

# Chapter 30

## MBS Growth: Effects on Students and Teacher Strategies

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Effective teaching can stem from practices and ideas such as attitude towards subject matter, as from being taught ways to understand and practice mindfulness in order to become aware and improve one's attitude. Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience. Research has shown that mindfulness is an important predictor of wellbeing, more positive affect, less negative affect, greater life satisfaction, as well as higher levels of self-esteem and authenticity. People everywhere in the world are suffering from mental and emotional stress, physical pain, disease, obesity, and suffering seem to begin at younger ages. A human body's balance is based on the role of mindfulness in connecting together these three elements, mind-body-soul (MBS). This chapter presents and discusses MBS work with the Elementary School students in Physical Education classes.*

*"Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment." ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005)*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that mindfulness is an important predictor of wellbeing as well as the medium which creates higher levels of self-esteem and authenticity (Thompson & Waltz, 2007). In a world full of distraction, a focus on materialism, and most of our lives going digital, it is easy to get disconnected. We are at risk of detaching from ourselves, our family, and the environment that surrounds us. How do we reconnect? What if our kids used their precious time learning how to listen to their minds, interpret the signals from their bodies, and make sense of their emotions? From here, their quality of life can be improved.

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Mindfulness is not a magical state of mind (Karatopouzi, 2018a; 2018b). It's a natural human ability to inhabit one's body, mind, and experience with opponency and receptivity. It's paying attention on purpose. When we pay attention on purpose, we're able to see beyond fear, anger, jealousy, and shift into a desire for things to be different. Mindfulness can help decrease stress and anxiety. It can strengthen resilience and emotional regulation as well as increase attention, improve critical thinking and deepen compassion. The roots of stress lie deep within our nervous system. In physical education we provide supportive tools to help students calm their nervous system, focus their attention, work with their emotions, and cultivate open and curious minds. In the end, we want students to develop a stronger capacity of self-care, self-compassion, and self-reliance.

## **THE MIND-BODY-SOUL (MBS) PROGRAM**

I first developed the Mind-Body-Soul (MBS) program in 2017. In the early days, students were forced out of their comfort zone. Never before had they learned how to be aware of their actions, movements, thinking, and feeling in a physical education class. Quickly, students became engaged. They excitedly anticipated the sun and silent circles where they could share their emotional updates, physical discomforts, or mental challenges. During the lessons, they soon understood that being mindful and answering the 8 questions made them feel more secure in their physical movement and not only enjoyed the lesson more but built up their self-esteem.

There are a few key features to my Mind-Body-Soul program and teaching philosophy/methodology:

1. Using mindfulness tools according to the needs of the class. To maintain student interest, I rarely use the same approach toward raising student awareness.
2. The priority is students to act the way they feel and approach mindfulness in a self-created way rather than imitating something their teacher says or a video show.
3. Avoiding to show videos of other students practicing mindfulness.
4. Explaining to students prior to an exercise why they practice this exercise and what they need to pay attention to.
5. Not all students feel comfortable closing their eyes, lying down to relax, or breathing in front of others. Offer alternatives such as sitting cross-legged instead of lying down or focusing on one thing in the room rather than closing their eyes.
6. Connecting all mindfulness tools and exercises with student's everyday life, their achievements and goals. Personalized mindfulness prompts a willingness to improve themselves.
7. Relating their daily or regular routine with the awareness routines they are building. These tools can be used anytime and anywhere.

Mindfulness teaching goes beyond ordinary teaching paradigms. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to approach our students with, and instill in them, wonder and the desire to innovate. An educator's influence is powerful. We have responsibilities to create interdisciplinary lessons and classrooms. For physical education, this means connecting a healthy body with an aware mind, and a clear soul. We are educating the future leaders of our world. This generation must be aware of their actions. In order to achieve their goals and holistically thrive, they will need to be able to rely on their

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