

Mindful
Teacher,
Mindful
School



Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 800 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi | Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

Mindful
Teacher,
Mindful
School

Improving Wellbeing
in Teaching & Learning

kevin
hawkins

 SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Jude Bowen
Associate editor: George Knowles
Production editor: Nicola Carrier
Copyeditor: Solveig Gardner Servian
Indexer: Silvia Benvenuto
Marketing manager: Dilhara Attygalle
Cover design: Wendy Scott
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed in the UK

© Kevin Hawkins 2017

First published 2017

Author photograph © Paulina Palikova

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016961792

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-5264-0285-1
ISBN 978-1-5264-0286-8 (pbk)

At SAGE we take sustainability seriously. Most of our products are printed in the UK using FSC papers and boards. When we print overseas we ensure sustainable papers are used as measured by the PREPS grading system. We undertake an annual audit to monitor our sustainability.

This book is dedicated to
all the teachers I have known and worked with
- and to all those I haven't. Thank you.

'Teachers, keep on teaching,
Till we reach the higher ground.'
- Stevie Wonder

In memory of exemplary educator, William Powell,
1949-2016

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
<i>About the Author</i>	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
<i>Praise for the Book</i>	xix
<i>MindWell Weblinks</i>	xxiii
1 Shifting The Focus	1
The Forgotten Taxonomies	3
Finding Balance	4
How Well Are We?	5
What We Want for Our Children, We Need for Ourselves	9
2 Mindfulness: What is it? How can it help?	13
Fifteen Seconds	14
So What is 'Mindfulness'?	15
Being with Pain	17
Feeling Your Feet	21
Wandering and Wondering	23
The Worry Gene	24
Mindfulness and Stress	26
Mindfulness and Depression	26
Healthy Scepticism	27
Going Public	28
Further Reading and Resources	31
3 Being Mindful: Stress Management and Self-care	33
Teacher Self-care	34
The Oxygen Mask	34
Supporting Teacher Self-care in Schools	36
Stress	37
A 'New Normal'	37
De-stressing	39
Re-balancing	40

Mindful Stress Management	41
Research on Teacher Stress and Mindfulness Training	42
Being Mindful	44
Dealing with the Inner Critic	50
Further Reading and Resources	52
4 Teaching Mindfully	53
Part 1: Bringing Mindful Awareness into Our Classrooms	54
Lessons from Social Neuroscience	54
Start Where You Are	55
Optimising Learning Environments	55
Presence	60
Transforming Teaching through Mindful Awareness	62
Relaxed Alertness	63
Impacting Individual Students	65
Part 2: Mindfulness and Relational Competence in Teacher Training	69
A New Teacher's Perspective	73
Courses for Teacher Self-care and Teaching Mindfully	76
Short Exercises to Calm or Energise a Class	78
Further Reading and Resources	81
5 Teaching Mindfulness	83
The Whole Child	84
Compelled to Teach	84
Not Your Average Professional Development	85
Stop and Breathe	85
Different Kettles of Fish - Training Adults and Training Students	86
Mindful Awareness Training in Schools	87
Pay Attention!	88
Focusing	89
Heartfulness - More than Just 'Bare Attention'	91
Understanding Our Mind, Body and Emotions	94
Negativity Bias	94
Pattern Completion	96
Natural-born Storytellers	97
Accommodating Competing Narratives	98
How do Students say they use Mindful Awareness?	103
Programmes for Teaching Mindfulness to Students	108
Further Reading and Resources	111
6 Mindfulness, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Wellbeing	113
Part 1: Situating Mindful Awareness Training in Schools	114
Authentic and Connected	114

A Framework for Wellbeing	114
How Does Mindful Awareness Impact Social-Emotional Learning?	115
Mindfulness-Based SEL in Action	116
Mind-Shift	119
Enlivening Learning	120
Changing Courses in Mid-stream	120
Hands Around the Flame	125
Time and Space	126
Part 2: Mindfulness-Based SEL in the Classroom - Practical Examples	129
Example 1 - Facilitating Deeper Connections	129
Example 2 - Training Listening in Foreign Language Classes	133
Example 3 - Training Deep Listening Skills for Group Work	135
Further Reading and Resources	140
7 Mindful Teacher, Mindful School: Changing School Culture	141
A Different Day	142
Pacing Change	142
Changing School Culture: Theory and Practice	144
How Can We Effectively Shift the Focus of a School?	145
The Overlap of Professional Development and Personal Growth	149
The Mindful School Leader	151
What's In It for Me?	153
Difficult Conversations	154
Getting Alongside	155
What About the Parents?	156
A Mindfulness Professional Development Continuum	159
Further Reading and Resources	161
8 Beyond Our Classrooms: Aligning with the Wider World	163
Positive Psychology	164
Developments in Mindfulness in Education	165
International Education	167
University and College Admission Systems - 'Turning the Tide'?	168
Filtering Systems	168
Wellbeing at Universities - A New Metric?	169
The Heart of Learning	170
<i>References</i>	173
<i>Index</i>	181

4

Teaching Mindfully

This chapter:

- looks at the value to teachers and students of bringing a more mindful awareness to our teaching
- explores research in social neuroscience concerning the importance of relationship in learning, and the significance of the role of the teacher
- considers how teacher presence can impact both the learning environment and the needs of individual students.



Be mindful
Teach mindfully
Teach mindfulness

Part 1: Bringing Mindful Awareness into Our Classrooms

Not everyone wants or needs to teach mindfulness to students, but we can all benefit from a training that has the potential to:

- increase our sense of presence
- increase our sensitivity to our own needs and the needs of our students
- heighten our awareness of bodily and emotional cues that guide us in developing this sensitivity.

In short, we can all learn to *teach more mindfully*.

Sometimes concepts like *mindfulness* or *mindfully* can get in the way of our intuitive understanding. No one 'gives us' mindfulness - it's an innate capacity that we can choose to consciously cultivate. In your own teaching you may already have a sense of this but just never actually called it 'mindfulness'. You probably know what it's like when you feel disconnected, detached or distracted - when you *don't* feel you're fully there with the students or the lesson. You probably also know what it's like when you *do* feel present, engaged and really connected with your students. This can include a sense of your own vibrancy when teaching from the front of the class, but it could also be a quieter sense of when the class is working well, of noticing that productive 'buzz' and being able to respond with ease to whatever arises in the moment. This is what I am calling *teaching mindfully*.

LESSONS FROM SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE

The Social Neuroscience of Education by Louis Cozolino (2013) is an impressive synthesis of a huge amount of research that the author has harvested from the most relevant findings in social neuroscience that relate to the role of the classroom teacher and to optimising the conditions for learning. Cozolino refers to the development of our social brain and our evolutionary history of learning in groups, and from his exploration of the research he concludes that teachers seeking to optimise learning in their classrooms would do well to compare their role with one of a *tribal leader*. Young humans are predisposed, through our child-parent attachment circuitry, to learn in groups from adults who fit this mould. A tribal leader is someone who uses a natural authority that the group senses is directed towards

their communal wellbeing. The tribal leader is concerned with protection and with keeping the group safe and healthy. Physical safety is of course essential, but for healthy development and engaged learning group members also need to feel emotionally secure. Good teachers and good leaders provide a sense of a supported safe space in which to learn and grow.

Tribal leaders also aim to find a place and a role for everyone in the group, so embracing and managing diversity is very important to them too. If we want to 'be the best teacher we can be', and to have the deepest impact we can on the students we teach, then acknowledging the importance of these insights from evolutionary science into the power and potential of learning through relationship can help motivate us to continue to connect our personal growth with our professional development.

START WHERE YOU ARE

Some of the most rewarding experiences I have had as a trainer have been with groups of teachers who just wanted to take a course for themselves, to become more mindful, and for this to impact the way they deal with stress and how they teach. To meet these needs we designed a Teaching Mindfully course based on the book *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World* (Williams and Penman, 2011) combined with activities and reflections specifically designed for teachers. We will draw from these in this chapter, looking at two key areas that teaching mindfully can influence:

- Optimising learning environments
- Impacting individual students

OPTIMISING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Making Arrangements to be Present

A first step in bringing a more mindful awareness to our teaching is simply to find ways to remember to be more present in the classroom. Here's an exercise adapted from Deborah Schoeberlein's book *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness* (2009) that you could try out next week.



ARRANGING TO BE PRESENT

Pick a class you want to experiment with, or a time of day if you are a primary teacher (or perhaps a regular meeting if you aren't a class teacher) and before you next meet this group familiarise yourself with these steps:

(Continued)

(Continued)

- First, instead of desperately using the final moments before the session begins to reply to some emails or to get some paperwork done or to chat to a colleague, set your intention to be fully prepared before the students arrive.
- Put everything else aside before class starts and take a few moments to calm and ground yourself, perhaps by taking some conscious breaths. Focus on a few full exhales, letting go as best you can.
- Greet the students at the door by looking them in the eye and saying 'Hi' to each of them as they come in. It doesn't really matter how they react, you are just letting them know that you are here and ready.
- Allow the class to settle, take another breath and then just start the class as normal but remain observant and curious about how the next few moments unfold.
- 'Notice what you notice.' As best you can, continue to tune in to your body, thoughts and feelings. Try to be aware of whatever arises; just begin to familiarise yourself with your own reactions and responses in the moment. Try not to be too self-critical.

Checking In

You can try the above exercise for a week or so with the same class/time of day and then, if you want, try finding a way that works for you and for the students to also give *them* a chance to transition from whatever has been happening before they turned up - to give them a chance to fully arrive before you get started. Many teachers naturally use some form of informal check-in, perhaps just having a chat with them about what they've just been doing or about what's coming up for them today. Here are some other ideas you can try, adapting them to suit your classroom needs.

STUDENT CHECK-IN ACTIVITIES

Try this short opener from Susan Kaiser-Greenland (quoted in Willard, 2016).

Ask each student to complete these two phrases with a word for each (3-5 mins):

'My mind feels

'My body feels

Try to keep it snappy and spontaneous - they don't need to think too much about it; for example, 'My mind feels foggy and my body feels warm', 'My mind feels alert and my body feels sleepy'.

If it's a small group you could go around the room or ask for volunteers. This can help people appreciate the range of mind and body states in the room at any one time, acknowledging that the way we all feel can be different from each other and different for each of us from now to next week, later today or in 10 minutes' time. Next time, when they have the hang of doing this, they could just share in pairs or at a table.

If you prefer, they can simply jot down their two words on Post-it notes on their table and then see if anyone wants to share with the class. Or you could collect them in and read a few out anonymously.

You can also try the same type of exercise as above, but using a different prompt such as *'How's the weather with you today?'*:

- Just a word or phrase to describe a current mood.
- Establish a 3-5 minute settling routine. This could, for example, be journaling based (see 'Try It Out' at the end of the chapter for examples and resources).

With students that have been trained in mindful awareness, a short shared silence or guided settling can be used instead of, or in conjunction with, these check-ins. (A guided settling is when the teacher leads the students in a short mindfulness practice, similar to the activity we did in Chapter 2, 'Feeling Your Feet'.)

These activities don't have to take long, but if you can get the tone right it can help students be ready to be here and learn with you. I know one teacher who used to tell her secondary students, 'Before we get going today, I just need a moment to settle myself. You can read or sit silently until I'm done. Just don't disturb me. OK?' After a while the majority of the class chose to join her shared silence before each class. For secondary students in particular a simple check-in is also a humane acknowledgement that you know there's more going on for them than just your class.

Here's a different type of check-in that I saw a teacher use effectively at the International School of Prague:

ARTICULATING EMOTIONS

Jason taught special educational needs classes, and one morning I went to do an appraisal observation with him. He was teaching a group of 13-year-old boys and intending to use the class to help them prepare for an algebra test in Maths the next day. The boys sat around a circular table but before starting work they each went over to the side counter and selected two cards that best described how they were feeling from a group of about 50 cut-up and laminated 'emotion words'. Jason did this every Monday with his students to try to get a read on

(Continued)



(Continued)

anything that might be coming up in school for them that week which could need some support from him. The first boy started to read out his words to the group - 'Sad' and 'Upset' - but he only managed to mumble the beginning of a sentence before dissolving into tears and openly sobbing to such an extent that he had to leave the room. Before he left he managed to explain that his new puppy had gone missing the day before and they had not been able to find it. While he went to the bathroom to compose himself Jason did a great job building understanding in the group by asking the other boys if they had ever lost something that really upset them. By the time the boy came back there was a lot of empathy in the room and after a bit they continued to go round the circle and look at each boy's words before starting on the algebra.

I felt a bit sorry for Jason as this all took place in the first moment of the first activity in his first formal observation. But he handled it all very skilfully, and to me this check-in activity and his creation of a safe emotional space for the boys spoke volumes about the value of teachers taking the time to allow for emotional aspects of learning in their classes. If he hadn't done that check-in the boy would probably have held those feelings in all day and the Maths class would probably have produced very little memorable learning for him. (The puppy was found later that afternoon, by the way - didn't want to leave you hanging with that!)

You may feel that with some groups you teach, you would be wary of trying out some of these activities. That's fine. These exercises are more to give you an idea of what it's like when opportunities arise where you might be able to use your mindfulness skills to engage with students on a slightly different level. We don't know at any one time what any of our students might be dealing with and we are not trying to expose children's vulnerability, but we do sometimes need to provide a safe space in case emotions need to surface. The effectiveness of our teaching depends upon the positive emotional engagement of our students and this simple check-in used by a well-attuned teacher who was able to deal appropriately and compassionately with an unexpected situation made all the difference to that child's capacity to learn that day.

Body as Barometer

As we learn to tune in more to our bodies, our feelings and our mental states, we can increase our sensitivity to be able to read physical and emotional cues that may help guide our teaching and make us more effective teachers. As we have noted, mindful awareness training involves consciously connecting with our bodies - noticing our physical aliveness, the physicality of breath and of sensory experiences. In this way we begin to use the body as a barometer - as a way of gauging the climate - or as a radar system giving us early warning of tensions and pressures that, unnoticed, might lead to physical tensions or illness.

As well as promoting better physical and mental health, this increased sensitivity can inform our classroom approach. Understanding our own emotional reactions and triggers helps us develop greater empathic understanding for others, and we can learn to not overreact and not to take things too personally. There are a variety of ways to enhance our sense of classroom presence and our sensitivity in the moment whilst teaching and interacting. The key is developing the ability to notice physical sensations and mental or emotional reactions to what is happening right now. This natural sensitivity can be significantly enhanced through developing a personal mindfulness practice (see Chapter 3). In time this may help us notice subtle triggers and habitual patterns of behaviour that drive our reactions. The more we tune in to the body and use it as an early warning radar system that is giving us information about our subtle reactions to what is happening around us, the more we are able to assess the classroom climate, adjust and make informed decisions about our responses.

TUNING IN

Towards the end of one student mindfulness course, I prepared to take a group of 17-18-year-old high-schoolers on a 'sensory safari' - a walk off campus that would involve silence, deep listening and reflection. Having worked in middle school (11-14 years) for the majority of my teaching career, I don't really see myself as a high-school teacher. As we left the school it began to rain lightly and I stopped the group in a covered alleyway to explain the ground rules for this somewhat unusual learning experience - one that might work against the naturally social grain of the teenage brain. As I stood waiting for the group to assemble I noticed a knot in my belly and an elevated heartbeat. There was a dampness in my palms. A familiar stress signature was beginning to take shape and I took a moment to tune in and turn towards these symptoms. Was I feeling threatened? Yes. Why? Perhaps the body language of the students, my sense that they might not be into this, that I was maybe taking them too far out of their comfort zone? Underlying that, I was aware that I have never really felt that comfortable teaching older adolescents. Perhaps because of my own issues with authority and some deeper rebellious tendencies, perhaps because of my experiences at age 11 when I was in a British grammar school where bullying was the norm. For whatever reasons, my vague fear of not being able to control a group was manifesting itself as threat symptoms in my body.

When we are threatened we close up, our thought processes narrow down towards 'tunnel vision' - not a good state to be in for teaching mindful awareness in nature! So what could I do? All of this happened in the space of a few moments, but the key step had already been taken - by noticing the physical symptoms, and by acknowledging what I was feeling, I was already giving myself some space to manoeuvre with awareness, instead of being subconsciously propelled by my discomfort. Deciding then that a closed response was not where I wanted to be for the next 40 minutes, I was able to internally clarify my intention for the class,

(Continued)

(Continued)

turn a little towards the physical symptoms, take a deeper breath, let go more on the out breath, allow those symptoms to be there ('I don't have to like feeling this way, I just need to accept it'), and then to use this heightened awareness to help guide me into the next moment.

By focusing my alertness onto what I wanted to achieve, onto connecting with the students and internally clarifying my intentions, I was able to avoid overreacting when I saw them not sticking exactly to the ground rules that had been set. Better to have a flexible response, to allow things to settle a little than to sternly force them to behave and be quiet. Acknowledging openly with them that this exercise was unusual - a challenge even - may also have helped the process unfold, whereas clamping down and being strict and demanding might have provoked their own threat or avoidance response which could have cut them off from the sensitive learning experience I was attempting to create for them.

So I gave them some slack as we walked down the hill, not insisting on total silence. Just staying in my own bubble as best I could. Gradually, as we got further away from the buildings and into the trees, they began to quieten until we eventually did have silence and the chance to really appreciate what was around us.

PRESENCE

In training teachers to *teach mindfully* we try to heighten this sensitivity through exercises that enhance our sense of presence in the classroom. These may be activities that increase awareness of body, breath and voice. For example, one of the approaches used by Helle Jensen and Katinka Gøtzsche in training Danish teachers is the 60/40. In this series of exercises, we play with keeping our attention predominantly in our bodies while moving, breathing and interacting with others. This is good practice for teachers as we are so often caught up in putting 100 per cent of our attention into our teaching and our students that we can forget about ourselves. So here we train to aim to keep roughly 60 per cent awareness inside ourselves and 40 per cent outside.

60/40 MEET 'N GREET (5 MINUTES)

- 1 Stand up (in your own space as much as possible), bringing attention to sensations in the feet.
- 2 Notice any tingling, fizzing, temperature.
- 3 Bend your knees a few times, sensing the weight on the soles of your feet.
- 4 Very slowly, maintaining awareness of any sensations in the feet, gently lean back and forth, and side to side.

- 5 Now, maintaining this awareness in the feet, walk around the room and introduce yourself to someone near you, making sure to shake their hand when you do so, still trying to keep about 60 per cent awareness in your feet.
- 6 Move around again and greet someone else, maintaining awareness in your feet.

(Adapted with permission from a workshop by Katinka Gøtzsche, Aarhus, Denmark, June 2015)

Like many mindfulness exercises this sounds simple, but it's not easy to maintain the combination of inner and outer awareness. In many cases, after shaking one or two people's hands, participants forget that the intention was to keep their attention on their feet. In discussion after the activity we can reflect on how easy it is to lose ourselves and on the importance of practice. Setting an intention clearly can help remind us to come back to ourselves from time to time in the midst of a busy class or day. Otherwise we may end up putting out so much energy during the day, week or term that we end up drained and exhausted. Keeping some sense of an inner awareness, on the other hand, helps cue us to the sensitivities described earlier that may increase the effectiveness of the learning environment.

Voice training used to be included in initial teacher training in the UK, and considering that the voice is the essential tool of the teacher it makes sense that we should learn how to take care of it and how to use it to greatest effect. The book *Presence* by Patsy Rodenburg (2009) has many activities that help build presence through breath and voice. Rodenburg mainly trains stage actors but her exercises work very well for teaching mindfully too. In one of our exercises with teachers we build up body, breath and voice awareness through a series of activities that culminate in reading a poem to a small group whilst playing with various aspects of presence. Before reading or speaking to the group, teachers also look at some suggestions for areas they can choose to focus on, for example:

- Slowing down
- Breathing
- Speaking mindfully
- Pausing/allowing silence
- Awareness of body
 - soft gaze - relaxed eyes
 - allowing oneself to be seen
 - strong back, tender heart (strong presence yet vulnerable)
- Awareness of emotions
- Awareness of thoughts - softening
- Awareness of environment beyond self.

These suggestions are courtesy of Richard C. Brown, Professor of Contemplative Education at Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, USA and come from a longer unpublished list of 'Contemplative Personal Practices while Teaching' (2014).

TRANSFORMING TEACHING THROUGH MINDFUL AWARENESS

Many teachers in a variety of schools where there is access to mindfulness training for adults have said that they have found this training 'transformational', either personally, professionally or both:

'This course helps you to actively look after your wellbeing. If you are aware of your needs you can be better aware of the needs of your students too.'

'I don't react how I used to when a student pushes my buttons.'

'I'm actually really enjoying connecting with my students these days.'

'It's a practical way for teachers to deal with stress.'

'It is a reminder to seek balance between your job and your professional life which helps to be more effective at your job.'

'It helped me function better as a colleague because it helped me raise my level of awareness for empathy towards others.'

'I was sceptical about this "mindfulness" at first but have found it so helpful.'

'I just feel much calmer.'

Certainly in my personal experience I would agree with all of the above. At a pressured, anxious and difficult stage in my life I began a regular mindfulness practice and after a while I began to notice an impact on how I was at work. I also began to really enjoy teaching my classes to middle school kids. I think what I appreciated more than anything was the fun - and the joy even - that can be found in connecting with students. This was something that over the years I had just lost, or perhaps did not appreciate so much at that time because of other concerns and priorities.

The core of each Teaching Mindfully class is usually spent setting teachers up for one of the home/school practices adapted from *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World* (Williams and Penman, 2011). For example, they might be asked to focus on bringing their attention to routine activities and noting physical sensations when, say, drinking a cup of tea or walking around the classroom. They might also be asked to try out some 'habit releasers' to remind

themselves to come out of 'auto-pilot' and into presence. This could mean sitting in a different place in meetings, sometimes standing in a different position when teaching, taking a longer breath while the class think about a question you have posed and so on.

Then in the next class we look at what came up for them during the week, anything they might be noticing about themselves and how they are teaching or relating, along with whatever mini-action research we had asked them to explore in the classroom that week. Often, the heightening of self-awareness and sensitivity that these activities and the course-book readings bring will lead to some new observation or insight, and when teachers begin to share these with each other we can mine a rich seam of discoveries that really contribute to deepening mindful teaching.

'It's not just the workload, it's the actual drain of having to emotionally hold those 30 individuals in the palm of your hand and getting ready for the next day and then the 30 needy little people are there again - that's where you see the really outstanding teachers are those who have connectedness and genuineness with their class. It doesn't matter so much about teaching style, it's about being genuine and connected.'

Elementary School Principal

We may tend to assume that 'gifted' teachers have a certain innate charisma that engages students in learning, but what we are discovering here is that we can all train to have greater classroom presence - through our physical presence, breath, body and voice awareness and through enhancing our sensitivity to read our own and other people's mind and body states.

RELAXED ALERTNESS

The Yerkes-Dodson principle that was derived in 1908 from experiments with mice and rats demonstrated that an absence of stress can lead to apathy and lethargy whereas too much stress can cause exhaustion and chaos, and that neither extreme is conducive to deep learning.

Not all stress is bad; **eustress** describes a level of stimulation that is beneficial for getting us switched on and motivated to learn (see Figure 4.1). Relevance, responsibility and novelty help prime this state, and when we feel *relaxed and alert* we are in a good space to engage and learn. The word 'alert' actually has its roots in 'alarm', and so there is a connection to fear in the sense of vigilance and wakefulness, but at low levels the impact is positive. If we can find, in our teaching, that sweet spot of relaxed alertness where students feel safe and comfortable

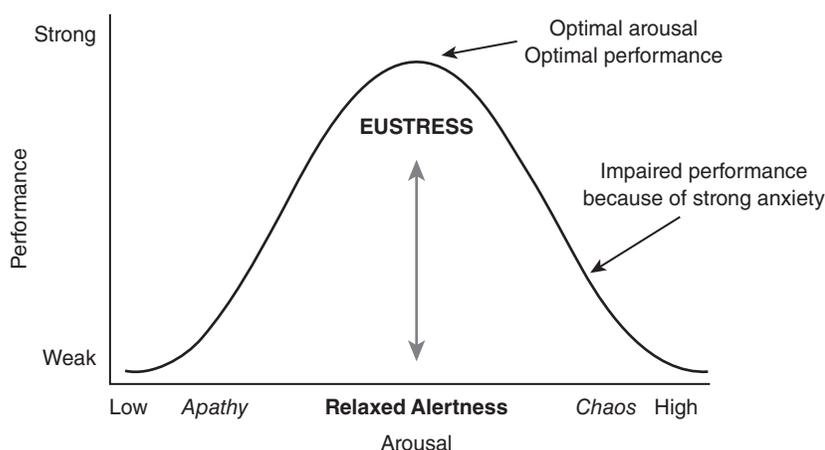


Figure 4.1 Stress and performance (adapted from Diamond et al., 2007)

(but not sluggishly comfortable) and where they are challenged (but not overly challenged), then we can truly optimise learning.

Mindful awareness training is fundamentally a training in relaxed alertness, and as we begin to have a feel for it we can use our own relaxed alertness to influence the classroom environment. As we increase our responsiveness and build emotional safety in our classrooms, we can more consciously create and adapt the quality of the environment to fit the fluctuating needs of the learning focus and of the group. Through noticing subtle cues from within - and from students - we can adjust our pedagogy and fine-tune the atmosphere, creating conditions that come closer to what we understand to be an optimal environment for learning.

Amy Footman, Head of Stanley Grove Primary School in Manchester, talks about how some of her teachers who are trained in mindfulness say they feel 'much more connected with their classes and they talk about how mindfulness makes you more receptive as a teacher instead of being totally caught up in whatever's going on all the time'. And they talk about the idea of 'reading the room': 'Oh, it feels really fizzy in here today, class' or 'I think the classroom feels really, really sleepy today - maybe that's because our minds and bodies are needing a bit more energy.'

Having consciously identified the mood, atmosphere or energy levels of a class, teachers can then adapt their tone, approach or activities accordingly. They might decide to select a short activity designed to calm students down or wake them up as necessary. These could, for example, be simple mindful movement

exercises – slow and gentle, or quick and energising (*gear shifting* activities, as the Danish teacher trainers call them), followed by a calm noticing moment when students tune in to the body, observing how it feels, before continuing with the lesson. (For some examples of simple 'activities to calm or energise' a class, see 'Try It Out' at the end of the chapter.)

I have heard from teachers in many schools that taking an 8-week mindfulness course has transformed their experience at home and in the classroom. Enhanced emotional regulation is often referred to in some form or other. Tracy (not her real name) was not someone her colleagues could imagine getting into mindfulness, but she did take a course, not intending to teach students but for her own benefit: 'It's changed my life,' she told me, 'I used to get so easily triggered by certain behaviours in my students, but now it seems like I can notice it, notice my reactions and make choices about how I want to be. I just don't react like I used to.'

IMPACTING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

We are above all social beings, and whilst the traditional theory of evolutionary development is based upon the survival of competing species, human achievement may be far more dependent on our ability to collaborate. In pulling together a wealth of research from social neuroscience, Louis Cozolino (2013) points educators to some valuable implications arising from our growing understanding of the science of relationship.

Our Capacity for Attachment

Our brain has evolved to enable us to act collaboratively and collectively and to develop the communication and linguistic skills that have enabled our extraordinary development as a species. In our early stages we are totally dependent on our care-givers and this close, dependent, *attachment* underlies our capacity to learn. As well as providing physical safety and nourishment, our parents regulate our emotions and provide a gateway to learning the literacies upon which our full functionality in culture and society depend.

Although human babies are born without a developed prefrontal cortex and are, for many years, highly dependent and vulnerable offspring, we are also born with some highly developed capacities. The ability of a young baby to 'read' a whole range of facial expressions that convey important social messages is a highly sophisticated form of literacy. The progression from reading faces to becoming literate in understanding and producing complex sounds, then going on to being able to read and write complex language systems, is what ultimately enables us to think abstractly, to reflect and to explore our inner selves and the outer universe.

Relationship in Learning

Although most of our initial communication as infants is non-verbal, on a basic and daily level we grow to communicate with each other through words and ideas, as well as through touch and emotions. Our evolutionary tendency is to learn best when engaged in communication with others in ways that contain this affective component (Marzano et al., 2011: 5-7). As Cozolino shows through the depth of research in the field of attachment theory and human learning, it is here that the potential and power of the role of the teacher is situated. Because of our evolutionary predisposition to connect with our adult care-givers, and the neuroscientific processes that provide this functionality, we are also predisposed to enter into learning relationships with other adults in our community - and in our current version of community that means, for the most part, with our teachers. (After all, in many communities, if you look at the time children spend interacting with adults, a significant chunk of that is spent with their teachers.)

Neuro-Scientific Sculptors

What is most fascinating in reading the research in this area is that scientists can now track the underlying mechanisms of this 'learning through relationship' at a cellular level. On the one hand, none of this is new to us. We know instinctively and through our own relationships and experience what has helped us to grow, develop and learn. But on the other hand, we can also begin to understand and actually 'see' through brain research the intricacies of the physiology of learning and relationship. So much so that, based on this evidence, Cozolino describes teachers as *neuro-scientific sculptors* who, by means of their personal and pedagogical capacities, create learning environments and internal connections in their students that literally 'sculpt' the synaptic frameworks of our brains. How cool is that!

Life Lesson No. 1

Deeper still, when we look at the crucial importance of early attachment in the life of a young human, we can begin to understand how we might grow up lacking some key social and emotional skills - especially if our primary care-givers were unable to meet some of our needs or to engage fully in our early development. Primary care-givers regulate our early emotional responses and if they are themselves missing some key capacities, then the gaps in the attunement between children and parents can, in later life, cause significant problems in our personal and professional relationships. Developmentally appropriate programmes and approaches that give young students the time and space to explore social and emotional skills can perhaps help fill some of those gaps.

Younger children do not have fully developed cognitive capacities, but this is a fertile time for the natural development of the affective skills. Well-attuned

children will naturally know if their mum is angry, or even have a fair sense of whether a stranger is to be trusted or not. Quality social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes that help develop these skills can heighten and enhance our abilities so that we can, for example, learn to be more empathetic even when in conflict, and can train to be less judgmental and more compassionate to ourselves and others. These programmes need to be more than just cleverly designed 'academic' programmes: they need to have authentic experiential components and, most importantly, they need to be taught by people who can embody the qualities sought.

Life Lesson No. 2

In addition to the need for the conscious development of social and emotional skills through well-taught formal and informal programmes, there is another important finding arising from research on attachment that is highly relevant to teachers. This is the impact through modelling and connection that a significant adult can have on an insecure child who has deficits in social skills or emotional regulation.

Our students are registering all sorts of messages in a classroom environment besides the content of the class that we are so focused on imparting. These include the body language of the teacher and of peers, sensitivities to humorous or threatening behaviours, group dynamics that can bolster or threaten self-esteem and status and so on. How the adult in the room holds himself or herself in relation to the class, and to potential threats to social and emotional stability, are keenly noted. Difficult student behaviour can easily trigger our own hotspots and deficits in relationship skills or in handling confrontation. Bringing a more mindful awareness to our reactions can help us develop the capacity to choose appropriate responses to challenging situations.

'Teach Your Children Well'

As well as improving our behaviour management skills we are also providing opportunities for individual students to learn from us through witnessing responses that might contradict, or throw into question, their early modelling patterns. Something as simple as seeing you not take anger personally can be profound for a child who has not witnessed that at home. A child in your class may have learned to use defensive aggression to mask a subconsciously felt inadequacy. If they surface hostility in an interaction with you but you don't react to it and are able to maintain a kind but firm demeanour, along with a patient curiosity in your interactions, this could teach them a life lesson that they have not yet had a chance to learn. Likewise a teacher who communicates (directly or indirectly) that they have the patience to stick with a student and to support them even if they may feel hopeless at something can help that individual learn a powerful lesson that might stay with them throughout their life.

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous ... I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized. (Ginott, 1994 [1972])

This may all sound a bit intense or overwhelming to you as a teacher with so much else on your mind: 'I have enough to do getting through the day and delivering the History curriculum to 30 disparate individuals in each of my five classes - I don't have time to be a therapist as well!'

True. But these indications from social neuroscience research should not be taken to imply that we need to be perfect human beings able to solve every child's problems. It's more about being human despite our imperfections, and being aware of the impact we might have on children.

Re-attunement: Ian Wright meets Mr Pigden

If you can, take 3 minutes to watch the video about Ian Wright, a famous English football player. Having retired from football he now works on radio and television, and this video was taken while he was filming another programme. Without his knowledge the director had contacted Wright's primary school teacher, not realising quite what impact this would have on the famous sportsman.

Ian Wright gets a big shock!:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=omPdemwaNzQ&ab_channel=MITOGEN

In other programmes Ian Wright has talked about his difficult upbringing, and we can see the wonderful impact Mr Pigden has had on him. It's quite extraordinary to see how this grown man, an accomplished athlete, reverts, in front of the camera, to a young child, respectfully taking off his cap and movingly holding his teacher's hand. Wright had a very tough childhood which resulted in him carrying a lot of anger and easily getting into uncontrollable rages. He says that Mr Pigden took the time to teach him how to communicate with others and was his first positive male role model and the one who made him feel important and capable.

If you listen to people talk about an important person in their life other than their parents or partner, you often hear them describe a key characteristic that this person had: 'He was so patient', 'Such a calm person', 'She was so enthusiastic about her subject', 'So caring' and so on. These people are seeing a quality in someone - quite often their teacher - that they had lacked in their own upbringing and so in themselves. Sometimes people who grow up having experienced insecure early attachments might only need to have a positive relationship with one other significant person who is secure in themselves to kick-start some of these missing qualities.

This process of 're-attunement' builds on the neurobiological circuitry that helps us attune and attach to our early caregivers (for further details, see Cozolino, 2013: 18, 106-107). There are many accounts of this sort of learning relationship having a profound impact on people for the rest of their lives. It doesn't have to be when you are a child - some people talk about university or college professors who have had a similar impact on them. It doesn't necessarily have to be a teacher, of course, it can be a relationship with a partner or other significant adult, but teachers are often cited because they are working in a context where re-attunement with a secure adult is a distinct possibility. Re-attunement does not only happen to people who have suffered abuse or serious lack in childhood - we are all stronger in some areas of social and emotional development and weaker in others, so all students can benefit from authentic connection with their teachers, as well as, and ideally in combination with, well-designed, well-taught social-emotional skills programmes.

Our human physiology has such strong social and emotional foundations, and teaching is such a social profession, that we can all benefit from paying attention to our social and emotional growth and wellbeing. On some level, you may never know the impact you have had on the children you have taught, both in terms of subject learning and in terms of other life skills they might have picked up along the way. But we can celebrate the opportunity to be involved in such potentially powerful learning relationships and also re-commit to doing the best we can to further the growth of the individuals and groups we teach.

Shifting our focus to our own affective skills can enable us to teach more mindfully. This in turn can help us teach more effectively and support our wellbeing by taking better care of ourselves and our students. We now have the evidence and understanding available to guide teachers much more effectively in this area. In many ways, *teaching mindfully* is an act of self-care itself, and it's important that schools help us foster this crucial capacity to take care of ourselves. Schools and educational institutions can do this by making training in self-care a normal part of professional development and initial teacher training. In Part 2 of this chapter we look more directly at this question of preparation in initial teacher training.

Part 2: Mindfulness and Relational Competence in Teacher Training

Many teachers and student teachers see relations and interaction with the students as the most difficult aspect of teaching, and they experience that their teacher training does not prepare them sufficiently for these aspects of the teaching profession. (Jensen et al., 2015)

This statement comes from an interim report of a Danish research study entitled 'Educating teachers focusing on the development of reflective and relational competences'. This Danish study, described in some detail below, gives us an insight into the kind of practical preparation for a career in teaching that a focus on our own social and emotional skills can provide.



WHEN DID YOU NOTICE YOU HAD LOST YOURSELF?

Mindfulness and Relational Competence Training for Trainee Teachers

Aarhus University and VIA University College, Denmark

'There is a need for student teachers to learn about and to develop relational competence during their teacher education programme in order to be able to create and maintain good-quality teacher-student relations, which provide the basis for a high-quality learning environment in which pupils can learn and thrive.'

In 2015 at a conference in Denmark, my wife and I met three remarkable ladies who are part of a larger group collaborating on research in training for teachers in what the Danes call 'Relational Competence'.

A 2008 review of 220 studies of different factors of importance for the learning environment by the Danish Pedagogical University concluded that 'If we want to create a good learning environment it's important to teach teachers to create good relations: To show tolerance, respect, interest, empathy and compassion to each child.' This research project in Aarhus is one of several efforts to explore precisely what makes for an effective training of relationship skills for teachers.

The current research project (2012-2016 and beyond) grew out of an earlier study on the impact of teaching mindfulness and contemplative practices to 11-13-year-old students in an ordinary school. In this first study the children described how they had experienced the mindfulness training. One 13-year-old boy said, 'Usually you are very busy in the morning and you have to run out to get to school and then you are stressed at the end of school, but when we do these exercises in the morning it's as if the stress crawls out of your body and you get relaxed ready to learn.'

Professor Anne Maj Nielsen, Head of Educational Psychology Department at the Danish School of Education at Aarhus University, said, 'One thing we learned from the part of this first study that followed the teachers was that it is very important to have a mutual context in which to practice mindfulness. Meditative practices are very difficult to keep up on your own - especially for busy teachers. So we realised we needed to include this as part of teacher education. By incorporating this into an initial teacher training degree, we would have the opportunity to offer a kind of social anchor to practice - to have it become habituated as part of your everyday life.'

Taking the training to the VIA University College, a teacher training school in Aarhus, the researchers tracked student teachers over the 4 years of their Bachelor of Education course. The trainee teachers in the trial group were regularly interviewed and they tried to describe what it is like for them on occasions when they feel they are able to be a good teacher - how they were aware of themselves and aware of what was going on with their students. They also described their experiences when things were not going well, when they were *not* able to be aware - or when they became aware of what was going on just after an incident.

For example, a male teacher felt provoked by a child so he told the student to leave the classroom. Then he felt ashamed that he had done that because



it didn't really solve the problem so then he told the rest of the class, 'Wait a moment I need to go talk to that student because I want him to stay in the class.'

The difficult part of that process was for the student teacher to admit to himself that it was a bad choice to ask the student to leave. But then he found the space to think, 'OK, this is what I need to do to take care of the relationship with the boy and with the class.'

'One thing that is common to the student teachers in the group,' Professor Nielsen suggests, 'is the ability to be more aware of their own state of mind and their own emotions and their own impulses to react. To be aware of it and not just to act on it. To be aware of it as it happens and at the same time to be aware of what is going on with the students they are teaching.'

This enhanced sensitivity has enabled trainee teachers to step back, develop greater empathy and broaden their perspective - they talked about how you can understand the student either as someone who wants to provoke you, or as a child who doesn't really understand what is going on, or as just a child who is having fun, even if it is annoying you.

Professor Nielsen explains, 'If you are able to see a child as a vulnerable person for whom it's hard to learn, or perhaps as someone who is afraid to make mistakes that could lead to ridicule, then as a teacher it's important to take care of dealing with mistakes and with how you might make the child feel in the classroom.'

In another situation a student teacher described how she managed to stop herself from over-reacting - by becoming aware that she was not breathing properly and noticing that she was getting very annoyed and then deciding to take a deep breath. This gave her the space to reframe her view of the student who seconds ago had been experienced as a provocative child - 'Maybe that could have been me a few years ago.'

'This training on Relational Competence only accounted for 5 per cent of their studies at VIA,' said Professor Nielsen, "but it has made a very big impact.'

Katinka Gøtzsche is a co-trainer for the student teachers and a secondary school teacher herself. 'For me as a teacher, this training has helped me to wait a little in challenging situations. It's not that it takes away the emotions - I can still get very irritated and annoyed - but it helps me to not react and to keep the feelings to myself and not react on my students. I think in the long term it's very helpful for teachers and I guess it makes you more resilient somehow.'

'When our student teachers started teaching they realised it actually had a great impact, that it was very important and that it helped them to be better teachers. Also, as a teacher, just to take some pauses in your teaching. "How do I feel now? What is this doing to me as a teacher?" The children don't have to know about it. You just need your awareness, "OK, I see I'm getting annoyed now."'

Helle Jensen, a psychologist, family therapist and lead trainer on the project, describes the courses they gave the student teachers as training in 'Relational Competence, Empathy and Presence'. 'Most of the student teachers - who were all chosen randomly - didn't want the training at first, but I think they realised it had a great impact on their way of dealing with classroom challenges and with parents.'

(Continued)



(Continued)

'We started the course by looking first at themselves as part of their own personal professional development. Learning about how your own way of being is influencing the learning environment in the classroom. This was very different for them. "We didn't come here to talk about ourselves, we came to learn how to teach children!" Some were quite furious at the beginning. Over time I think the mindfulness exercises helped them come to the point of seeing themselves as part of the problem. They could begin to see themselves as the ones who can create a problem, or solve a problem.'

The trainees in the trial group were filmed on their teaching practices and they learnt to reflect openly on any challenging situations they had encountered with a trainer and their peers. Jensen believes it's this reflection that often brings the greatest learning and that helps develop more mindful teaching.

'They have to talk about what makes a good learning environment. This is part of the training, not only developing the mindful awareness but also how to put into words what happened in this little sequence. The point where something essential happened. They learn to identify this point, "When did I first lose myself in this interaction?", "Could I have done something else at that point?" This is easier to identify if you do mindfulness exercises.'

From observing the growth of the trainee teachers and from their feedback, Jensen concludes that one of the key tools the students have picked up from the training is how to be able to work with their attitude and mood. They know, for example, that the way you enter the classroom is significant, and it impacts the way the learning will unfold. They also know they can change their attitude.

'We teach them a 3-minute exercise, one the teacher can do before they go into the classroom. You learn to quickly get in touch with body, heart, breathing, and mental state to see how each is right now.'

In one case, a trainee was working with a group of 14-year-old boys. He liked the boys but when they were together they would never listen and he found he got annoyed with them. In reviewing this later with his peers he was asked a series of questions:

'How does it feel for you when you revisit this now, a situation that didn't go well?'

'What were you feeling in your body?'

'How was your empathy for yourself and for them?'

'How was your ability to focus or to think clearly? Did you have ideas of how to get out of the situation?'

'This way of changing his own attitude can help the student. No one gave him any solutions, but it became clear to him that before he went into the next class, he could take the 3 minutes to acknowledge his state, to be more conscious about his emotions - to take responsibility for how he is feeling right now.'

Owning our own emotions is very important - otherwise these feelings are 'homeless' - and when you take them into the class, they will get expressed in



ways that are not helpful. If the boys feel bad or that it's them that are in the wrong they will do things to get rid of this bad feeling.'

'It's important to have this dialogue with yourself and with others because we need help to gain clarity about how things are. You have to express it, to name it. When we express ourselves and then get in touch with our natural competencies we don't need to know a lot about theory we just need to be interested and listen to ourselves.'

So this training revolves around using the competencies to bring us back to a more authentic, empathic state and then around remembering to use these in the moment. The student teachers learn to take mini-pauses for themselves, to check-in from time to time and in addition they learn short 'gear shifting' activities they can use with children to change the energy in a classroom.

The research study is ongoing but the preliminary report after the first 18 months found that, compared with a control group, the student teachers in the trial were:

- more active and reflective in establishing relations with students in school;
- more reflective and experimental in relation to their teacher role.

Student teacher:

'In the project I learned to pay attention to how I enter the teacher role. It is important ... to balance between being professional and at the same time just stick to being myself.

Professor Nielsen:

'Through noticing their inner impulses as well as external factors it makes it possible for the teachers to become aware of what is going on and to keep in mind that they are able to still be the adult in the room or still be the one to take care of the situation - including taking care of themselves.'

A NEW TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

I've tried to not push mindfulness with my children, concerned that they might just see it as 'Dad's thing' (or perhaps 'Dad's really weird thing') and of causing an adverse reaction. But I was thrilled to hear recently that my eldest daughter, now in her second year of primary school teaching in Scotland, is doing a mindful awareness training course for herself - provided free to teachers in her area by the education authority (Hooray!). Knowing the significant demands on young teachers in the education system and the limited focus on equipping them with affective self-management skills on teacher training courses, I was really pleased to hear that she has the opportunity at this stage in her career to learn some fundamental stress management techniques. This could help guide her towards

greater self-care and also ultimately might enable her to begin to share this work directly and indirectly with her students.

Here's what Lucy herself says about mindfulness and teacher training:

HOW MINDFULNESS HELPED ME

While doing my own mindfulness training I have been reflecting on times when I've had a bad day and tried really hard to not let that affect the kids. I noticed that it's really hard to do!

The Introduction to Mindfulness course, though, has helped me in:

- being able to notice when my stress levels are getting to a point of no return. It's both a physical thing - heart beating really fast, almost hyperventilating, almost crying (or crying!) - and it's also mental - recognising where my thoughts have gone
- being able to stop before I get really worked up and letting it go for a bit
- being compassionate to myself, when you feel like you are not good enough - 'It's okay', 'I'm okay'
- learning to appreciate the kids more.

I was so lucky that I was doing mindfulness training at a time in my first year at this school when I had to deal with some really difficult situations.

At teachers' college you are constantly being told that 'You will need to take care of yourself because it's very, very stressful.' But they don't teach you any coping strategies. You want practical things that you can apply when you are teaching.

What you get with mindfulness is something that is going to help you cope.

It would be especially good to have an introduction to mindfulness in the teacher trainee year because that's a very stressful time itself - even before you are a teacher on your own - and then you will already have some of those skills to use on the teacher training and then to use after you graduate and start teaching.'

I wish in teacher training I had learned about:

- Thinking about how you as a person can affect the children you are teaching.
- The importance of being aware of your emotional state and your stress levels. You never think about how that's going to affect the children. You do a lot of work with the kids to name their emotions and so on but don't really bring that to yourself.
- Coping strategies - take a breath, take a moment.
- Your body as barometer - it would have been amazing to know that early on.

Lucy Hawkins, Primary School Teacher, UK

Here are a few statements from other teachers highlighting 'Things I wish I had learned in teacher's training':

- How to deal with stress during the busy times: report writing, conferences.
- How to manage my own emotions, especially when students - or parents or other colleagues - push my buttons.
- How to manage my workload.
- Ways to cope with the emotional unrest that I can feel when teaching students in difficult situations.
- How to deal with difficult parents.
- That the relationship I build with students is a form of classroom management.
- Understanding a student's emotional situation and how this can affect their learning.
- That academic and social and emotional wellbeing are not separate entities.
- How to refuel when you have given so much of yourself emotionally.
- That teaching can be draining but you can recharge with silence and solitude - that you can respect that about yourself and surround yourself with others who respect self-knowledge.
- That the way I am when I teach can have positive (and negative) outcomes on my students' learning.
- To be myself in the classroom, not to try to be an 'idea' of what I think a teacher should be.
- That creating a positive relationship with my student's *is* classroom management.
- How to be nice to myself.

When I was in teacher's college, I remember that one of my professors said that teachers have the highest rate of bladder infections of any other profession, which she seemed to think was pretty funny. She went on to say it's because teachers don't go to the bathroom as often as they should because they are too busy teaching or running around before and after class trying to get things done. She seemed totally okay with this. I was not okay with this! She also briefly mentioned that, as future teachers, we are really going to need to look after ourselves because it's a very stressful job. But there was never any information about *how* to do this. No practical tips, no advice. For me, mindfulness was one of the tools I used to help with my own stress management. It has helped me to be more aware of my body and its needs. So if I'm at school and my body tells me that it needs to go to the bathroom, I listen to it! I can't be present for my students and attentive to their needs if I am not attentive to my own.

High School Guidance Counsellor, Canada



I kept thinking about where to place mindfulness training and I thought, 'It needs to be in teacher training'. If it could be put in a module in teacher training courses, that would be the most effective and beneficial place for potential teachers to learn the techniques both for themselves and for their future students. This is an approach that can promote creativity for teachers as well as to help manage the workload. I wish I had learned some of those skills early in my teaching career. Even a slight change in the way that a teacher relates to a child can make a massive difference to their school experience.

Liz Lord, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, UK

'CARE' Program Research

Although mindful awareness training for teachers is still quite new, we are beginning to see various types of evidence, not just anecdotal, of the impact of undergoing this type of training on teaching and learning. A recent study (Jennings et al., 2015) tested the efficacy of the CARE training (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) on primary school teachers. This large-scale randomised control study followed over 200 teachers in 36 urban elementary schools in New York. As well as a large range of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, the study looked at the impact on students, using observers in every classroom before and after the 8-week training course. As well as significant positive effects of the training compared with the control groups in terms of teachers' emotional regulation, sense of time pressure and stress symptoms, the report showed a clear impact in the classroom on the emotional support aspect for students, as well as improved classroom organisation. The report concluded that,

These findings have promising implications for education policy because they demonstrate that learning environments can be improved by supporting teachers' social and emotional competence.

COURSES FOR TEACHER SELF-CARE AND TEACHING MINDFULLY

SMART (Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques in Education)

SmartEducation™ is an evidence-based programme that specifically targets the needs of K-12 educators and professional support staff, with a strong emphasis on the cultivation of mindful awareness including elements of self-compassion, emotional

literacy, self-regulation skills, optimism and self-care. The SmartEducation™ programme involves experiential activities in mindfulness, including meditation, emotional awareness and movement.

CARE for Teachers (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education)

CARE for Teachers is a programme designed to help teachers reduce stress and enliven their teaching by promoting awareness, presence, compassion, and reflection. Training in relaxation, movement and deep listening can strengthen the inner resources needed to help students flourish, socially, emotionally and academically.

For further information go to www.care4teachers.com.

WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

- Teachers!
- The quality of our relationships with our students.
- *How* we teach is as important as *what* we teach.

TRY IT OUT!

For yourself:

- *Personal practice*: continue to work towards a daily sit, using the ideas and audios from Chapter 3 to support you.
- Try the Making Arrangements to Be Present exercise on page 55.
- Focus on one class and go through the checklist each time before you meet them.

With your students:

- In the following week, you could try out one or more of the student 'Check-in' activities on page 56.
- Try this with the same class as above.

(Continued)



(Continued)

- You can also use 'student journaling prompts' for brief writing exercises as settling routines, eg:
 - Which is louder a frown or a smile? Explain why.
 - Do you feel like you can control your emotions or do your emotions control you? Explain using a specific example.
 - What is your favourite day of the week? Why?
 - List 8-10 things that you are thankful for.
 - What kind of 'thought attack' do you get most often? In other words, what do you worry about? How do you deal with this worrying?
 - Do you show compassion towards yourself or are you hard on yourself? Explain using specific examples.
 - Can you think of a time when your gut/intuition influenced your decision?
- Make up your own, perhaps adapted to your teaching area, or find great journal ideas at <https://daringtolivefully.com/journal-prompts>
 - Doodling, drawing or colouring - this can be a fun and absorbing alternative, and you can print free designs from <https://printmandala.com/>.
- Explore working with the energy and atmosphere of a class:
 - Notice fluctuations in attention, engagement, group mood.
 - Tune in to your body to note any subtle cues, tensions, positive sensations.
 - Use your voice, body breaks, short shared silences or listening practices to soften or sharpen attention, to energise when sluggish or to calm when hyper.

SHORT EXERCISES TO CALM OR ENERGISE A CLASS

These activities can ease transitions and also help get us out of thought mode and more connected with the body. We have used these with all age groups, including adults. It's important when you lead these that you too participate. *Even the Energisers can become Calming activities if you follow them with a quiet moment of standing and noticing the effect on the body, before moving on.*



HANDS SHAKE - ENERGISER! (2 MINS)

1. Invite your students to stand up, knees slightly bent, bounce up and down gently a few times feeling your feet connected to the ground.
2. Start shaking the hands, gently at first.

3. Then shake harder.
4. Then shake as hard as you can (being aware of your neighbour and any jewellery you might be wearing) as you count down from 10 out loud. You can play with the pace of the count, encouraging your students to shake faster and harder (within reason!).
5. When you get to 0, invite them to all stop, and let the arms hang, tuning in to any sensations they feel in their hands, their arms, the rest of their body.
6. Perhaps invite them to pair share/whole group share about what they notice.

Note: a few minutes later you can invite students to connect back to their hands, even without moving.

BODY WIGGLE - ENERGISER! (4 MINUTES)

1. Invite your students to stand up, knees slightly bent, bounce up and down gently a few times feeling your feet connected to the ground.
2. Invite them to move their little fingers in circles, then the ring fingers, next fingers and so on, tuning into the sensations of the small circles. Then include the wrists and from here on, keep all of the parts of the body moving as you include others - elbows, arms, ankles (one then the other), knees, hips, neck, and torso until as many body parts as possible are making circles at the same time

Note: it's impossible to keep it all going, which is part of the fun!

3. Then invite them to stop, tune into the sensations in their body. Maintain awareness of the sensations as the students move back to their seats.

SHAKE LIKE A WET DOG - ENERGISER! (1 MINUTE)

1. Pretty self-explanatory! Start with a slow body shake and build up to shaking like a wet dog.

Note: you can show a video of a dog doing this to get them in the mood.

EYES AND EARS - CALMING (2-4 MINUTES)

1. Invite students to rub the palm of their hands together.
2. Generate some heat if possible.
3. Place hands gently over the eyes, palms cupping the eyes.
4. Tune into any sensations.
5. Repeat.
6. Rub hands together, cup around the ears, then gently pinch ears giving them 'mini-hugs.'

(Continued)

(Continued)

 FINGER PRESS - CALMING (2-4 MINUTES)

1. Invite students to place their hands on the desk, palms down.
2. Slowly press the left little finger into the desk, release. Encourage them to do this so no one would be able to tell that they are pressing. Continue with the next finger as you move through each on one hand and then the other.
3. After you have led the class through one 'pass,' invite them to do it at their own pace. When finished they can work on pressing down the whole hand at once, again, with the intention that no one would be able to tell that they are pressing.

 TAPPING - ENERGISER! (2-5 MINUTES)

1. Invite your students to stand up, knees slightly bent, bounce up and down gently a few times feeling your feet connected to the ground.
2. Taking the tips of your fingers, start *gently* tapping the head, all around, including the top, sides, hairline.
3. Gently move to tapping the face, forehead, cheeks, nose, jaw.
4. Then using palms or fists, start patting the chest.
5. Then move down one arm, then up the same arm. Repeat on the other side.
6. Before moving to the abdomen, remind students to be gentle as the organs are a little more sensitive here.
7. Stronger fists can pat the hips simultaneously.
8. Use both hands to move down the front of one leg, then up the back of the same leg. Repeat on the other side.
9. Gently tap lower back/kidneys.
10. End with patting hands together = applause!

 CLOCKWISE CHALLENGE - CALMING AND ENERGISING!
(3 MINUTES)

1. Invite your students to stand up, knees slightly bent, bounce up and down gently a few times feeling your feet connected to the ground.
2. Lean weight onto left leg, raise right knee up and start making clockwise circles with the lower leg. If you need to hold something with the left hand to stay balanced, no problem.
3. Establish this focus and balance then introduce the next instruction.
4. The challenge is to continue the clockwise circles with the right lower leg while, at the same time taking the right hand and 'drawing' the number 6 in the air with the index finger. For some reason, this seems impossible to do!

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Cozolino, L. (2013) *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing Attachment and Learning in the Classroom*. New York: Norton.

A highly impressive gathering and analysis of a body of research that has significant implications for how we teach.

Weaver, L. and Wilding, M. (2013) *The Five Dimensions of Engaged Teaching: A Practical Guide for Educators*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

A rare and highly practical professional development manual for teachers that is based on self-care, mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

Marzano, R.J. and Pickering, D.J. with Heflebower, T. (2011) *The Highly Engaged Classroom*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

Robert Marzano is widely respected for his research and evidence-based publications and this one applied to building student attention and engagement contains classroom examples and ideas as well as the theory that supports them.

Powell, K. and Kusuma-Powell, O. (2010) *Becoming an Emotionally Intelligent Teacher*. London: Corwin.

A valuable practical guide to increasing affective skills and improving relationships in the classroom:

'While teachers do not have absolute control over the emotional weather of the classroom, they have a powerful influence over the affective climate. More often than not, their verbal and nonverbal behaviours and their displays of emotion, dispositions and moods can have powerful effects upon their students. The emotions that teachers display - both consciously and unconsciously - can significantly enhance or inhibit student learning.'

Rodenburg, P. (2009) *Presence: How to Use Positive Energy for Success in Every Situation*. London: Penguin.

Rodenberg's idea of 1st, 2nd and 3rd circles of presence and interaction is particularly helpful for teachers (as well as her normal target audience: actors).

