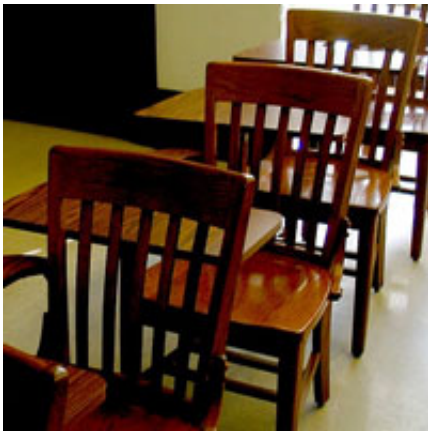


Mindfulness meditation increases well-being in adolescent boys

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'Mindfulness', the process of learning to become more aware of our ongoing experiences, increases well-being in adolescent boys, a new study reports.

Researchers from the University of Cambridge analyzed 155 boys from two independent UK schools, Tonbridge and Hampton, before and after a four-week crash course in mindfulness. After the trial period, the 14 and 15 year-old boys were found to have increased well-being, defined as the combination of feeling good (including positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, interest and affection) and functioning well.

Professor Felicia Huppert of the Well-being Institute at the University of

Cambridge said: "More and more we are realising the importance of supporting the overall mental health of children. Our study demonstrates that this type of training improves well-being in adolescents and that the more they practice, the greater the benefits. Importantly, many of the students genuinely enjoyed the exercises and said they intended to continue them - a good sign that many children would be receptive to this type of intervention.

"Another significant aspect of this study is that [adolescents](#) who suffered from higher levels of [anxiety](#) were the ones who benefitted most from the training."

For the experiment, students in six classes were trained in mindful awareness - mindfulness. Mindfulness is a 'way of paying attention. It means consciously bringing awareness to our experience, in the present moment, without making [judgements](#) about it'. Students in the five control classes attended their normal religious studies lessons.

The training consisted of four 40 minute classes, one per week, which presented the principles and practice of mindfulness. The classes covered the concepts of awareness and acceptance, and taught the schoolboys such things as how to practice bodily awareness by noticing where they were in contact with their chairs or the floor, paying attention to their breathing, and noticing all the sensations involved in walking.

The students were also asked to practice outside the classroom and were encouraged to listen to a CD or mp3 file for eight minutes a day. These exercises are intended to improve concentration and reduce stress.

All participants completed a short series of online questionnaires before and after the mindfulness project. The questionnaires measured the effect of the training on changes in mindful awareness, resilience (the ability to modify responses to changing situations) and psychological

well-being.

The researchers found that although it was a short programme, the students who participated in the mindfulness training had increased levels of well-being which were proportional to the amount of time the students spent practicing their new skills.

Professor Huppert continued: "We believe that the effects of mindfulness training can enhance well-being in a number of ways. If you practice being in the present, you can increase positive feelings by savouring pleasurable on-going experiences. Additionally, calming the mind and observing experiences with curiosity and acceptance not only reduces stress but helps with attention control and emotion regulation - skills which are valuable both inside and outside the classroom."

The success of this initial study has recently led to the creation of an exciting 8 week [mindfulness](#) curriculum for schools in both the state and private sectors. This new curriculum, which includes games and video clips, should have even greater benefits.

More information: For further information, see mindfulnessinschools.org

*As described in the Mental Health Foundation Report 'Be Mindful' 2010

The paper 'A controlled trial of mindfulness training in schools; the importance of practice for an impact on well-being' is published in the latest edition of *The Journal of Positive Psychology*.

Provided by University of Cambridge

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