

EVALUATION REPORT

Plugged Into Mindfulness

Breathwork & Mindfulness Training

Provided to:

Seneca Valley School District

Prepared for:

***Healthy Body – Peaceful
Soul, Inc.***



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healthy body, peaceful soul

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Background

Healthy Body – Peaceful Soul Inc. (HBPS), provided a series of training sessions to school personnel employed by the Seneca Valley School District. The *Plugged Into Mindfulness (PIM)* training was voluntary and focused on teaching mindfulness and breathing exercises that might be used to reduce personal stress and minimize “burnout” as well as provide the participating teachers and administrators with techniques they might use with students. An eleven-session course was provided between November 5, 2019 and April 7, 2020. The course outline is provided for reference in Appendix A. Most sessions were provided in a group setting at the school; however, due to school closures and social distancing restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic, the last 2 sessions were provided online. The course was sponsored by the Butler County Drug and Alcohol Program.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator and was designed to assess the degree to which participants in the program increase their understanding of the concepts and practice of mindfulness as a result of the training. Additional information was also secured from the participants that can inform any future training sessions with similar groups. A pre-test – post-test design was used to collect evaluative data. Participants completed an on-line pre-test survey at the beginning of the eleven-session course and then completed the post-test survey after completion of all sessions. A Likert type scale was used to provide a quantitative measure of participant responses to statements. Eleven statements included in both the pre-test survey and post-test survey were scored on a scale from 1 to 5 with a value of 5 assigned to the most desired response and 1 assigned to the least desired response. The quantification of the responses allows for both a pre-post item analysis of change in responses as well as a statistical test¹ to determine the significance of any increase in scores observed in the post test as compared to the pre-test.

30 pre-test surveys were completed; however, only 22 post-test surveys were completed. Participant birthdates were used to match each pre-test and post-test pair to assure that the evaluation was based on the participants who completed both the pre-test and post-test. After cleaning the data there were 22 matched pairs of pre-test and post-test data. The average number of sessions attended by participants was 9.9 or 90.0% of the total sessions provided.

The data secured through the pre-test and post-test surveys was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In order to gain additional insight into how the course participants’ benefit from the “*Plugged Into Mindfulness*” course, information was secured from participants through the post-test survey about how the mindfulness training contributed to their personal and professional growth. This qualitative data is discussed under the sub-heading “Additional Findings”.

¹ A paired sample t-test was used to determine the level of statistical significance in the means of the pre and post test samples.

Evaluation Findings

Difference in Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

When the 22 matched pairs of pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed all 22 participants scored higher on the post-test than they did on the pre-test. The maximum possible score on the 11 items included in the pre-test, post-test analysis is 55 (*11 items X rating score of 5*). The 22 participants who completed both the pre-test and the post-test had an average total score on the pre-test of 39.4, and these participants had an average post-test score of 46.2. Thus, on average, participants completing both the pre-test and the post-test increased their score by 6.8 points – a 17.3% increase.

There was a 17.3% increase in the average post test score of the Plugged Into Mindfulness participants when compared to the average pre-test score.

In order to confirm the statistical significance of the increase in post-test scores (i.e. difference not due to chance) and the level of such significance, a t-test was completed comparing the pre-test and post-test means. Results of the statistical analysis confirms the increase in post-test scores is significant at greater than the .001 level. The probability that the increase is due to chance is, therefore, less than one-tenth of one percent.

The increase in knowledge and self-efficacy of participants is significant at a statistical probability level exceeding 0.001.

We can be extremely confident that the “*Plugged Into Mindfulness*” course increases self-efficacy² of participants as measured by the 11 items assessed. Results of the paired two-sample statistical analysis of means is included in Appendix B.

Item Analysis and Discussion

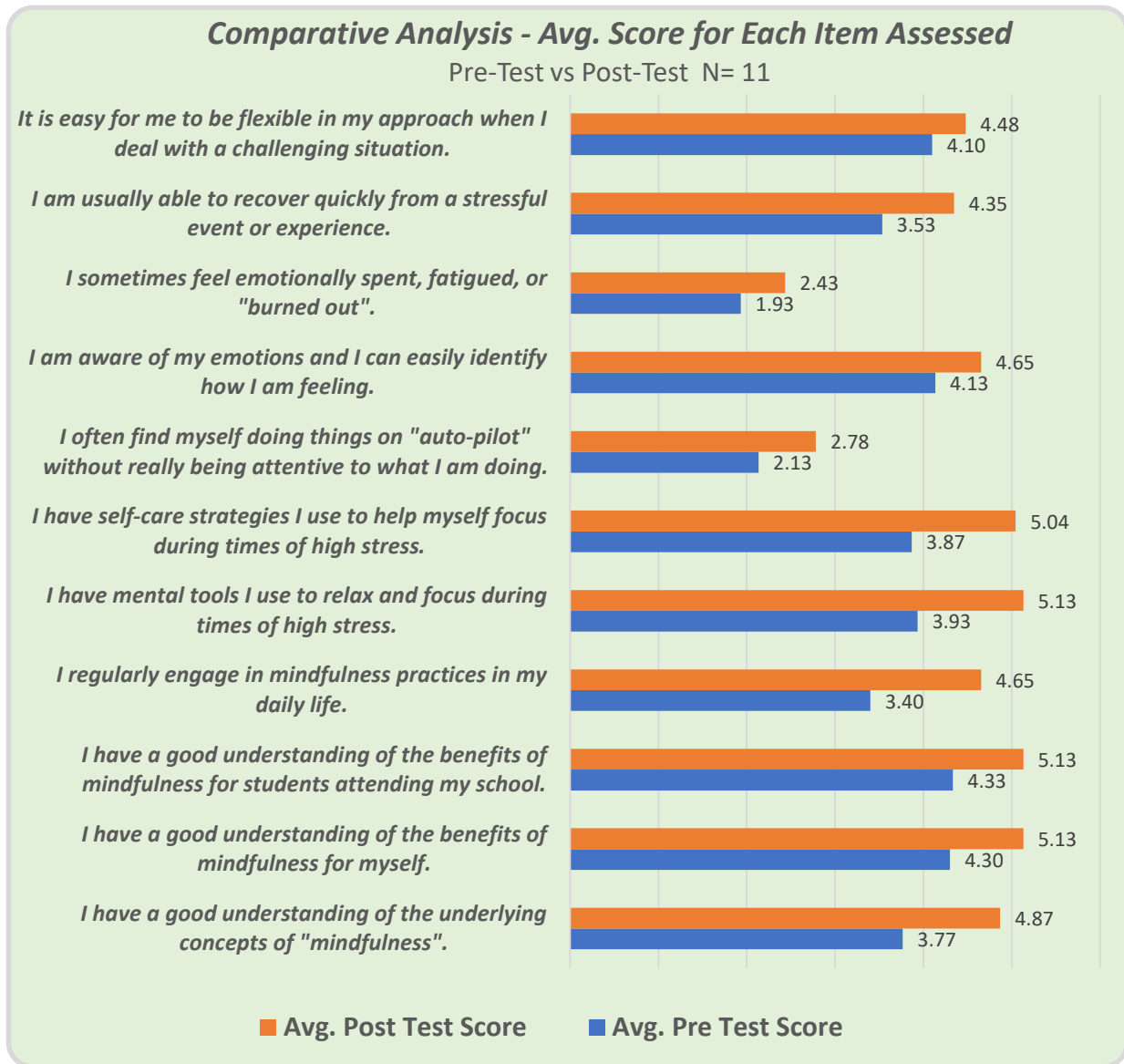
Examination of the differences in how participants rated the individual items included in the pre-post analysis provides additional information about which items are more or less impacted by the mindfulness training.

One measure of change is the increase in average raw score on the post-test as compared to the pre-test. When the average raw score of the 22 participants included in the evaluation cohort on the pre-test is compared to the average raw score on the post-test, all 11 items assessed were rated higher on the post test.

Chart 1 summarizes the change in the average raw score for each test item.

² For purposes of the evaluation “participant self-efficacy” is defined as the extent participants believe mindfulness concepts and practices improve their well-being and ability to effectively manage life and work situations.

Chart 1



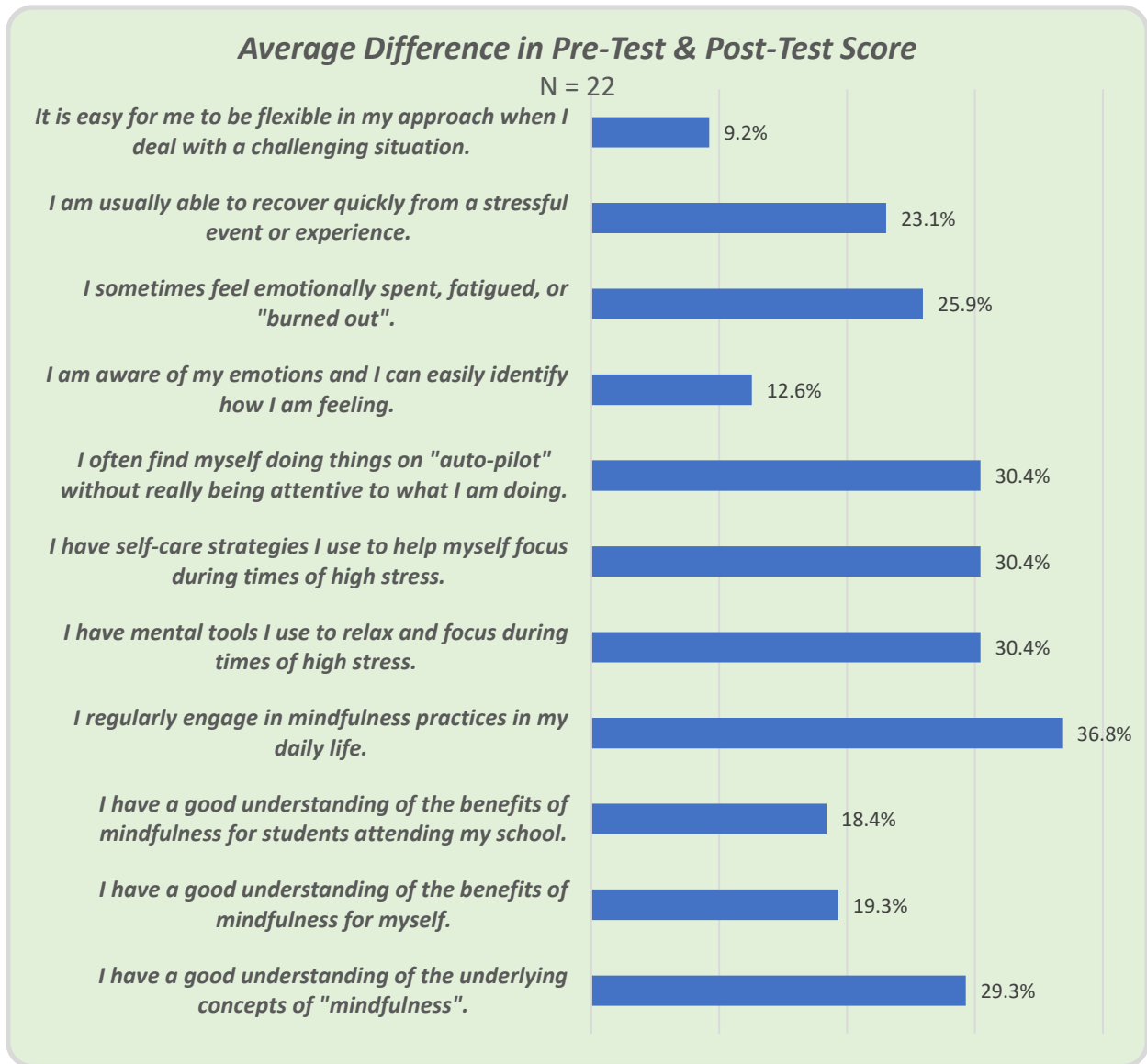
The extent to which participants in the “*Plugged Into Mindfulness*” training increase their raw score on the post-test as compared to the pre-test is determined in part by the degree to which they are familiar with and practice mindfulness techniques prior to participating in the eleven session course. When the pre-test rating is relatively high for a test item there is less opportunity to increase that rating (raw score) on the post-test. Given this, the percentage of increase (difference in pre-test and post-test score divided by pre-test score) is the best metric to assess change in each of the test items included in the assessment. This metric is more informative than the actual increase in the raw score of the post-test over the pre-test.

The percentage increase in raw score ranged from 9.2% to 36.8% (see chart 2). The most notable increases were observed in items related to practicing techniques taught through the *PIM* training and understanding mindfulness concepts. A 36.8% increase was observed in how participants

scored the statement “*I regularly engage in mindfulness practices in my daily life*”. The participants also were more likely to agree with the statement: “*I have self-care strategies I use to help myself focus during times of high stress*”, “*I have mental tools I use to relax and focus during times of high stress*”, and “*I have a good understanding of the underlying concepts of mindfulness*”.

A summary of the change in raw score is provided below (Chart 2) for each of the 11 test items.

Chart 2



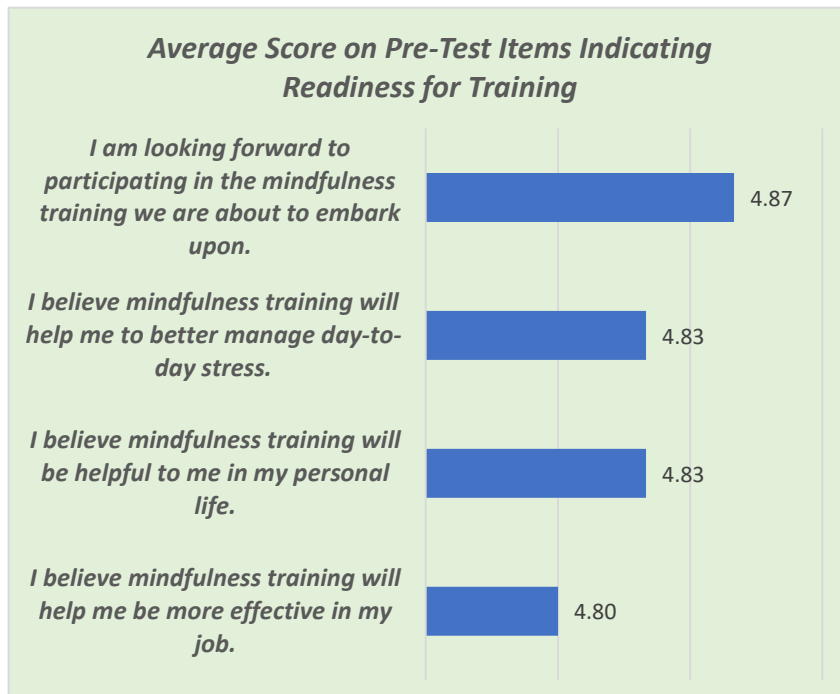
It is also notable that the participants in the Seneca Valley course indicated they were less likely to feel “emotionally spent or burned out”, and less likely to feel like they were on “auto pilot” when they completed the post test.

Additional Findings from the Pre and Post Surveys

Participants in the *PIM* training were asked to what extent they agreed with several statements prior to beginning the training that were designed to assess their attitudes about the training and readiness to engage in the *PIM* sessions. These statements included:

- I believe mindfulness training will help me be more effective in my job.
- I believe mindfulness training will be helpful to me in my personal life.
- I believe mindfulness training will help me to better manage day-to-day stress.
- I am looking forward to participating in the mindfulness training we are about to embark upon.

Chart 3



All participants completing the pre-test either agreed or strongly agreed with each of these statements indicating a predisposition among the educators that the training would be beneficial to them and that they were looking forward to the *PIM* sessions.

Chart 3 summarizes the average score for all participants completing the pre-test survey for each of the 4 statements.

At the conclusion of the mindfulness training course,

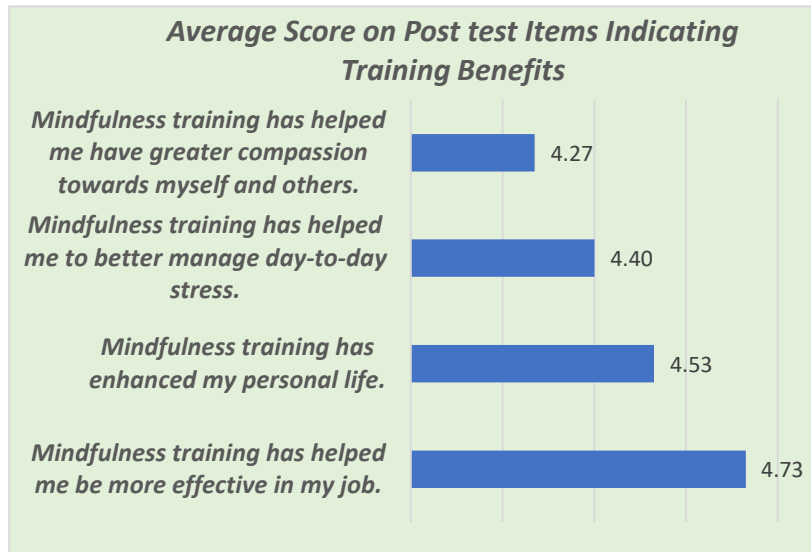
the education professionals who participated in the *PIM* training were asked to rate their level agreement with statements about how the training sessions had benefitted them and how they thought the training would impact their personal and professional life.

These statements include:

- Mindfulness training has helped me be more effective in my job.
- Mindfulness training has enhanced my personal life.
- Mindfulness training has helped me to better manage day-to-day stress.
- Mindfulness training has helped me have greater compassion towards myself and others.

Chart 4

Chart 4 summarizes the average score for all participants completing the post-test survey for each of the statements related to perceived benefits from the PIM course. Nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed with these statements after the training sessions had been completed.

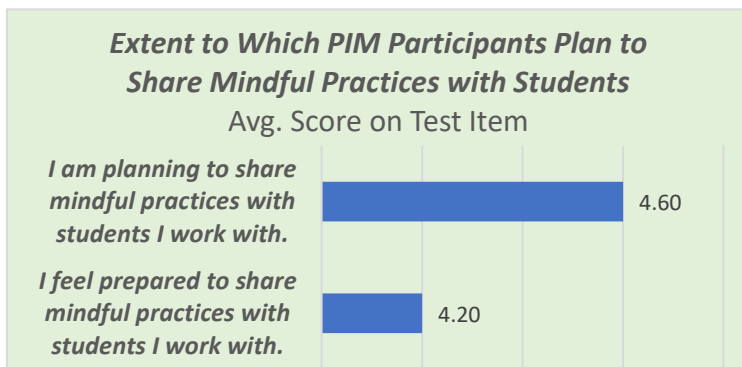


The post-test survey also included statements to assess to what degree the education professionals believe they are prepared to share what they had

learned with their students, and their intent to share these practices. These statements included:

- I feel prepared to share mindful practices with students I work with.
- I am planning to share mindful practices with students I work with.

Chart 5



13 of the education professionals strongly agreed that they felt prepared to share mindful practices with their students and an additional 9 agreed with the statement. Thus, 91.6% of the 24 people completing the post-test survey indicated they felt prepared to share what they had learned with students.

All (100%) of the education professionals indicated they planned to share the practices they had learned with their students.

Participants were also asked if they had any suggestions about how the mindfulness training might be improved in the future. These comments are listed verbatim in Appendix C.

Observations of the Instructor

The course instructor was asked to provide her observations about the course – specifically what went well with the PIM sessions and what challenges or problems may have been encountered.

The following points were identified by the instructor:

- Verbal feedback from course participants indicated people enjoyed the discussions during the face-to-face sessions.

- Sharing within the group helped the educators to better understand they had similar experiences related to stress and struggling to focus.
- The instructor received positive feedback about the book participants read during the training and using the manual as a resource.
- When the last few sessions were moved online because of the pandemic, attendance declined somewhat.
- The content of the online sessions shifted more toward ways to handle the very stressful circumstances related to school closure and online instruction.
- There was less emphasis on ways to teach and lead students in mindfulness practices than was desirable since those issues would normally have been focused on during the final few sessions that were moved online.

Conclusions

- ✓ The *Plugged Into Mindfulness* training increases participant understanding of the underlying concepts and personal benefits of practicing mindfulness techniques.
- ✓ The training increases the regular practice of mindfulness techniques.
- ✓ Participant self-efficacy related to belief in one's ability to enhance personal well-being and effectively manage stress experienced in life and work situations is improved through the training.
- ✓ The effectiveness of the training is confirmed through statistical analysis of pre-post scores.
- ✓ The course participants believe the training has helped them have greater compassion toward themselves and others and they believe the training will help them be "more effective" in their job and personal life.
- ✓ The PIM training course appears to have the greatest impact on issues related to understanding the underlying concepts and benefits of mindful practices and engaging in mindful practices.
- ✓ There appears to be a positive impact as measured by the difference in pre-test and post-test scores related to reduced feelings of fatigue or "burnout", self-awareness of emotions/feelings, ability to recover from stressful events, and flexibility in dealing with challenging situations.
- ✓ Nearly all participants in the training reported some level of comfort related to sharing mindful practices with students.
- ✓ All participants indicated they plan to share mindfulness concepts and practices with students.

Appendix A – Plugged Into Mindfulness Course Outline

Session 1

- Intro to Mindfulness
- Science/Neuroscience behind mindfulness practices
- Introduction to breathing practices for managing stress
- Difference between breath awareness and breathing techniques
- Deep breathing; 4:8 breath, with sound and without
- For next class, read through Mindfulness Theory section in manual and p. 47 in Kabat-Zinn; home practice homework

Session 2

- Mindfulness Theory - acceptance & non-attachment
- Body Scan
- Internal Awareness
- Discuss readings; For next class, read in Kabat-Zinn to p. 80

Session 3

- How mindfulness can help ease pain and suffering
- Direct experience and reaction chain
- Discuss Flow activities and informal practice
- SOBER breathing space
- Walking Mindfulness Meditation
- Discuss readings; for next class, read in Kabat-Zinn to p. 126

Session 4

- Internal Awareness & Planes of Contact practice
- Revisiting the practice of acceptance and non-attachment in life as mindfulness
- Positive thought practice
- Discuss readings; for next class, read in Kabat-Zinn to p. 169

Session 5

- Mountain Meditation
- Lake Meditation
- Loving Kindness meditation
- How do these help you cope with challenge?
- Discuss readings; for next class, read in Kabat-Zinn to p. 216

Session 6

- Informal Practice: reporting on home/daily practice
- Obstacles of seated practice
- Breath - movement practice
- Discuss readings; for next class, read in Kabat-Zinn to p. 270

Session 7

- Discussion of self-care practices other than mindfulness
- Mindful yoga movements
- Breath awareness
- Discuss readings; make sure you've read up through The Importance of Your Practice in manual

Session 8

- Breathwork practices
- Square, alternate nostril
- Breath awareness practice
- Internal Awareness / Planes of Contact
- Troubleshooting

Session 9

- Basics of sharing mindfulness
- SOBER breathing
- Acceptance / Non-attachment
- Practice Share time
- Read research and articles Joni emails

Session 10

- Mindfulness for Recovery outline
- Troubleshooting
- Practice Share time
- Oral Quiz on mindfulness, research, breath, science

Session 11

- Body Scan
- Practice Share time
- Q&A
- Post-Survey

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Appendix B – Statistical Test Paired Two Sample for Means

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Total Score</u>	<u>Total Score</u>	t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<u>Pre-Test</u>	<u>Post Test</u>	alpha = .001		
				<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
1	41.03	43.01			
2	31.02	43.01	Mean	3.579090909	4.201364
3	40.04	45.98	Variance	0.214208658	0.069517
4	43.01	41.03	Observations	22	22
5	46.97	52.03	Pearson Correlation	0.275276171	
6	32.01	46.97	Hypothesized Mean		
7	31.02	43.01	Difference	0	
8	39.05	44.99	df	21	
9	42.02	48.95	t Stat	-6.272213423	
10	41.03	46.97	P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000016026	
11	32.01	45.98	t Critical one-tail	3.527153669	
12	36.96	45.98	P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0000032051	
13	43.01	48.95	t Critical two-tail	3.819277164	
14	44.99	44.99			
15	44.00	41.03			
16	44.99	51.04	Reject null hypothesis of no difference in pre and post test scores.		
17	40.04	48.95			
18	34.98	45.98	Gain in scores is statistically significant at greater than 0.001 level.		
19	45.98	47.96			
20	41.03	44.99			
21	33.00	47.96			
22	37.95	46.97			

Appendix C – Open Ended Comments

Given our unique situation, I would have appreciated more time to practice class scenarios.

This program was very helpful! It helped to enhance my practice and connect with other colleagues. I appreciated Joni's willingness to do Zoom sessions also during the school closure. I would have loved a few sessions at the end focusing more on sharing this with colleagues and students, but the school closure somewhat affected that. Thanks so much, Joni!

Thank you for bringing this to the attention of our leadership. Was very nice meeting you.

I would have attended all sessions, however as a school counselor the end of the day often raises student issues that I am called to address, especially when principals are out of the building.

I understand the reason for wanting us to share our practices with our colleagues, but I felt very anxious about doing so, mainly because teachers are ironically a really hard group to teach. I think that making it optional and encouraging those who are not immediately willing to join in using a quick video showing clips of people's testimony at a building level meeting or an in service would go a lot further than trying to keep their attention for 30+ minutes on a day they are mentally distracted with planning and preparations for teaching. Keeping it short will prevent it from feeling like a lecture and more like an "invitation" in my mind. It was a challenge for those of us who wanted to learn to let go of distractions for even just a 10-minute practice at first. Those who are already resistant to the idea might be further aggravated by seeing it as something they are being forced to do for an extended time that they could be using to do something they feel is necessary and productive. If they felt like it was just a quick showcase of something you might "elect" to try out, maybe they would be more willing to do so.

Possibly a different time frame. Into January/February, it became harder to get away from school before the school day was done.

I currently work with 2nd graders and have taught mindfulness to 1st-4th graders in the past. Many of the strategies we worked on in our sessions were better suited for older students/adults. (Which I totally understand since we as adults need to have a daily practice and understanding first before we can support others.) However, I would have loved to have a little more practice on teaching mindfulness to primary students since that is the age group that has been most challenging for me to teach on the past. Thank you for all of your time and wonderful expertise! I love this group!

I think the program was well done. I liked that it was after school - when we needed to take that deep breath and learn to "tune in". Then we went right home and could practice. I always shared what I learned with my spouse - not only for his benefit, but to reinforce the concepts in my brain. He would sometimes ask me questions - which made me do a little research and helped to validate the practices. Well done! I am the only school nurse in our class, but I find that nurses (like counselors) are by nature a pretty mindful bunch. Not only is it part of our training, but I think - like our class - we sort of "self-selected". I will use this training to enhance how I interact with students and staff who come in my office daily, and I will share these techniques with my colleagues so they may enhance their practices as well.

I think our district should have a clear vision as to how we will use the information and techniques being received in the training. Please continue to have "share-outs" in the training. I found them very helpful. The human connection was important.

Joni did an excellent job!! Thank you for offering this for teachers!!

"I felt this was incredibly valuable and such a gift to have been able to attend. I learned so much and gained incredible insight.

I do, however, have one piece of feedback for you to ponder. There were times that I shared, and I felt as though you weren't truly listening to understand. Instead, you often had somewhat of a negative comeback to my response. I felt disparaged & judged. I actually stopped attending the last few sessions. And, it wasn't that you were providing comments that pushed my thinking or encouraged me to reflect. I welcome feedback and criticism that is intended to grow my brain and encourage my growth mindset. Instead, you provided comments that stopped me in my tracks and almost caused me to feel shame. I don't believe shame has any place in our world but especially not in a class where we are working towards peace."

I really enjoyed the format, the instructor, and the group of people taking the class. Joni was understanding and compassionate to the group's needs. I'm very glad I participated.

love the videos for each practice