

S.E.A.T. of Awareness Program

Using mindfulness of the Senses, Emotions, Anatomy and Thoughts to cultivate physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.



The S.E.A.T. of Awareness Program has been developed for teens in grades 7 to 9 (e.g. ages 12-14) and incorporates mindfulness of the Senses, Emotions, Anatomy and Thoughts, with meditation techniques, to cultivate physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

ABOUT MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION

Mindfulness is about:

- Being present in the moment and paying attention to our day to day experiences (rather than focusing on the past or the future).
- Observing our senses, thoughts and emotions without judgement (helps cultivate stillness, peace, acceptance, clarity and focus).
- Becoming more self-aware by noticing our internal thoughts, feelings, emotions and responses to them (enabling more thoughtful choices, decisions & actions).

Meditation is a mental discipline that:

- Brings the body back into a state of rest and stillness (homeostasis).
- Gives an anxious mind something else to do.
- Turns the stress response off.
- Creates a mental space or pause between impulse and action.
- Aids in cognitive functions such as learning, memory and problem solving.

Mindfulness Meditation uses attention regulation techniques such as focussing on our breathing, senses and body sensations to train our minds to be present, peaceful and still.

Research demonstrates that children who practice Mindfulness and Meditation experience the following benefits:

- ✓ Focused attention
- ✓ Reduced hyperactivity and impulsivity
- ✓ Ability to regulate emotions
- ✓ Decreased anxiety
- ✓ Better quality of sleep
- ✓ Increased social skills and empathy for others
- ✓ Enhanced sense of calm and relaxation
- ✓ Development of self-acceptance and self-esteem

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The Teenage Brain

From around the age of 12 onwards there are significant changes in the adolescent brain that can sometimes be confusing, frightening and isolating, as well as have both beneficial and negative effects:

- Higher motivation to engage more out of life – trying new things, taking greater risks, looking for excitement, focusing on the pros rather than the risks.
- Lower dopamine levels but more of it released at once – feelings of boredom, thrill seeking, need for stimulation.
- Drive for social connection – making new friends, spending more time with them.
- Heightened emotions – impulsive, moody, intense, reactive.
- Expanded sense of consciousness – questioning, exploring.
- Reduction of brain cells and connections (neurons/synapses) – keeping what they think they need from all the information and skills they have learnt since birth and discarding the rest.
- Development of myelin sheath over linked neurons – enables faster, more synchronized and efficient flow of information in remaining neural connections.

Teens are now growing up in a hyperkinetic environment – overloaded by external stimulation and constantly bombarded with the distraction of technology from tv, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, gaming and other devices. No wonder being silent and still can make them feel bored and uncomfortable or anxious!

In addition, with the expectation and pressure to multitask, learn high volumes of information and perform at the mind and body's maximum capacity for long periods of time (e.g. school then sport), the brain's neural pathways can become scrambled, making it difficult to focus and concentrate on a single task.

Just being constantly busy can produce the stress response in their minds and bodies and excessive thinking about the past and the future can cause anxiety and depression. Recent studies have shown that one in seven kids aged between 4 and 17 now has a diagnosed mental illness, 8 adolescents a week are committing suicide (an increase of more than 30% over the last 10 years making it the leading cause of death in kids aged between 5 and 17) and they are three times as likely to be injured or killed in an accident during the ages of 12-24.

The good news is - how they choose to focus their attention throughout this period plays an important part in the growth of the brain and overall physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

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CLASS STRUCTURE

The classes in this program can be run as two options:

1. Full term program, e.g. as part of the Health and Wellbeing subject to link in with the mental health and wellbeing components.
2. Part of an existing wellness program, e.g. specific class/classes that link in with the theme.

Classes combine the following elements:

1. Stretching exercises
2. Breathing techniques
3. Mindfulness exercises
4. Relaxation (guided meditation)

These are taught in different formats and positions, e.g. standing, sitting and laying but with an emphasis on the ease with which the students can then use them “seated” anywhere anytime, e.g. at their desks, during exams, during sport, at work, at home, etc.

Each class focuses on a different theme or technique with a practical application that relates to everyday life, e.g.:

- Mindful breathing techniques and how to use them to calm anxiety
- Sensory awareness and finding enjoyment in simple pleasures like nature
- Body relaxation for physical wellbeing
- Self-awareness and how our thoughts and feelings affect us and those around us
- The stress response and learning to respond rather than react
- Emotional awareness and acceptance
- Focus and concentration

My personal reasons for wanting to teach these life skills to teens:

- ❖ To use them as coping mechanisms for stress rather than turning to things like drugs, alcohol and self-harm.
- ❖ To understand the importance of switching off from the noise of their daily lives to connect with themselves and others.
- ❖ To develop mindful leaders for the future.

These goals also align with the Melbourne Declaration of Education Goals for Young Australians: *“to have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing with a sense of hope and optimism about their lives and the future.”*

For a full list of my experience, qualifications and accreditations please refer to the [website](#).