

# STRESS MANAGEMENT & MINDFULNESS FOR EDUCATORS

Friend to Friend

Professional Development  
Workshop

 **Children's Hospital  
of Philadelphia®**  
Center for Violence Prevention



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Teaching is a Stressful Position
- My Desk Activity
- What's the impact of Teachers' Stress?
- How Teacher Stress can be Addressed
- Strategies for the Most Effective Teaching to Occur
- Define Mindfulness
- Mindfulness Strategies and Exercises for Teachers
- Mindfulness/Stress Management Strategies for Teachers and Students

**What do you find  
rewarding about  
being a teacher?**



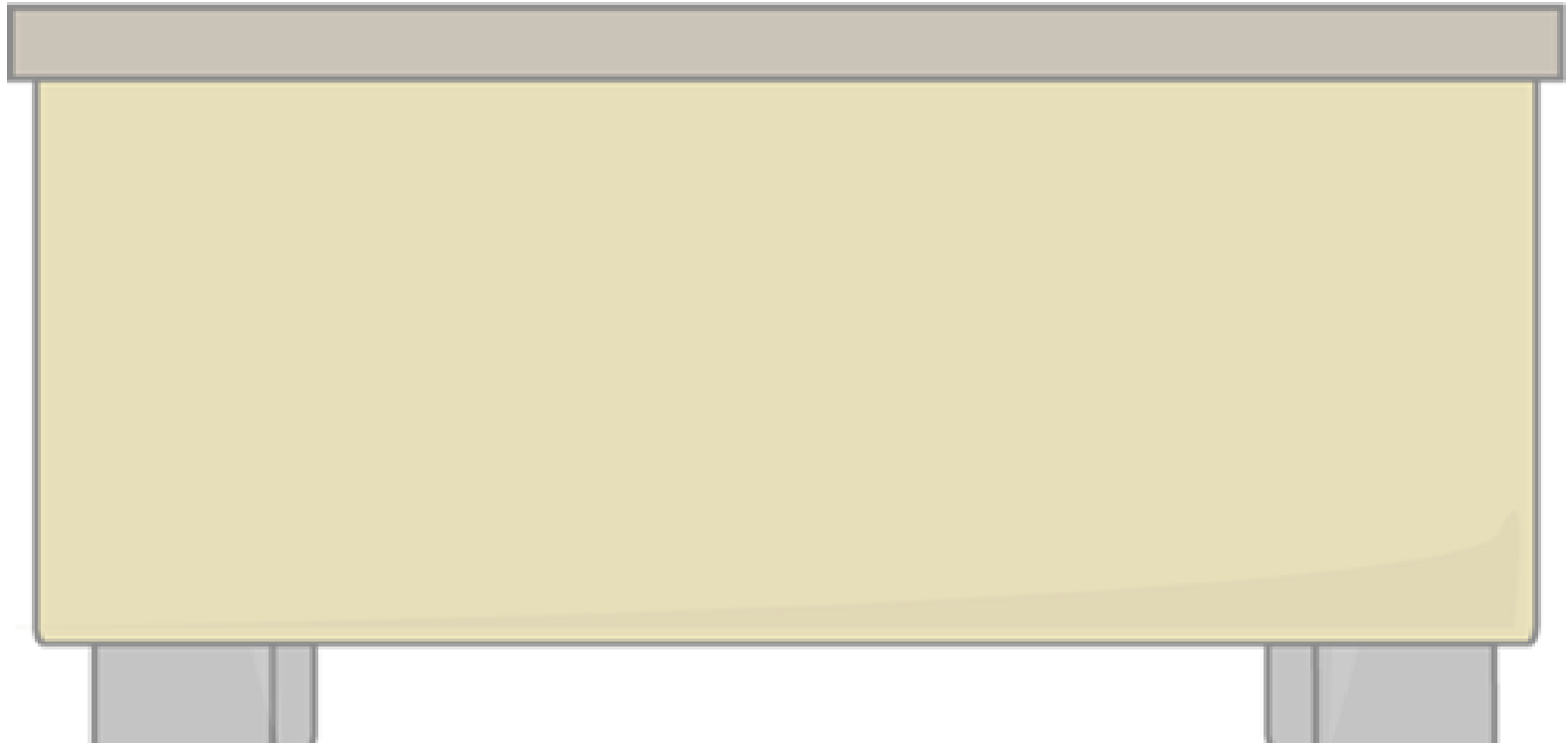
# TEACHING IS A STRESSFUL PROFESSION

## Stress can come from:

- Managing a large group of children and trying to educate them
- District-level demands for documentation
- Lesson planning
- Meeting attendance goals



# WHAT IS ON YOUR DESK?



# THE IMPACT OF TEACHER STRESS (EMERSON, ET. AL) ARTICLE

- Research has shown that teachers' stress leads to fatigue, depression, anxiety, cynicism, and low self-efficacy
- Some teachers who teach kids with trauma experience secondary trauma, which affects them physically and emotionally
- Burnout leads to less empathy for students and less trauma-sensitive teaching
- Teachers' stress negatively affects students because it leads to teacher absenteeism and reduces teaching effectiveness

# HOW TEACHER STRESS CAN BE ADDRESSED

- **Societal-level change:** We need to value and appreciate the work of teachers better – provide them with safety and fair pay
- **Organizational-Level Change:** Districts and administrations can support teachers by
  - Collecting and acting on teacher feedback on systems and supporting teachers
  - Mentoring new teachers to improve retention
  - Minimizing disruption and giving teachers control and predictability
  - Implementing PBIS and SEL Programs that lead to greater job satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy
- **Individual-Level Change:** Since societal and administrative issues are more challenging for us to control as individuals, teachers need to use effective ways of personally managing the stress of the job

# STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING TO OCCUR

- Managing their own emotions - Teachers who are good at this report higher self-efficacy in general
- Not taking student misbehavior personally
- modeling the use of good social and emotional coping skills



Teacher Social &  
Emotional Competence



```
graph TD; A[Teacher Social & Emotional Competence] --> B[Student-Teacher Relationships & Effective Classroom Management]; B --> C[Student Well-Being & Achievement];
```

Student-Teacher  
Relationships & Effective  
Classroom Management

Student Well-Being &  
Achievement

# TOOLS & STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS

**Mindfulness** – the psychological process of directing one’s attention to experiences in the present moment, without judgment

- It comes from Eastern Religion, but has been adapted for secular, therapeutic use
- Regular practice of mindfulness has been shown to improve teachers’ physical and psychological health
- It includes practices like body scans, breath awareness, meditative movement, greater emotional awareness, and the cultivation of positive emotions towards self and others

# MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES & EXERCISES FOR TEACHERS

## Focus on the Present Moment

- Focus on what is happening right now for you, not what you have to do later today or tomorrow and not what you did earlier today or yesterday. Follow your own breath, in and out. Usually we can say, “Right now at this moment, all is well.”
- Think of a nice soft sound that will remind you to come back to the present moment when your mind does wander towards negative, stressful thoughts (e.g., play the chimes sound on your phone, or ring a bell that has a nice tone).
- Move from a **Stimulus ->Reaction** approach (how we generally respond) to **Stimulus->Mindfulness->Response** (which allows for a more thoughtful, intentional response to a student or a situation).

# MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES & EXERCISES FOR TEACHERS

## Breathing and Counting

- Count slowly to 10 to delay your reaction to a situation
- 4-7-8 technique
  - Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds
  - Deep breaths help us physically to relax, and mentally to slow down

## Stay Grounded

- Focus on the physical sensation of your feet on the ground when you feel overwhelmed or stressed out. Imagine that you have roots coming out of your feet that are literally grounding you to the floor.
- This visualization fosters a sense of calm and control, like an immovable tree withstanding a storm. Often, stress is a symptom of feeling overloaded, like running too many apps on a computer at once. By paring down your focus, you can clear your mind and use your clarity to make better decisions.

# MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES & EXERCISES FOR TEACHERS

## Take a Drink

- Sip a glass of water or tea when you need to pause during the day. Focus on the sensations of the liquid hitting your lips and your mouth and going down your throat as you swallow.
- Taking a moment to divert your attention from an emotional sensation to a physical sensation can help your body relax and allow you to shift into a more positive mindset.

## Journal Activity

Write your responses to these three prompts each morning to evoke positive emotion:

- “I am grateful for...”
- “I will let go of...”
- “I will focus on...”

# STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS & STUDENTS

## Deep Breathing Activity

Sample Script: *“Good Morning, Class. Before we take our test, I would like everyone to first close their eyes. Now, put your hands on your stomach. And take a deep breath in like you’re smelling your favorite food. Hold for 3 seconds. Now exhale like you’re blowing out your birthday candles.”*

- Do this up to 3 times or as many times as you think your students need
- Do this along with your students, as it will help you relax and center yourself in the moment
- When to use?
  - Before a test
  - When students come back to class after lunch, recess, or gym
  - In the morning as students are putting away their coats and getting seated

# STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

## 1-2 Rounds of Mindful Stretching with Deep Breaths in Between

The stretches can include:

- Reaching for the sky, with your hands and fingers outstretched in the air and lifting your feet up
- Shaking your arms and legs out as if you're trying to get a bug off you
- Benefits of Mindful Stretching:
  - Stretching your body and minding your breath is a great way to relax and re-center yourself and your students.
  - This can especially be beneficial at times where students have been sitting at their desks for a long while.

## Journal Activity

Write your responses to this prompts each morning to evoke positive emotion in your students:

- “I am grateful for...”
- “I am grateful for...”
- “I am grateful for...”

# GUIDED MEDITATION

To begin this meditation, start by finding a comfortable, seated position. If you feel comfortable doing so, please close your eyes. Allow your attention to be directed inwards. Checking in with how you are feeling in your body and in your mind. Bringing a sense of acceptance to whatever your experience may be – because it is already here.

For the second part of this meditation, direct your awareness to your breath. Observing the full of cycle of your breath from the beginning of the inhalation to the end of the exhalation. Perhaps saying to yourself – "inhaling" as you inhale and "exhaling" as you exhale. Just simply staying with one point of focus. And when distractions tug at your awareness, gently guide your attention back to the breath.



# GUIDED MEDITATION MANTRAS

Now that you have taken some time to settle into the meditation, see if you can bring an image of your students into your mind. See what it is like to hold this image. As you continue to hold this image, see if you can evoke feelings of kindness towards your students. To help you in this practice, you may try bringing forth phrases that capture your deepest feelings. Some phrases you may try are the following: **May you all be happy; May you all be healthy; May you all learn in peace.**

For the next part of this practice, see if you can direct the same feelings of kindness towards yourself as a teacher. Recognizing the qualities of yourself that your students benefit from having you as a teacher: your commitment, your compassion, your care, your support. And recognizing how at times we may feel uncertain or judged, particularly from ourselves when faced with difficult situations. So, as you offer yourself loving kindness, find phrases that resonate with you: **May I be happy, May I be healthy, May I be at peace, May I do the best I can as a teacher and support for my students.**

And now bring your entire classroom into your mind. As you hold this image, again evoke feelings of kindness with the phrases that you have chosen: **May we all be happy; May we all be healthy; May we all be at peace; May we live in ease and learn together.**

# CITATIONS

- Emerson, L., Leyland, A., Hudson, K., Rowse, G., Hanley, P., & Hugh-Jones, S. (2017). Teaching Mindfulness to Teachers: A Systematic Review and Narrative Synthesis. *Mindfulness*, 8: 1136-1149.
- Greenberg, M. T., Brown J. L., Abenavoli, R.M. (2016). “Teacher Stress and Health Effects on Teachers, Students, and Schools.” Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University. (Research Brief created for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).

# LEARN MORE

For additional information about Friend to Friend or to access more bullying prevention resources, please visit [violence.chop.edu](https://violence.chop.edu)

**Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**  
Center for Violence Prevention

ABOUT CVP RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE TYPES OF VIOLENCE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

### SUPPORTING SAFE, STRONG YOUTH

Explore our research and programs.

- Bullying Prevention
- Assault Injury Prevention
- Suicide Prevention
- Intimate Partner Violence Prevention
- Gun Safety
- Affiliated Programs

### OUR MISSION

The mission of our Center is to reduce the exposure to and impact of violence among children, teens, and families. We conduct community-focused research and design innovative, evidence-based programs that are implemented, disseminated and sustained across clinical, school and neighborhood settings. Our work is trauma-informed and rooted in racial equity and social justice.