



The Neighborhood Place for Early Head Start  
A Division of the Early Learning Coalition of Alameda County

# Building Compassionate Self-Awareness in ECE

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## Outline



1. Breathing exercise
2. What is Compassionate Self-Awareness (CSA)?
3. Blue Zones & Connectedness
4. What is Mindfulness?
5. Mindfulness in the Early Childhood Environment
  1. Four capacities enhanced by mindfulness:
    1. Attentional awareness
    2. Emotional regulation
    3. New insights & perspective taking
    4. Self-compassion
6. How Mindfulness helps build CA
7. Workforce wellbeing


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## Breathing Exercise


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*“Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing. Use the pain as fuel, as a reminder of your strength.”*

*–August Wilson, American playwright*



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### What is Compassionate Self-Awareness (CSA)?

- Self-Criticism vs. Self-Compassion
  - **Self-Criticism** – negative thinking/self-perception, trying to eradicate perceived “issues” and “flaws”; tiring and stressful
  - **Self-Compassion** – accepting and forgiving; making peace with self while working on improvement; gentle and productive



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### What is Compassionate Self-Awareness (CSA)?

- **Compassionate Self-Awareness** –
  - consciously accepting of self without judgement or negativity
  - acknowledging imperfections in a gentle non-judgmental way
  - Practicing awareness through mindfulness and breathing exercises



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*If you don't love yourself, you cannot love others. You will not be able to love others. If you have no compassion for yourself then you are not able of developing compassion for others.*

The Dalai Lama



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### How to be Kinder to Yourself



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How Do You Practice Self-Care?

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## Self-Care practices

- Develop a regular sleep routine
- Aim for a healthy diet
- Take lunch breaks
- Go for a walk at lunchtime
- Get some exercise before/after work regularly
- Set aside some time to read/meditate/spend time with friends
- Engage in your favorite activity/hobby often



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## Blue Zones



The Five Original Blue Zones



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## Blue Zones' Power-9

LIVE LONGER BY APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES FROM THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED THE LONGEST.



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## Connectedness



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## What is Mindfulness?

- **Mindfulness** is bringing one's attention to what is happening at the *moment*
- **Mindfulness** is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us
- **Mindfulness** is void of judgement or criticism—nothing is good or bad, it just is



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## Benefits of Mindfulness

- Reduces stress
- Reduces depression
- Reduces anxiety
- Improve sleep
- Improve general health



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## Mindfulness in the Early Childhood Environment

- Role of a calm & responsive adult
- Secure adult-child relationship
- Interaction challenges when caring for children
- How practicing mindfulness helps



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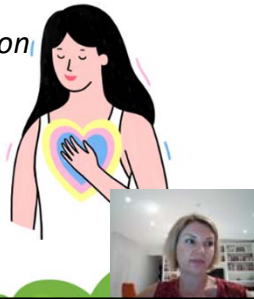
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## Four capacities enhanced by mindfulness:

1. *Attentional awareness*
2. *Emotional regulation*
3. *Perspective taking*
4. *Self-compassion*



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## 1. Attentional Awareness

- Mindfulness training supports attentional awareness by helping us engage with important details, stay with present experience, and disengage with distracting information.



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## 2. Emotional Regulation

- There is growing evidence that mindfulness training improves emotional regulation skills (Baer et al 2009; Carmody et al 2009). Emotional regulation skills allow us to better model and scaffold a state of calmness, particularly in times of distress for children, families, and co-workers.



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## 3. Perspective Taking

- Mindfulness can be used to expand our capacity for perspective-taking as we better understand our own emotions, intentions, and beliefs, we see others' more clearly as well.



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## 4. Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion helps us shift from a stance of self-criticism and judgment to one of self-care, warmth and love. Rather than judge ourselves harshly, we can acknowledge our feelings in the moment (shame, frustration, anger, disappointment, etc.) and recognize that these moments are part of the shared human experience. Doing so can increase our capacity for resilience during moments of conflict, frustration, or upset.



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## Mindfulness & Compassionate Self-Awareness

Mindfulness is more than just moment-to-moment awareness. It is a *kind, curious awareness that helps us relate to ourselves and others with compassion.*

Dr. Shauna Shapiro



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## Workforce Wellbeing

- ECE professionals/educators: burnout, turnover, high stress, working with trauma
- High demands, low rates of self-care practices
  - Can't connect with feelings of purpose and meaning
- Mindfulness-Based & Reflective Practices:
  - Promote self-awareness & self-compassion
  - Establishing healthy boundaries
  - Early detection of burnout



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## How to Bring Mindfulness to Workplace

1. Start with yourself: develop regular practice
2. Assess interest: see how you can engage others
3. Form an internal committee: champions
4. Create intentions: goals and objectives
5. Implement your action plan
6. Adapt your plan



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## Practicing Mindfulness with Children

- Research confirms that for children, mindfulness can:
  - Mitigate the effects of bullying (Zhou, Liu, Niu, Sun, & Fan, 2016);
  - Enhance focus in children with ADHD (Zhang et al., 2016);
  - Reduce attention problems (Crescentini, Capurso, Furlan, & Fabbro, 2016);
  - Improve mental health and wellbeing;
  - Improve social skills when well taught and practiced with children and adolescents.
- It's also important for caregivers and educators to provide age-appropriate mindfulness practices to children.



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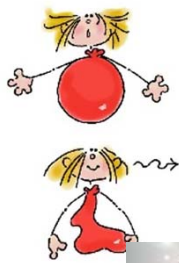
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## Mindfulness Games with Kids

1. Balloon breathing
2. Blowing bubbles
3. Starfish breathing
4. Calming Glitter Bottle



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## Questions?



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## References

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