

# Meditation technique enhances children's mental health

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Meditation can enhance mental health in students.  
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(Medical Xpress)—Teachers in schools across the globe are turning to a new philosophy to help improve the behaviour and well-being of students.

Mindfulness, a form of meditation, has been shown to help with a wide range of [mental health conditions](#) and improve well-being in adults. However, few trials have evaluated its effectiveness in children.

Professor Willem Kuyken from the Mood Disorders Centre at the University of Exeter is presenting new [research findings](#) from a feasibility trial which show how the mindfulness technique is also effective in improving well-being in young people. Speaking at the Mindfulness in Schools Project Annual Conference in London, Professor Kuyken will describe the results of the study which assessed how effective the intervention was at enhancing the mental health and well-being of young people aged 12-16 years.

Students from 12 [secondary schools](#) either participated in the mindfulness in schools program or took part in the usual school curriculum. Mindfulness has been described as the practice of becoming aware of what is happening in the [present moment](#) and of learning to relate more skilfully to thoughts, emotions, body sensations

and [impulses](#) as they arise. The young people who participated in the mindfulness program reported fewer [depressive symptoms](#), lower stress and greater well-being than those in the [control group](#). The findings provide promising evidence of the effectiveness of the mindfulness in schools program.

Previous studies have shown that mindfulness can have a positive impact on physical health conditions, on social and emotional skills, and on learning and cognition. Changes in the brain are the basis for these positive effects. Neuroscience and brain imaging shows that mindfulness meditation alters the structure and function of the brain to improve the quality of both thought and feeling.

Although there is more work to do to fully determine the effects of mindfulness in young people, these results suggest that students participating in the scheme are likely to benefit from improved emotional wellbeing and mental health. Such interventions can fit within the school curriculum, are inexpensive to introduce, can have rapid impact and above all are enjoyable for both pupils and staff.

The philosophy behind mindfulness is rooted in more than 2000 years of history. In the 1970s the disparate approaches were brought together and incorporated into a programme by Jon Kabat-Zinn called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Since then mindfulness-based programmes have helped thousands of people with chronic health problems and have been used to relieve distress and enhance well-being. Ongoing research in Exeter is examining mindfulness approaches for people with recurrent depression and vascular disorders.

Provided by University of Exeter

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