

A Firm Foundation for Mental Health: An Ongoing Series

Daily Meditation at the Country School

By Holly Novick



“Mindfulness” can be a popular buzzword, often associated with sparkling advice surrounding the importance of self-care. In grocery store aisles and in online news feeds, headlines and articles

are emblazoned with tips and advice as to how one can keep their head above water and reduce anxiety. Indeed, we can use all the help we can muster to manage our laundry list of tasks and to meet the expectations we place on ourselves - regardless of how fair or realistic those might be.

However, in today’s ever-increasing pace of life, mindfulness needn’t only be put into practice at times when life becomes most stressful, but should be applied through daily intentional practice.

As the idea of mindfulness becomes more fashionable, many misconceptions surrounding its practices have arisen, including the false notion that it is a tool best suited for adults. At The Country School, we know this is not the case. In fact, we believe children can benefit the most from gaining self-awareness as we seek to raise them in a digital age that is riddled with unprecedented stresses and challenges. For decades, TCS has recognized the benefits of grounded meditation and guided mindfulness through pioneering daily practice. This is all to say that at TCS, mindfulness is not and has never been a here-today, gone-tomorrow fad, but rather an integral facet of our culture and curriculum.



Humans are wonderfully complex, messy creatures, striving for stability through routines and pattern-seeking behavior. We hunger for

knowledge, thirst for detail, and seek connection with others. However, achieving genuine connection and satisfaction in today's instant-gratification culture can prove challenging. As well-intentioned people trying to navigate contemporary societal and economic pressures, it is easy to feel that we are most worthy of attention and affection when we are performing at our highest capacity, accruing accolades and material goods as proof of our accomplishments.

Today's social media has only amplified this pressure to embody perfection and to accomplish the next "big thing". However, lost in this endless pursuit is the appreciation for the mess itself. Our minds are richly varied and creative spaces, capable of astonishing feats of insight and creativity, and we need moments of quiet refuge to balance the furious activity in our daily lives. In a world where it seems there's "always something," we can all benefit from embracing nothingness and re-centering ourselves on a regular basis.

Meditation is the absence of bustle, the opposite of the need to produce, and appreciation of the glorious jumble that is our consciousness. Mindfulness in turn is the ability to move from meditation to the business of life and back again with full awareness of the process. It's about intentional doing, and intentional resting. By cultivating mindfulness, we can become

fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly focused or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. There are three simple, central components of mindfulness:

- Intention - choosing to cultivate your awareness
- Attention - to the present moment, sensations, and thoughts
- Attitude - being kind, curious, and non-judgmental

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At TCS, we believe the sooner students learn these tools the better, which is why we begin each day with meditation in every classroom. Our meditation practices are varied to suit the age of our students. Outside research coupled with our own 75-year experience has taught us that meditation has profound benefits for even the youngest of children, including but not limited to:

- **Improving cognitive functioning** — for deeper learning and greater engagement in the classroom.
- **Developing emotional regulation** — skills to assist our students in their interpersonal relationships with peers.
- **Enhancing the mind-body connection** — thereby lowering stress and anxiety and improving confidence and self-esteem.
- **Building a healthy habit of peaceful, self-acceptance** — reducing unhealthy comparisons with peers and increasing individual self-worth.

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between students, and increasingly deep rapport in interactions with teachers and support staff.

We encourage you to talk with your student about the meditation they practice daily at school and how they feel this affects their lives on campus. If you would like to explore meditation at home with your kids, here are some tools you may find helpful:

- Preschool and Early Elementary: [PeaceOut Guided Relaxation Meditations](#)
- Upper Elementary: [Mightier Meditation Tool](#)
- Middle School: [Calm](#) or [Headspace](#) Apps

To learn more about the benefits of teaching and practicing meditation and mindfulness at TCS, please explore these resources:

- ["Benefits of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention upon School Entry: A Pilot Study"](#) National Library of Medicine
- ["Just Breathe: The Important of Meditation Breaks for Kids from Healthy Children"](#) HealthyChildren.org
- ["Making Time for Mindfulness"](#) Harvard Graduate School of Education
- [Mindfulness for Kids from Mindful](#)
- ["The Power of Mindfulness from ChildMind"](#) Child Mind Institute
- ["What Is Mindfulness? Why It Can Be Helpful for Children"](#) Mayo Clinic Press