Mindfulness: A Non-Clinical Approach to Wellbeing

Carolyn Camacho, Program Director, Identity
Tiziana DiFabio, Mental Health Therapist, Identity
Barbra Lewis Green, Mindfulness & Restorative Practices Facilitator
Identity

- Founded in 1998, **Identity** is a community-based organization with headquarters in Montgomery County, MD.

- Works with other organizations who share our common mission to provide opportunities for youth to believe in themselves and realize their full potential.

- Provide trauma and healing informed social, emotional and support services to vulnerable youth and families at three, School-Based Health and Wellness Centers and two Youth Opportunity Centers in Montgomery County.
Our Wellness Center Programs

• Served over 1,300 youth in FY17

All programs are based on the Positive Youth Development Model (PYD):

PYD works to:

- Increase protective factors
  - Self-esteem
  - Conflict resolution
  - Self-efficacy levels – i.e.

- Help reduce risk factors
  - Substance abuse
  - Involvement in delinquent activities
  - School disconnection
Reflection…

- What trends do we see among the youth that we serve?
- What concerns do you have about the wellbeing of the youth we serve?
Identity’s Mindfulness Initiative: Goals

- Promote awareness and self-care to improve wellbeing
- Teach valuable coping and life skills including social/emotional learning, conflict resolution, communication, mindfulness
- Help students channel stress and learn to reduce their own stress levels
- Cultivate ability to make healthy choices
- Utilize restorative practices to build relationships
- Provide opportunities for youth and school staff to connect
- Reinforce the importance of strong support systems for health and wellbeing
What Is Mindfulness?

“What paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

“Present-moment awareness, an open and friendly willingness to understand what is going on in and around you.”

Eline Snel
What Mindfulness Isn’t

- ... a disciplinary tactic
- ... only calmness and happiness
- ... a magic pill for everything that ails
- ... the absence of thought
- ... religious
History of mindfulness practice and research

Mindfulness can be traced back thousands of years to ancient practices and traditions.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) have 30+ years of research & development behind them beginning with the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction)

• First Frontier – Healthcare (MBSR)
• Second Frontier – Mental Health (MBCT)
• Third Frontier – Education
Benefits of Mindfulness

Supported by 30+ years of research and current neuroscience among adults, and a growing literature with youth.

**Cognitive Outcomes**
Better **focus** and **concentration**

**Social-emotional Skills**
Improved **self regulation** as well as **compassionate** attitudes and behavior

**Well Being**
Decreased **stress**, **anxiety**, and **depression**
Research finds benefits for educators randomly assigned to mindfulness training

- Demonstrated reduced stress and burnout
- Reported greater efficacy in doing their jobs
- Had more emotionally supportive and better organized classrooms (based on independent observations)

- Mindfulness Practice
- Emotion Regulation
- Attentional Control
- Self-Awareness
- Beneficial Outcomes
Milestones of Mindfulness at Wheaton HS

Jan to May 2017

Lunch detention total # of students
76 students exposed to Mindfulness

Principals Mindfulness Forum
About 40 staff, students and parents attended

Lunch detention repeat # of students
21 attended 2 times
2 attended 3 or more times

Mindfulness Mondays
Between 3 to 7 students regularly attended
Wellness Center Focus Group
“Mindfulness at Lunch Detention” Wheaton High School Evaluation Report, June 2017. 11 participants

In learning about mindfulness, what mattered most to you?

✓ “My actions and how it would affect me in the long run”
✓ “Being calm”
✓ “Taking time to control myself”
✓ “Listening before acting”
✓ “Stress relieving”

Which best describes you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)</th>
<th>African American/Black</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
<th>African Origin</th>
<th>Other/No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wellness Center Focus Group
“Mindfulness at Lunch Detention” Wheaton High School Evaluation Report, June 2017. 20 participants

In learning about mindfulness, what mattered most to you?

✓ “How to relax and stay calm ”
✓ “Not being stress ”
✓ “Think before you say something ”
✓ “Help me to study more ”
✓ “The relaxation and the time for quietness”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attended one session of lunch time detention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which best describes you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mindfulness during lunch detention June, 2017. 20 participants

1. I learned something about mindfulness during lunch time detention
2. I left lunch time detention with at least one idea that might help me
3. I have practiced some mindfulness since learning about it
4. I believe that mindfulness might be able to help me with stress or the choices I am making
5. I would like to learn more about mindfulness
6. I learned something about the Wellness Center during lunch time detention
Milestones of Mindfulness at Gaithersburg HS

**GHS Trojan Experience**
- 88 rising 9th graders exposed to Mindfulness & Yoga during week-long summer program

**Biweekly mindfulness practice for students**
- Started October 17th
- 25 core students; up to 10-12/session

**Mindfulness in classrooms**
- 24 students, 16 sessions, 10-15 min/wk
- Special Ed resource class; 1 class period/wk; 21 students

**Intro to Mindfulness for Teachers**
- 34 teachers attend at GHS
- 17 teachers attend at WHS

**Regular mindfulness practice for teachers**
- Five, one hour sessions on half day

**Conflict resolution circles w/mindfulness**
### What teachers are saying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions from “Introduction to mindfulness” - Evaluation</th>
<th>GHS Teachers (N:33)</th>
<th>WHS Teachers (N:17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you interested in learning more about mindfulness?</td>
<td>97% said Yes</td>
<td>100% said Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you be interested in meeting with peers to build and support your own mindfulness and/or meditation practice?</td>
<td>88% said Yes</td>
<td>82% said Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like help introducing mindfulness to your students and establishing simple (&amp; short) mindfulness routines in your classroom?</td>
<td>82% Said Yes</td>
<td>82% Said Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you support further mindfulness initiatives for staff and students?</td>
<td>97% Said Yes</td>
<td>94% Said Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What teachers are saying

“It was always beneficial to me personally to start off every Monday with some mindfulness. It helped prepare me mentally and emotionally for class and for the rest of my week.”

“With more time it would have also been great to have students write/reflect more and share this out.”

“I personally benefited from the mindfulness sessions as I reminded myself to take deep breaths especially when interacting with challenging students, to journal to reflect on my days and remember what I am grateful for.”
What students are saying

“The main thing I learned is taking deep breaths is a good way to help in stressful situations.”

“I feel more calm and aware about my surroundings.”

“Mindfulness helped me in school to take a minute, and relax and think stuff through.”

“I would most definitely recommend mindfulness because as you grow up you deal with a lot of things and sometimes you just need a break.”
Practicing Mindfulness
Where do we go from here?

Please share a reflection, learning and/or question
Mindfulness Resources

The Movement of Meditation Replacing Detention in Schools.- Newsweek
http://www.newsweek.com/education-meditation-after-school-program-holistic-life-504747

Why breathing and movement exercises – and quiet time – belong in the classroom.