

Journal of Research in Education

(A Peer Reviewed and Refereed Bi-annual Journal)
(SJIF Impact Factor 3.393)



St. Xavier's College of Education (Autonomous)

Digha Ghat, Patna, Bihar - 800011 India.

VOL.11, No.1 | JUNE, 2023

Dr. Soya Mathew

Assistant Professor

St. Joseph College of Teacher Education for Women,
Ernakulam, Kochi-35, Kerala, India

Email: drsoyamathew@gmail.com

2

Mindfulness for a Holistic Development of the Learner: Pedagogical Strategies and its Benefits

Abstract

UNESCO has identified various tensions and crises of the modern society and suggested four pillars to be constructed for strengthening the education system. These pillars are: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together, and Learning to be. Education is the process of empowering learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, attitudes and habits. The important aim of education is the transformation of behaviour which ultimately leads to a self-actualized personality of the learner. In the modern world, learners are subjected to a lot of stress and many distractions which takes them away from fulfilling the objectives of proper education. Every person has to be educated to adjust themselves with the tempo of the present day civilized life of the society. Due to the non-capability of integration, students find it difficult to focus and learn the content matter inside and outside the classroom. Here comes the importance of Mindfulness. It is one of the effective practices which helps the individual to move towards self-actualization. It is a lifestyle for being at the present moment. Mindfulness, can be practised by anyone. Learners can be introduced to this process right from the classrooms. The pedagogical strategies of Mindfulness which can be practised in the classroom situation helps the learners to move from chaos to equilibrium of mind, body and soul. This article focuses on pedagogical strategies which lead the learners to grow towards integration through Mindfulness.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Pedagogical Strategies, Classroom Situation, Equilibrium of Mind.*

Introduction

International Commission (Delors Commission) on Education for 21st Century in its report “Learning: A Treasure Within” UNESCO has identified various tensions and crises of the modern society and suggested four pillars to be constructed for strengthening the education system. These pillars are: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together, and Learning to be. These pillars have to be strengthened by improving the quality of education in the present century. Education is the process of empowering learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, attitudes and habits. The important aim of education is the transformation of behaviour which ultimately leads to a self-actualized personality of the learner. Quality education promotes the all-round development which encompasses all the dimensions of the personality like physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual. The present world is very dynamic and fast changing. As a result, the learners are subjected to a lot of stress and chaos which takes them away from fulfilling the objectives of proper education. Every person has to be educated to adjust themselves with the tempo of the present day civilized life of the society in other words ‘Learning to be’. This situation brings forth the need of developing more integrated personality through educational strategies for the betterment of the individual as well as the society. Here comes the importance of Mindfulness, since it can be practised by anyone who focuses on action that leads to a peaceful life.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are given below:

- 1) Bring out the meaning and importance of Mindfulness in modern day education
- 2) Explain the pedagogical strategies of Mindfulness which helps in the wholistic development of the learner
- 3) Explore the benefits of Mindfulness in classroom teaching and learning

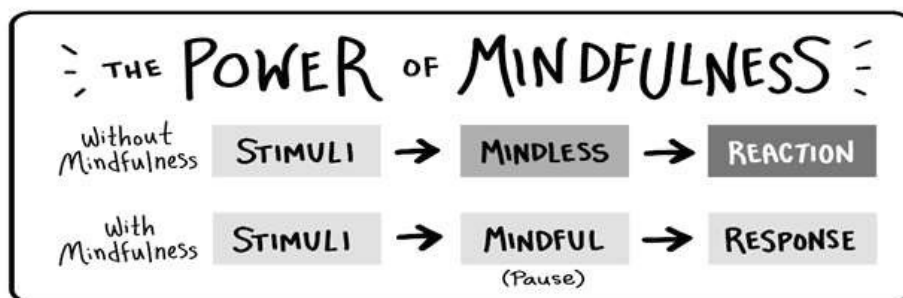
Mindfulness- for “Learning to Be”

The stress and strain of day-to-day activities divides and estranges the mental capabilities of human beings. The effectiveness and achievement of any action depend on the attention given and the input of mental and physical energy in to the action. Due to the non-capability of integration, students find it difficult to focus and learn the content

matter inside and outside the classroom. The best remedy for this problem is practicing Mindfulness in the classroom environment itself. That could help the learner to “BE” as him/herself and live an authentic life with satisfaction.

Mindfulness is living in the present and being aware of the present self. It is a simple way of relating to experiences with an open mind. This process has long been used to lessen the sting of life’s difficulties, especially those that are self-imposed. It is a skill that allows the individual to be less responsive to what is happening in a particular, current moment. It is a way of connecting to all experience—positive, negative and neutral—such that the overall misery is reduced and the sense of well-being increases. To be mindful is to wake up, to recognize what is happening in the existing moment.

The term Mindfulness is an English translation of the Pali word *sati*. Pali was the language of Buddhist psychology 2500 years ago and Mindfulness is the core teaching of this tradition. *Sati* connotes awareness, attention and remembering. In other words, it denotes the retention and recollection which forms an essential part of being consciousness through the senses correlate with thoughts. Brown and Ryan (2003) define awareness and attention under the canopy of consciousness: Consciousness incorporates both awareness and attention. Cambridge dictionary defines awareness as knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience.

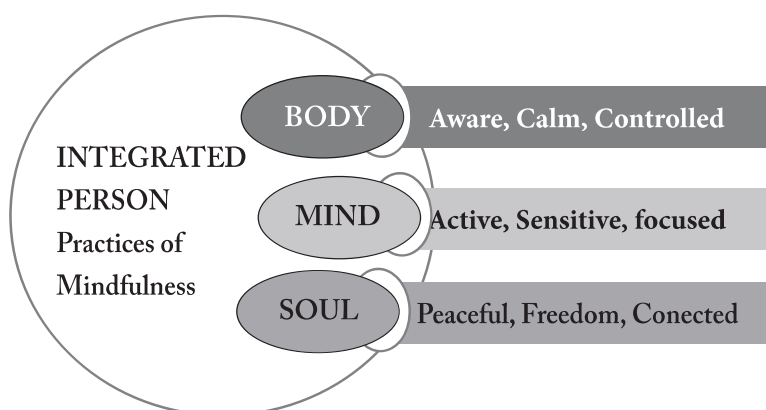


Attention comes after awareness and it includes focusing on something particular. When it comes to Mindfulness, awareness and attention comes to consciousness with openness to the experience. It is non-judgmental at the same time it is very subjective to the person. It involves memories but not talking to the past, but holds the person in the present itself.

Various Aspects of Mindfulness

Mindfulness consists of common aspects irrespective of time and subject on the practice continuum. It is grounded on the person's attention and awareness or consciousness of a particular moment in life, that leads to the openness towards the experience without any judgements. The practice of Mindfulness helps the individual to be non-reactive to the situation but to be proactive in life. This does not mean that the person become detached from their emotions and circumstances. On the contrary, the person gets involved in the experience fully and completely with enjoyment. Given below are the various aspects of Mindfulness:

- **Non-conceptual:** Mindfulness is awareness without absorption in our thought processes.
- **Present-centred:** Mindfulness is always in the present moment. Thoughts about our experience are removed from the present moment.
- **Non-judgmental:** Awareness cannot occur freely if we would like our experience to be other than it is. "Mindfulness is not limited by any condition. It exists to some extent in every moment, in every circumstance that arises" (Bhante Gunaratana)
- **Intentional:** Mindfulness always includes an intention to direct attention somewhere. Returning attention to the present moment gives Mindfulness continuity over time.
- **Participant observation:** Mindfulness is not detached witnessing. It is experiencing the mind and body more intimately.
- **Non-verbal:** The experience of Mindfulness cannot be captured in words because awareness occurs before words arise in the mind.
- **Exploratory:** Mindful awareness is always investigating subtler levels of perception.
- **Liberating:** Every moment of mindful awareness provides freedom from conditioned suffering.



Pedagogical Strategies of Mindfulness

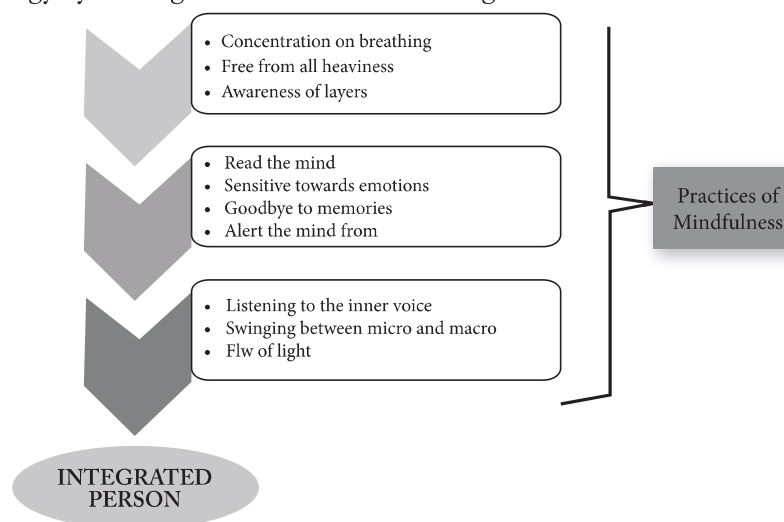
Mindfulness is an ongoing journey that can be developed through practice. An efficient teacher could practise these strategies within a classroom situation for the wellness of students. The practices lead the learners from the chaos to the equilibrium of mind, body and soul. Ten pedagogical strategies of Mindfulness which can be practised in classroom situations are explained below:

- **Concentration on breathing:** Make the learner to become aware of the breathing at the present moment. For this, make them to concentrate only on their breathing. The simple, deep and heavy breathing could be practised. The exercise is for 5 minutes every day before the learning process commences.
- **Free from all heaviness:** Allow the learner to be free from all heavy things. Let them be free from touching anything. Should not keep any things on their lap and in their hands. Make the learner to sit in equanimity, without touching or holding anything. Also, guide them to let out the heaviness of mind and heart by self-talk or by imagining emptying themselves out like a vessel. The time given for the exercise is 8 to 10 minutes. This could be practised during free periods in class or when time permits.
- **Awareness of layers:** This is a practice which could be done every day for 5 minutes. Make the learner to close their eyes gently and feel the pressure exerted on the skin by the chappal/ shoes, cloth, hair, watch, ornaments etc. They have to feel the weight, smoothness, heaviness, lightness, tightness of things on the skin. It could start with self-awareness from the feet and moving up towards the head.
- **Read the mind:** Lead the learners to go within oneself and make themselves aware of their mind. Give proper instructions to be calm and go through different dimensions of the mind such as thinking (thoughts), memory, imagination, fantasy and emotions. Ask the learner to think something and be aware of that; at the same time imagine something which gives happiness, feel the emotion of happiness and at the same time remember something which motivated positively in life. All this should be done slowly as well as one by one and at a stretch. The person should be aware of all the faculties of the mind and also be able to distinguish them. This process needs time, but it could be a best practise towards self-awareness. Once in a month or two weeks this exercise could be conducted in the classroom.

- **Sensitive towards emotions:** Ask the learners to be calm and think about a life situation of happiness, sadness, anger and fearfulness. Allow them to note down all the experiences in detail. Let them go through the experiences once again as it happened for a second time. This time the person should read the emotions as a second person or another person. She should watch the experience and evaluate the emotions. If the person wants to share the experience, then give them a chance to do so.
- **Goodbye to memories:** Ask the learner to take a calm, still posture and close their eyes. Then imagine the mind to be a store house and all the memories of life are stored in that. Give them clear instructions to start with their first memories of life and move forward through memories each year of life, till reach at present. While passing through the memories, if it is very painful and not encouraging give them the instruction to say goodbye to that particular memory and go forward. Finally reach today without any negative memory. This is not an exercise to erase memories but to gather positive energy from the memory and to purge negativity. This could be conducted twice in a month in different environmental conditions.
- **Alert the mind from wandering:** Ask the learner to take a stable postur and to be absolutely still. Let them slowly become aware of their thoughts. At present what am I thinking? Is it only one thought or many? Which are they? Only analyse these thoughts. Slowly command the mind to stop the thoughts and try to be still without any thoughts clouding the mind. It will be difficult in the beginning but by practice it can be done. Tell them to practise the exercise whenever it is possible and learn to pause the thoughts or control the mind from wandering.
- **Listening to the inner voice:** Guide the learner to sit in a still posture with closed eyes. Tell them to repeat a word like 'Om' or "silence" to themselves. Repeat the word as much as possible without anything in mind and only see the image of those words within. The words should be repeated in the mind. Then imagine the words echoing on the walls of the mind and try to listen to that sound. After listening to that echo, maintain silence without uttering a word. Slowly guide the mind to enter in to silence and try to listen to the inner voice. Each person will be able to hear their inner voice based on the depth of inner silence they can achieve. This is the voice of the conscience. They can use this method to search for solutions to life's problems especially when in doubt or confusion.
- **Swinging between micro and macro:** In this exercise, the learner can take a still posture. Ask them to close the eyes gently and be conscious of their body. Tell them to imagine the body as an outer layer and go in to the

internal organs, the next layer. Then to the next internal layer that is tissues and to the cells; from there to the atoms and the particles that is electron, proton and neutron. The moving particle is electron and imagine the whole organs and then the whole body is made up of moving particles of electrons. And feel the momentum in the body then try to move out from the physical body by the imagination. Be aware of the air which is moving around the person and feel the movement of the air. Then imagine it as a breeze, then as a wind which carry the person around the world and also into space and try to reach the sky and planets. meander around the universe try to reach to the boundary of the universe and know that it is getting wider and the boundary is expanding. Allow the person to feel that expansion as a movement and then slowly come back to the body and inner self. This will help the person realize that the inner being and outer being are same.

- **Flow of light:** Guide the learner to take a calm posture and get in to the inner mind set. Tell them to focus to the mind and imagine the mind as a temple. Imagine a lighted lamp is placed in the inner most part of the temple, mind. And ask them to focus only on the flickering flame of that light. Slowly imagine that the light from that flame is filling the walls of the mind and flowing outside and fill the body. Again, the light is filling the body and flowing out from the body to fill the room where they are sitting. From the room to the out to the compound then to the place, village/ city, the state, country, world and to the space. The flow of light again fills the space and solar system, stars, then to the edge of the universe. From there the light rays shrink to the stars and planets, the back way, finally reach to the room re-enter to the body, to the mind and then to the lamp within. Focus again on the flame and try to absorb all the light energy from that. Slowly open the eyes and spread the light energy by looking around to the surroundings.

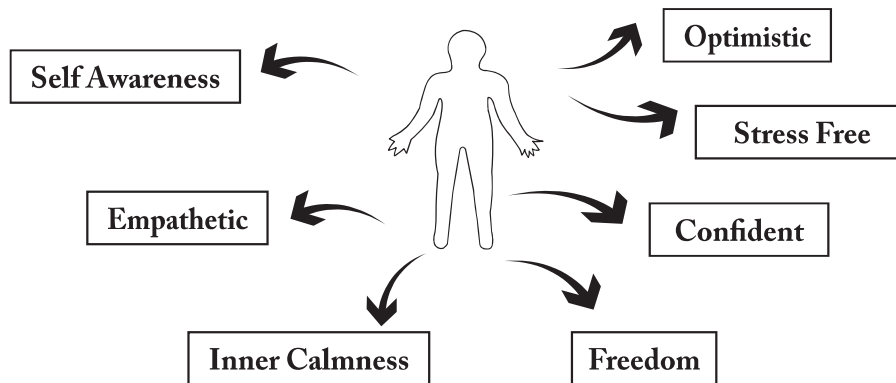


Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the best practise for the development of self-awareness and helps an individual grow towards self- actualization. There are many benefits for a person who practise these exercises which are given below:

- **Increase Self Awareness:** These exercises are beneficial for self- awareness. Since it is focused on physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of the individual.
- **Being sensitive towards others:** The awareness of self will lead to become sensitive towards others. The person will begin to understand that the other is also having the same disposition and emotions as themselves. That will lead to a better understanding of the other.
- **Fill and radiate positivity:** All these exercises are focused on unfolding the positive energy and removing negativity that radiates from the person to the self and to the environment. This is evident and reflects in the behavioural changes in the person later.
- **Become stress free:** The exercises given above leads a person into a stress-free zone and inner calmness. It increases the concentration ability and mental energy level. That helps the person to manage stressful situations mere effectively.
- **Enhance Confidence level:** The positivity and the self-knowledge increase the self-confidence of the individual, which motivates the person to take risk and become more creative in life.
- **Serenity of inner being:** The most important benefits of these exercises is the attainment of calmness within which is also called serenity of mind and spirit. That makes the person free from aggression and negativity. The individual starts to enjoy the beauty of life and find meaning in all the experiences.
- **Growing to the real freedom:** The person slowly realises the meaning of true freedom and starts to experience it. The negativity from the past starts to disappear and the person get freed from fears. The integration of thoughts, words and action demolish the hypocritical nature of the person which ultimately leads to self-realization, self-actualization and real freedom of life.

Mindfulness Integrate a Person



Conclusion

Mindfulness is the need of the hour to help us grow towards self-actualization. This article provides a few simple exercises which could be practised within a class room situation with the help of a mentor that could lead to a meaningful change among learners. Positive change begins when the individual augments one's personality growth which in turn makes the building block of a healthy society. Therefore, the practise of these simple exercises within the class room on Mindfulness could become the corner stone for a better, healthier and integrated personality for students.

References:

- Daphne M. Davis, PhD, & Jeffrey A. Hayes, PhD. "What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research," *APA journal Psychotherapy* (Vol. 48, No. 2). July/August 2012
- Germer, C. K. (2013). *Mindfulness: What is it? What does it matter?*, C. K. Germer, R. D. Siegel, & P. R. Fulton (Eds.), *Mindfulness and psychotherapy* (pp. 3–35). The Guilford Press.
- Glomb, T.M., Duffy, M.K., Bono, J.E. and Yang, T. (2011), "Mindfulness at Work", Joshi, A., Liao, H. and Martocchio, J.J. (Ed.) *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* (Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management, Vol. 30), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 115–157. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301\(2011\)0000030005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301(2011)0000030005)

- *J. David Creswell., 2016. Department of Psychology, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Psychol.68:18.1–18.26The Annual Review of Psychology. psych.annualreviews.org. doi: 10.1146/annurev - psych-042716-051139 .2017*
- *Klebanova, K. Rethinking Mindfulness in Education within Two Frameworks: Articulating the “Threefold Model of Mindful Wisdom” with the “Theory of Mental Interference”. Religions 2022, 13, 66 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010066>*
- *Ruth Baer, Carolina Caldera & Laura M. Nagy. 2020. Mindfulness, Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences. (pp 2898–2908)*

