



Teachers' Corner

Implementation of Student Mindfulness at School: The Chillaxation Group



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Evidence exists for the impact of mindfulness on adults for a range of physical and mental health concerns [e.g., a mindfulness-based stress reduction program via Kabat-Zinn in the 1970s has a history of treating pain, anxiety and depression (McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2016)]. Emerging evidence with children and youth demonstrates mindfulness-based practices for physical health, mental health, social skills, and well-being (e.g., Burke, 2010; Crescentini, Capurso, Furlan, & Fabbro, 2016; Rempel, 2012; Sheinman, Hadar, Gafni, & Milman, 2018).

In fall 2019, a multidisciplinary collaboration implemented a small-group, multi-session psychoeducational training for students in Grades 4–6, including training as peer mentors for mindfulness, self-regulation, and related strategies. Eight sessions were framed in cognitive-behavioural strategies, mindfulness techniques, and developmental bibliotherapy for eight students nominated by school staff with parental permission (see Figure 1; Burke, 2010; Crescentini, Capurso, Furlan, & Fabbro, 2016; Maich & Kean, 2004). School-based sessions took place in a cozy room offset from the main corridors, with comfort-

The Chillaxation Group is a series of up to 10 skill-building sessions of around 30 minutes each on 10 different school days. In these sessions, a small group of students will learn a range of **relaxation, mindfulness, calming, and self-regulation strategies** such as abdominal breathing, thinking calming thoughts, and helping to develop a relaxation station to use during our group—or any time after!


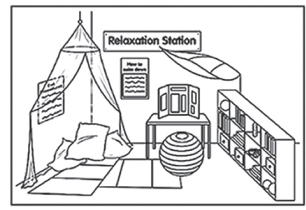


Figure 1. Partial permission form.

Chillaxation Group

Name: _____

Grade: _____



1. How anxious do you usually feel? Circle a number!

NOT VERY ANXIOUS				VERY ANXIOUS
1	2	3	4	5

2. How anxious do you feel today?

NOT VERY ANXIOUS				VERY ANXIOUS
1	2	3	4	5

3. When you feel anxious, what do you do to feel better? Make a list!
4. If your friend feels anxious, what advice do you give to your friend?

Figure 2. Pre-post anxiety-related measures.

able seating and display space, where students were given an informal pre–post measure of anxiety and related strategy use (see Figure 2).

Sessions 1 to 8 of Chillaxation were dedicated to the following (see Table 1 for details):

1. **Belly breathing.** Students were taught abdominal breathing exercises and instructed to practice daily in a relaxed state to better access the *rest and relax* response when feeling anxious.
2. **Affirmations.** Statements of self-belief to help develop positive self-talk were taught, a guided visualization was shared, and students wrote their own affirmations (e.g., “I am brave.”).

Table 1. Resources and References for Small Group, School-Based Mindfulness

Focus	Resources
Belly Breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Belly Breathe with Elmo</i> (Sesame Street, 2012) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mZbzDOpylA • Guided meditation, <i>A Boy and a Bear</i> (Indigo Dreams Soundtrack; Track 2) (Lite, 2004)
Affirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini <i>turtle stickers</i> • A copy of their own affirmation with they wrote in session • Guided meditation, <i>The Affirmation Web</i> (Indigo Dreams Soundtrack; Track 1) (Lite, 2004)
Five Senses Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Mindful Turtle</i> (Strang, 2018) • Props to stimulate the senses such as fidgets, essential oils, candy, a singing bowl, and colorful surroundings • <i>Ikea Löva bed canopy</i> (leaf)
Body Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>12 Minute Body Scan</i> from <i>Calm</i> app (Tew & Acton Smith, 2018)
Loving Kindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube clip: <i>The Effect of Bullying a Plant</i> – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yx6UgfQreYY • <i>Loving Kindness Meditation</i> from <i>Calm</i> app (Tew & Acton Smith, 2018)
Yoga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube clip: <i>Yoga For Kids</i> with Alissa Kepas – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZpkRAcgws4
Gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on how gratitude affects well-being (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008) • Gratitude journals (available widely)
Relaxation Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Relaxation Station in Every Location</i> (Maich, Davies, & van Rhijn, 2019) • Posters designed by students to illustrate each skill learned

3. **Mindfulness meditation.** Students were taught to bring attention back to the present moment by using their five senses. They listened to a children’s book to guide them and utilized props such essential oils for smelling.
4. **Body scan.** Guided body scans were used to teach mindfulness of bodily sensations and full body relaxation.
5. **Loving kindness.** Students took part in a *metta meditation* designed to cultivate kindness towards self and others.
6. **Yoga.** Students engaged in a gentle yoga class as an exercise in mindful movement.

7. **Gratitude.** Students were taught how to cultivate gratitude in daily life (e.g., using a gratitude journal).
8. **Relaxation station.** The training culminated by developing a relaxation station, a quiet space for mindfulness skills practice, including posters illustrating all group strategies.

During our sessions, we explained and demonstrated strategies, encouraged practice, and created products of learning. We utilized interactive strategies to engage attention (e.g., audio-visuals) and unique resources paired with new learnings.

As noted above, students created a range of products of learning throughout their sessions. For example, during Session 2 (Affirmations), students wrote “I am ...” statements on index cards. During Session 4 (Loving Kindness), students created collaborative posters about themselves that included positive statements from their peers, and during part of Session 8 (Relaxation Station), students co-created posters of each skill they learned in the Chillaxation Group to post in their relaxation station. They also developed the relaxation station itself. In their calming space, students placed a rocking chair with an Ikea leaf canopy, a soft pillow, a copy of the

book *The Mindful Turtle*, a box of sensory items, and posters to remind them of how to practice the skills they learned (see Table 1 & Figure 3)—ready to continue to be used long after their sessions ended.

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Figure 3. Calming Space.