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Schools get on board amid growing recognition of the importance of mindfulness for children

Article by: [Nicole Madigan](#) | Published: 18-10-2019As [Magazine](#) Photo: Health Times Magazine

children report higher rates of stress than ever before, with Mission Australian citing mental health as the number one concern for young Australians aged 15 to 19, the importance of health and wellbeing development in schools is rapidly increasing.

"Today's kids are faced with more stress than the children of previous generations," says Psychotherapist Eugenie Pepper.

"In many families both parents are working and not around as much as in previous generations, more kids have parents that are divorced, children are overscheduled and this is mostly by choice, many have a fear of missing out, peer pressure and social media.

"Pressures on young people can come from parents, teachers, peers and the society.

"Young people worry about making friends, doing well in school, not being sporty enough, peer pressure and lack of confidence.



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"Children may have to cope with bullying in the playground. Balancing homework, extracurricular activities the social pressure in the playground and social media - our kids are living in a hectic fast-paced world."

Which is why Ms Pepper recommends children take part in daily meditation and mindfulness as a way of helping them cope with the pressures of the modern world.

"Meditation helps children learn to manage strong emotions.

"It helps kids function more effectively, improves attention and behaviour."

Ms Pepper says research has shown children gain the following benefits from mindfulness and meditation.

- improve school performance
- calms the nervous system
- improve health and wellbeing
- relieves anxiety and stress



- decreases stress hormones

“When a child learns to meditate, they also become more present, mindful, and more self-aware and better able to self-regulate their emotions.

“They become more aware of what they are doing, how they are reacting.

“Children and teens taking time out each day to unplug become more relaxed, more focused and happier.”

Sitting still can be difficult for some children so mindfulness techniques are often in the form of movement, yoga, or simply getting them to become aware of their surroundings, the sounds they can hear, what they feel in their body and what they can see.

“For children who find it difficult to sit still you can encourage them to want to slow down and do activities mindfully to help you relax and feel present in the moment.

“Mindfulness is the act of focusing on being in the present, such as focusing completely on eating, feeling a breeze on your skin, listening to the sounds you can hear, feeling the temperature on your skin, focus your attention a word you repeat in your head.”

Once the concept is understood, Ms Pepper says parents can assist in their child’s mindfulness development too.

“For preschool and primary children, parents can create their own guided meditation custom made to suit their child incorporating subject matter and imagery that you know will appeal to you child.

“For little kids, you can guide your own child in mediation buy using storytelling and teaching them to be more mindful.

Parents can incorporate guided meditation, a relaxation body scan or deep breathing into their children’s bedtime routine. It will help them wind down and maybe sleep better too.”

Ms Pepper says when she’s introduced these techniques to young children, they’ve been well received.

“From my experience with my 10-year and 11-years old’s, they beg me to make up guided meditations for them.

“Kids who meditate and are more mindful, pay attention better, less distractible, are better learners, better able to stay calm under stress, listen better, more patient and feel happier.”

It’s a concept that’s growing in popularity as worldwide recognition of the benefits of meditation increases.

In fact, an increasing number of schools are introducing meditation and mindfulness techniques into their curriculums to help foster and positive wellbeing of their students.

“Schools are already incorporating Positive Psychology life skills including mindfulness and mediation and seeing great results.

“Positive Psychology science-backed life skills are being included in curriculum-aligned school programs, empowering students with social, emotional and physical skills which will not only help them develop their human skills, it will also enable them to thrive.

“Meditation should be taught in all schools, the earlier children start the better to help them learn to control their emotions and feelings to prevent and relive mental illness, anxiety, and depression.

“Meditation is like exercise, it gets easier with practice.”

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