

Mindfulness at Hockerill Anglo-European College 2016

Mindfulness is the moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, characterized mainly by "acceptance" - attention to thoughts and feelings without judging whether they are right or wrong.



Mindfulness for staff: Wednesday 4-4:40 L6

Mindfulness for students: Thursday 4-4:40 E6

Mindfulness in boarding: Rochester House Tuesday evening 9:00 – 9:30

After a small group of interested staff members attended a series of mindfulness training sessions conducted by David Rycroft in 2014 as part of the College Innovation Programme, it was decided that the introduction of Mindfulness to our students could be a most beneficial addition to our pastoral provision across the school.

From September 2014, a mindfulness club was established which was offered twice weekly to all students in the school; mindfulness sessions were introduced twice weekly in the evenings for boarders; and eight interested teachers agreed to take part in a pilot project to introduce a 3-minute mindfulness starter in a selected number of classes. The students have responded very positively to these opportunities, and have shared their experience through short interviews, which are available on the school system at:

X:\PASTORAL & EXTRA-CURRICULAR\Mindfulness\Research Project\video interviews

In addition, in May 2015 Hockerill hosted a 'Mind with Heart' 3-day training workshop for educators all over Europe, in which eighteen participants including nine from Hockerill, came together to learn how to implement the 'Connected with Myself' mindfulness programme. It was deemed to be a great success, and will be followed with a similar workshop this year on the 'Connected with Others' programme.

Building on the initial success of the mindfulness pilot programmes we have incorporated mindfulness into our new Year 7 Well-being curriculum; offered mindfulness training as a CAS option in the Sixth Form; and continued our mindfulness clubs both after school and in boarding for students and teachers. Additionally, many teachers who participated in the mindfulness starter project have continued using this technique as a calm and productive way to start their classes.

By introducing our students to mindfulness we hope to be able to better support them in coping with the many demands of life within Hockerill, and give them a tool which they can access throughout their lives to help them remain calm, sustain their attention, and be able to focus.

Resources:

Teachers can access audio files which have a variety of different timed guided mindfulness sessions, sample mindfulness scripts and other resources at:

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<http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>

Student Feedback from Sixth Form Students:

'Mindfulness in essence was pure concentration. An activity both simple and incredibly hard at the same time. I believe mindfulness helped me increase my focus and concentration without needing an extra cup of coffee, a skill which I am sure will come in handy in the future. Most importantly though, it was one of the most relaxing activities during a time of stress and work.'

'Over the past few Mindfulness sessions I attended, I clearly noticed how I improve in focussing only on my inner self whilst blocking out any noise from my surrounding. In the last week, I came to the Meditation with a bad headache. Fortunately, when I started to concentrate on breathing and "clearing" my mind from all the thoughts and feelings which had bottled up during an academically stressful half term, my headache almost disappeared at least for this very half an hour.'

'After the first five "Mindfulness" sessions, I already notice a little improvement in my meditating skills. Now, I can focus better, I am able to use the time to fully reflect on myself and enjoy the meditations more and more. As I am rather busy person, they give me a little, important time of relaxation for my mind whilst I still concentrate on what comes to my thoughts and how I can control these mental processes.'

'In Mindfulness, I have discovered how much thirty minutes of calm can improve a situation and relieve the mind of stress and preoccupation. Since the beginning of this activity I have noticed that I have more self-control and I am more positive on the whole. I try to participate regularly although I have had to miss it a few times due to other engagements, but I then spend at least a quarter of an hour in a calm environment to make up for the session. When I come out of a session, I feel that my thoughts are more orderly and I am able to perform a task more effectively. I will continue attending the evening mindfulness sessions since they are of great benefit to me.'

'We then had a reflection as to what we thought of our mindfulness session. I thought that my mind seemed a lot clearer after the session and I also was surprised to find myself more alert rather than tired and relaxed which I thought I would feel like.'

'I find it very unfortunate that we have not had mindfulness this term, do to unavoidable circumstances. I really enjoy this activity and look forward to continuing it. I have started trying to meditate by myself again, and found that I have been far more successful this time due to the techniques we have learnt. I have also learned different techniques from my own research. I find that performing mindfulness shortly before I go to sleep allows me to have a far more refreshing and restful sleep. I aim to start performing shorter sessions more frequently throughout my day, as I feel it aids my concentration, alertness and general mood.'

'CAS Mindfulness has helped me gain understanding of meditation and by extension allowed me to focus more and improve my productivity. It was a relaxing experience and help my creativity as new thoughts and ideas often formed after clearing my mind in a meditative state. Though it was hard to focus at first, I quickly gained skill in the techniques required for zen meditation. We practiced breathing, how to clear your mind, and eventually I learnt how to break away focus. It became very theraputic.'

'I found mindfulness a really relaxing and helpful task, I actually have been practicing it to help me focus and relax around my school work when I feel over whelmed. I feel like I have really developed an understanding of how my mind works and how i can further myself by relaxing and taking the time to think things through.'