Using Mindfulness for Stress Management in the Teaching Profession

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Who am I and why am I here?

➢ Background

Who are you?

➢ Your Role?
➢ Knowledge of Mindfulness?

Overview

➢ Stress & Educators
➢ Mindfulness
  ➢ What is it?
  ➢ How does it work?
  ➢ Mindfulness, Stress & Emotion Regulation
➢ Mindfulness in Practice
  ➢ Formal & Informal
  ➢ Common Challenges
  ➢ Recommendations
➢ Mindfulness Resources
➢ Discussion

What’s the plan?

What is Stress?

Stress is an internal experience we have when we perceive the demands of the situation are more than we can cope with.

Stress & Educators

➢ Teachers report stress at a similar level to that of police officers and paramedics.
➢ Recently, 79% of educators reported that their stress levels increased over the past 5 years, with 85% indicating that stress had a negative impact on their ability to teach.
➢ Up to 40% of new teachers choose to leave the profession within the first five years.
➢ And...

(Froese-Germain, 2014; Johnson et al., 2005; Perda, 2013; Rudge, Masters, & Tripp, 2016)
**Educator Stress & Student Outcomes**

Teacher Stress

Student Stress & Lower Academics

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**How Stressed Are You?**

**Perceived Stress Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ...been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. ...felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?</td>
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<td>3. ...felt nervous and &quot;stressed&quot;?</td>
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<td>4. ...questioned your ability to handle your personal problems?</td>
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<td>5. ...felt that things were just not working for you?</td>
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<td>6. ...found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. ...felt unable to control irritations in your life?</td>
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<td>8. ...felt that you were overwhelmed by things?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. ...been angered because of things that were outside of your control?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. ...felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them</td>
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**The Hazards of High Stress**

**Psychological effects**
- Anxiety symptoms and depressive symptoms, fatigue, and low affect
- Poor judgment in the face of “hot” emotions
- Increased risk of substance abuse
- Interpersonal problems

**Physical effects**
- Migraine headaches
- Digestive problems
- Overeating
- High blood pressure

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**The Hazards of High Stress**

**Burnout**
- Protracted experience of high stress leads to burnout
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Compassion fatigue
  - Impaired productivity

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**Importance of Teacher Well-being**

- Decreased personal suffering of teachers
- Decreased societal and system costs
- Increased student learning

**Teachers’ wellness matters!**

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(Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014; Bailey, 2013; Chan, 2006; Karsenti & Collins, 2013; Kyriacou, 2001; Milburn, 2011; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Perda, 2013; Rodger, 2016)
Contributors of Stress

Stress is within the individual, a within person experience. But what about now? How can I cope?

What is Mindfulness?

Awareness of the present moment
Paying attention on purpose
Acceptance of present-moment experience

Mindfulness Pause

Mindfulness: Does it Work?

Mindfulness: Effectiveness

- Mindfulness has been used in a number of high stress demanding professions to enhance performance and ability to function under stress
Training of military in mindfulness…

"It is not enough for a Soldier's physical body to be trained, it is also vital that the mind be fit and ready, equipped with a "mental armor" of sorts ...[Our research] has shown that mindfulness meditation exercises positively support active duty Soldiers in protecting and training their own minds and helping better prepare Soldiers for high-stress combat situations."

Mindfulness Basics: Breath Awareness

Calming breath
- Place your right hand over your heart, your left hand on your lower abdomen below the navel.
- As you inhale/exhale try to make your belly hand go up and down while keeping your heart hand mostly still.
- Inhale through the nose for 4 slow counts, hold for 2; exhale through the mouth for 6 slow counts; pause for 2...

Mindfulness: Does it Work?

- Highlights – mindfulness is associated with:
  - Decreases in stress
  - Improvements in emotion regulation
  - Enhancing positive emotion & wellbeing
  - Promotion of good sleep
  - Greater satisfaction at work and at home
  - Increases in task performance
  - Lower physiological stress
  - Relationship benefits

Mindfulness Activity: Short Body Scan

How Does it Work?

- The ability to focus attention, results in better emotion regulation....
  - Decreased emotional lability
    - Less Reactivity
    - Lower Intensity
    - Better Recovery

Know your emotion regulation.....

- Emotion Reactivity Scale
- Sensitivity/Reactivity
  - I tend to get emotional very easily
  - Not at all like me ...................................Completely like me
  - 0 1 2 3 4
- Arousal/Intensity
  - When I experience emotions, I feel them very strongly/intensely
  - Not at all like me ...................................Completely like me
  - 0 1 2 3 4
- Persistence/Recovery
  - When I am angry/upset, it takes me much longer than most people to calm down
  - Not at all like me ...................................Completely like me
  - 0 1 2 3 4

Mindfulness Activity: Short Body Scan

(Nock, Wedig, Holmberg, & Hooley, 2008)
Stress, Emotion Regulation and Mindfulness

- Emotion Regulation – Can be changed, and mindfulness practice can do that...
- But… Mindfulness as an attention muscle, mind fitness
- Work, not relaxation

Mindfulness Activity: Three Good Things

- Identify 3 good things that happened to you today
- Recreate in your mind
- Possibly write them down

Mindfulness Activity: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Sit on a chair
2. Stretch up your face
3. Tense your arm
4. Tense your shoulders and chest
5. Tense your legs
6. Breathe

Mindfulness in Practice

- Informal Mindfulness
- Mindful Moments (e.g., grounding, coming to your senses etc.)

Mindfulness Activity: Three Good Things

- Identify 3 good things that happened to you today
- Recreate in your mind
- Possibly write them down

Mindfulness in Practice

- Formal Practices
  - Sitting Meditation
  - Body Scan
  - Walking Meditations
  - Mindful Yoga
  - Yoga Nidra
  - Progressive Muscle Relaxation (mindfully)
  
- Informal Practices
  - Finding moments for mindfulness in day-to-day life

Mindfulness in Practice: Common Challenges

- Identity: Not me
- My mind is too active
- I can’t do it properly
- I don’t feel at all relaxed
- I’ve tried and nothing changed
- I have no time
**Mindfulness in Practice: Recommendations**

- **Formal practice:** Body Scan, Sitting Meditation, Breath Awareness
  - 10-15 minutes, 4 times/week
- **Yoga Nidra** to sleep a few nights a week
- **Informal practices:** build into routines
  - First sip of coffee, shower, teeth brushing...
  - Remember to pause
  - Take time to notice time.

**Mindfulness Resources**

**Websites**
- MindfulProject.org: Information on mindfulness and mindful music
- Mindful.org: Articles and information on mindfulness

**Apps**
- The Mindfulness App: Meditation reminders, guided sessions and timed meditations
- CALM: Various meditations from beginner to advanced level
- Smiling Mind: Modern meditation, web and app based mindfulness
- Insight Timer: Provides various meditations and milestones to track progress

**Mindfulness for Educators**
- Seven Ways Mindfulness Can Help Teachers by Patricia Jennings
- Mindfulschools.org: Resources for integrating mindfulness in the classroom

**Resources**

- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, 1994)
- Maslach Burnout Inventory - Educators Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1996)
  - https://www.mindgarden.com/316-mbi-educators-survey#horizontalTab2
- Emotion Reactivity Scale (ERS; Neck, Wedig, Holmberg, & Hooley, 2008)
  - https://noshlab.fas.harvard.edu/tasks
- Calming Breath (Belly Breathing): https://www.mindful.org/a-guided-meditation-to-encourage-deep-breathing/
- Body Scan: https://www.mindful.org/a-3-minute-body-scan-meditation-to-cultivate-mindfulness/

**Concluding comments**

- **Mindfulness for…**
  - maximizing concentration and performance
  - decreasing stress
  - quality of life under pressure
  - coping with loss and extreme distress beyond our control

- But really… **Mindfulness for actually living the time we have.**
Thank you!
Questions....