

Making Storytime Mindful

a Toolkit
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Background + Framing

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention, non-judgmentally, to the present moment. It can be practiced anywhere, at anytime. Benefits of mindfulness have been well documented and include increased self-esteem, working memory, attention, emotional regulation, and improved academic skills. It has also been shown to decrease anxiety, stress, and fatigue (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

Museums have a number of health and well-being benefits for visitors (Lackoi et al., 2016). Bringing mindfulness into the museum space is likely to support and enhance the well-being and learning already happening there.

Mindfulness benefits like emotional recognition and regulation can be useful for young children who are just learning about emotions, making children's museums fertile ground for integrating mindfulness practices.

Purpose + Impact

To help children's museums integrate brief mindfulness practices into their already existing programming, with a focus on storytime, using KidsQuest Children's Museum as a model organization.

- Understand and integrate museum professional needs and perspectives into the toolkit.
- Help museum professionals recognize the benefits of mindfulness and how it can support their work.
- Provide museum professionals an easy-to-use and flexible tool to integrate mindfulness into their programming.

Although this project is aimed at educators, the long term goal is to improve learning outcomes and well-being for program participants.

Process



Reflections

Implications:

- New material doesn't require a new program. By providing brief practices that can be integrated into already existing programming, this toolkit expands its utility and accessibility.
- A toolkit must balance the competing needs of different educator styles.
- Respect other's expertise. Provide the tools to empower them without dictating to them.
- This work aligns with the role that museums play as community anchors that support and increase well-being.

Next Steps:

- This project could be expanded to:
 - include additional mindfulness practices, gear practices toward different informal learning sites, or different audiences (different ages, interests).
- Evaluate program participants to measure mindfulness benefits.

References

- Lackoi, K., Patsou, M., & Chatterjee, H. et al. (2016). A Preliminary Report from the National Alliance for Museums, Health and Well-being. Museums for Health and Well-being.
- Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M.L., Griffin, M. L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., Frank, J., Burke, C., Pinger, L., Soloway, G., Isberg, R., Sibinga, E. Grossman, L., & Saltzman, A. (2012). Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students. *Mindfulness* 3, 291-307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5>
- Willard, C., & Saltzman, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Teaching Mindfulness Skills to Kids and Teens*. The Guilford Press.

Deliverable

One toolkit that museums (or any informal learning setting) can utilize to integrate mindfulness practices into their pre-existing programming for children 10 and younger.

Includes:

- An overview of mindfulness.
- 16 Practices to plug into programming, with suggested modifications and several handouts.
- Suggestions on integration, how to help visitors shift into a mindful mindset, how to modify practices, and how to engage caregivers.
- Information on the benefits of mindfulness with a focus on the well-being/health and learning benefits.

Sample toolkit page and corresponding handout:

3-2-1
A grounding practice to help bring attention to the present moment

target age: 2+
run time: 2 minutes
[Video of the longer version of this practice](#)

potential programming: a good practice prior to science programming & activities where children should pay attention

set up and materials: everyone seated comfortably. Copies of handout if you choose to use them

STEPS TO TEACH:

- 1 "I want to tell you about mindfulness. It means being right here. Right now"
- 2 "One way we can practice mindfulness is by paying attention to what is going on around us. I'd like to play a little mindfulness game. This game can help us feel better anytime we feel anxious and it teaches us how to pay attention. Also it's fun to notice new things! You can join me if you'd like!"
- 3 "For this game we'll try sitting however feels comfortable. I'll ask some questions and you can try answering them in your mind. From where you are sitting, what are 3 things you can see right now? Look closely at those 3 things. Notice all the different colors and textures"
- 4 "Now you can answer in our mind - what are 2 things you are hearing right now? Maybe you can hear other kids playing or cars driving nearby. Really listen for what you can hear."
- 5 "Now you can answer in your mind - what is 1 thing you can feel right now? Maybe its the ground under your body or your hair touching your face. What's one thing you can feel?"

Modifications:

- Introduce activity by saying we are going to be like scientists ("let's put on our imaginary lab coats!"), using our senses to explore the world. Then elicit senses from kids.
- With older children, you can do the practice involving all senses from the video or ask them to identify more things they can see, hear, and feel.
- Ask students to find as many red things as they can from their spot in 10 seconds. Ask them how many they found.

mindfulness
Is all about checking in, not checking out

Try checking in with your senses

- 3
What are 3 things you can see?
- 2
What are 2 things you can hear?
- 1
What is 1 thing you can feel?

You can do this anywhere at anytime! Where will you try this?

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