

The Benefits of Meditation and Mindfulness

At District 146, students and staff are offered plenty of opportunity for meditation and mindfulness. There are numerous reports that meditation and mindfulness are beneficial to adults and children alike. Here are just a few of the benefits according to studies.

Mindfulness may decrease depression

A study from the University of California, using patients with depression, concluded that mindfulness and meditation decreases ruminative thinking and dysfunctional beliefs.

Meditation reduces stress and anxiety

A University of Wisconsin-Madison study indicates that meditation reduces the gray-matter density areas of the brain related to anxiety and stress.

Meditation increases concentration

A group of Harvard neuroscientists reported that following long-term meditation, gray matter concentration increases in areas of the brain involved in learning and memory.

Meditation improves focus and attention

A study demonstrated after 20 minutes a day of meditation, students were able to improve their performance on tests of cognitive skills.

Meditation improves information processing

A professor at the UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging found that long-term meditators have larger amounts of myelination in the brain, which is responsible for processing information, making decisions, forming memories, and improving attention.

Meditation fosters creativity

A Leiden University study shows that meditation has positive effects on creativity and divergent thinking.

Meditation may help manage heart and respiratory rates

A Korean study has shown a significant decrease in heart and respiratory rates for up to eight months after meditation training.



Benefits in the Classroom

There is evidence that meditation and mindfulness has helped students and staff in the classroom. MindfulnessInSchools.org has compiled a list of studies that outline the benefits in both.

Benefits for students:

- Reduced depression symptoms
- Reduced stress
- Reduced hostility and conflicts with peers
- Reduced anxiety
- Increased cognitive retention
- Increased self-care
- Increased optimism and positive emotions
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased happiness and well-being
- Improved social skills
- Improved sleep
- Improved self-awareness
- Improved academic performance

Benefits for teachers:

- Increased qualities of open-minded curiosity, kindness, empathy, compassion, acceptance, trust and patience
- Improvements in physical and mental health particularly those relevant to teaching (such as stress and burnout)
- Improved ability to give appropriate support for students through motivation
- Increased work motivation
- Improved spatial memory, working memory, and sustained attention

Family-Friendly Recipe

Sweet Potato Egg Boats



Ingredients

- 1 small sweet potato, roasted and still hot from oven
- 1 teaspoon ghee (or butter)
- 1 egg
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- As desired:*
- 2 pieces turkey bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1/2 ripe avocado, sliced
- Parsley and/or green onion, chopped, to garnish
- Freshly ground pepper, to garnish

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees
2. Place cooked potato on rimmed baking sheet. When cool enough to touch (even if using a kitchen towel), carefully slit the top of the sweet potato (do not cut all the way through). Squeeze the ends to open potato up.
3. Add ghee (or butter) and mash with a fork.
4. Salt and pepper to taste; about a pinch of each will do.
5. Create a well in the center of the potato by removing one scoop of the potato.
6. Add the egg and bake for 10-15 minutes, until whites are set and egg yolk is done to your liking.
7. Remove from oven and garnish with bacon crumbles, avocado slices, chopped herbs, and freshly ground pepper, if desired.

Notes: It can take up to an hour to roast a sweet potato. Alternatively, prick the potato, cover with a paper towel, and microwave for roughly 4-8 minutes, until tender. If you can't find a small sweet potato, simply cut one in half and save one of the halves for the next day. Feel free to substitute butter for the ghee.

Take a Deep Breath

Most people take short, shallow breaths into their chest. This type of breathing can make you feel anxious and zap your energy.

Deep breathing has many benefits. Simply put, extra oxygen does wonders for the body and mind. It cleanses, opens, and soothes different parts of our body. Overall, it is something extremely healthy we can all do.

Deep breathing is unnatural for your body to do. Like with any new skill, it takes practice. Try to incorporate one breathing exercise each day.



By following the steps below, you'll learn how to take bigger breaths, all the way into your belly.

- Get comfortable. You can lie on your back in bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head and knees. You can also sit in a chair with your shoulders, head, and neck supported against the back of the chair.
- Breathe in through your nose. Let your belly fill with air.
- Breathe out through your nose.
- Place one hand on your belly. Place the other hand on your chest.
- As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly lower. The hand on your belly should move more than the one that's on your chest.
- Take three more full, deep breaths. Breathe fully into your belly as it rises and falls with your breath.

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