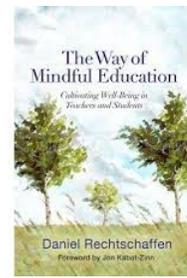


St. Mark School
March 9, 2017
Mindfulness



"You can't stop the waves but you can learn how to surf." -Jon Kabat-Zinn

Appreciations

Thank you Mrs. Spatola for sharing student work with me :)

Thank you Ms. Paulson for our conversations about student needs.

Thank you Mrs. Donaldson for initiating a 3 minute mindful breathing experience!

Attention Lessons

So often we tell students to pay attention, however, we don't teach them how to pay attention. To excel at reading, writing, math, science, art, music, dance, sports...the ability to pay attention is key. Instead of being controlled by our distracted thoughts, the mindful attention practices help harness the mind. Once the mind is focused, it works with our still and balanced awareness. When students don't know how to pay attention or how to regulate their emotions, they fall into distracting behavior, often from frustration.

Anchor Breath

Anchor breathing is a core lesson in mindfulness practice. It is called the anchor breath because the breath can be an anchor, a home base, to which we can return at any time. When the waves of life come, there is a stillness at the bottom of the ocean. Our anchor breath can be our connection to that calm inside our bodies.

The breath is a biological function that is both conscious and unconscious. We don't need to think about breathing. If we want to, however, we can consciously control our breath.

We started by talking about attention.

Have you noticed that sometimes it's hard to pay attention? Like when you're listening to a teacher or playing a game outside? Our minds are thinking all of the time. It's easy to get distracted.

The practices we will explore will strengthen our attention muscles. One way to strengthen our attention muscles is by practicing the anchor breath.

We can use our anchor breath like the anchor to a ship. The anchor is what keeps the ship grounded so the ship doesn't blow away. If a storm comes, the wind and waves may blow the ship around, but the anchor is still underneath the waves.

Sometimes waves of emotion come over us...sad, mad, scared. When these waves of emotion come, we can remember our anchor breath and take a few breaths to help calm our mind and our body.

Make waves with your hands and swoop them down to your belly. Close your eyes and breathe in and out. Notice what your belly is doing as you breathe in and out. What did you notice?

TK

"My belly was twitching, my belly was wiggling, my belly was moving in and out"

K

"Calm, it felt good, my eyes were open but it felt like they were closed, all the thoughts were starting to slow down, my belly was going in and out"

1st

"Breathing slowly, feeling calm, when I breathe in my belly is facing in and when I breathe out my belly is facing out, going in and out slowly and peacefully"

2nd

"Darkness, my head was moving, I feel sleepy, my belly was moving in and out"

3rd

"Calm, earth stood still, time stopped, my belly was moving in and out, my stomach moved more when we did it as a group and less when we did it on our own"

4th

"Stomach expanding, breath in and out of my nose, I feel tired, I noticed I was thinking of a tsunami"

*the practice is noticing when your mind wanders and gently bringing it back to the breath

5th

"Calm, like I was floating, I feel tired, I felt the air move into my nose into my sinuses and into my chest, I noticed my mind got distracted and started thinking about other things"

6th

"I noticed when I breathe in my belly goes out, after you turned your voice off I heard your voice in my mind and it helped, I noticed how sleep deprived I am, I noticed my breathing is shallow, I was falling asleep, I was thinking about the basketball game, it felt like I was floating on a raft...it felt really nice, when I breathe in I feel it in my lungs"

Isn't that amazing that when we breathe in and out, our bellies move in and out? So the next time you feel a wave of emotion like feeling sad, mad, scared...remember your anchor breath. Your anchor breath can help calm your mind and your body.

Next week, we are going to practice mindful listening by being aware of the sounds that are all around us.

With gratitude,
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