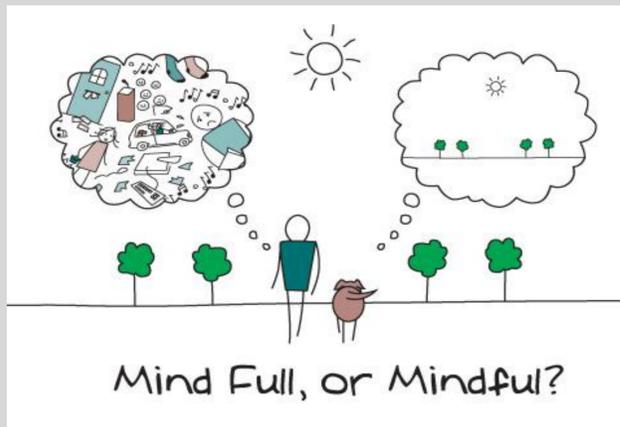


## Introduction

In June 2011, The Mindful Edge program and The Sterling Institute decided to co-operate in the completion of an action research project. The growing field of research that supports the value of mindfulness in education was of interest to both organizations.

We worked together to complete an action research project that promoted mindful living for teens and assessed the effectiveness of The Mindful Edge program by collecting research data.

The Mindful Edge program is designed to offer strategies for positive mental health promotion to students through long-term skill building. These skills help teens manage stress in a healthy manner and better ready themselves for learning in class.



## Mindfulness Defined

Mindfulness is paying attention to your life, here and now, with kindness and curiosity.

## Benefits of Being Mindful

- Clear awareness of thoughts and emotions
- Ability to relate in a new way to pain and difficulties
- Ability to experience / transform or diffuse emotional distress
- Space where creative solutions can arise
- Development of self-awareness and positive self-image
- Greater sense of well-being and ease in the world
- Ability to respond to stress more effectively
- Ability to make choices with greater clarity and awareness

## Transforming Emotional Reactivity



Mindfulness creates space, changing impulsive reactions to thoughtful responses.

## A Quick Summary of our Findings:

### Question #1 - Does the Mindful Edge program improve students' abilities to recognize and identify symptoms of stress?

Yes, the mindful awareness of students increased by 6.1%.

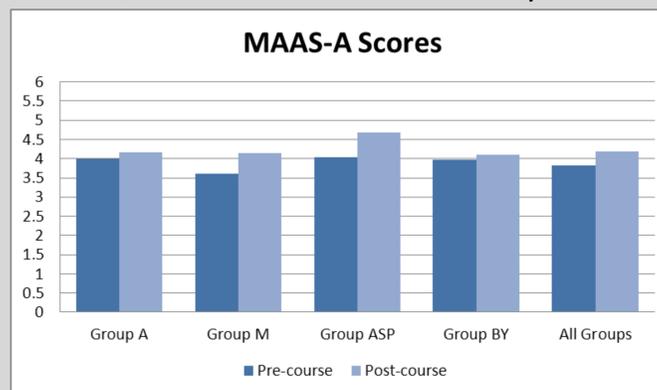


Figure 1 - Each group experienced an increase in MAAS-A scores. When all groups were combined, there was a 6.1% average increase in mindfulness traits over the course of the 8-week program.

Students recognized the following symptoms of stress in their lives.

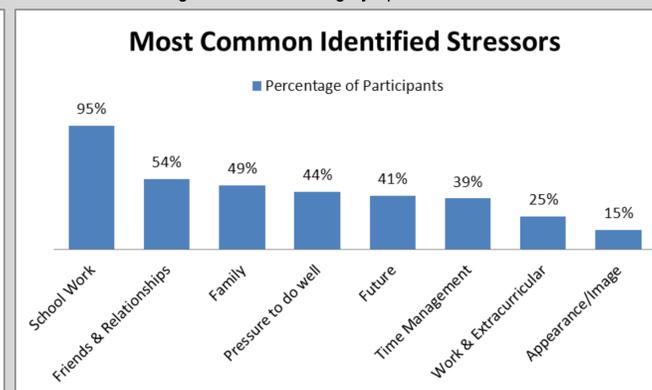


Figure 2 - The most common identified life stressors for students.

### Question #2 - If so, are they adopting more effective strategies when trying to reduce the unhealthy effects of stress?

Yes, students learned and adopted more effective strategies for dealing with the unhealthy effects of stress.

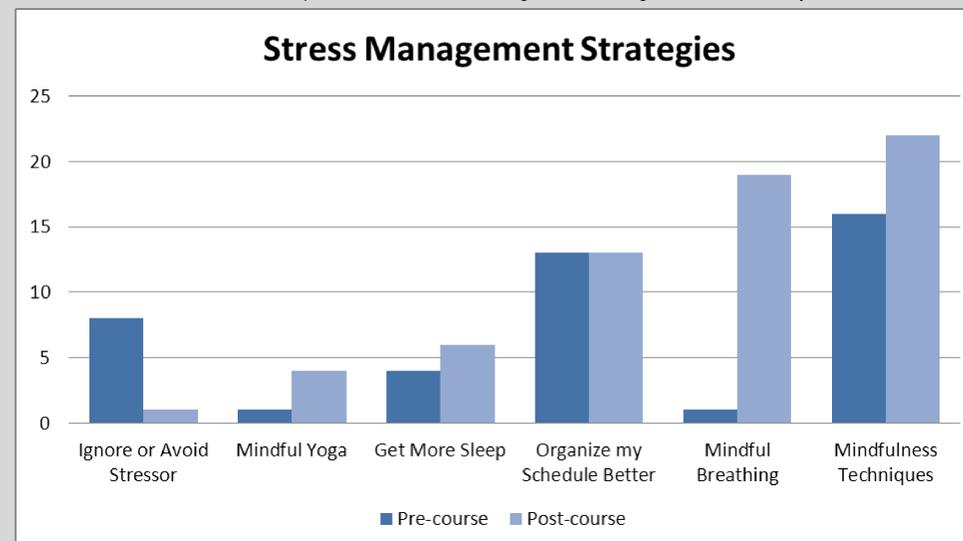


Figure 3 - Stress management strategies used by participants. By comparing pre-course and post-course strategies, it was found that less mindful strategies, such as ignoring the stressor, decreased and more mindful strategies, like mindful breathing and yoga, increased.

## The Issue

The troubled hearts and minds of children are becoming a campaign issue in Ontario. A broad new coalition of hospitals, social workers, children's aid societies, psychologists, teachers, students, and trustees cites the turbulent mental health of today's students - from anxiety and depression to suicidal feelings - as the "number one issue facing schools today" (OPSBA, 2011).

Louise Brown - Education Reporter

## Mindfulness: Fostering Positive Mental Health

Students may come to school with stressors arising from many sources. Combined with the challenges of learning and achievement, these sources of stress can, at times, be toxic to a student's learning and development. Sustained stress in childhood and adolescence is likely to impact well-being, general functioning, and factors specific to learning such as executive function and working memory. Many youth exhibit learning, behavioral, attentional and/or mental health problems that are stress-sensitive or stress induced.

The school setting offers an ideal environment for providing the experiential practice of mindfulness through which students learn an attitude - a way of being - that broadens the skill sets of attention, balance and compassion. Training in mindfulness provides very practical and simple exercises that enhance the accepted value of Social and Emotional Learning.

Social & Emotional Learning Core Competencies



## Contact Information

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