Stress, Youth and Obesity: Stress Reduction and Mindful Awareness

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Focus

• What young people report about their stress and coping

• Impacts of chronic stress on youth behavior

• Stress management and mindful awareness as an element of a youth weight management intervention

• Teaching stress-reduction & mindful awareness skills to students in a school setting
Whole Child: Health, Well-Being and Success
Adult perception of youth
- 28%

Tween perception 8-12 years old
- 14%

Teen perception 13-17 years old
- 5%

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206
APA, 2009
Stress in America Survey

Physical Symptoms Associated with Stress

- Adult perception of youth
- Tween perspective 8-12 years old
- Teen perspective 13-17 years old

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206
APA, 2009
Stress in America Survey

Sleep Issues Associated with Stress

- Adult perception of youth: 13%
- Tween perspective (8-12 years old): 39%
- Teen perspective (13-17 years old): 49%

Adults n=1,568 Youth n=1,206
APA, 2009
Eating Issues Associated with Stress

- Adult perception of youth: 39%
- Tween perspective (8-12 years old): 27%
- Teen perspective (13-17 years old): 8%

Stress in America Survey

APA, 2009
Asking Kids How They Cope

52% play or do something active
44% listen to music
42% watch TV or play video game
30% talk to friend
29% try not to think about it
28% try to work things out
26% eat something
25% hurt themselves
23% lose their temper
22% talk to a parent
11% cry

Nemours Foundation, 2012

9-13 year olds
Asking Teens How They Cope

- Listen to music
- Watch TV
- Talk to friends (not face to face)
- Sleep
- Talk with family

- Cry
- Play computer games
- Drink
- Eat
- Drugs

American Psychological Association, 2010;
Teen Age Clicks: Understanding Global Youth Culture report, 2009
Chronic Stress

• Impairs working memory

• Impairs social skills

• Impairs habit changes

• Impairs decision making

Jensen, 2011; Galvan, 2011
Cumulative Risk Factors:
Greater Stress = Greater Impulsivity

Jensen, 2011
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response in percentages</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>Normal Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worry a lot/great deal about thinks in their lives</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about the way their look/their weight</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent is always/often worried or stressed</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble falling asleep</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat too much/too little</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel angry/get into fights</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do healthy things to make me feel better when worried or stressed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat to feel better when stressed</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take nap to feel better when stressed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

American Psychological Assn. Stress in America 2010
Stress/Weight Connection

Stress

Health Behaviors ↔ Overweight
Stress Reduction & Mindful Awareness for Youth Weight Management

- One component of effective prevention & intervention for behavioral change (Martin et al. 2013)

- May promote long-term weight management (Ludwig, 2012, JAMA)

- In adolescent girls positive association between level of perceived stress and measures of general and abdominal obesity (De Vriendt et al. 2011)

- School is a reported source of adolescent stress and should be focus of stress management campaign. (De Vriendt et al. 2011)

- Mindfulness for youth well-being is an emerging area of research
A Spectrum of Stress Management Practices

- Relaxation & recovery in non-stressful times
- Identification of stressors and controllable factors
- Recognition and self-management of emotions
- Problem solving
- Cognitive restructuring (affirming self-talk, reframing thoughts)

(Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine; Kaiser –Greenland; Greenberg; Stixrud, etc.)
Relaxation Effects Mind and Body

- Less stress and anxiety
- Reduces muscle tension
- Quiets the mind
- Improves sleep
- Improves focus & concentration
- Reduces impulsivity
- Helps with creative problem-solving
- Decreased anger and aggression
- Increased locus of control

Resilient Mindful Learner Project

Cultivate mental & physical health

Teach relaxation & mindful awareness practices

Integrate into classroom management routines

Use toolkit of age-appropriate promising & evidence-based practices

Reduce stress as barrier to learning & social-emotional growth

Enhance emotional management & impulse control

Build resilience
I have been using some deep breathing techniques each day in my small group (very below grade level) reading group. The first day they were not able to sit and be still for more than 30 seconds. I am amazed at how they have progressed in their ability to get to a calm place. They are so much more attentive and alert after our breathing exercises.

-Mrs. Atkinson, La Habra School District

To view videos go to: www.ocde.us/healthyminds
Click on “Resilient Mindful Learner”
Progressive Muscle Relaxation
Resilient Mindful Learner

Stress Reduction Practices

• Abdominal breathing
• Progressive muscle relaxation
• Guided imagery
• Gratitude
• Mindful awareness
What Is Mindfulness?

Paying attention in a particular way:
- On purpose
- In the present moment
- Non judgmentally

Dr. Kabat-Zinn

Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.2
How does mindfulness work?

Mindfulness develops the prefrontal cortex – the ability to pause before acting on an impulse.

Allows for self-regulation, empathy, improved decision making, prioritization etc.

Want more on neurobiology of mindfulness? Dr. Dan Siegel, Founding Co-Director, Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC), Clinical Professor of Psychiatry UCLA School of Medicine.
Sampling: Emerging Research on Mindfulness

- Impacts stress, well-being, attention, and behavior in elementary school children and adolescents

- Improved self-regulation in early childhood.

- Impacts agreeableness, optimism, and emotional stability in pre and adolescent students

- Reductions in attention, behavioral, and anxiety symptoms in 9-13 year old children & attention in first, second, third grade students

- Decreased negative affect and increased feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance in adolescent girls

- Positively associated with executive function of inhibitory control in children, tweens and teens.

(Van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Broderick & Metz, 2009; Riggs et al. 2014; Oberle et al., 2012; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012; Flook et al., 2010; Semple et al., 2010); Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Beauchemin, Hutchins, & Patterson 2008; Rosaen & Benn, 2006; Biegel and Brown, n.d.)
Mindfulness Practice in K-12 Schools: Emerging Research

- Stress
- Learning
- Urban Youth
- Academic achievement
- Well being
- Self-regulation
- Mental health
- Measurements
- Programs

[www.ocde.us/healthyminds](http://www.ocde.us/healthyminds)
Click: Resilient Mindful Learner
Teaching Stress-Reduction Practices

• Practice stillness and calming techniques before teaching your students

• Your role is co-learner and guide

• Invitational

• Children learn best when actively participating and not being told to calm down

• Regular practice creates a routine

• Start simply: routine, being available, breathing together, calm music, a nature walk, active listening, read aloud

• School is a stressor; ways to reduce school stress
Resilient Mindful Learner Project

Most school leaders understand the benefits of focusing on learning supports.

Why Focus on Resilience and Stress Management?

Unmitigated stress impacts both students and teachers. For students, stress is the enemy of learning and impacts their ability to focus, remember, pay attention, and manage their behavior, thus jeopardizing their academic, social and emotional development. Children who have experienced early, chronic trauma such as family or community violence can develop emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and relationship difficulties that can make it very difficult for them to learn and function well in school (Cole et al. 2005). For teachers, meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of students can take a toll making burnout and emotional fatigue a present reality. Both teachers and students can benefit by supports and skills that can help them cope healthily with their stress, build their resiliency and flourish in the academic setting and in their personal lives.

What is the Resilient Mindful Learner Project?

The goals of the project are to:

- Develop the capacity of classroom teachers to gain knowledge about adult and youth resiliency, stress, its impacts on mind, body and performance, and ways to promote resilience.
- Support teachers to develop their own resilience and learn practices to healthfully manage their stress.
- Train and coach teachers to integrate student stress management, impulse control, and self-regulation practices within their daily classroom management practice.

Click here for the flyer. See videos below.

www.ocde.us/healthyminds
Whole Child Approach

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