



## **Mindfulness: Cultivating Resilience and Well- Being For Middleborough Public Schools**

**by Calmer Choice**

**EDUO 9075**

**2 Semester Credits/Units**

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### **Course Syllabus**

#### **Course Overview**

Inform teaching practices as you apply mindful awareness practices and social emotional learning to support self-compassion, kindness and emotional regulation. Engage with other educators in this 8-week, instructor led course to investigate the benefits of using mindfulness practices to settle the mind, create clarity, improve attention, and widen perspective; all leading to a greater sense of well-being. Explore the following aspects of mindfulness throughout the course: curiosity, mindfulness anchors, senses, mind-body connection, mindfulness of thoughts and emotions, gratitude, self-compassion and perspective.

*These foundational skills support teaching in the classroom setting as participants apply mindful awareness throughout their day, as well as establish a formal practice.*

#### **Course Objectives**

- Develop and support a regular mindful awareness practice for resilience and well-being.
- Investigate the foundations of mindfulness through experiential practice, journaling and discussion.
- Apply mindful awareness practices in daily life and professionally, learning to have more mindful communication, connection and relationships.
- Understand the physiology of stress and how to self-regulate our emotions in order to respond effectively in challenging situations.
- Recognize our habits of mind and self-talk that often generates more stress and learn to apply components of self-compassion practice.

## Course Relation to CCS or other Professional Standards

This course supports the overall presence and well-being of teachers in the field. It is an overarching foundation that supports all of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, for any subject area. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness, therefore enabling a deeper connection to students, content and their learning communities. Specifically, it enhances the 5 propositions for the teaching profession:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

## How to Submit Coursework

The only assignments to submit will be the final course reflection and the mindful awareness practice log during the independent practice portion after module 8. These can both be emailed directly to your instructor at the above address.

## Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Mindful Awareness	
Assignment	Attend virtual class- 2 hours Read follow-up materials and daily practice (3-5 min) Log practice
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investigate mindful posture and definition of mindful awareness</li><li>• Examine common mindful awareness “anchors”</li><li>• Explore curiosity as a mindful awareness tool</li></ul>

<p>Activities</p>	<p>This session provides an introduction to mindful awareness. Mindful awareness is a form of observation that increases awareness of our experiences in life. Mindful awareness supports a gentle remembering of what to do when something pulls your attention away from the object of our focus, or pulls us away from an intended way of being. This activity of remembering done over and over, develops mental and emotional states of calmness, stability, clarity and balance- the traits most needed for developing inner emotional resilience and optimum cognitive function.</p> <p>The introduction of mindful awareness will be experienced through formal sitting practice, discussion of common mindfulness anchors and proper posture. The definition of mindful awareness and benefits of a regular practice will be discussed and related to personal life stressors in large and small group discussions. Related videos and research will be shared during this class meeting.</p> <p>Students should be prepared to take a pre-survey of measurable skills during class, engage in discussion with classmates, and practice mindful awareness in a structured/group environment. Course guidelines and expectations will be shared in class 1.</p>
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<p>Module 2: The Mindful Brain</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours  Follow-up materials and daily practice (5-10 min)  Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore basic brain science related to mindful awareness.</li> <li>• Investigate mindfulness tools for practice.</li> <li>• Explore various aspects of mindful awareness as it relates to the brain.</li> </ul>

<p>Activities</p>	<p>Participants will learn about key parts of the brain involved in thinking, learning and emotional regulation: the pre-frontal cortex( involved in higher level thinking); the amygdala (part of the limbic system deep inside the brain, controlling emotions and motivations); and the hippocampus (also part of the limbic system, important for memory and learning. Learning helps understand why we “humans” behave the way we do. This lesson specifically deepens our understanding of our mental/emotional and physiological processes in response to anger, stress and fear. It encourages us to realize through our experience with mindful awareness, that we have the ability to pause, and within that pause, recognize that we have choices in our response.</p> <p>Be prepared to share and reflect on independent sitting practice and respond to group discussion questions as they arise. Introductory information about brain science and it’s relation to mindfulness will be presented and discussed. Journaling, related videos and informal mindfulness practices (ie mindful minute, 3 breaths, etc) will be shared to add to our mindfulness “toolkits.”</p> <p>A discussion about the three aspects of mindfulness necessary to develop a practice, Intention- Attention-Attitude, will be presented. Students will be assigned a “mindful awareness partner” to be in contact with throughout the course to support on another with practicing at home.</p>
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<p>Module 3: Mindfulness of the Senses and Mind-Body Connection</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- hours  Follow-up materials and daily practice (10-15 min)  Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate our senses as a mindful awareness anchor.</li> <li>• Explore the senses as they relate to mindful eating and body awareness</li> </ul>

<p>Activities</p>	<p>This lesson begins to connect mindfulness to our five senses, which can be used as tools for continued mindful awareness practice. Our bodies are constantly receiving data from the environment both internally and externally, much of which is difficult to describe, and often goes unnoticed, but it is very real. When we focus our attention on our senses we are no longer captivated by our thoughts and emotions. Focusing our attention on the information we are receiving through our senses brings our mind right into the here and now. It provides the opportunity to recognize that focusing attention on purpose, using sense receptors with curiosity provides a point of attention which we choose. We learn we have the ability and power to control where our focus rests-and that our minds can only focus on one thing at a time. This exercise provides students the opportunity to practice a skill that can help reduce anxiety, improve impulse control, enhance memory, problem solving, creativity and physical performance. Our bodies are not in the past or future, our bodies do not worry; our bodies exist in the present moment. Just noticing allows the opportunity to experience so much that we begin to identify resources we never knew existed.</p> <p>Activities may include journaling, mindful eating, partner work, small group discussion, and body awareness practice. Formal sitting practice will be held for longer periods to build mindfulness practice stamina.</p>
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<p>Module 4: Mindfulness of Thoughts and Emotions</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours  Follow-up materials and daily practice (15-20 min)  Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore our thoughts in mindful awareness practice</li> <li>• Identify the connection between thoughts and emotions</li> <li>• Investigate our “stories” as manifestations of our mind that affect our emotions and well-being.</li> <li>• Explore our habits of mind and begin to look at our habitual patterns of thinking.</li> </ul>

<p>Activities</p>	<p>Creativity often depends on inspiration, spontaneity, and allowing the mind to wander, and it is also important to be able to stay focused and pay attention to something in a particular way when we want to. We are all subjected to extraordinarily competitive sensory experiences daily (i.e. voice of co-workers, sight of rain on windowsill, aroma of food from cafeteria). With increased skills to notice our thoughts, we are able to redirect attention to what is in the moment. Our thoughts are closely related to our emotions- sometimes difficult to separate them. Emotions are a part of a human’s life. We all experience similar emotions, but may experience them differently. By anchoring into body sensations related to emotions, we can begin to make a choice in their responses to thoughts and emotions.</p> <p>Discussions of thoughts, emotions and our brain’s inclination toward a negativity bias will be the focus of this class. Be prepared for journaling, mindful walking practice and discussing how mindfulness is showing up in your everyday life. Strategies and techniques will be offered, such as NAME.</p>
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<p>Module 5: Emotions and Stress</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours  Follow-up materials and daily practice (20-25 min)  Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the connection between thoughts and emotions.</li> <li>• Speculate on the physiological responses to stress, fear, anxiety and worry.</li> <li>• Apply initial skills for activating the parasympathetic nervous system.</li> </ul>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>Emotions are a part of a human’s life. We all experience similar emotions, but may experience them differently. The body sensations to the emotions we experience can be used as a guide for mindfulness in our everyday lives. Tuning into our emotions, especially difficult ones, offers us an opportunity and pause. In this pause we can choose a response, rather than react in a habitual manner. Strong, unpleasant emotions can cause stress, and over time can lead to physical and mental health concerns. The Parasympathetic Nervous System [part of the Autonomic Nervous System] is responsible for the rest and</p>

	<p>relaxation response. The relaxation response decreases heart rate and blood pressure, slows metabolism, reduces muscle tension and increases oxygenation to the brain. We will learn that we are able to change the cascading reaction associated with the stress response and build healthier habits. The response that happens can be seen as an empowering- providing the energy needed for the best response. Seeing the stress response in this way provides a strength-based mindset that has been shown to be health enhancing.</p> <p>During this class period we will focus on increasing mindfulness practice time and leaving longer space between guidance. Practicing using anchors of attention, paying attention to thoughts, emotions and using the NAME acronym will be added to the practice developing in each participant.</p> <p>Discussion of the body’s fight, flight and freeze response and a unique look at how we perceive stress will be the focal point of large and small group discussions and journaling. Opportunity to engage in mindful walking and a stress “experiment” will be included, time permitting.</p>
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<p>Module 6: Self-Compassion and Gratitude</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours  Follow-up materials and daily practice (30+ min)  Gratitude journal  Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the concept of self-compassion as a mindfulness tool.</li> <li>• Examine the role of gratitude and the connection to mindful awareness practice</li> </ul>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>Gratitude is a mindful awareness practice. Paying attention to the things in our lives that bring us happiness or joy can have a profound impact on our outlook on life and our mood. Noticing feelings of thankfulness and gratitude for the things we receive in our lives, whether tangible or intangible (a smile, a breathtaking view of a landscape, a flower, etc.), has been shown to increase a sense of calmness, contentedness and happiness which in turn cultivates a more positive emotional outlook. When we purposefully notice things in our lives for which we are grateful we often feel comforted and uplifted. We will learn that</p>

	<p>we can use our minds to train the brain to shift to a more positive mind-set. Research has demonstrated that there are many positive physical and mental benefits as a result of this practice: the brain’s neural networks are changed, and neurotransmitters including dopamine and serotonin are increased. These brain changes support the capacity for cognitive reasoning and logic, as well as promoting positive emotional states. Self-compassion is an important aspect of mindful awareness. Without it, many find it too hard to continue to practice. While compassion is often so readily offered to others, it can be difficult, albeit awkward, to offer it to ourselves. The practice of self-compassion is good will to oneself, not good feelings. It is not about making the pain go away, or suppressing it, as that can inadvertently increase it at some point later. This lesson aims to offer a moment to mindfully accept a painful moment and embrace ourselves with kindness and care, along with tools to support this.</p> <p>Introduction of these two mindfulness topics will focus on the work of Kristen Neff and incorporate journaling, sitting practice, small group discussion and related videos. Movement options we be offered time permitting.</p>
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<p>Module 7: Perspective</p>	
<p>Assignment</p>	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours Follow-up materials and daily practice (30+ min) Log practice</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the topics of perspective and habits of mind</li> <li>• Formulate initial understanding of seeing a behavior, event, or situation from a particular perspective.</li> <li>• Investigate cognitive bias</li> </ul>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>This lesson will investigate the topics of perspective and habits of the mind. In our conversation about perspective, we will learn about its role in shaping what and how we see things in the world and its connection to empathy. We learn to see things with an “open mind” with the ability to consider viewpoints different from our own. This flexibility has social benefits such as reducing conflicts, cultivating a more inclusive peer community, and helps one to develop the capacity to care deeply from an</p>



	<p>objective place. When we are able to step back and see the big picture we can realize that often it is not a matter of who is wrong or right, but rather we just have differences in how we are seeing things. When we have patience and tolerance to see someone else’s perspective, interpersonal skills are enhanced, relationships flourish, and we feel safe and connected in our community and the world. Perspective, and emotional outlook, effects how we see the world.</p> <p>In this class there will be an introduction to cognitive bias and an increase in the length of formal mindfulness practice time. Be prepared to journal and look into what informs our own perspectives.</p>
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Module 8: Bringing it All Together	
Assignment	<p>Attend virtual class- 2 hours  Follow-up materials and Independent Practice (see below)  Final Reflection on 8-week course learnings</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illuminate learnings that have made shifts and changes</li> <li>• Identify how to incorporate mindful awareness personally and professionally</li> <li>• Decide on future intentions for continued mindful awareness practice</li> </ul>
Activities	<p>As the culminating lesson for the program, this is time to offer closure and wrap up any loose ends to what arose during the course. We will revisit the course objectives and practice together one last time. This class offers a chance to connect with classmates and instructors one last time and reflect on the changes and learnings that have been beneficial, as well as, intentions for continuing to incorporate mindful awareness into daily life.</p>

Module 9: Independent Practice 10 hours	
Assignment	<p>Spend the next week practicing mindful awareness daily</p> <p>Log practice</p> <p>Final self-reflection on independent practice</p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine a daily intention</li> <li>• Practice mindful sitting practice daily</li> <li>• Reflect on the impact mindful awareness practice has personally and professionally</li> </ul>
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fill out the daily log for practice</li> <li>2. Submit a written reflection about the experience in the course, with personal practice, and an intention for continuing to incorporate mindful awareness into life.</li> </ol>

## Course Assessment Rubric:

<p>EXCELLENT</p> <p>Meets or Exceeds Course Objectives: A to A-</p>	<p>ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Majority of Work Meets Course Objectives; B+ to B-</p>	<p>NOT ACCEPTABLE</p> <p>Needs Considerable Improvement: Resubmit Work Suggested: C or below</p>
<p>Attends all classes and participates in large and small group discussions with reflection and demonstrates understanding of content.</p>	<p>Attends 7 classes and participates in large and small group discussions with reflection and demonstrates understanding of content.</p>	<p>Attends 6 classes and participates in large and small group discussions with reflection and demonstrates understanding of content.</p>
<p>Final reflection and practice log shows substantial evidence of new knowledge evidenced by thoughtful and detailed assignment responses.</p>	<p>Final reflection and practice log shows some evidence of new knowledge evidenced by thoughtful, assignment responses</p>	<p>Responses show little to no evidence of new knowledge as evidenced by lack of thoughtful assignment responses.</p>
<p>Work submitted was organized and clearly articulated. The student carefully followed all assignment instructions. The instructor did not have to provide continual assignment clarification or request revisions.</p>	<p>Work submitted was somewhat organized and clearly articulated. The student followed most assignment instructions. The instructor had to provide some assignment clarification or ask for revisions.</p>	<p>Work submitted was not organized or not clearly articulated. The instructor had to provide constant clarification and ask for continued revisions.</p>
<p>Assignment content and required projects were original.</p>	<p>Assignment content and required projects were original.</p>	<p>Evidence that not all assignment content and required projects were original.</p>
<p>Work is free of spelling and/or grammatical errors.</p>	<p>Work has few spelling and/or grammatical errors.</p>	<p>Work has numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors.</p>