

Fostering great parent-child interactions & healthy attachment

By Molly Grosvenor and Mary Beth Slack MA BA Ed

A child who is securely attached has confidence that they can count on parents when they experience distress giving them security to explore the world and establish relationships. A child who is insecurely attached lacks the confidence that their parent will protect or comfort him when in distress. These children feel they can't rely on parents and so develop other strategies for finding comfort elsewhere. **Relationships must be consistent, predictable and emotionally and physically safe to provide a secure base for children.**

Attachment Theory focuses on the process through which infants and young children develop a feeling of security and their parent's ability and willingness to protect them from harm. 'Attachment' is the foundation of mental health. It is how we develop our view of relationships and our view of the world. Mental Health is a state of mental functioning resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity. **Infant Mental Health Practice believes children and their parents will develop optimally within nurturing relationships and parents must feel nurtured in order to nurture their children.**

How teachers foster healthy parent-child interactions using relationship based strategies?

- Support parent's understanding of importance of responsive and playful interactions to early growth and development.
- Help parents to read child's cues and interpret them and anticipate their needs, supporting the development of a secure and trusting attachment relationship.
- Taylor your understanding and teaching of child development to the developmental level of the parent.
- Maintain awareness of your own emotional response to the parent and child as they interact and respond to one another

About Our Nursery School



Our Nursery School provides high quality developmentally appropriate educational experiences for children 9 months to 2 years old, while advocating for children, parents and families. Our children experience a lightly structured day allowing them to feel safe and supported while enjoying a wide variety of developmental opportunities.

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“WHAT WE DO TO OUR CHILDREN, THEY WILL DO TO SOCIETY.”

Dr. Karl Menninger

What do parents do to help toddlers' maintain healthy secure attachment?

- Provide social referencing (is this person okay?)
- Help toddler understand the world (what is this?)
- Support language and communication skills
- Support autonomy (seek approval and parents give admiration and encouragement)
- Help with regulation limits (develop "self speak" based on what they hear from their parents.)
- Prepare toddler for what is coming next (routines make the world feel organized for children).



Model the 'Observe, Listen, Wonder, Respond' technique.

- Observe** - Take time to sit with child, follow child's lead and invitations, remain emotionally and physically available and engaged.
- Listen** - Attend to your child's cries or words, share in your child's games, songs, joy, laughter, listen for your child's expressions of emotion and bathe them in emotional vocabulary.
- Wonder** - Be open, non-judgmental, wonder about their own feelings and allow some time to think before you act.
- Respond** - Support the child's curiosity, set limits consistently, remain flexible, adaptive, and balanced in response.



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Are we the best we can be?

Welcome to Issue 4 of The Nursery News, a free and informative and educational paper for parents and early years educators.

We aim to provide relevant research-driven articles on a variety of health and educational topics to better advocate for and support our community's children and families.

It is so important to work together and offer ourselves and our children opportunities that enhance our roles as parent and or educators.

Evieann Barber
Nursery School Manager

Upcoming Free Workshops

Fostering Healthy Bonds of Attachment
Tuesday 21 February at 6pm

Mindfulness & Creating Space
Tuesday 28 March at 6pm

Held at ISTCI Nursery School.
Open to all the community.



Invest Time in a Child's Mind

AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR PARENTS AND EARLY YEARS EDUCATORS



Mind Full, or Mindful?

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2017 - Find 'Mindfulness' in our fast-paced, techno-driven, results-oriented society!

By School Psychologist Mary Spence PhD

Mindfulness has arrived, or at least the word "mindfulness" is everywhere in the culture at large. So, what is mindfulness?

The definition of mindfulness provided by its founder, Jon Kabat-Zinn, includes three essential components:

- 1) **Paying attention in the present moment**
- 2) **On purpose**
- 3) **Without judgment**

I want mindfulness to survive its popularity because I believe that the practice of being mindful can remind us of who we really are, bring us back to our common humanity, and invite us to remain integrated in mind and body.

Even though I doubt we will see mindfulness practices adopted universally in schools or other governmental organizations, I am hopeful that the work will continue to grow and be valued, particularly as one of the essential skill-sets for the development of social-emotional learning (SEL).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves **understanding and managing emotions**, setting and achieving positive goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions, according to CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

Mindfulness is different from meditation

CONTINUED...

I think the widespread interest in mindfulness practices can remind us all that we need to “**create space**” in our lives through reflection and creative pursuits something I believe to be sorely lacking in our fast-paced, techno-driven, results-oriented society.

My view is that mindfulness is a broader term than meditation. Mindfulness refers to one’s ability to live life from a less ego-driven, fear-based place. Usually this is **best accomplished from a deep understanding of the nature of the mind** and practices that allow you to regularly make contact with, and sustain connection to, the spaciousness of your inner awareness.

Meditation is typically the vehicle by which this most readily occurs and I’m a staunch advocate of developing a meditation practice for individual well-being.

Nowadays, learning to meditate is recognized as a stand-alone practice and recommended by many, including WebMD, the Mayo Clinic, and other medical/mental health pundits. **Extensive studies are documenting the benefits of regular meditation practice on the brain’s health and well-being.** However, I don’t believe that it is essential to developing a mindful presence in your life.

For me, mindfulness is being **contemplative and compassionate, to yourself as well as others**; letting go of ego; and recognizing our common humanity. Both meditation and mindfulness involve becoming silent and still for periods of time to allow for an inner focus.

“MINDFULNESS REFERS TO ONE’S ABILITY TO LIVE LIFE FROM A LESS EGO-DRIVEN, FEAR-BASED PLACE.”

Because mindfulness uses **moment-to-moment awareness**, it has parallels to essential elements of play. This makes it perfect to teach young children, who often don’t live in their heads as much as we do once we’ve been socialized to sit still, think, and produce.

Ironically, by honoring this important connection between mind and body, the end goal we desire is much more likely to authentically take hold, so that teachers can more readily teach good curriculum without having to wade through all the classroom management issues.

There are a number of great children’s books worth exploring on mindfulness. Some of my favorite recent titles include:

Dan Siegel’s *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*, Kristin Neff’s *Self-Compassion* books, Trish Broderick’s *Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance*, and Daniel Rechtschaffen’s *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students*.



By School Psychologist Mary Spence PhD

One Thousand & One Ways

to create space!

By School Psychologist Mary Spence PhD

My nature is to wonder. About things, phenomenon, and people. I come from a long line of teachers who taught me well about the importance of reflection. From a young age, I was intensely curious about how what is happening now is a reflection of the big picture. Whether it’s by communing with others in deep conversation, a vigorous work out, playing with children, doing yoga, walking, dancing, chanting, singing, reading or writing, doing artwork, I have long known that we encourage the presence of our best selves when we purposefully stop the whirl of life regularly. There really are endless ways to open our hearts and mind to experience.

“HOW DID THINGS GET SO CRAZY IN THE FIRST PLACE – HOW DID REFLECTION GET THE SHORT SHRIFT IN OUR LIVES?”

While spending time in spacious awareness, I found myself intrigued with the mindfulness movement. While I see acceptance of mindfulness practices in education, I can’t help but wonder, **how did things get so crazy in the first place - how did reflection and contemplation get the short shrift in our lives?** Understanding the significant changes that have taken place in the world at large provides a context for understanding how to make schools better places to work, learn, and send our children to.

There is a need to purposefully “create space” in our lives again as an essential aspect of well-being. Steve Jobs’ goal to “invent things we didn’t even know we needed” was pivotal in the technology industry’s evolution and is now a fantastic part of this brave new world we are living in. But like most things that dramatically shift the landscape of our existence, we are often intrigued and excited by the wonderful things that are now possible, without much realization of what we give up while gaining access. Sherry Turkle, Founder and Director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, aptly notes that these technological advances come at a cost: **“...immersed in simulation, we are vulnerable. There are losses as well as gains. Older scientists describe a younger generation as “drunk with code.”** ...From both sides of a generational divide, there is anxiety that in simulation, something important is slipping away.”

Turkle’s and Spence’s work considers our essential human need for connection, pausing and creating space.



While Turkle notes the need for caution about the fully simulated life, Spence articulates how our humanness is limited in our societal trajectory.

Though people today often view the varied and endless activities that allow us to have more spaciousness as irrelevant or unproductive, with some gentle encouragement, everyone can remember how important taking a moment and doing so regularly can be to their daily lives.

Recently, Newbery Medal winner Neil Gaiman said his ideas for what to write about come from “daydreaming.” This is a space we all can find ourselves in, sometimes when we least expect it. Using mindfulness practices is purposefully creating a similar space to allow, consider, and notice what’s going on for us. By doing so, it provides some insulation from some of the driven-ness rampant in our society and the subsequent heightened level of reactivity that can ensue.

Developing a mindful way of life is an excellent and efficient way to be more spacious about our present moment experience. Accessing our intuition can also remind us of our interconnectedness in a way that enhances our intentions to be more authentic. Creating space in our lives rather than following the litany of items on every to-do list - perhaps including meditation. **No wonder we are tired, burnt out, and lack compassion for one another.** We attempt to harness the power of something good without truly integrating it into our lives for health. The concept of creating space within our lives and those of our children opens the doors WIDE for possibilities.

We can regularly do our mindful practice to take the edge off our fast-paced life and return to being reactive, overwhelmed and judgmental in less than a heartbeat. There really are 1000n ways to create space!

JOIN US FOR A SERIES OF FREE WORKSHOPS HELD AT THE NURSERY SCHOOL

FOSTERING HEALTHY BONDS OF ATTACHMENT - TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY AT 6PM

Aimed at parents of infants and toddlers – discussion about ways to foster healthy parent-child interactions using relationship based strategies. Find new pathways to productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.

MINDFULNESS AND CREATING SPACE - TUESDAY 28 MARCH AT 6PM

Mindfulness can significantly improve a wide range of conditions including anxiety disorders and stress and help us purposefully “create space” in our lives again. Join us for a helpful workshop to find new ways to manage emotions, achieve positive goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships and make responsible decisions.

MUMS AND TOTS CLUB

Every Wednesday – 3:15 – 4:15. Join us for a casual, drop-in at the Nursery School.

Visit: www.internationalschooltci.com or call 9465523 for information.