

Frequently Asked Questions about Mindfulness

1. **What is mindfulness?** Mindfulness means paying attention in the present moment to our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, or surrounding environment. For the sake of simplicity, we can define it as noticing what's happening right now in an open, balanced and curious way. It also includes intentionally nurturing positive states of mind such as empathy and kindness.
2. **What are the benefits of mindfulness with youth?** Scientific studies find that mindfulness improves young people's attention, emotion regulation, behavior in school, social skills, empathy, test anxiety and stress, among other benefits. For more information, visit www.mindfulschools.org/research.
3. **Can mindfulness help improve academic performance or behavior issues?** Both quantitative and qualitative research indicate that mindfulness helps give students the mental and emotional skills needed to improve learning readiness, attentional stability, prosocial behavior, impulse control and emotional regulation. In turn, these changes can support improved academic performance and behavior.
4. **Is mindfulness religious?** No, Mindful Schools and other mindfulness in education approaches are completely secular, and are based upon decades of work and research applying mindfulness to the medical and mental health fields. Youth learn awareness, self-regulation, and social-emotional skills. [Click here](#) to read more about secularity.
5. **Is mindfulness about getting rid of thoughts?** No, it's natural to have thoughts and better not to repress them. Mindfulness gives us the ability to be aware of our thoughts, to step back and evaluate whether our thoughts are true or helpful, and redirect our attention when we realize we are caught up in ruminating.
6. **How is mindfulness taught with youth?** The Mindful Schools curriculum provides 16 sessions of mindfulness training, plus additional lessons and short daily practices. The classroom teacher (or trained mindfulness instructor) will instruct youth in brief mindfulness lessons, ranging from 5 to 15 minutes, one to three times per week. Teachers and youth continue short mindfulness practices on their own once the program is complete. Students learn to apply mindfulness to all daily experiences. Lessons include:

- Mindful listening
- Mindful breathing
- Mindful movement
- Mindfulness of thoughts
- Mindfulness of emotions
- Mindful test-taking
- Cultivation of positive states like kindness, generosity and gratitude

7. **Is mindfulness a replacement for Social-Emotional Learning?** Mindfulness is not a replacement for social-emotional learning (SEL), but it is an important complement. The practices, skills and outcomes of both mindfulness and SEL are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Mindfulness teaches youth to pause and self-regulate, allowing them to respond with their social-emotional skills rather than react impulsively. The Mindful Schools curriculum includes SEL, so it can be taught alone or combined with a more intensive SEL curriculum. [Click here](#) to read more about integrating mindfulness and SEL programming.

8. **What kind of training did the mindfulness instructor receive?** The Mindful Schools approach requires all instructors to first learn mindfulness practice themselves, whether through Mindful Schools' courses or an approved alternative training. Instructors then take a [6-week online course](#) in which they learn to bring mindfulness into their work with youth and teach the Mindful Schools curriculum.