

# Mindfulness

Here at BIST we are positively promoting Mindfulness and have a Mindfulness Coach as a staff member.

Mindfulness happens when we bring attention to our present-moment experiences with curiosity, kindness and without judgment. For example, we are mindful when we become aware of what we see, smell, touch, hear, feel through our moving body, posture and breathing. We cultivate mindfulness when we observe our thoughts, emotions and the surrounding environment and when we teach our mind to come back to its focus of attention even if it gets distracted or wanders. Mindfulness is a skill of the mind which can be trained through regular practice much like the stability, strength and flexibility of our body can be improved through sustained physical exercise.

Without mindfulness, it can be difficult to control impulsive reactions in challenging and even ordinary situations. Many, if not all, of us have done or said something we later regretted, many have at least once in their lives felt out of control or nervous before an important event. Mindfulness training helps both children and adults replace reactions with thoughtful responses. It gives us an opportunity to choose our actions more consciously. Mindfulness also includes the cultivation of positive states of mind such as kindness and compassion in relation to ourselves and others.

There are several misconceptions about mindfulness. Some people associate it with a religion when in fact it is a secular and inclusive practice. Mindfulness should also not be used as a disciplinary tool or as an answer to any type of difficulty that might occur at school, at home or at work. Sometimes other forms of support or intervention may indeed be needed. Mindfulness in itself does not aim to make us happier and calmer however these positive side effects do often occur as a result of consistent regular practice.

Schools in around the world are increasingly recognising the value of mindfulness for students' academic and personal progress. Scientific studies are also showing that mindfulness practice can benefit children and young people's attention and focus skills, social-emotional regulation, self-control, relationships and general well-being. For more on the most recent research, please visit [www.mindfulschools.org](http://www.mindfulschools.org).

The school-based mindfulness programme at BIST takes a whole-school approach. It utilises the Mindful Schools curriculum as a basis and offers all BIST students an opportunity to develop mindfulness skills. The training sessions are delivered by the school's mindfulness coach and take place in the classroom. Collaboration between the mindfulness coach and senior leaders, class teachers and parents is an integral part of the programme. During mindfulness sessions, the students have a chance to learn and practise simple mindfulness techniques, take a lead as well as reflect and enquire into their experiences. Session topics include mindfulness of breathing, mindful listening, mindful test taking, mindful eating, body awareness, mindfulness in the playground, mindfulness of emotions and thoughts, generosity and others. The programme emphasises experiential learning and experimentation. It also has the potential of deepening the students' understanding of their thoughts, emotions and behaviour.

The whole-school approach means that every opportunity is taken to integrate mindfulness into the school day and culture so that it can support a nurturing and caring community of children and adults building relationships and learning together. There are information and training sessions for parents as well. Where necessary, individual sessions are also offered to support an individual student's need through a more individually tailored mindfulness skills programme.

**Acknowledgement:** Our organisation utilises the Mindful Schools Curriculum.

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