



Transcript for the video:

Mindfulness with Young Children

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Ms. Emily: Take another one. Ready? [Breathes.] Let's think about how we're going to be kind to our friends today.

Mindfulness with Young Children (0:13)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: Incorporating mindfulness and yoga have really just a lot of potential for students as far as emotional self-regulation. If you can bring this into education, you have a real fascinating opportunity to influence children's stress response.

Erin Trudeau, 3rd Grade Teacher, North Windham Elementary School: Student social and emotional well-being are huge key factors in education, and also in being able to make school more equitable for our kids. And so to kind of give them those coping skills, because a lot of times when you have big emotions, it feels like all of your options kind of become erased. And so making yoga and meditation and mindfulness just a part of that toolbox for them is what I'm hoping to do.

Teaching Breathing Strategies (1:13)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: A lot of teachers have breathing techniques they may already be using with their students. And so that is a mindfulness practice, so they can build off of that.

Erin Trudeau: We do our "morning meditation."

Señora Trudeau: Okay, tomamos cinco respiraciones, Saúl. (Let's take five breaths, Saúl.)

Erin Trudeau: I have a Hoberman sphere, and so they love that to simulate breathing into the belly and breathing out.

Child: Inhala, exhala. (Inhale, exhale.)

Erin Trudeau: And so even kids that you wouldn't think would be into that are like holding their belly, taking deep breaths, or pretending like they have the ball, or just taking a moment, which I think we all really need sometimes.

Teacher 1: Breathe up and down. Can you see your bean bag moving? Breathe in...

Teacher 2: Big breaths.

Teacher 1: ...and out.

Amy Figueroa, Preschool Teacher, Women’s League Child Development Center: Each child has their picture on a star, and at the beginning of the year, we tell them that that’s their own star. And it’s kind of a breathing technique, so they have to blow their star away into the sky. So they hold their picture, and they take a deep breath in and out and kind of blow their star. So it’s really about their breathing techniques and calming themselves down.

Emily Grogan, Preschool Teacher, Child and Family Development Resource Center: So every day we go to morning group, and to start our morning group, we bring out our kindness drum.

Ms. Emily: Everybody put one hand on your heart, one hand on your tummy, and let’s take a deep breath, in through our nose and out through our mouth.

Emily Grogan: When we do that, we have the children feel their heartbeat and kind of regulate and see how fast it’s moving to see them then calm down. And on their tummy, they can feel themselves taking the breath, so they have that vestibular movement as they are calming their body and kind of thinking about how our day’s going to begin.

Ms. Emily: If you need to calm your body, you can give yourself a little pat.

Emily Grogan: I think it benefits the children in the classroom because it helps us start our day more calmed. Another way that it helps them is throughout the day, if there’s frustration with another child or if they have frustration on a project that they can’t quite complete themselves, we’ll go back and we’ll put our hand on our heart and we’ll put our hand on our tummy, and we’ll take those breaths like we take in the morning. So they’re already familiar with that strategy and that exercise that will help them kind of calm their body down, so we can more focus on what they have to do.

Teaching Mind and Body Awareness (3:33)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: So, the 5-4-3-2-1 strategy is a grounding strategy to anchor us in our bodies and give our minds a break.

Sra. Trudeau: Piense en tu mente. (Think in your mind.) Cuatro cosas que puedes ver. (Four things you can see.) Y puedes apuntar si quieres. (And you can point if you want.) So four things you can see. Shhh. En tu mente. (In your mind.)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: And so that process is a means to just calm that ruminating mind.

Erin Trudeau: We do a check-in. How are you feeling today?

Sra. Trudeau: Alright, show me how you feel today. Muéstrame cómo te sientes hoy.

Erin Trudeau: And they just hold up a finger based on how they feel. So any of my kids who have a four, I’m like, “Okay, those friends are tired today,” and they see me do it, too. And

sometimes some of them will come up to me later at snack time or whatever it is. “How come you said that you were sad today? Do you want to talk about it?” And so I’m holding that space for them, but also giving them a little bit of privacy, right? Like, you can just hold your fingers up right here, and nobody necessarily needs to see. But then if it’s something that we need to address later, we can have those conversations.

Doing Yoga with Children (4:45)

Sra. Trudeau: ¿Qué es yoga? Randolph? What’s yoga?

Child: Something that helps you, um, do stuff if you wanted to be quiet, like you’re a little bit, like angry.

Erin Trudeau: In the beginning of the year, we talk a little bit about what is yoga and where does it come from?

Child: So people from India made yoga to, like, relax and calm down.

Sra. Trudeau: Yes, exactly.

Erin Trudeau: We find India on the map and on the globe. And we talk about how people have been doing this for thousands of years, and where did it come from?

Sra. Trudeau: Yeah. Para calmarte (to calm down).

Erin Trudeau: Usually I bring it up like, it’s an invitation. Here’s the yoga pose of the day, if you’d like to try it.

Sra. Trudeau: ¿Como se llama esta postura? (What is this pose called?)

Children: The tree pose!

Sra. Trudeau: ¿En español? (In Spanish?)

Children: ¡El árbol! (The tree!)

Sra. Trudeau: El árbol. Muéstrame por favor un árbol. Y las ramas moviendo en el viento. (The tree. Please show me a tree. And the branches are moving in the wind.)

Erin Trudeau: But there’s some kids that are sitting down the whole time and they don’t want to participate, or they’re like, “I’m not feeling it today,” and that’s okay, right? So I think we just have to give space to everybody, because we’re all in different places.

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: With those younger ages, it might look a little bit more fun and silly.

Teacher: What noise does a puppy make? Does anybody know?

Children: [barking sounds]

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: It’s a chance to get out those wiggles and squiggles and just the things that they really need to move through.

Teacher: And we're going to have our eyes way up to the sky. Can you stretch, stretch, stretch to the clouds, to one side, and one to the other side.

Advice for Teachers: Getting Started with Mindfulness (6:32)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: I believe you have to practice what you preach, that you have to really begin your own practice and anchor yourself in that before bringing that into the classroom. And you know your students best, so considering at what point in the day this might fit or what practices would be most engaging for them. And then I think much like a lot of teaching, it's just figuring it out as you go, right? So giving it a shot, see what works, what really fits for your group of students, and then over time, building upon that.

Erin Trudeau: Because you're going to be able to teach best what you know, and it's going to feel more authentic to your students, too. So, yeah, I would say jump in to trying a whole bunch of different things, and just being open-minded to it, because if you approach it that way, and then you present it to your students that way, then they're going to be more open-minded, right?

Sra. Trudeau: Inhala. (Inhale.)

Sra. Trudeau and students: Ahhhh... ohhhhh... mmmmm....

Sra. Trudeau: That was pretty good.

Emily Grogan: Don't be afraid to try. And if it is too loud at the beginning, just teach them.

Ms. Emily: Sometimes Gabe likes to close his eyes. You can close your eyes and take deep breaths if you'd like.

Emily Grogan: Go slow, model it a lot. And if it doesn't work for your classroom specifically, it's not too late to change it and go back to something different.

Classroom Benefits (8:06)

Martha Goldstein-Schultz: Just having pride in their practice at a young age, I mean, that's just amazing. The level of self-esteem and self-confidence that can be built from that yoga practice early on, as well as coping skills in relation to stress in the pandemic.

Erin Trudeau: I think I have been able to build this really wonderful and trusting relationship with my students because they know that I'm here to support them with more than just their academic needs. Because students aren't going to be ready to learn if they don't know that they're safe and comfortable and, you know, they're respected as a human being first.

Emily Grogan: So as a teacher, being able to take these deep breaths every morning really focuses me and reminds me how much I love the job and how much I'm here for the kids. So if I'm more calm, they're more calm. Together as a classroom we can kind of just be more calm, and it helps us make our day more successful.

Emily [whispering]: Alright. Thank you.