

The Laurel Hill School

MINDFULNESS

AT

LAUREL HILL



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“It helps me when I feel crazy.”

“It helps me to be relaxed and focused.”

“It clears my head, reduces my stress.”



“I feel happy!” said a barely 5 year old kindergartener. Another child in the same class thought about it all and added, “I’m glad, too. It made me feel better.” A second grader reflecting on the very same “It” agreed. He said, “Sure helps me when I feel crazy. Gets me to be relaxed and focused.” A fourth grade student toned in, “It clears my head, reduces my stress, and helps me concentrate on my work.” “Why”, said a middle school child, “it even helps me to not get upset when my little sister does something awful. I just do it and I then know that things are not as bad as I thought.”

How Laurel Hillers Energize Their Day Without “Burn-Out”

What is this fantastic “It” that Laurel Hillers say relaxes, calms, makes the whole body feel refreshed and peaceful, increases enthusiasm, reduces clutter, and even raises confidence? Is it something exotic, something costly, or something attainable only through extraordinary means? Well, here are all the tools you need to begin crafting your very own “It” at home: some play dough, a squishy rubber duck or other squeezable friend, a melodic chime of any shape, and perhaps a feather and some soft sweet scents, if you are so inclined. You will be applying your tools in activities such as, Rainbow Breathing, Ocean Breath, Breathing Anchor, Play Dough Stress-Out, Rockabye Ducky, and more. Or forget the tools and even the ‘games’. Innovate with light, breath, movement, and pleasing thoughts. And then you will soon experience *Mindfulness* - the “It” that has given so much to our boys and girls every day at Laurel Hill.



Pick your favorite squishy owl... place it on your tummy... rock your owl to sleep

Mindfulness Throughout The Day

It's a time to declare high value to critical but elusive achievements that are usually not recognized, measured or awarded in most schools. And it's fun! Just take a look. Here's one example of a mindfulness exercise in Ms. Bond's 3rd grade class with student comments to follow.



"I HEARD BIRDS CHIRPING"

“Okay boys and girls,” Ms. Bond begins. “Pick your favorite squishy owl, stretch out with your back to the carpet, and place your owl on your tummy. Close your eyes if you like and let's begin to slowly take deep breaths together. Feel your owl friend go up and down with each breath - careful that owl doesn't fall.

Now rock your owl to sleep. Rise now and take a deep, deep breath. Stretch out your arms and legs. And take a deep breath again. How do you feel?” Some student remarks: “Makes me feel happy! I heard birds chirping. I heard nature all around me. Helps me with hard times. It unstressed my heart. My body feels refreshed. I feel focused.” And I say, “Wow!”



Mindfulness at Laurel Hill happens throughout the day. Kindergarten to fifth grade practices before reading and mathematics sessions and at the start of each visit to a specialist. Middle school students do mindfulness exercises at the beginning of each subject period. We are finding more and more that our children continue to practice at home, and report utilizing mindfulness exercises when in a stressful situation - during oral surgery, distracting noises or activities, studying for tests, and sibling conflicts are examples.

Here is some interesting research that validates the efficacy of Mindfulness in several non-obvious ways . . .

(The) body of scientific research illustrating the positive effects of mindfulness training on mental health and well-being—at the level of the brain as well as at the level of behavior—grows steadily more well-established: It improves attention, reduces stress, and results in better emotional regulation and an improved capacity for compassion and empathy. Brain-imaging studies at Harvard and Mass General Hospital have shown that long-term mindfulness training can help thicken the cortical regions related to attention and sensory processing, and may offset thinning of those areas that typically comes with aging. Mindfulness is widely considered effective in psychotherapy as a treatment not just for adults, but also for children and adolescents with aggression, ADHD, or mental-health problems like anxiety.

*Education reformers have long maintained that there is a fundamental connection between emotional imbalance and poor life prospects. As Paul Tough argued and popularized in *How Children Succeed*, stress early in life can prompt a cascade of negative effects, psychologically and neurologically—poor self-control and underdeveloped executive function, in particular. The U.S. education system’s focus on cognitive intelligence—IQ scores and academic skills like arithmetic—undermines the development of equally vital forms of non-cognitive intelligence. This type of intelligence entails dimensions of the mind that are difficult to quantify: It is the foundation of good character, resilience, and long-term life fulfillment. It is this part of the mind that mindfulness seeks to address.*

_____When Mindfulness Meets The Classroom, The Atlantic Magazine, August 31, 2015

We invite you to join in the pleasure! We are sure your child can help you get started. But just to give you further aid, go to this website for fun exercises: <http://annakaharris.com/mindfulness-for-children/>. Please let us know what you discover.

We'll keep you informed of our progress in mindfulness. And certainly we look forward to sharing your stories, insights, and discoveries as you undertake your journey to more mindful living.



Please find the time to drop-in and say, "Hello!" School is such an invigorating and happy place. Your visit will end in a sunny smile that lasts and lasts!

Warm regards,

Robert & Helen Stark

Yosefa Klein-Karchmar