

# Mindfulness in the Classroom: Exercises for Your Students to Focus on Class Content

by Katie Jostock

# Today we will...

- Define mindfulness and its relevancy to educational contexts
- Discuss evidence-based research supporting the efficacy of mindfulness in educational contexts
- Practice mindfulness exercises which may be used in classrooms or educational contexts

# Why do I care about this?

- My history
- My question: Why do we spend so much time and energy educating students on textbook material and not becoming mentally and emotionally healthy?
- What about you?

# Exercise #1

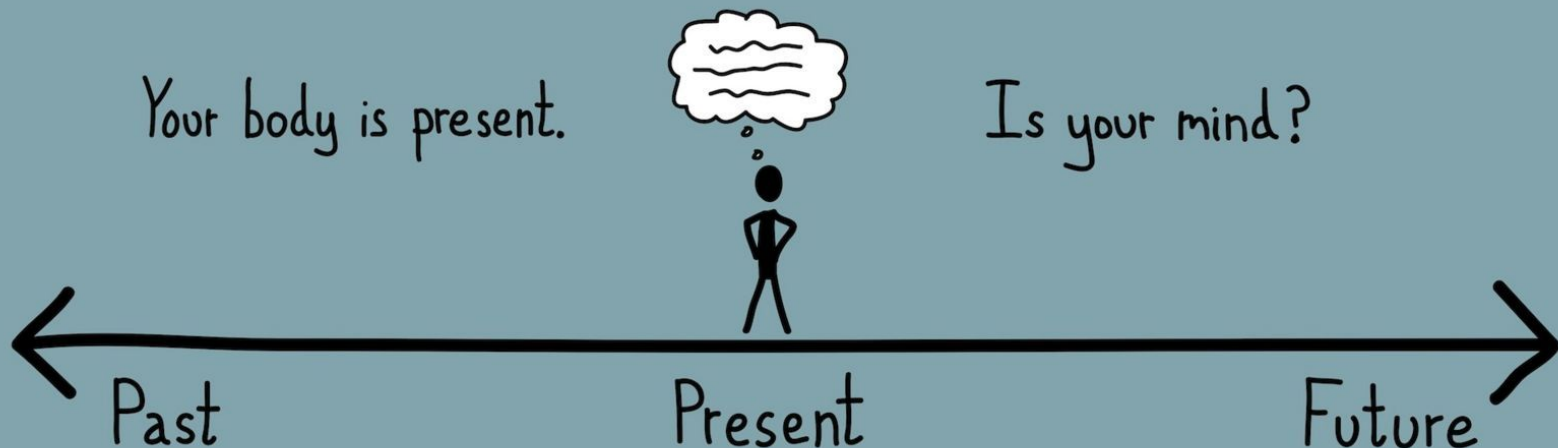


# Exercise #1 (cont.)

- What were you thinking while listening?
- What were you feeling?
- Did you notice how your body responded?
- How do you feel after listening to this?
- You've just engaged in mindfulness!

# What is mindfulness?

- “**Awareness** that arises through **paying attention**, on **purpose**, in the **present moment**, **non-judgementally**” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).



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# What is mindfulness? (cont.)

- Eastern Buddhist origins (expect Western resistance)



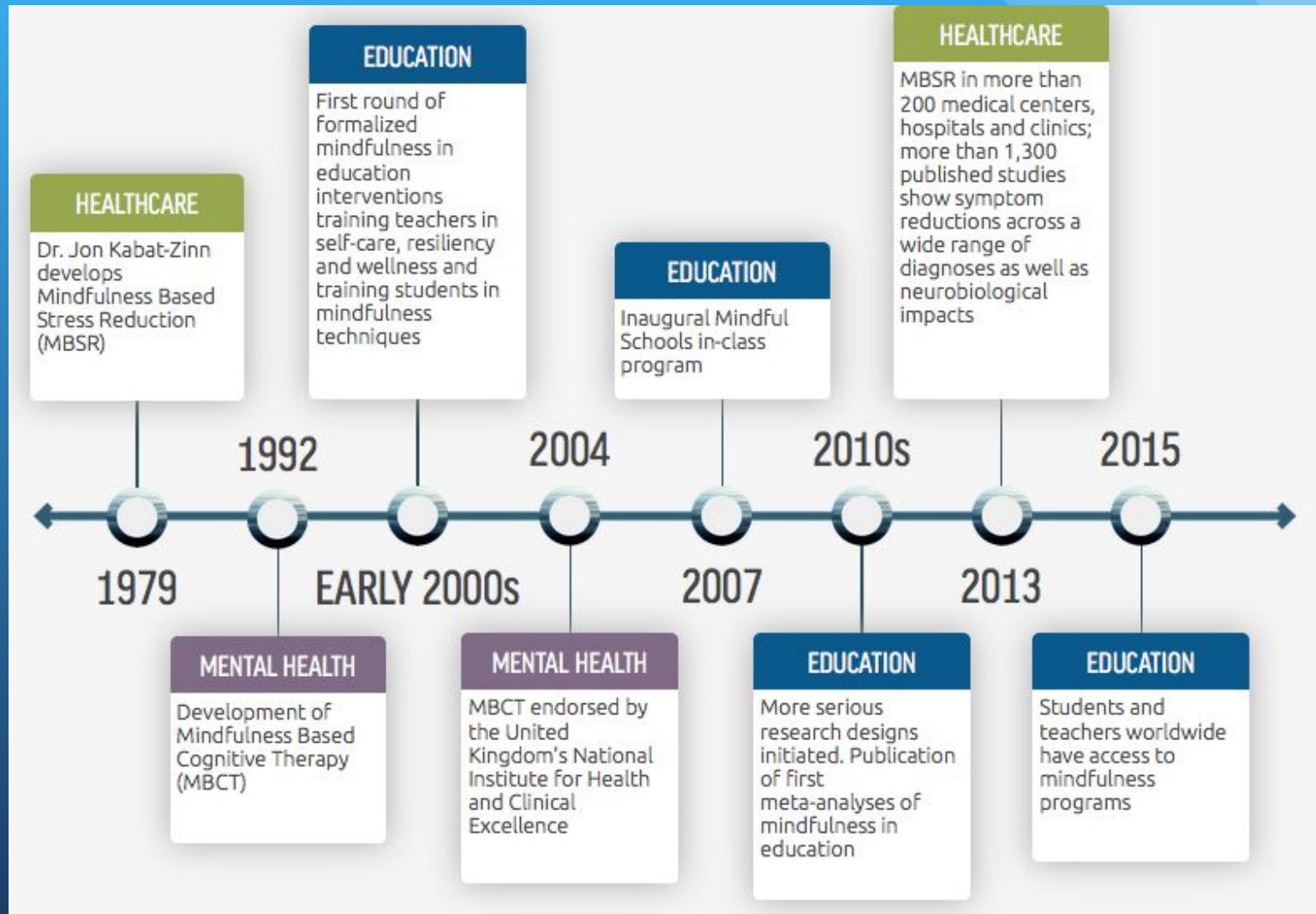
# Religious conflict?

I like to think of mindfulness simply as the art of conscious living. You don't have to be a Buddhist or a yogi to practice it. In fact, if you know anything about Buddhism, you will know that the most important point is to be yourself and not try to become anything that you are not already. Buddhism is fundamentally about being in touch with your own deepest nature and letting it flow out of you unimpeded. It has to do with waking up and seeing things as they are. In fact, the word "Buddha" simply means one who has awakened to his or her own true nature.

So, mindfulness will not conflict with any beliefs or traditions—religious or for that matter scientific—nor is it trying to sell you anything, especially not a new belief system or ideology. It is simply a practical way to be more in touch with the fullness of your being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action.

-Kabat-Zinn, 2005

# Mindfulness Timeline



# Mindfulness in Education

- Mindfulness and meditation's positive effects on focus development and stress reduction have lead a number of college instructors from business, accounting, sociology, and nursing to incorporate its practice into their pedagogy (Borker, 2013; Helber, Zook, & Immergut, 2012; dos Santos et al., 2016).
- Specific outcomes may include :
  - Staying focused in learning situations
  - Moving from fear to curiosity in academic learning
  - Finding an inner source of calm
  - Feeling more self-acceptance when facing difficult situations (Hjeltne et al., 2015)

# *Room to Breathe (2012)*

Megan Cowan - Mindful Schools

# How to Start the Conversation

- You can be as elaborate as creating a “Road Rage” audio clip, or you can simply engage in a group reflection about how your students are feeling about an upcoming assignment
- Discussions regarding emotion awareness may help, too

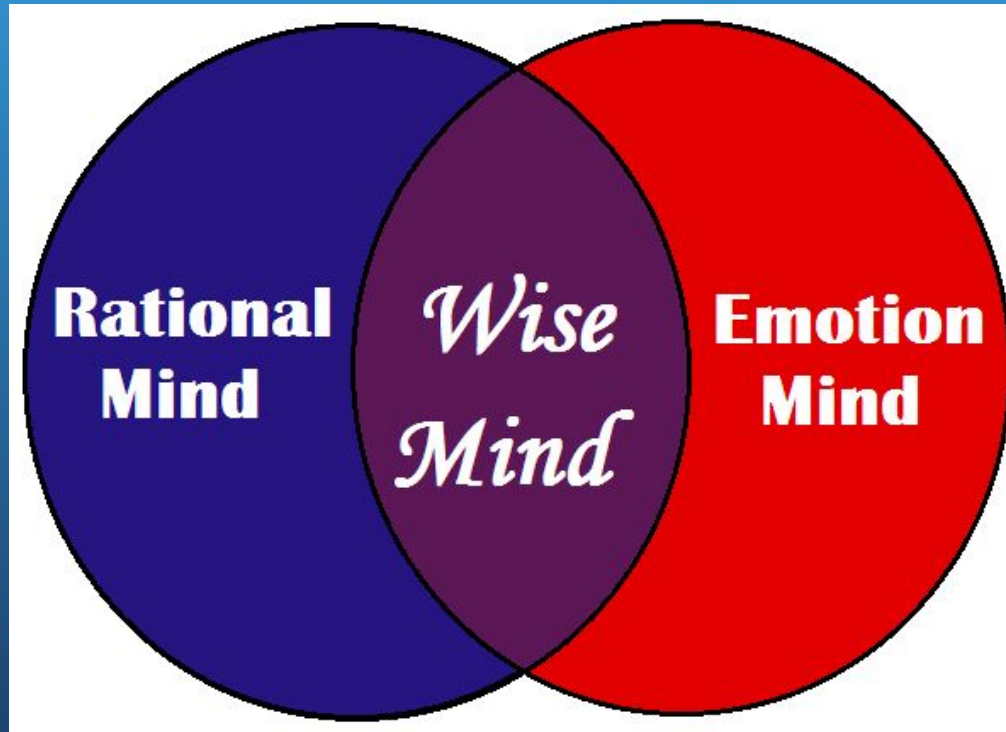
# Spock and Captain Kirk

Emotion Mind	Rational Mind
 A close-up portrait of Captain James T. Kirk, played by William Shatner. He has a serious, intense expression, with his mouth slightly open as if speaking or shouting. He is wearing a yellow Starfleet uniform with a black turtleneck. His right hand is raised near his face, with fingers slightly curled.	 A close-up portrait of Spock, played by Leonard Nimoy. He has a calm, steady gaze and a neutral expression. He is wearing a blue Starfleet uniform with a black turtleneck. His iconic black hair and pointed ears are clearly visible.

Benefits? Problems?

# Wise Mind

- We need both emotion and rationale to engage our wise mind



# Dealing with Negative Thoughts and Emotions

- Identifying the Thought: “I can’t finish this assignment.”
  - Identifying the Feeling: Shame, anger, guilt, fear, etc.
  - Identifying the Judgment: “I suck at this.”
- 
- Challenge: “You finished and received a high grade on the last assignment. That’s evidence that you can do it again.”
  - Affirmation: “It makes sense you would feel nervous approaching this assignment. It is new and unfamiliar, but that doesn’t mean you can’t do it.”
  - Your Toolbox: “Which mindfulness tool can you use to reduce your stress and retain focus to complete your goal?”

## 10 Growth Mindset Statements



What can I say to myself?

INSTEAD OF:

I'm not good at this.

I'm awesome at this.

I give up.

This is too hard.

I can't make this any better.

I just can't do Math.

I made a mistake.

She's so smart. I will never be that smart.

It's good enough.

Plan "A" didn't work.

TRY THINKING:



1 What am I missing?

2 I'm on the right track.

3 I'll use some of the strategies we've learned.

4 This may take some time and effort.

5 I can always improve so I'll keep trying.

6 I'm going to train my brain in Math.

7 Mistakes help me to learn better.

8 I'm going to figure out how she does it.

9 Is it really my best work?

10 Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters!

(Original source unknown)

@sylvia duckworth

## Exercise #2: Focusing on Taste

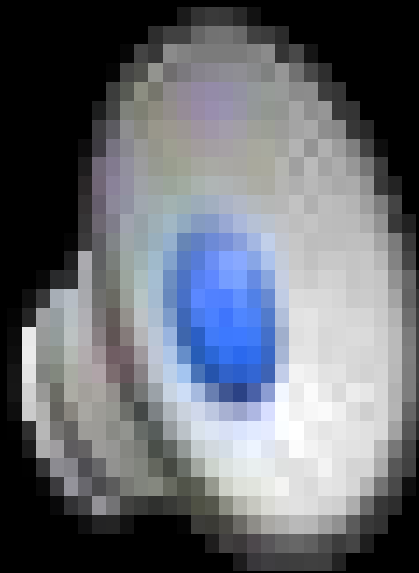


# Exercise #2: Focusing on Touch



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTGqo\\_Scl6Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTGqo_Scl6Y)

# Exercise #3: Focusing on Sight



# Mindfulness for School Leaders

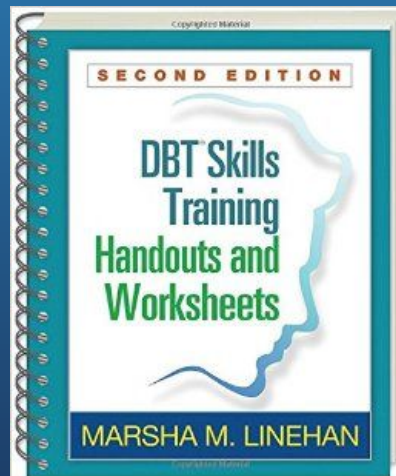
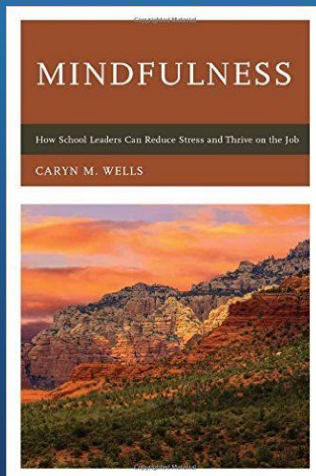
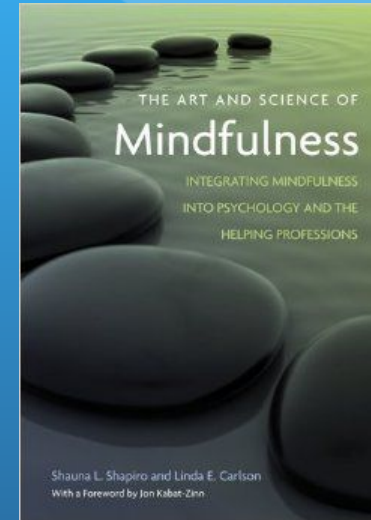
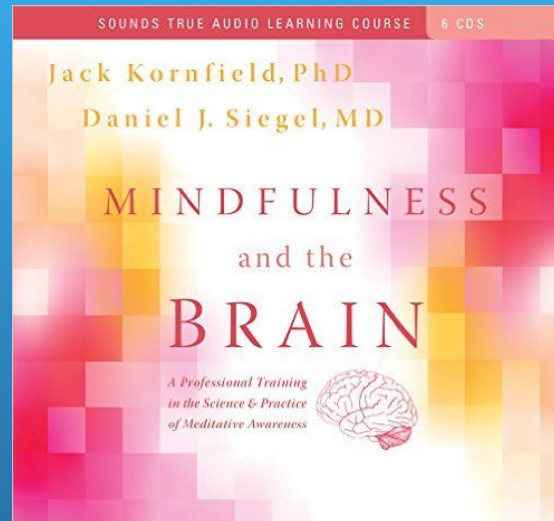
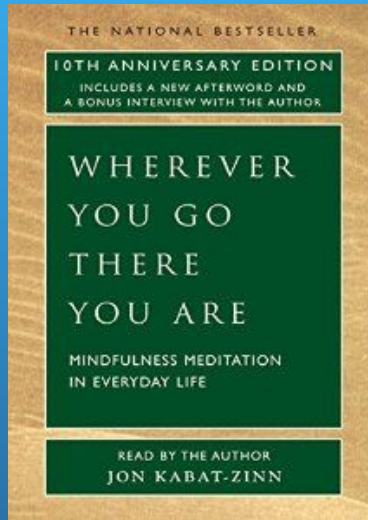
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>

# Final Debrief

- What are the benefits of including mindfulness into your class? What are the potential problems?

Questions for me?

# Resources for You



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