



Mindfulness as a Journey

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Mindfulness is a journey, and it has been my journey for the last five years. I first began by just trying to *understand* it, then I started *practicing* it and then after reading several books and attending numerous trainings, I started *teaching* it to High School Students. I am now a proud graduate of the 2019 Mindful Teacher Certification Program through Mindful Schools and grateful that the Merlin W. Schultz Professional Development Grant helped pay for a part of the Year Long Certification Program.

The Mindful schools training gave me a solid foundation of Mindfulness education relevant to me, as a School Counselor, working with students in the classroom. This training helped me grow my personal mindfulness practice and give me a solid curriculum that I can teach to students, while supporting me every step of the way. This program gave me the confidence and support to teach the curriculum in the classroom the way it made sense to me and the students in my school.

In addition to working with students in the classroom I have incorporated many Mindfulness strategies when working with students individually. My training has increased my knowledge of brain physiology, trauma, relaxation, mindful movement and breathing techniques. I have found that when students understand more about their stress and realize they have what it takes inside them to make a change they feel more empowered to respond more wisely to stressful stimuli and can begin to regulate their emotions.

Last year I visited several classrooms to teach mindfulness, some just once and others for an entire semester reaching well over 500 students. I have worked with all grade levels and

different disciplines including Health, AVID, Math, and Special Education. This year I am continuing to teach in classrooms and have since been invited to facilitate a group of teachers helping them learn about Mindfulness.

I am thankful for the Schulz foundation's professional development grant in supporting my continued growth as a counselor and even more thankful for the impact this grant helps me make on students.

The following are quotes from students who I taught mindfulness and the questions they were asked.

How would you explain mindfulness to someone else?

- *I would explain mindfulness as the awareness of your emotions, yourself, and the world around you*
- *Getting to know your body and recognizing your moods*
- *How to be patient and more open minded and positive*
- *Something to help you through tough times*
- *It's understanding where you are right at that moment, relaxing, and understanding.*
- *Mindfulness is when you are able to use your brain for your benefit when feeling overwhelmed.*
- *A way to control your thinking and maintain a healthy mind; food to your brain.*

When you think about your Mindful Monday experience, describe what you will remember most about the class?

- *The different ways to focus and calm myself down*
- *I will remember all of it and being able to get weights lifted off of your shoulders.*
- *When my body is in a relaxed position, I can prepare for the rest of my day.*
- *I'll remember the different methods of coping with difficult things around us*
- *I really enjoyed the atmosphere of it. It allowed me to decompress before continuing on with my day.*
- *I think that mindfulness is cool and it kinda works*

Please explain why you think Mindful Monday should continue or not?

- *I think it should continue so we can grow more on it and it can help us out when needed and make us realize a lot of stuff.*
- *I think it should continue because High School can be really stressful for some kids and they may need it just to calm their mind.*
- *You learn a lot about understanding your own emotions and feel more relaxed and aware.*
- *I think it should because not a lot of kids know how to deal with stress and know how to calm themselves down, and I know I certainly did not and would've probably not tried it had this not been a thing.*
- *I feel like it's a good idea to teach people about reaction v. response and breathing, etc. so that they know more about themselves and their emotions.*
- *It is important for students to understand how to deal with the immense stress and pressure society places on them*
- *Because the amount of teens with anxiety and stress is only increasing and even if they don't admit it, I think a lot of teens need this help.*