

Sometimes Kids Need Personalized Mindfulness Instruction

By Ariel Frager <<http://bridgingconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/pexels-photo-459971.jpeg>>

School is hard. Hours of listening. Hours of having to sit still. Hours of not talking to your friends, not playing Wall Ball, no video games and no soccer. And then there are all those people: the annoying kids, the teacher who is so kind it is also annoying, the friends who are also sometimes, you guessed it, annoying. **School is a hard and some kids don't know how to handle it.**



For some students, school is an emotional minefield and big feelings can take over. No child wants to throw a chair across the room. No student wants to cry in front of the entire class. No kid wants to get so nervous about upsetting their delicate social balance that they yell at the friends or worse, threaten grievous bodily harm. But these things happen and for many educational professionals, finding a way to help students regain composure and work through the big feelings takes patience and specialized skills. **Mindfulness can help.**

In my role as an elementary school counselor, I am often called into crisis situations. One time a student climbed high up into a tree and refused to get down. Students have run off campus only to return escorted by a police officer. My students have hurt other kids, my colleagues and me. **I usually complete six to eight suicide assessments per year.** The one thing that I find the most useful when working with a student who is feeling a big, overwhelming emotions, be that anger, sadness, anxiety or fear, is guiding that student through some sort of mindfulness practice.

Recently one of my students threatened to kill another student. He was angry because something precious to him had been ruined. This third grader was sitting in the principal's office surrounded by adults and **completely disconnected** from how his words and actions could have affected the student he threatened. He said he didn't care as the principal tried to discuss the severity of his behavior. He slumped in the chair, arms crossed, waiting for the school-imposed punishment to be over.

This student had already been exposed to mindfulness through classroom lessons. I asked him to get his mindful body on while we sat in the principal's office. When he closed his eyes, I led him through a guided mindfulness practice that I made up on the spot. We first took some deep breaths together. Then I asked him to put his hands over his heart and led him through a heartfulness practice where he sent kind thoughts to the part of himself that got so angry that he told another student he wanted to kill her. I told him to cradle this part of himself in his heart and to be extra tender with the part of him that gets so angry. **As we did this, tears started rolling down his eyes.** Then I had him send kind thoughts to the student he threatened and to imagine himself in her place.

When he opened his eyes, he was ready to accept responsibility for his actions. He was ready to offer a genuine apology to the other student. He was also ready to care for the part of himself that gets angry. Taking the time to deeply connect with his big emotions gave this student an opportunity to care not only for himself but also for the person who was most affected by his behavior.

As educators sometimes we need tools that can adjust to any given situation. By personalizing mindfulness instruction we can tailor an intervention into exactly what our students need at that exact moment.

Please join Ariel for her presentation, Mindfulness-Based De-escalation

Techniques <<http://bridgingconference.org/mindfulness-based-de-escalation-techniques/>> at this year's Bridging the Hearts and Minds of Youth Conference.

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