

Webinar Transcript: Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms & School Communities

by Elli Weisbaum

[SLIDE – Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms & School Communities]

[Text on slide: Presented by: Elli Weisbaum.

Instructor Applied Mindfulness & Meditation Certificate, University of Toronto

Ph.D., student, Institute of Medical Science, University of Toronto

Please call at 416-929-4311 ext. 27

Image of LD@school logo

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Moderator: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to LD@school's first webinar for the 2016 – 2017 school year! My name is Amy Gorecki and I will be your moderator this afternoon. If anyone is experiencing any difficulties at this time, please call the number on the displayed slide. Also, if you have a Twitter account and would like to tweet us live throughout the webinar, our Twitter handle is displayed at the bottom of this slide.

[SLIDE – Image of LD@school logo]

[Text on slide: Funding for the production of this publication was provided by the Ministry of Education.

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[SLIDE – What We Will be Sending You]

[Text on slide:

1. Power Point Slides;
2. Webinar Evaluation Survey;
3. Link to Access the Webinar Recording.]

Moderator: After the webinar, we will be sending out the presentation slides, as well as a link to a survey to provide us with feedback on the webinar. In approximately **three** weeks, the webinar recording will be available and we will send out a link to all participants.

[SLIDE – Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms & School Communities]

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The LD@school team is very pleased to welcome our guest speaker, Elli Weisbaum, whose presentation this afternoon is entitled, *Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms and School Communities*.

For your information, all webinar participants, with the exception of the presenters, have now been muted for the remainder of the presentation; once our presenters have finished their presentation, we will be opening up the floor for questions.

Over the course of the presentation, if you would like to ask any of the LD@school team a question, you may enter your text in the box at the bottom of the control panel and choose to send it to the staff from the dropdown menu underneath.

We will also be tweeting throughout the webinar, so if you would like to participate, you can send us a tweet. Our Twitter handle is @LDatschool, which is displayed at the bottom of this slide.

[SLIDE – Welcome]

[Text on slide: Elli Weisbaum.

Instructor Applied Mindfulness & Meditation Certificate, University of Toronto
Ph.D., student, Institute of Medical Science, University of Toronto
Image of Elli Weisbaum]

That takes care of housekeeping for this afternoon, so let's get started. It is now my pleasure to introduce our speaker, Elli Weisbaum, a Toronto based mindfulness practitioner and teacher, who is presenting, *Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms and School Communities*.

Welcome Elli - the cyber floor is now yours.

[SLIDE – Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms & School Communities]

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[SLIDE – Welcome]

[Text on slide: Elli Weisbaum

Instructor of Applied Mindfulness & Meditation Certificate
University of Toronto Ph.D. Student, Institute of Medical Science
Photo of Elli Weisbaum.]

[SLIDE- Introduction to Mindfulness for Educators, Classrooms & School Communities]

[Text on slide: Presenter Elli Weisbaum

Image with a quote: "Happy teachers will change the world"
Calligraphy by Zen Master & Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Thich Nhat Hanh.]

Elli Weisbaum: Elli Weisbaum, I'm based in Toronto. I have a master's degree focused on bringing mindfulness education, and for this degree, I actually did a human participatory research around the



world, going into schools, K through 12, in India, Bhutan, Germany, the U.K., the United States and Canada. In all these places, I was going into classrooms doing workshops with teachers, students, parents and school administrators around mindfulness. Days of mindfulness, introductions to mindfulness and exploring how mindfulness could really impact as communities and what that might look like. I'm currently at the University of Toronto completing a PhD, focusing in bringing mindfulness into healthcare, really continuing this work of what impact mindfulness has on communities, and I'm also faculty at the University of Toronto's Applied Mindfulness and Meditation Certificate program. And I worked for a year previously as the international coordinator for Wake-Up Schools, which is Thich Nhat Hanh's initiative to bring mindfulness into education systems around the world. So that's a little bit about me. And now I want to dive into our topic for today, which is, what is mindfulness?

[SLIDE- What is mindfulness?]

[Text on slide: Image of a man walking his dog with the caption "Mind Full, or Mindful?" A thought bubble above the man shows his mind is clouded with thought, while a thought bubble above the dog shows a picture of the park the man and dog are walking through. The dog is fully present in the moment.]

Elli Weisbaum: Mind full, or mindful. And I think probably many of us coming to this webinar today have some ideas of what mindfulness is, maybe you've experienced it in a yoga class or read a book, and I always think it's nice just to start by thinking about what our own perceptions are of this idea that we're going to explore today. And I love this slide. You may have seen it before, but it's just a great example of what we're kind of starting to talk about, this idea that we could have a mind full of our worries, our fears, a song we heard yesterday, where we need to get to. Or we could have a mind that's really aware of what's in front of us right now. So we can take a moment, and you can just think to yourself, how often does your mind look like each of these examples? More often, do you find your mind looking more like the human here who has it just full of everything that's going on? Or do you find that you're often aware of your surroundings, and have a clear mind? And I ask this question because mindfulness is both a tool we can apply in our classrooms, but also a wonderful invitation to reflect on our own experiences. So just take a moment for yourself right now. Think back over this day, and which have these minds have you had today? The busy mind or the clear mind? Let's take a moment, one is not right or wrong, it's not good or bad, just to kind of let yourself know which of these minds have you been living with today.

[SLIDE- Quick poll: How much experience have you had with Mindfulness?]

[Text on slide:

- No experience
- Some experience
- Extensive experience]

Elli Weisbaum: And before we go any further into our reflection on this topic, I'd also like to find out who's in the room today. So we've set up a poll, just a little bit about our own experience where we're coming from, which will help me frame this webinar. So I'd like to invite our moderators to put that poll up, and to invite all of you participating to add into the poll, and we'll just learn a little bit about the experience of those of us who have joined the webinar today.

So it's great, I see the polls are coming in. So it looks like we're kind of around 20 percent no experience, 70 percent some experience, and 11 percent extensive experience. So welcome to all the different experiences. Like I said, with mindfulness, we're really kind of just becoming aware of what's around us

in the present moment. So it's great to know that we have some people who are just trying us out for the first time, so welcome. We'll definitely have lots of introductions for you. And also, if you're wondering, what is this thing I keep hearing about, we're seeing more and more articles about mindfulness. The New York Times has been running a series of them, so it's great to have you here, to explore what this is about. For those of you with some experience, I hope that we'll be able to kind of go a little bit deeper, give you some new tools that you might want to test out and some new language. And those of you with extensive experience, I appreciate you being here as support. I look forward to some questions you may have, and also hope that I can give you more language, either on the neuroscience side or in practical applications to support the experience that you've had. So thank you for participating in this poll. It's great to know who's on the call.

[SLIDE- Two definitions of mindfulness]

[Text on slide: "Mindfulness is the awareness of what is happening inside and around us in the present moment" – Plum Village Community.

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally" – Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR.]

Elli Weisbaum: And so, with that, we'll return to my presentation here. And we'll move on, just to start by getting a few working definitions of mindfulness. You know, as I said, mindfulness is about community, and it's also about creating a common language for ourselves to know how to express our emotions, what we're feeling, and also to create that common language with our students, our colleagues, with the parents and even the whole world that we interface with. Mindfulness gives us this great language. So to start with these two definitions of mindfulness; the first is from the Plum Village Community, which is the international community of my teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh. And that definition is, "Mindfulness is the awareness of what is happening inside and around us in the present moment." And you'll see I've bolded the word "awareness" and "present moment." And for me, these really stand out as some of the key tools or expressions of mindfulness that we'll run into time and time again throughout the presentation. Awareness -- simply being aware of what's happening. Awareness is a word that we all are very familiar with, but we can imagine how much of our day we spend not being aware. Many of you can take a moment to think how often you've lost the awareness that you have a body, and realize several hours later you need water, you need to go to the bathroom, and you haven't taken care of yourself. So awareness is really important to mindfulness. It's something we're trying to engage with when we think about awareness for our students. Awareness is also something in neuroscience that we know is directly connected to attention. Attention impacts our ability to learn, take in new information, so awareness is a very key piece of what we're trying to develop, both for ourselves and our students when we do a mindfulness practice. And then present moment is another idea that we're going to return to throughout the presentation, but this idea awareness of the present moment. So this isn't awareness of the future, which is my mind running away to worries and things coming up and planning, it's not awareness of the past, my mind replaying something or going back to something. It's awareness of the present moment. And specifically, when we talk about learning, learning only happens in the present moment. Learning is what is in front of us right now. And so this heightened awareness of present moment is an incredibly useful skill both for learning math and also for handling our strong emotions. The next definition is by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who is the founder of MBSR, Mindful Base Stress Reduction, a program that many of you may be familiar with. And he says that, "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." Now, we see a few key words that are overlapping here; attention and awareness, present moment. But I really wanted to highlight this word, "non-judgmentally." I think this an absolute foundation for any mindfulness practice. Non-judgment is something that I love introducing to students

of all ages. And often, when I ask what non-judgment is, the first answer I get is that non-judgment towards others; I shouldn't judge someone by their race or the clothes they're wearing, or how they speak. And this actually is almost easier than the other type of non-judgment, which is non-judgment towards yourself. To not judge yourself for how you look or how you're speaking is an incredibly difficult and powerful thing to do. And it's something that awareness of the present moment can help us to practice. And if we've been following some of the articles coming out recently, we have this word in our kind of consciousness right now, micro-aggression. And judgment is kind of micro-aggression that we actually aim towards ourselves all the time. And this can have a huge impact on learning. We're going to get into the neuroscience and the impact that stress has on learning. But just in a fundamental way, when we just ourselves -- do I sound stupid? Do I look cool enough? That person is better than me -- we have a huge impact on our cognition and our ability to use our executive function and to express ourselves with other people. And so non-judgment is a foundational piece of this. And again, that idea of awareness of the present moment, I'd like to invite you to become aware of whether you have judged yourself today. Just think back. Maybe in the morning you looked in the mirror and judged your hair, what you were going to wear today. Maybe you said something to a colleague earlier and you thought, oh, that wasn't the right way to say that -- I'm sure all of you can probably find many times already today that you've judged yourself. I'm probably judging myself the whole time I'm giving this talk, and that's something for me to be aware of. So again, these terms are going to come up throughout the presentation. They apply to ourselves as educators, and they also apply to every single one of our students in terms of their impact on learning, attention. And specifically, when we think about students with learning disabilities. We know that there can be a lot of comparison and judgment that they put towards themselves and other students. So bringing in this concept, making it explicit, that we want to practice not to judge ourselves, can really open students' hearts and allow them to feel safer in the classroom and safer to learn, because if I'm sitting there thinking I'm stupid because I can't read, that has a huge impact on my ability to learn to read.

[SLIDE- Mindfulness seeks to address]

[Text on slide:

- **Students**
 - Decrease anxiety, stress and fatigue;
 - Improve emotional regulation, resiliency, self-esteem & sense of well-being;
 - Build attention & ability to focus;
 - Reduce depression.

- **Teachers**
 - Reduce stress;
 - Prevent burnout;
 - Increase self-compassion;
 - Improve classroom management;
 - Build & maintain supportive relationships with students;
 - Increase sense of well-being.]

Elli Weisbaum: So moving on from these two definitions, as we're kind of going to go into more concrete examples, I just want to give a little overview of some of the items that mindfulness is seeking to address. And when we do our follow-up resource email, we can actually send you research articles that are exploring every single one of these. So these are words I have actually pulled directly from

published peer review journal articles, so all of them has an efficacy and rigor behind them. But I'll just do a quick rundown here; so students, we're looking to decrease anxiety, stress and fatigue, improve emotional regulation, resiliency, self-esteem and a sense of well-being, build attention and ability to focus, reduce depression. And so these are some of the things that the trials have shown mindfulness interventions can address. And of course, if we know our students, especially those with learning disabilities, we know that there is a really high risk of things like anxiety, stress, fatigue and depression. And so, just in a base way, we know as we move through the exercises today that all of these exercises have been shown to have a really positive impact on these areas. And in our second column here, teachers -- reduce stress, prevent burnout, increase self-compassion, improve classroom management, build and maintain supportive relationships with students, increase a sense of well-being. So there's some overlap here, as well as some things getting into our classroom management. And again, I really want to stress the importance of keeping in mind both yourselves as educators and your students when we explore the impact mindfulness can have, because of course we want to support our students, but also in mindfulness we're very interested in how it supports the teachers themselves.

[SLIDE]-

[Text on slide: the way in is out

Calligraphy by Zen Master & Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Thich Nhat Hanh.]

Elli Weisbaum: And with that, I'll move on to another calligraphy from my teacher. And this says, "The way out is in." And this calligraphy can be explained that, in order to take care of others, those outside of ourselves, we need to know how to take care of ourselves. And when we know how to take care of ourselves, we will already take good care of those around us. And this calligraphy is, again, a real invitation, before we get into some of the practical tools that I'm going to introduce later, to begin by looking at how this can impact yourselves as educators. I don't want to give you something extra you have to do every day. But I will say, and I'll give some examples later, that a lot of the educational communities that I work in, when we start bringing mindfulness into those settings, the educators find out that it actually gives them more energy, more time to be there for their students, because of how it impacts them.

[SLIDE]-

[Text on slide: the way in is out

Calligraphy by Zen Master & Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Thich Nhat Hanh.]

Elli Weisbaum: So with that, I'd like to go into our first brief activity here. I'd like to invite you, for this activity, I'm going to ask you to imagine something. You can close your eyes, especially if you're sitting with other colleagues that can be kind of good. If you want to keep them open, that's fine. But I'm going to ask you to take a moment when I ask this question, just to see what comes to mind first. The question is, please bring to mind a teacher from your childhood who you really loved -- whoever comes to mind first -- and take a moment to just think about what you loved about them. Why did this person just pop into your mind? A teacher you loved from your childhood. And think of a few key words, if you can, or a sentence. And I'd like to invite us now to actually put these sentences into the Question section.

[SLIDE- Reflection Activity]

[Text on slide:

1. Bring to mind a teacher from your childhood who you really liked.
2. Share in the questions section – “send to all” 1 or 2 words why you liked them. Example “kind”.]

Elli Weisbaum: So if you look at your kind of webinar toggle there, you'll see that there's a Question section. And I'd like to invite, if you're inspired, just to write in a word or a sentence out, why did this person come to mind? What is it that you loved about them? And we'll just kind of take in a few of these answers and see what comes up for all of you on this reflection. I'll just take a moment to look here at the Question section. And if you hit Reply All, we should be able to have these come in. All right, so I see a few of these coming in now. And it's very nice to kind of just see the words that pop up for people, when we think about the teachers that we love from our childhood. You know, it's very interesting, I've actually done this activity and asked this question all around the world. As I mentioned earlier, I was in India, Bhutan, in the U.K., in Germany, in the U.S. and Canada, and what's fascinating to me is, any time that I ask this question, inevitably, we hear about who the teacher was. I don't think I've ever heard that someone loved their grade four teacher because they taught them multiplication. Usually, we get these words like, "they listened," "they were excited about me," "they took time with me" -- we hear the qualities of who that person was, not the curriculum that they were teaching. And again, I think this is an important place to start, because as educators, it's important to think what our intentions are. Who will we be? Will we be in that student's mind in 20, 30, 40, 50 years? And why will they remember us? Again, this isn't to put more pressure on you to have to do more work. We're going to get into some pretty accessible and easy tools that we can start bringing in to look at who we're being in our classroom. But I really want to address what's coming out of the research, which is that who the teacher is, is such an important component for learning. And we often call this the "hidden curriculum" in a classroom.

[SLIDE- The Hidden Curriculum]

[Text on slide: Image of an iceberg]

Top of the iceberg represents the visible curriculum: formal curriculum.

The, much larger, bottom portion of the iceberg represents the hidden curriculum: interaction with students, school governance and school management.]

Elli Weisbaum: So this is just a little kind of graphic. And what's visible is this tiny bit of the iceberg, which is the formal curriculum; I can walk into the classroom, I can see that a reading class is going on, that a literature class is going on -- you know, what I see there, right now, what the teacher's teaching. And yet what's hidden, this huge part of what's going on in the classroom are the interactions with the students, school governance and classroom management. It's who you are. It's how you respond when a student asks a question. And again, going back to that first definition of mindfulness, awareness of what's happening inside and around as an in the present moment. Mindfulness, if all you take away today is to not judge yourself, and to be aware of what's happening -- that's the start. And what's interesting about the word "aware" is that it doesn't have the word "fix" or "change" in it, just "awareness." And so mindfulness practice at its core is about starting somewhere to even become aware of this huge amount of hidden curriculum that the students are taking in within our classroom.

[SLIDE- The importance of relationships]

[Text on slide: What matters most in early childhood education:

not the # of children

not the caregiver: children ratio

not having the best materials

but the caring relationship between the teacher and the children



- Adele Diamond, slide from AMindfulSociety Conference 2016, review of international studies (e.g., Melhuish, 1990 a&b).]

Elli Weisbaum: And jumping off of this, I'll just share a few stats about the importance of relationships. This is from Adele Diamond, she's a wonderful Canadian researcher in B.C., and her research says that what matters most in early childhood education -- not the number of children, not the caregiver to child ratio, not having the best materials -- but the caring relationship between the teacher and the children. So again, we know that as educators, you're dealing with so much. But it's just raising that awareness of what's really important in our classrooms. So who the caregiver is matters most -- this is, again, from Adele, "Across all types of psychotherapy, nothing predicts a good outcome as reliably as the patient's experience of the therapist as being warm, caring and genuine. And that's the patient's experience of being seen, understood and helped."

[SLIDE- Who the caregiver is matters the most]

[Text on slide: "Across all types of psychotherapy, nothing predicts a good outcome as reliably as the patient's experience of the therapist as being warm, caring, and genuine, and, thus, the patient's experience of being seen, understood and helped.

– Adele Diamond, slide from A MindfulSociety Conference 2016, review of Saffran & Muran by Diana Fosha, Winter 2003, pp. 30-32.]

Elli Weisbaum: And again, just relating this to classrooms, reflecting on who the caregiver is in that setting, and really understanding the impact of who you are as the educator there, and that this impacts the students' ability to be seen, understood and helped. And again, relating this back to LD classrooms, we know that there's a lot of different learning styles and spaces, and so this need for being seen, understood and helped is really amplified in those spaces.

[SLIDE- Sustaining teachers]

[Text on slide: The dissatisfaction of teachers can be seen reflected in recent studies that look at teacher attrition, also referred to as teacher turnover. In their 2003 summary report the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003, p.8) states, "Teacher retention has become a national crisis. As we make clear in the full report that accompanies this summary, teacher turnover is now undermining teaching quality and it is driving teacher shortages. "]

Elli Weisbaum: So sustaining teachers is something that we're really interested in in mindfulness. We're saying that there's this huge hidden curriculum. We know that there's so much work and pressure put on teachers. And so I just wanted to share this interesting statistic that came out of the United States National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and it just says that, "Teacher retention has become a national crisis." And I think this is a really interesting point to start from, because if we're being aware, that's what mindfulness is. We want to be aware that there is a crisis of our teachers, and that our teachers are a group of people we want to support and take care of.

[SLIDE- What neuroscience tells us about stress & learning]

[Text on slide: Recent advancements in the field of neuroscience, particularly stemming from fMRI research studies, have given greater insight into how the brain functions. Understanding brain processes, like the amygdala flight/fight/freeze response can help us understand where our emotional reactions come from.]

Elli Weisbaum: So with that, we're going to shift and go into a little bit of the neuroscience. So with mindfulness, we now have two little working definitions; we're starting to think of words like "aware" and "present moment," and we're going to get into some very practical applications and activities in a moment. But before we go there, I want to take a moment to talk about the neuroscience, because as we learn more about the brain and how it functions, it's becoming an incredible door through which mindfulness has come into education. And if we look at the increase in popularity of mindfulness-based interventions being brought into education, we can see that a lot of it stems from the findings in neuroscience. Recent advancements in the field of neuroscience are particularly from fMRI research studies, which I can talk more about later, we can send some examples if you want. But this is the ability to actually -- I get functional MRIs, which means seeing how people's brains are reacting in real time, have given us a lot of insight into how the brain functions, they've only been around for about 20 years. And understand these processes can really help us understand where emotional reactions come from. And as you know, you may have experienced this, a student who is just unable to focus in the classroom is having what you might feel is an overreaction to something; they're not able to self-regulate, they're throwing a chair, they're kicking a friend, whatever the outcome is. Having a deeper understanding of really why that's happening from a neuroscience perspective can help you as an educator increase your capacity and compassion, and also that understanding and help your students know what's going on in their brains.

[SLIDE-Fight/Flight/Freeze Response]

[Text on slide: image of two brains]

The first one represents the Amygdala: detects if a trigger is a threat, initiates "flight/fight/freeze" response. The second image represents the Prefrontal cortex: center for executive function, regulates thoughts/emotions/actions, impacted by chemicals caused by stress.]

Elli Weisbaum: So for me, and I love teaching this, I teach about the amygdala and prefrontal cortex to all ages, and here we have an example of both spaces. So you can see on the left there, your amygdala is a tiny part of your brain in the limbic system; it's a very old piece of our brain, it's about the size of an almond, which is what amygdala means. And the amygdala is in charge of detecting a trigger as a threat, and initiating the flight, fight or freeze response, which you may have heard of. And this is a response, or basically we have a chemical reaction in our body that's going to get us ready, let's say, from an evolutionary perspective, to fight a tiger in the woods. And so this is a very handy thing from an evolution perspective, because we're going to be able to kind of put all of our executive function offline; I don't need to do multiplication while I'm running from a tiger, I'll be ready to run. But this is not so helpful when we're trying to learn, or have an emotionally-cognizant response. So you can see on the right hand side here, our prefrontal cortex, it's right at the front, newest part of our brain. It's in charge of our executive function, it regulates our thoughts, emotions and actions. And it is directly impacted by the chemicals caused by stress. So these two parts of our brains are something we're going to explore a little further.

[SLIDE-What happens to the brain during a stress response?]

[Text on slide:

The body and the brain respond to stress with a complex cascade of hormones and neurotransmitters. When a child's senses perceive danger, their hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) system releases steroid hormones (glucocorticoids). The HPA also stimulates the release of epinephrine (adrenaline), which activates the amygdala, which in turn triggers a fearful response and which increases alertness and feelings of anxiety.

Image of a brain with a megaphone.

Source: How Stress Affects the Brain During Learning. By Leah Levy, October 13th, 2014
www.edudemic.com/stress-affects-brain-learning.]

Elli Weisbaum: What happens to the brain during a stress response? So as I mentioned, when we perceive danger, our HPA systems releases hormones. And this creates a cascade that actually triggers our fearful response that allow us to be alert at a time of danger. What's interesting about this is the word "perceived danger," and I want to take a moment here to pause. Students in our classrooms, and even ourselves, have different things that we perceive as danger. From an evolutionary perspective, what we're trying to perceive is a snake. I see a snake; I need to immediately know that it's dangerous. However, students are actually perceiving things like exams as danger. We're seeing the same hormonal chemical HPA system release response to sitting down in front of an exam as we are to that snake. And this is where it impacts learning, and becomes incredibly difficult.

[SLIDE-How stress inhibits a brain's ability to learn]

[Text on slide:

Together, the HPA system will keep a child stimulated & ready to run. While this may be good for truly life or death situations, this stress response makes learning difficult, as the stimulated deep learning. You wouldn't try to memorize the times tables if you were being chased by a bear.

Source: How Stress Affects the Brain During Learning. By Leah Levy, October 13th, 2014
www.edudemic.com/stress-affects-brain-learning.]

Elli Weisbaum: And so the way that it inhibits it is, it makes it not associate with deep learning, and also I love this little quote at the bottom here, "You wouldn't try to memorize the times tables if you were being chased by a bear." So of course, if we saw our students running away from an animal, we wouldn't walk up to them and ask them to work on their multiplication tables. But we would ask them to do that if they're sitting in our classroom. And we may not be aware of the stress they're under, they may have perceived danger from another student who's bullying them. They may have a learning disability that's impacting their reading, and when a book is put in front of them, they perceive danger on the same scale as meeting that tiger. They have a full chemical response. Their executive systems are offline. There is no way for them to learn in that moment. And yet, we pressure and ask them to. And so again, raising our own awareness of what's going on in students' brains, and also sharing this with them can really have a wonderful impact on all of us in the classroom, because when we're aware of it, we're able to respond to it and take care of it. I had a student in grade three run up to me one day after recess. And he comes up to me and he says, "Elli, I'm having an amygdala response!" And I was, like, "Okay." He was, like, "I kicked somebody!" I was, like, "Okay, well, what do we do now?" And he was, like, "Well, we breathe, and our prefrontal cortex will help us." And I just thought that was such a lovely example of how this awareness can move us from a stress response to an executive function response.

[SLIDE-The "Brain hijack"]

[Text on slide:

Part of stimulus goes directly from the thalamus to the amygdala, bypassing the neocortex "thinking brain". If the amygdala sense danger it triggers the HPA axis. Daniel Goleman refers to this as a "brain hijack".

Image that represents the process of brain hijack.]

Elli Weisbaum: So just to summarize up this section, here I have a picture that is explaining the "brain hijack." So you'll notice that we have the eye as our example of where our sensory perceptions are coming in, so this is visual stimulus. And that goes into our thalamus, and then normally it would

continue on back to our occipital lobe and then compute back up through our brain towards our hippocampus where we're going to make memories, and then towards the frontal lobe where our executive function is. That's kind of the standard trajectory for visual stimulus that we're going to use to analyze and compute information coming in. But you'll see, there's another arrow that goes directly from the thalamus, that's the yellow part, to our amygdala. There's a tiny bit of this information that bypasses the whole system that's going to make a kind of rigorous analysis, and just goes directly to the amygdala so we can immediately decide if there is a danger. And if we perceive a danger, then our HPA system is triggered, our executive functions are offline, this tiny part of our brain has basically hijacked the rest of it, because it wants to keep us safe. And so again, as educators, it's very important to understand the brain hijack, to know what's happening when a student is unable to self-regulate. And to be able to communicate with them at that time with this deeper understanding of how much of a difficult perceived danger sense that they're in.

[SLIDE]

[Text on slide:

Without mindfulness – Stimulus prompts a reaction

With mindfulness – Stimulus leads to mindfulness and response.

Source: Mindful Schools, "Class Three: Mindfulness of Emotions, page 6. Retrieved from: mindfulschools.org]

Elli Weisbaum: So here we have a slide from Mindful Schools, which is a great program out of Oakland, MindfulSchools.org if you want to learn more. And this is just a little graph from them that's going to explain what we're trying to get at with mindfulness, in terms of responding to the way the brain is set up. So without mindfulness, we have stimulus, somebody kicks me in the playground -- reaction, I kick them back immediately. With mindfulness we could have the stimulus -- someone kicks me, I'm aware of how it affects me, I following my breathing, I try one of the techniques that we're about to explore, and then I have a response. I tell them that I don't want them to kick me. I decide to walk away from the situation. So what we're trying to do with mindfulness is move from reaction to response, to give ourselves the ability to bring our prefrontal cortex back online, even if our amygdala has momentarily taken over.

[SLIDE-Introducing Mental Fitness: Why we call it a practice]

[Text on slide:

Three foundational practices that can be applied to different activities to develop mindful awareness & create mindful moments:

- Present Moment Awareness;
- Bell as reminder to notice;
- Breath to anchor the mind.]

Elli Weisbaum: So I like to refer to this as "mental fitness." So we're going to shift now from the neuroscience into how we actually bring this into school settings and classrooms. I like to introduce it as mental fitness, because physical fitness is something that really has been understood and accepted by our society over the last several years, as something each person needs to do. And also, I like it because all of us exercise in different ways. Physical fitness is not just one thing, and yet when we imagine mindfulness, many people just imagine someone sitting silently on a cushion in a room by themselves. Of course, this is an optional way to practice, it's a great way to take care of yourself, but it isn't the only way. Mindfulness really means to meet students where they are, be fun, and reflect the environment that they're in. So mental fitness is a great introduction. I like to ask students and teachers that I work

with why we practice things. When I ask this to students, they often tell me, oh, I practice soccer, or dance or piano. And I ask them, "Why do you practice?" And inevitably the answer is, "To get better." And that's the exact same thing for mindfulness. We practice mindfulness activities, which we're about to try out, to get better, to be stronger, because if we only apply mindfulness in our classrooms at a time of difficulty, we won't be strong enough to use it. It's like if you were going to play a game of soccer and you hadn't practiced in eight months or stretched; you'd probably pull a muscle or tear a muscle, even, on the field as you were running. Mindfulness is a little like that. We want to bring it in at times when our classroom is calm and open, even for ourselves, so that when we hit our big game -- that could be for us as educators -- we have a promotion, or we're worried about whether or not we're going to get bumped because of where we are in our standing with the school. For students, this could be their parents getting a divorce or an exam. We want to be strong enough to be able to mentally support ourselves at those times. So for practicing a little bit in an ongoing way, our mindfulness practices will be there. That's to help support us in these times of difficulty. So if you're bringing this to your students, it's a great place to start. Ask them what they practice, then let them know that mindfulness is just like this. It's another thing that's a little different for everyone. Some days we're going to have a better game, some days we're not. We're not going to judge ourselves, we're just going to start exercising our mental faculties. So with that, I'd like to introduce us to our first practice.

[SLIDE]

[Text on slide:

Three foundational practices that can be applied to different activities to develop mindful awareness & create mindful moments:

- Present Moment Awareness;
- Bell as reminder to notice;
- Breath to anchor the mind.]

Elli Weisbaum: Those of you who have lots of experience will be familiar with these different foundations. I'd like to introduce these three foundations for you, because today we're going to try them out with a sitting practice, but they can really be applied to many different activities we do throughout the day to make them into mindful moments. So this is present moment awareness, bell as a reminder to notice, and breath to anchor the mind. I'm going to go through each of these foundations briefly now, so we can kind of get an idea of how they apply to us.

[SLIDE-The present moment]

[Text on slide:

Image: a signpost that represents now, yesterday and tomorrow.]

Elli Weisbaum: So the present moment -- we've heard this since the definitions. But I'd like to introduce present moment to students as this idea that our mind can time-travel, which is kind of a fun idea. It's just a simple idea that our mind spends a lot of time thinking about the future, planning for the future, worrying about the future or running away to the past, replaying stories, and it doesn't spend a lot of time in the now, which as we said earlier is where learning happens. I'd like to invite you now, just think -- since I've been talking, have you thought of something coming up in the future, or something going on in the past? You're with some colleagues, please raise your hands for each other, but I would expect that 100 percent of us on the call, including myself, have let our minds wander. So the idea is that present moment awareness is something that we're actually training for in our mindfulness. We're learning how to let our mind stay in the present moment. This supports us in many ways. It supports attention, focus, and it also supports our ability to notice how we're feeling. Many of you, maybe like me, sometimes

have trouble falling asleep at night, because often night time is the only time that I actually stop and let my brain settle in my body and tell me what's going on. All of a sudden, I have this flood of thoughts that come in. So giving ourselves time throughout the day to train to be in the present moment is a very helpful thing.

[SLIDE-The bell]

[Text on slide:

Image of, Thich Nhat Hanh, mindfulness teacher, with a bell.]

Elli Weisbaum: The bell -- here is a picture of my teacher, so I like to share it. He's ringing the kind of bell that you'll hear me ring, so now you have an image. The bell can really be any sound that you like to use in your classrooms. Teachers use rain sticks, chimes -- the idea of the bell, and you'll hear it used, is simply to have a sound that reminds our mind to come back, because even during the short activity we're going to try, it's very likely that your mind will naturally run to the future or the past. In fact, if we haven't practiced mindfulness a lot, it's going to happen over and over and over. So we use a sound to cut through the thoughts and remind us to bring our mind back to the present moment. So what do we bring it back to?

[SLIDE-Breath]

[Text on slide:

Image of a young woman breathing.]

Elli Weisbaum: And this is where the breath comes in really handy. We like to say in mindfulness that the breath is the anchor to the present moment. If I am fully aware of my breath, congratulations. My mind and my body, I'm in the here and now. So throughout this next activity that we're going to try, if your mind runs away to the point where you can't even hear my voice anymore, maybe you're having a busy day -- that's fine.

I invite you to bring it back to your breathing, and the sound of my voice.

[SLIDE]

[Text on slide:

Three foundational practices that can be applied to different activities to develop mindful awareness & create mindful moments:

- Present Moment Awareness;
- Bell as reminder to notice;
- Breath to anchor the mind.]

Elli Weisbaum: So just to recap, what we're going to try on this activity is, we're going to try and bring our minds to the present moment. Then they're going to wander off. The bell will remind us to notice where our mind has gone. Once we notice where our mind has gone, we bring it back to our breathing. That's our anchor, and then, ta-da -- we arrive at in the present moment. So there's this kind of cycle that we'll go through. So with that, I am going to invite you to try out our first activity. It's going to be a very simple three-minute breathing exercise.

[SLIDE- Mindfulness Activity- Guided Meditation]

[Text on slide:

Goals/Outcomes:

- Learn practice to calm the mind;

- Reduce anxiety & stress;
- Shift from reaction to response;
- Build foundations for mindfulness practice;
- Cultivate sense of gratitude/happiness.]

Elli Weisbaum: So some goals and outcomes of practical breathing exercises, learning to calm the mind, reducing anxiety and stress, this can help us if we're practicing it in the classroom. If we're out on the playground and we've been doing this for two weeks and someone kicks us, we can remind ourselves to go back to this response that we've actually trained ourselves to do. It builds foundation for other mindfulness practices, and it cultivates a sense of gratitude and happiness. You'll see how it does that a little later. So I want to remind you before we go into this activity of a few key things.

First off, practice your non-judgment. This means for yourself. Your mind is definitely going to wander, even though we're trying to keep it present. And instead of getting angry at your mind wandering, if you notice your mind wandering, I'd like you to congratulate yourself on this very happy moment, because you've become aware. And then see if you can bring it back. This is really the weight-lifting part of this exercise, that not perfectly emptying your mind and levitating, but actually learning how to notice when it wanders, and getting it to come back. So your goal is to see if you can keep your mind in the present moment, but your hidden curriculum goal is to not judge yourself when it goes away, and bring it back. You can also practice not judging the activity. You might be, like, "Why am I doing this? This is a waste of my time." That's totally fine if those thoughts come up. Again, notice them, become aware, come on back to your breath. And so with this introduction now, I'd like you invite you to find a comfortable position.

We're going to close our eyes, or if you're not comfortable closing your eyes, you can pick a spot to look at, but I encourage you to close them because it helps remove, again, one of those sensory stimulus that's coming into our bodies that we're analyzing. And a comfortable position is any position that you feel like you won't need to move from for three whole minutes. You might like to take a moment to wiggle in your chair and just check how your back feels. Take a moment to notice where your shoulders are. You want to be upright and stable, without feeling stressed. So you don't have to judge how perfectly straight your back is, just make sure that it's comfortable and stable.

You might like to put both your feet on the floor. You can cross your legs if you like. Most importantly, please put down anything you're holding that you might fidget with. I find if my cell phone is even in a back pocket, that it's going to be pulling my mind away. So you might just take a moment, clear your space, close your eyes. We're going to do this three-minute breathing exercise. And this is, again, an opportunity for you to just experience what a mindfulness practice looks like, remembering the foundations of the sound as reminding us to come back. Our breathing is the anchor if our mind is running away. And throughout this activity, I will be guiding you, using key words for you to focus on.

So take a moment to settle in. Close your eyes. We're going to start with a sound of the bell. And I invite you to allow it to cut through whatever busy thoughts you have, and invite your mind to try and rest on the sound of the bell, beginning to arrive in the present moment fully, stopping running to the future or the past.

Guided Meditation:

[BELL SOUNDS] Breathing in, I become fully aware of my entire in-breath, noticing it entering my lungs and filling my belly. Breathing out, I become fully aware of my entire outbreath. Breathing in, I can focus

on the word, "in." Breathing out, I can focus on the word, "out." In, out. Breathing in, I notice of my breath is becoming deeper. Not forcing it to change, just bringing my full attention. Breathing out, I become aware if my breath is becoming slower. Breathing in, I can focus on the word, "deep." Breathing out, I can focus on the word, "slow." Deep, slow. Breathing in, I invite my mind to feel the calmness of this moment, where I have nowhere to go and no one to manage. Breathing in, breathing out, I invite my body to feel fully at ease in this moment. Breathing in, calm. Breathing out, ease. Calm, ease. Breathing in, I invite my mind and body to fully arrive in this present moment, letting go of any thoughts that are rushing in to pull me away. Breathing out, I touch the qualities that make this a wonderful moment, a moment where I can be with myself and I have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Breathing in, present moment. Breathing out, wonderful moment. With the next sound of the bell, we'll allow our minds to come back from wherever they are, resting fully on the sound and spending one more moment with ourselves and our breath. [BELL SOUNDS]

[SLIDE- Take a moment to reflect]

[Text on slide:

- What is going on in your body?
- Are you calmer and slower?
- Are you tight and anxious?

Elli Weisbaum: And with that, I'd like to invite you to open your eyes. Take a moment to come back to the space that you are in. Sometimes it's helpful to rub your face a little, stretch your arms. Then before we continue, I'd like to invite you to take a moment to reflect on your own experience. I like to say that mindfulness is a great opportunity to collect some data on ourselves that we might otherwise have. Here are some questions that's a good place to start: What's going on in your body right now? Does it feel any different than before we started? Same question for your mind. Does your mind feel the same or different? Are you calmer and slower, or are you tight and anxious? Again, without judgment, you may have enjoyed that, you may feel at ease, or it may have been really uncomfortable for you and you want to get up and run around, or maybe you even did take a moment to go get a water. Again, all of that is fine. But just take a moment to become aware for yourself. What are some key words you might use to describe the experience you just had with us? It's very interesting just to reflect.

Sometimes myself, as a long-term practitioner, I have days where a mindfulness breathing exercise just is so calming and easy, and others where it's quite difficult. And for me again, this allows me to become aware. It may allow me to know that something is still bothering me from a few days before that I haven't taken care of properly. If there is one idea that just kept ping-ponging into your mind, dragging you away, you may like to let yourself know that there is something that you need to take care of. And the same thing with students. This is a great opportunity for them. I get a lot of feedback from young people that this is very calming, it's centering. It's something they can use outside of the classroom when someone is bullying them, or if they're having a fear about a test. If we do this just for even three minutes at the beginning of our day after a transition, after recess, it's a great way to have everyone fully arrive.

But for ourselves and our students to know that sometimes becoming aware of how we feel, actually makes us realize that we feel very tense and stressed. So that's always a -- I don't know if "risk" is the right word, but it's just an implication that we shouldn't assume everyone will just feel great after a meditation. We are open to the meditation simply allowing us to know how it is we're all feeling. So you might want to jot down a few of your words, or just allow them to be kind of there. Then I'm going to move in now to some strategies for bringing this to our classroom, so hopefully we've gotten a bit of the

definition by some of the foundations we're applying, and also why we're doing it through the neuroscience, to become aware of how we're feeling, address stress, anxiety, and to allow our executive functions to be online.

[SLIDE- Strategies for the classroom]

[Text on slide:

Mindfulness as experiment

- Introduce mindfulness as an experiment;
- A chance to observe & collect data.

Image that represents chemical solutions.]

Elli Weisbaum: So strategies for the classroom -- again, I talked a little bit about how we introduce this. Going back to mental fitness, what we practice, and another word that I'd really like to bring in is, "mindfulness as experiment," because experiments are things that we do to observe and collect data, not necessarily something we do to have an answer right away or fix everything. And this is really important. We read a lot of articles about mindfulness producing anxiety -- well, it doesn't do that if we just do it for three minutes, one time. It's really an ongoing practice. And again, like I said, sometimes we do it and we feel like it works so well because we feel better. Sometimes we feel like it failed, because we actually feel worse. From a mindfulness perspective, it's an experiment. Both of those are successes. This is another thing for ourselves and our students in terms of classroom management. We want to allow everyone to feel successful. We don't want mindfulness to be another thing that's impacting our LD classroom as something we're going to fail at. So allow everything to be a success, because in an experiment, anything that we observe is successful. When I work with grade seven, eight boys, they're always falling off their chairs when we do a mindfulness practice. And they look a little cheeky and tell me, "Oh, I guess I didn't do it right." And I tell them, "Well, did you find out that you couldn't pay attention?" And they say, "Yes." And I say, "Fantastic! That was a successful experiment." So this language is really useful to us.

[SLIDE- Strategies for the classroom]

[Text on slide:

The Glitter Jar

- 50% Water
- 50% Glycerin

Use sequins!

Image of a jar filled with glitter floating in water.]

Elli Weisbaum: Another thing that we can do is to create a glitter jar. I'm just going to switch for a moment so you can see me for the first time, and also check out my glitter jar. So here we go, we're going live. Hello everybody, nice to see you for the first time. So this is my glitter jar, and I'll go back to the instructions of how to make it in a moment. So just to show you here, what the glitter jar does is, basically water, I do it in plastic so it's easier to bring it into the classroom. And if you shake it up, it can become a great example of what our mind looks like when we're stressed or angry. We cannot see through. The water is dark and unclear, and we can't make sense of what colours there are. And yet, if we start breathing and we allow our mind to settle, this is a visual example of what happens during a mindfulness practice -- the water settles, the sequins settle. We can see clearly through to our hand behind it. So something like the glitter jar is a great technique because -- and let me just switch back here to my screen mode -- it allows us to have a visual example of what's going on in our minds. It's a nice thing to use as an introduction. I also find, I worked in some autistic classes, or classes where

students have different areas of focus, and this can be a great thing to use as a focus for the meditation. So if we're not able to sit there with our eyes closed, we can actually have a glitter jar, one per student or one that the class uses, we shake it up to imagine our busy mind, and then we set it down on the table in front of us, and we breathe as the sequins settle. So we don't have to use key words.

Sometimes a sound can be disturbing, a loud, struck sound, and so the jar is another option for where we can focus our attention, link it to our breathing, as always, the foundations. Mind in the present moment, the jar is in the present moment. If we're focused on the jar, we're in the present moment. Once we feel calm with the jar, we link our breathing to the sequins settling, and now we're arriving fully in the here and now. And you'll see on here -- please take note -- to make these jars, it's very important to use 50 percent water and 50 percent glycerin, which you can get at any drugstore. It just makes the water a little thicker so that the settling happens in that very kind of nice, controlled way, instead of everything just falling to the bottom. You can use glitter, I prefer sequins, because they're a bit bigger and they kind of work better. But that's a great strategy for the classroom.

[SLIDE- Strategies for the Classroom]

[Text on slide: **Body Scan**

- Use the three foundations (breath, bell, present moment)
- Move focus down body from head to toes, calming each part of body you bring attention to
- For students with attention issues, have them place their hands on the part of their body they are focused on.]

Elli Weisbaum: Another is to take the same foundational practices and apply them to what we call a "body scan." I like to do the body scan lying down if you can, it's very nice. But also, especially in classrooms where students might want to kick their neighbours, I often, especially with the teenagers, will do arms crossed, head down on the desk. And what we do with a body scan, the same idea as we introduced, the concept of the present moment, the bell, or our noise to cut through, the anchor of the breath. Then as the person guiding it, we simply move through our bodies. So we focus on our forehead, then our eyes, then our nose, then our mouth. And each place we come to, we take a moment to invite it to relax and be calm. It's a beautiful way to take care of our bodies. It also again gives another point of focus for the people who are meditating, because they're focusing on their own bodies. There are scripts online that you can get if you look up "body scan." I personally like to just do it across myself. I don't need a script, I just move through my own body. If you're working on a biology unit, or you want to bring in the different muscles, you can get into those. So really, you can play with this if you're doing a body recognition unit with the younger students, awareness -- whatever the languages that you're using in your classroom, you can simply apply to this. And as I mentioned before, sometimes in an ADHD classroom or where students have autism, I find that it's very helpful, too, to have an extra level of contact to put their focus and attention to. So we can actually practice touching our eyes. We breathe and we relax our eyes. Touching our nose, and so we move our hands down our body as a way to have contact be part of the focus for our attention. When I did my human participatory research in India, I actually worked with 900 students at a school. I gave them a questionnaire survey afterwards to find out what they enjoyed most. I thought I'd make some fun graphs so you could see what different activities were the favourites, but I didn't get to make any fun graphs because 100 percent of the 900 students answered that the body scan was their favourite practice. They liked -- we did songs, we did sitting meditation, we did walking meditation -- you can bring the foundations to whatever you like. But this is the absolute favourite. Their response was that taking this type to calm their bodies allowed them to be more focused afterwards. It actually rolled out into their evenings, they were nicer to their siblings when they just took this time during the day to just stop for 10 or 15 minutes. I was in a grade three classroom

in Toronto, and it was my last session of three workshops I was doing with the students. I was going to do a sitting meditation because I didn't think we had time to lie down. And I told them this, and they rebelled on me. They said, "Quick, if we lie down, she'll have to do the body scan." And they laid down. They said, "Don't kick your neighbours, or she won't start." And so of course I had to offer it. That's just an example, again, of how powerful these exercises can be. It can seem so simple just going through the body and telling it to calm and relax. Why do I need to do that all the time? But, in fact, it has this huge cascading impact on ourselves, on our ability to learn, and bringing our executive functions online. So these seemingly simple tools can actually have a really big impact on the community. If we think about it, the student who went home that night and talked nicer to their sibling probably also was speaking nicer to their peers and their colleagues. When we think about building community, communication, how we listen and how we act is impacted by our thinking. Our thinking is impacted by our stress, our stress is impacted if we're not taking any time in the day to take care of ourselves. So that's the kind of full loop.

[SLIDE- Summary notes]

[Text on slide:

- Happy teachers will change the world;
- Mindfulness: awareness, non-judgment;
- The way out is in: taking care of yourself naturally takes care of those around you;
- Neuroscience: amygdala = fight/flight & brain hijack;
- Neuroscience: amygdala = reaction, pre-frontal cortex = response.]

Elli Weisbaum: So we're going to move into some summary notes for you, and then some resources, and then we'll have time for some Q and A, which I'm always excited about. So summary notes -- happy teachers will change the world. If you take nothing else away, thank you for taking the time to be here today. And please, take some time for yourself, because we know that who you are impacts the classroom. Mindfulness -- the words "awareness" and "non-judgment," the way out is in. Taking care of yourself naturally takes care of those around you. If you don't have time to bring in a breathing activity this week, just know that if you take a moment to breathe yourself over breakfast, you are already bringing it to your classroom. Neuroscience -- remember the amygdala is the fight or flight brain hijack, takes our executive functions offline. And again, the amygdala causes reaction. The prefrontal cortex, when it's online, allows us to respond. We want to move from reaction to response.

[SLIDE- Activities to take with you]

[Text on slide:

1. Reflection activity:
 - Noticing the qualities you remember in a favorite teacher;
 - Awareness that the teacher is the hidden curriculum;
2. Three foundations of mindfulness:
 - Present moment;
 - Bell (sound);
 - Breath
3. Mindfulness activity: guided meditation
 - Use key words on in breath & out breath to focus attention & calm mind;
 - Begin & end with sound of bell (or sound of choice);
 - Apply three foundations of mindfulness.]

Elli Weisbaum: Activities to take with you today -- we have the reflection activity. Noticing where your favourite teacher, the qualities you remember is a beautiful thing to do with your colleagues, even. It's very inspiring. The three foundations, the present moment, the bell or sound and the breath -- again, you can apply these in creative ways to experiment with how you walk, how you get ready for recess, what you do before an exam. They can be applied to all ages and all levels. Then the mindfulness activity, again, is a key word focus activity. We can begin and end with the sound of the bell, or a sound of your choice to kind of bring the focus in, applying the three foundations, as a way just to come back to yourself. Really great for transitions, and a great place to start testing this out with the class before you apply it to other activities. Applying mindfulness at work -- there's this great phrase, "Disconnect to reconnect more fully." Tons of the literature shows that even taking one or two moments, three breaths will change the way that we're interacting with one another. So it doesn't have to take too much time. And take a real break. Stop your mind from running the same stories. Many of us, maybe we're taking a coffee break, and yet during the coffee break we spend the whole time planning the next thing we're going to do. That means you didn't actually have a break. You physically might have not been in the classroom, but your brain was time-travelling to the classroom. If you can, say, for the first three sips of coffee, I'm going to do thing but think about this coffee and my breath, and see if it has an impact on you. The washroom is also a great place to practice mindfulness. Don't get on your phone and check your emails. Don't check your Facebook. Take that moment for yourself, because probably no one's going to bother you there. And that's this idea of daily bells and mindfulness. Set something in your life to remind you just to check in with yourself for a minute. I know someone who sets from the parking lot to her school's front door, an intention to not arrive at the school before she gets to the front door, to notice her steps and her breath the whole walk up, and she arrives in a different way. And you can share with your colleagues and students by playing around, introducing mental fitness, that this is an experiment, we're collecting data. We can try sitting meditation and different things like that.

[SLIDE- Applying mindfulness at work]

[Text on slide:

- Disconnect to reconnect more fully;
- Take a real break, stop your mind from running the same stories;
- Find daily bells of mindfulness (ex. the sanitizer, getting a coffee, going to the washroom);
- Share with your colleagues & students.]

[SLIDE- Resources]

[Text on slide:

- **Mindfulness in Educators Network**

mindfuled.org

Image logo of mindfuled.org

- **Applied Mindfulness & Meditation**
- **Certificate, University of Toronto**

<http://learn.utoronto.ca/courses-programs/business-professionals/courses/social-work>

Image logo of University of Toronto

- **A Mindful Society Conference**

amindfulsociety.org

Image logo of the Mindful Society Conference.]

- **American Mindfulness Research**

Association

goamra.org.

Image logo of the **American Mindfulness Research Association.**]

Elli Weisbaum: Some resources for you today, and again, these slides will be sent out -- the Mindfulness in Educators Network was started in the States, it's a great place to share with other teachers that are interested in this, other educators, get resources. The Applied Mindfulness and Meditation Certificate program at the University of Toronto is also a great place if you're wanting to go a little deeper. You can take any of the courses as a one-off, one-standing course, or if you want to get a full certificate in this, you can also do that. It's through the continuing studies program, which means each course is offered in two full-day modules, either on the weekends or in the evenings. So it's very accessible for those who are working. The Mindful Society Conference takes place at the University of Toronto every spring. This is a chance to do a deep dive into the neuroscience and education and best practices for applying this in different spaces. And the American Mindfulness Research Association -- if you're interested in reading further articles around the research that's coming out, around the brain, how stress impacts it, the impact that mindfulness has on it, to learn more about clinical and in-school intervention trials, there's fantastic articles all across this website. And finally, for myself, if you want to connect further -- and we'll have some time for questions now -- my website's at the bottom there. I am always happy to answer questions. If you're trying something out, I had a teacher write to me a few weeks ago about putting a couch in the middle of her classroom and having the kindergarten kids practice mindful walking around the couch, silently. And then we were experimenting on how this might be expanded to other parts of the physical therapy that she was doing with them. So I'm always happy to -- reach out to me.

[SLIDE- Presenter Contact & Upcoming Courses]

[Text on slide:

University of Toronto, school of continuing studying]

"Mindfulness for Reconciliation & Conflict Management"

Saturday January 14 & Sunday January 15

In this two-day course, you'll learn to recognize and handle the roots of strong emotions, and communicate effectively in times of difficulty. Explore the four-step framework of "Beginning Anew", based on the work of Zen Master and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh, which offers a concrete structure that can be applied to a wide variety of daily settings, including workplaces, classrooms and the home. This course involves a series of hands on activities to develop range of skill-sets that can be applied to foster reconciliation and conflict management.

"Building & Broadening Resiliency: Integrating Mindfulness into Education"

Saturday February 25 & Saturday March 4

This two-day course will show you ways to increase well-being and combat burn-out, anxiety and stress. You'll learn how to develop your own personal practice, along with a tool-kit of practical activities you can apply in the classroom and workplace. Explore the latest research, connections between neuroscience and mindfulness and the teachings of scholar and Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh.

Contact, Register for Courses & More Resources:

www.elliweisbaum.com.]

Elli Weisbaum: Then these are two courses that I have coming up that I thought it's particularly applicable to education; one is "Mindfulness for Reconciliation and Conflict Management," and the



other is, "Building and Broadening Resiliency: Integrating Mindfulness in Education," which is a two-day module where we basically go through many different activities, how they apply to you, how they apply to the classroom. Then also, looking at some of the curriculum that's coming out through the Ministry of Education, and how this connects to their well-being mandates, and how we can support each other as colleagues and students to have well-being.

[SLIDE- Be Beautiful, Be Yourself]

Elli Weisbaum: So with that, we'll get to my final slide, which is the last calligraphy that I just like to end on, just an invitation from my teacher to be beautiful, and be yourself. So thank you for listening, and I look forward to diving into our Q and A together. So with that, I'll turn on my video so you can see me. Then I believe our moderator will take over to moderate our Q and A.

[SLIDE-Q&A]

Moderator: Yes. Here I am, Elli, I'm back. So I just wanted to say first of all, thank you so much for providing an opportunity to deepen our understanding of mindfulness, and for those great exercises. If anyone has any questions, you can either click the Raise Hand button on your control panel and we will unmute you and you can ask a live question, or you can type your question into the Chat box on your dashboard and I'll read your question to Elli. We actually do have one question that's come in. And the question is, for how long can I do a body scan with grade one and two students?

Elli Weisbaum: Fantastic question. And so this is a great area to look at, because depending on our classroom, we may want to really think about how much time any mindfulness actively can realistically be enjoyed. With usually elementary grades, I keep a body scan to 10 to 25 minutes. I actually find that 25 minutes is quite approachable for that age group, because we're so focused on each part of our body. The first time I might try for 10 or 15 minutes. Also, if you notice if someone's getting really restless, you can set up some kind of tools. You can say, "Okay, if you're not able to sit still and I come over and tap you, you're going to go sit at your desk quietly," so you might want to put some things in place. But I wouldn't hesitate to leave them for 25 minutes, if you have the time. I wouldn't recommend doing less than 10 minutes, because it's a little hard to actually get into the practice. If you only have five minutes, I'd try doing more of a breathing exercise at the tables, and definitely especially with the younger grades, but even with the older grades, set up some boundaries and rules around bothering your neighbours. It can be really nice to set this up as a way to support one other. Even if we can't be still, we can be still for our friends. And again, do set up some rules about how we move from the desk to lying down if we're doing that, how we're going to put our heads down on the desk. Most importantly, as the moderator or facilitator for a body scan, I always walk very gently around the room. So if people do open their eyes, they see that I'm coming around, and when someone looks up at me, I just smile to them. Often, okay, that's enough. Some people just need to check that other people's eyes are closed, and then they close their eyes again.

Moderator: Okay, so we have quite a few questions coming in, so this is great. Do you have any strategies for practicing mindfulness with students with autism?

Elli Weisbaum: Yes, so great question. And again, we really want to allow mindfulness practice to meet students where they are. Again, I found with autistic students, that often ringing a bell -- this is my bell that I was ringing here -- the sound can be a little bit disturbing. So if I am going to bring in a sound that we're going to hear when our eyes are closed, it's really important to introduce everyone to the sound, maybe even invite them to practice ringing it a few times, so they get used to it. I think all of you know, as educators, every student, whether they have an LD classroom or not, needs their own techniques. So for me, again, with autistic classes, really letting the students explain the activities back to me before we try them, make sure they're on board, that we've all agreed on what it's going to be, that we've all listened to the sound with our eyes open, if we're going to hear a sound, is really important. And again, the tactile piece -- so if we're moving through our bodies, as we relax our eyes, we're touching our eyes. As we relax our face, we're touching our face. I find that that's really, really helpful. Also, I find that it's really nice if we have the capacity, the cognition and capacity, to share about the mind. I find that students who have an LD or are struggling with emotions are really interested in why this is happening. So sharing about the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex could be a really great thing to do with these students.

Moderator: Okay, fantastic. Thanks, Elli. The next question is from Debbie. How do you suggest introducing mindfulness practice into a large high school?

Elli Weisbaum: So again, another great question. You are tapping on the questions I think that are at the forefront of what the research is looking at in every school that I've been to in the world. So bringing mindfulness in a larger environment is a great thing to do. I mean, the more classrooms that it's in, the more the calm, the ease, the techniques can roll out across the school. I'd say for a big school environment, we often find that schools have one or two what I would call "champions" in them that are interested in bringing this in. So there's a few ways that you can do this; one is just go easy on yourself. Start in your classrooms, see what works. Often you find your colleagues will start noticing or hearing about it from the students and get curious. So starting with yourself and your classroom is a great place to start. If you want to go beyond this, I would say discussing with your administration, showing them this video or some research around what impacts mindfulness can have can be a really great way to start getting that buy-in, especially what we know about resilience and self-regulation. If we get enough buy-in that we want to actually have a workshop for the whole school, there's a lot of us in Toronto, many of us who teach at the AMM program at UofT that do introductory days of mindfulness, I'm actually going to a high school this Friday to do one hour in the morning for their PD Day to do an introduction. And it can help to have someone like myself, or someone else from our program, come in who's not you, can do the explanation for an hour, sit with everyone and kind of get the ball rolling. There's also a number of programs, one is called "Mind Up, Mindfulness Without Borders" that exist in Toronto that do max trainings for schools. So there's resources out there for you, depending on what level you want to bring it to. And again, you can take my course, or other courses, where you can get a little bit deeper and you can even run workshops for your school. So there's many different ways to experiment and play with bringing it in. I just suggest that you check your own energy, and then you can help us change the world.

Moderator: Okay. Next question: Other than breathing activities, how can we help teens with test anxiety or general anxiety about school?

Elli Weisbaum: Yes, so in the breathing techniques, you know, it's funny, they can sometimes seem separate, but it is truly incredible how much a breathing practice can help with that anxiety. The next piece, when I get into this in my course, is actually going into some emotional regulation activities, so starting to have reflections on how do we feel doing journaling? So there's a ton of techniques out there. I can't get into all of them now, but I would recommend the Mind Up curriculum has some resources that you can buy through Scholastic. And then again, taking this present moment awareness once we breathe, and especially with teens, adding a journaling component after our breathing technique -- okay, collect the data on yourself. You might choose each day, they might decide, are you feeling anxious, happy? Give them some language to start journaling what their feelings are, once they're collected, because often we don't know until we stop. So pairing a breathing technique with an actual awareness writing activity can help to even raise the awareness even more. And at the end of the week, we can actually look back at that journal and discover how we've been feeling all day, because it's incredibly important to know this. Often, teenagers aren't actually aware of how they're feeling all week, as adults are not aware of how we're feeling all week. But it's very important to raise this awareness, because if you know we're feeling stressed, we can actually make choices that will help us reduce that anxiety. Often, also in high school, we find out a lot about teasing, talking behind each other's backs. So I had a group of teenage girls discover that they were feeling upset all week because of how they were talking about each other; this was a group of friends. They had no idea about this, so we did the journaling exercise. Once they had an idea, we were able to discuss ways that they might reduce the amount of talking that they were doing about their friends.

Moderator: Okay. Our next question, I'm not sure if this is kind of something that's in your wheelhouse and you have a response to, so we'll give it a shot and see what happens. I teach core French, and I'm thinking of doing this with my intermediates. I'm wondering if I should start doing the exercises in English and move into French. Just curious how the second language factor might affect the practice.

Elli Weisbaum: Absolutely. So again, starting where the students are, you know, if you feel like you have one class that has a good handle on the language, then of course dive right in. But also this is a great example of a way that we can play with mindfulness practice that will integrate with what we're already doing in the classroom. So if there's a set of language skills that you're currently working on, you might want to make those the key words. If there's some way to actually bridge learning a language, becoming comfortable with it, and a relaxation thing, that's a win-win. So I would definitely say with learning languages, because we're only focusing on one key word at a time that we can actually integrate this into the learning we're doing in the classroom, and that those words, if we're listening to them with our breathing, will actually become things we know really well, and actually feel more at ease with it. So I would definitely encourage you, across all the different learning that you're doing, to try and weave it in. If you think there's a class that doesn't have a handle on all the words you're going to use, definitely do a lesson beforehand to make sure everyone's comfortable, but I think it would pair up very nicely.

Moderator: Okay, great answer. So our next question, I'm going to unmute Lisa Ann. Can you hear us? And is your microphone working? Hello? Lisa Ann? Oh, I think we lost her. Okay. All right, that's okay. I have her question here in print, so we'll just do that instead. What strategies or tips would work with high school age students?

Elli Weisbaum: Yes. So of course, coming back again to really meeting students where they are, so I think a great thing for buy-in, you know, just like the buy-in we started with today with all of you was, reflect on a teacher that you loved. And all of a sudden you could hear those qualities. So maybe you were saying think about how you cultivate those qualities in yourself. I think with high school students, buy-in, having them want to do the activity for themselves is incredibly important. So you know your classrooms best, but one technique I often do is, I start asking, "Does anyone in here feel anxious or stressed about anything?" And everyone's, like, "Ah!" I'm, like, "Okay, well, what is it?" So we start to kind of come up with some lists around what's going on in the classroom. And then I say, okay, cool. So we know that we're worried about exams. Who here would like to try out an activity that might help your heart beat slower before an exam? So to really start with their buy-in, and then again, introduce it as an experiment. So once you try it, say, "Who loved it? Who hated it?" And again, this tool of non-judgment is really interesting, because it plays out across everything that we do. So as the teacher, starting them out, "That's totally fine that you hated it. Isn't that interesting?" Starts to, like -- there'll be some laughter. There's, like, wow, yeah, how I feel is okay. And it starts to kind of break down some of the self-judgment that plays out into all the aspects of teenage life. So again, introducing as an experiment, asking students where they are, getting them to convince you why they need these techniques is the best place to start. And have fun with it. I think all of us take a lot of things really seriously, there is another place that our judgment comes in. And if the student says, like, "You need to breathe!" Then everyone else gets tense. And so I think a sense of playfulness and coming together to look at these things. Also, as an educator, sharing with the students how you feel. "I'm really stressed, I have so much to do today." That can be amazing for high school students, that the adults around them are human beings, too. So there's all different kinds of quite simple ways that this can really come in and start transforming our classrooms, how we feel about ourselves and how we feel about each other.

Moderator: Okay, our next question: One concern I would have for general classroom use would be possible negative reaction, such as bringing back trauma memories, a child being worried because they feel like they're dizzy or floating. Is there anything that you could offer on this?

Elli Weisbaum: Yeah, absolutely. And a great thing to be aware of. Like I said at the beginning, mindfulness is not a fix-all, and it also doesn't result in everyone feeling wonderful and like fluffy kittens right away. And so we do want to think about what this means to bring in. A great technique for that is to set up with students beforehand the non-judgment and expectation that this may make them realize that they're tense or worried or fearful, and that this is totally okay. One thing that heightens our anger or fear is being angry that we're angry, or being fearful that we're fearful. So again, the playfulness, the experiment, the fact that there's no one right way to do this, and that you are not judging them as their teacher is an excellent place to just reduce anything that may come up. Now it may come up anyway. If you have a classroom where you know students are struggling with anger issues or anything that may be more extreme, and of course everyone's struggling with these all the time, but if you specifically have a concern, you may want to have a second body in the classroom where students know if they're uneasy that they can get up and walk out of the classroom with that person, that person can go over and take

some care of them. So yes, please know your classroom. Set up the expectations, which is to not have any. That will help reduce anything that comes up. Then also, always do a debrief with the students. Let them know how they're feeling is okay. And for yourself, know that there may be time where a student is triggered, and know where your resources are in the school if someone's triggered, if you don't have a second body in the classroom. So set up the parameters for yourself to be safe, what you'll do if that happens, and then also for your students. If you're nervous, if your eyes are closed and you start feeling dizzy or floaty, open your eyes. Focus on a space. If your face is itchy, right, we're trying to be calm, but we're not trying to sit here in pain. So we often say, "Do the movement with mindfulness. If you need to itch your face or open your eyes or move your body, do it, just as slowly and mindfully as you can." So you can demonstrate, oh, I need to itch my nose. I know I'm itching my nose. I stop itching my nose. My eyes are closed and I feel dizzy. I'm going to open my eyes. I have opened my eyes. I know that I'm okay. So just set up some kind of tools for yourself and your students before you dive in, especially if you know that someone in the classroom might be nervous about it. I have also worked in classrooms, if we have, like, a mixed classroom where we have different kind of backgrounds and needs and learning places, I've asked certain students whether they want to sit at their desk if we're doing it on the floor. I've had students say it's scary to think about their breathing, so we focus on their heart. I had a student who was autistic who really just wanted to focus on her cat, her pets were something really safe for her. So when I would tell the students to focus on their one thing, she knew that was her time to imagine her cat and to focus on her cat. So definitely be aware, and communicate with yourself and your students.

Moderator: Okay, great. So we have time for one last question. So the question is, I'm wondering if we should notify parents before starting a mindfulness program in the classroom. Just thinking of diversity for different families, that they have religious beliefs, or just anyone in general that prefers no meditation, or less spiritual approach to self-regulation. What options could be available to those students whose parents prefer they not participate in mindfulness?

Elli Weisbaum: Yes. Another great question. You're all really hitting all the hot topics for mindfulness practice. So just to begin with, there are a diverse set of communities, and really anything we do in the classroom may or may not work for all of our families. So we want them to be aware of this. I don't necessarily think -- and again, it really depends on your schooling, you might want to check with your administration, that there needs to be a permission slip for this, but you might be in a school that does need that. So again, start with where your community is. Communicate as you feel necessary. For me, mindfulness really is a secular practice. Going back to the roots of where it comes from, there isn't a God. It may be spiritual for some people, but that's really something that we're adding on top of these kind of basic practices that are really based in breathing techniques and emotional regulation. So for me it is a really great tool if we're working in a very diverse community, because it is quite safe to practice with whatever other practices are in your classroom. So I'd start there, as in terms of giving an explanation. I also will send out a link to Discovery Mindfulness, which is a resource that I didn't have on my resources slide -- sorry about that, we'll send it out -- that has some great fact sheets about mindfulness and what it does in the classroom, where it's coming from, the secular nature of it, the neuroscience, so using a fact sheet to kind of explain this so that you don't have to do the explanation yourself can be really helpful. Again, having someone like myself or from the AMM university program come in to meet with your administrators or teachers or colleagues. Or parents can also be really helpful. So we're here to support you if you need it.

I do a lot of evenings of mindfulness practice with parents in schools, which is really beautiful because everyone starts developing this common language. So again, just like with, how do we introduce it to the classroom? How do we bring it to our school? It's really about knowing your community, knowing what's safe, not stepping on people's toes. But also, I think you can be quite confident in the fact that this is a secular practice, that it is coming into the programs, and that those of us that are bringing it in are, again, coming from this place that's very accessible to all different communities. One thing you may need to address if you have a diverse classroom is, students may have an idea of what mindfulness or meditation practices that comes from their traditions, and so you may want to open the floor for some conversations about that, to make sure everyone feels safe. So again, awareness of what's happening inside and around you, what support your community needs. And if your administration feels like you need to send home a little note about it, again, I would just think about what the buy-in is. Bring in some of these words that we're trying to address, like self-regulation and resiliency. Share some of the neuroscience. And definitely for parents who are interested, give them some of the articles if they want to read about the interventions. So this is here to support you. Again, in the course I teach, it's all about just developing the language to communicate it, so if I can be of support, definitely let me know.

[SLIDE – Other Questions?]

[Text on slide: Image of LD@school logo

Email: info@LDatSchool.ca.

Twitter: @LDatSchool

Image of LD@school logo.]

Moderator: Okay, great. Thank you, Elli. So that's all the time we have for today, and we're going to have to end our question and answer session at this time. For those of you who didn't have your question answered, we will ensure that it does happen. And if you have further questions, you can either email us at info@LDatSchool.ca, or send us a tweet to @LDatSchool. Again, we will ensure that everyone's questions get answered.

[SLIDE]

[Text on slide: image of the word *thank you!*]

So on behalf of everyone here on the LD@School team, I would once again like to thank Elli for her presentation. And thank you to all of you, our participants, for joining us. Please remember that we'll be sending out presentation slides as well as a short survey following today's webinar. And the feedback we receive through this survey provides us with important information for producing future webinars, so please do take the time to complete it. We'll also be sending out a link to this recorded webinar in approximately three weeks. So thank you again to everyone for participating in our first LD@School webinar of the year, and have a wonderful day!