate professor at the University of Virginia.

³⁶ Merikangas, K.R., et al. (2010). Lifetime Prevalence of Mental Disorders in US Adolescents: Results from the National Comorbidity Study-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 49 (10): 980-989. (<https://childmind.org/report/2016-childrens-mental-health-report/>).

³⁷ <https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-in-education/> The National Education Association (NEA) U.S.

How to bring mindfulness into schools?

Mindfulness training has emerged as a powerful tool to help children, teachers and parents with a wide range of concerns, from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to anxiety, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) to depression and stress.

With scientifically demonstrated benefits of mindfulness meditation, there is a growing demand for integrating mindfulness into education and parenting. Academia is becoming increasingly interested in the benefits meditation may provide students beyond stress reduction, and has begun to explore the possible integration of meditation into the curriculum. The attempt is to develop specific skills fundamental to the learning process, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating, and collaborating concentration.³⁸

What can you do to bring mindfulness into school? What are the best strategies, practices, and resources to implement a mindfulness program? As a discipline, mindfulness can be integrated into the classroom using one of three basic approaches.

(a) *Indirect* - mindfulness-trained teachers embody mindful behaviours and attitudes through their presence and interaction with students in the classroom. Personal training in mindfulness skills can increase teachers' sense of well-being and self-confidence, as well as their ability to manage classroom behaviour and establish and maintain supportive relationships with students and parents. The indirect approach creates a wider and more sustainable benefit to the system of education.

(b) *Direct* - preparing teachers to directly teach mindfulness exercises and skills to students. This focuses primarily on teaching mindfulness a more traditional "toolbox" approach in education.

(c) *Combination* of direct and indirect approaches.³⁹

³⁸ Shapiro S.L. and Carlson, L.E. (2006). *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychology and the Helping Professions*. American Psychological Association. (APA). Washington DC. pp. 136-137.

³⁹ Meiklejohn, J., et al. (2012). Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students, *Mindfulness*, Springer.

For the past 10 years, initiatives have been taken in the USA, UK, Canada and other countries to integrate the discipline of mindfulness into the field of education for the benefit of both students' as well as teachers' physical, emotional, and mental well-being. The current research points to benefits for children and adolescents similar to the benefits for adults.

School-based mindfulness training appears to offer a means for students to cultivate attentional skills as well as an array of other aptitudes that may enhance their capacity to cope with their psychosocial as well as academic challenges.

The typical foundation of mindfulness-based curriculum for students should include age-appropriate programs. The length and frequency of lessons and the duration of the programs should vary according to the age of the students.

Engaging administrators, including parents, school staff and support staff, will provide the basis for the most effective implementation of a school-based mindfulness program. The relationship between implementing mindfulness and the measurable educational outcomes of academic achievement, classroom behaviour, emotional self-regulation, and the capacity to regulate one's attention need to evaluate regularly.



Chapter 12

Conclusion

“...In today’s rush, we all think too much — seek too much — want too much — and forget about the joy of just being...”

~ Eckhart Tolle

Mindfulness meditation has become increasingly popular as a treatment for mental illnesses and physical wellbeing as well. It is also accepted as a technique to develop a healthy lifestyle. In our consumerist culture, now there is a demand for a lifestyle that promises a more fulfilling life other than materialistic needs. Appropriate training in mindfulness meditation could minimise the effects of depression, anxiety, stress and other mental sickness while strengthening the mind

We observed in this book that mindfulness training has played an instrumental role in reducing mental suffering. Many child psychologists recommend mindfulness meditation for young children to develop positive emotional states, cultivate wholesome actions, tolerance and also to develop an ability to sustain attention.

Today’s generation needs meditation more than ever. Many youth suffer from behaviour and mental issues. They are frustrated and make quick decisions without thinking or displaying remorse. Suicide rates in youth are also rising. Advanced technology is also responsible for these sad situations. Some of these youth do not know how to relate to situations with patience and tolerance. Expectations from parents are also a contributing factor to the frustration in some children.

Therefore, it is important to start developing mindfulness meditation in young children. Mindfulness meditation would cultivate compassion, kindness, patience, tolerance, honesty, generosity, gratitude, forgiveness and behaviour control. They also develop wholesome actions and the ability to sustain attention.

This book has provided many techniques to cultivate these good qualities to help children become responsible citizens in society. In this journey, the first step is to understand what is breathing and to train oneself to focus on it. This

is a long and very slow process. Developing mindfulness is a challenging task for young children with all the distractions around them.

As we saw in this book, practising mindfulness is the key to a healthy life. Children need motivation and guidance from parents, teachers, and adults to experience, explore and experiment with this valuable concept. They should be mindful while walking, eating, sleeping and specially when studying.

By making it a part of their daily routine, this path would benefit and foster a child to thrive throughout their life for a bright and healthy future. This book shows you that there is no complicated process, but rather a series small activities, meant to bring children to a more mindful, peaceful and content place in their lives.

The great quality about mindfulness is that it can be practiced by anyone, regardless of religious background or beliefs. We can all benefit by feeling appreciation and gratitude for the everyday gifts that life has to offer. There are endless opportunities to be mindful in the moment, mindful of oneself and mindful of others. If everyone practices these concepts, this may ultimately give greater health, happiness and freedom for all beings.

As the famous African proverb goes, **“It takes a village to raise a child.”**



Appendix 1

The Power of Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

In the Buddha's time, it was a traditional practice by the Buddhist monks to go on retreat during the rainy season. About 500 monks were sent to a forest to practice *mettā* meditation.

When they were meditating, they were disturbed by the unseen beings - the forest sprites that were dwelling there. The forest dwelling began to create frightening noises and sounds and discharged some very distinctive and unpleasant odours.

The frightened monks went back and sought the Buddha's aid in dealing with the spirits. The Buddha delivered the discourse of Loving-kindness meditation sutra or the *Mettā* Sutta as an antidote for their fear. After delivering the discourse to the monks, The Buddha requested the monks to go back to the same forest and continue their meditation using the weapon '*Metta*'.

With fear and anxiety, the monks went back to the forest and started practicing '*Metta*' meditation. Soon, there were no more fearful noises and sights. The anger and the resentment of the sprites who lived in the forest disappeared and they began to feel the monks *Metta*. The sprites were very happy and content. They started showing respect towards the monks and welcomed them. They also provided protection to the monks from the other dangers in the forest and allowed the monks to practice meditation peacefully.

The story illustrates what we learnt about the power of *Metta*. It is a very valuable tool to be cultivated in children and youth today. We hear how some youth use guns and other weapons to murder others. According to statistics, youth suicides are increasing in society. It is also known that many youth suffer from mental health issues and use various dangerous drugs for relief.

Metta helps youth to cultivate Loving-kindness in their minds and prevent them from committing dreadful crimes. They will also learn to love themselves and heal their minds from hatred.

Appendix 2

Mindful Eating

Place the grape so it is close at hand.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, allowing your stomach to expand when you inhale and to contract when you exhale and allow any tension or stress to release with the out breath.

Move your awareness into your feet, then your legs, your torso and into your arms and hands. Feel your whole body sitting here in the chair, and allow any tension to let go when you breathe out.



Now, bring your awareness to your mouth. Note any tastes or sensations present. Is your mouth salivating in anticipation of the grape?

- Without chewing, place the grape in your mouth, and close your eyes again.
- What do you notice first?
- Explore the shape, the texture, and note any flavours before chewing.
 - Where on your tongue are the flavours most intense?
- Now, use your teeth to bite the grape one time. How does this change the experience?
 - What thoughts are going through your mind now?
- When you are ready, slowly chew the grape.
- Try to chew it at least 15 times.
- When you are ready to swallow, pay close attention to the sensations.
 - How do you feel at this moment? Is there desire for another grape?
 - How does this intense focus on eating differ from how you usually eat?

- What would it be like to eat an entire meal with this level of mindfulness?⁴⁰
- When you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the present moment.

Children can try mindful eating once a week and compare with their normal eating process.

To develop positive attitudes towards food in children, it is good to have a discussion about the cultivation of grapes at the end of the meditation session.

The grape story

Use your five senses to analyse the grape. You can see the grape with your eyes, the colour and the shape. By touching it in your hand, you feel the smoothness and the round shape of the grape. You can also smell the grape with your nose. You can taste the grape in your tongue when you take a bite and also can hear a sound with your ears when you bite it. Therefore, it is important to pay attention with your five senses to food when eating to develop mindfulness eating.

⁴⁰ Wangen, K.E. (2016). Mindful Eating Edited: Zerbo E., Schlechter A, Desai S. and Levounis P. *Becoming Mindful : Integrating Mindfulness Into Your Psychiatric Practice*. American Psychiatric Association (APA). p. 149.

Appendix 3 - Notes

1. Thomas William Rhys Davids (12 May 1843 – 27 December 1922) was an English scholar of the *Pāli* language and founder of the *Pāli* Text Society. He took an active part in founding the British Academy and London School for Oriental Studies.

2. Jon Kabat-Zinn born in New York City in 1944. He graduated from Haverford College in 1964 and went on to earn a Ph.D. in molecular biology in 1971 from MIT, is professor emeritus of medicine and the creator of the 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction' (MBSR) program and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Kabat-Zinn was a student of Zen Buddhist teachers and a founding member of Cambridge Zen Center.

3. Thích Nhất Hạnh born in central Vietnam in 1926 is a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist, renowned for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace. Exiled from his native Vietnam for almost four decades, Thich Nhat Hanh has been a pioneer bringing Buddhism and mindfulness to the West. In 1961, he travelled to the US to teach Comparative Religion at universities of Princeton, Columbia, and Cornell. In early 1970s he was a lecturer and researcher in Buddhism at the University of Sorbonne, Paris. He was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967 by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

4. Five Aggregates (Sanskrit: *Skandha*; Pāli: *Khandha*),

According to Buddhist philosophy, the five aggregates/elements sum up the whole of an individual's mental and physical existence. But it (the self or soul) cannot be identified with any one of the parts, nor is it the total of the parts. They are:

1. Form/matter (*rūpa*). The manifest form of the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water
2. Sensation/feelings (*vedanā*). Sensory experience from using the five senses.
3. Perceptions (*saṃjñā/saññā*); sensory and mental process that registers, recognizes and labels (for instance, the shape of a tree, colour green, emotion of fear).

4. Mental formations (*saṃskāras/saṅkhāras*) your mental prejudices and biases, interests, attitudes, and actions.

5. Consciousness (*viññāna/viññāṇa*) an awareness of physical and mental processes

The five Aggregates are essentially a method for understanding that every aspect of our lives is a collection of constantly changing experiences. There is no one aspect that is truly solid, permanent or unique. Everything is in flux. Everything is dependent upon multiple causes and conditions.

5. Dr. Thomas Bien, Ph.D., is a psychologist and a meditation and mindfulness teacher. Dr. Bien is a noted author for both professional and general readers. He is an author of five books, including ‘The Buddha's Way of Happiness’. He also holds a master's in theology from Princeton. Dr. Bien conducts national and international presentations, and has played an influential role in integrating mindfulness into the practice of psychotherapy.

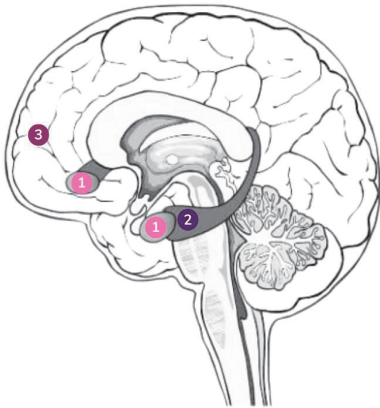
6. Jack Kornfield (born 1945) is a best-selling American author and teacher in the Vipassana movement in American Theravada Buddhism. He trained as a Buddhist monk in Thailand, Burma and India. He has taught meditation worldwide since 1974 and is one of the key teachers to introduce Buddhist mindfulness practices to the West. In 1975, he co-founded the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, with Sharon Salzberg and Joseph Goldstein, and subsequently in 1987, Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. Kornfield has worked as a peacemaker and activist, organized teacher trainings, and led international gatherings of Buddhist teachers including the Dalai Lama. Kornfield has written extensively incorporating together the wisdom of Eastern and Western psychology.

7. Dr. Richard Davidson Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the Founder and Director of the Center for Healthy Minds. He is best known for his ground-breaking work studying emotion and the brain. He is a highly sought-after expert and speaker on international stages, such as the World Economic Forum, where he serves on the Global Council on Mental Health. The Time Magazine named Davidson as one of “*The 100 Most Influential People in the World*” in 2006. He is also founder and chair of the Neuroscientific Meditation Research Center.

8. The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is the cerebral cortex covering the front part of the frontal lobe. The PFC is involved in executive functions, or the higher

cognitive functions, of our brain. Executive functions focus on things like planning, decision-making, problem-solving, self-control, and acting with long-term goals in mind. PFC helps us make good choices. Scientists have figured out that the prefrontal cortex is more activated following mindfulness training

9. Mindfulness Develops Our Brains



1. The amygdala is activated when detecting and reacting to emotions including difficult or strong emotions such as fear. Following sessions of mindfulness training, this part of the brain may be less activated.

2. The hippocampus is critical to learning and memory and helps regulate the amygdala. The hippocampus is more activated and produces more gray matter density following mindfulness training.

3. The prefrontal cortex is most associated with maturity, including regulating emotions and behaviours and making wise decisions. This part of the brain is more activated and developed following mindfulness training.

10. Guru Nanak, Born in 1469 in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan also referred to as Baba Nanak, was the founder of Sikhism and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. His birth is celebrated worldwide as Guru Nanak GURPURAB on Katak Pooranmashi ('full-moon of the Katak'), i.e. October–November. Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world.

11. Sharon Salzberg Born in New York City in 1952, is a mindfulness teacher and author who along with Jack Kornfield in 1976, founded the Insight Meditation Society (IMS), in Massachusetts, which now ranks as one of the most prominent and active meditation centers in the Western world. She played a key role in bringing mindfulness and mindfulness meditation to the West. She is the author of eleven books including *Loving Kindness*, the NY Times best seller *Real Happiness*.

About the Author

Mrs. Shanti Senadeera is an ideal candidate to write a book on developing mindfulness in children. She has extensive knowledge and experience in mindfulness and considerable interaction with children in many aspects.

An Early Childhood Graduate Teacher, she has almost 35 years' experience in Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Australia. Shanti obtained Diplomas in Pre-school Education, Montessori Method of Education from Sri Lanka and a Diploma in Social Sciences from North Sydney TAFE.



She holds a Degree in Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) from the University of New England. She is also qualified in Pianoforte (Trinity College, UK).

Shanti was a Pre-school and Music Teacher at her alma mater, Buddhist Ladies College, Colombo 7 and the Head Teacher, primary section at Katsina Polytechnic Staff School in Nigeria. She was the Director of Mallikarama Kindergarten School in Sirimal Uyana, Ratmalana in Sri Lanka. Since 1992 she has worked in Australia in many private, Council, KU Children's Services and NSW State Government, Early Learning Centres as well as Montessori Schools in Sydney. She introduced mindfulness programs to children in multi-ethnic and multi-religious settings.

She was a teacher at North Parramatta Sinhala School and pioneered in developing the school curriculum and textbooks for primary classes of all Sinhala Schools under The Sinhalese Cultural Forum of NSW Inc. She was also a teacher at North Parramatta Dhamma School and conducted Sil and meditation programs for primary school children for Wesak and Poson programs in Lankarama Temple, Sydney.

She has written a research paper on, "The importance of learning the mother tongue in an adopted country for children with special reference to teaching of Sinhala Language in NSW".

Shanti has written in a very easy to read writing style handling a complex subject succinctly. She has utilised her knowledge and experience in Child Psychology, Educational Philosophy and Methodology to the optimum to fulfil a universal need for the young children in the present-day society.

Dr. Cicil Fonseka Ph.D.

(Author, Music Composer, IT Consultant, Screenwriter)

Sydney, Australia, November 2020

Taking Refuge with a mind of Bodhichitta

**In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha,
I shall always take refuge
Until the attainment of full awakening.**

**Through the merit of practicing generosity
and other perfections,
May I swiftly accomplish Buddhahood,
And benefit of all sentient beings.**

The Prayers of the Bodhisattvas

**With a wish to awaken all beings,
I shall always go for refuge
To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
Until I attain full enlightenment.**

**Possessing compassion and wisdom,
Today, in the Buddha's presence,
I sincerely generate
the supreme mind of Bodhichitta
For the benefit of all sentient beings.**

**"As long as space endures,
As long as sentient beings dwell,
Until then, may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of all sentient beings."**

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.

May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

NAMO AMITABHA

南無阿彌陀佛

財團法人佛陀教育基金會 印贈

台北市杭州南路一段五十五號十一樓

Printed for free distribution by

The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation

11F., 55, Sec 1, Hang Chow South Road, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tel: 886-2-23951198 , Fax: 886-2-23913415

Email: overseas@budaedu.org

Website: <http://www.budaedu.org>

Mobile Web: m.budaedu.org

This book is strictly for free distribution, it is not to be sold.

Printed in Taiwan

5,000 copies; April 2021

EN465-18036



