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Brain Power's Vision for Mindfulness & Wellness (MW) in Japanese Education

Fostering Well-being and Empowering Futures

The Current Landscape - The Need for Mindfulness & Wellness in Japan

The Need is Clear: Supporting Japan's Students and Educators

Recent data paints a compelling picture of the mental wellness landscape within Japanese education, highlighting a significant opportunity for positive intervention:

- **Student Mental Well-being:**

- A 2025 UNICEF survey (as reported by Nippon TV News Zero, May 14, 2025) revealed that while Japanese children rank 1st out of 36 countries in Physical Health (due to low mortality and obesity rates), their Mental Well-being ranks a concerning 32nd.
- A high child suicide rate is identified as a major contributing factor to this low mental well-being score.
- Professor Aya Abe (Tokyo Metropolitan University) emphasized the need to address this high suicide rate and the significant pressures on children from academic standards and appearance standards.
- National statistics (FY2018-FY2023) show an increasing trend in student suicides, particularly since FY2020, affecting elementary, junior high, and high school levels. FY2022 saw 514 student suicides (ES: 17, JHS: 143, HS: 354), with FY2023 at 507.
- Concerns also exist regarding rising obesity rates and underweight issues, especially among girls, despite the high overall physical health ranking.

- **Teacher Well-being:**

- Public school teachers in Japan are facing immense pressure, with a clear upward trend in the number of teachers taking leave due to mental illness over the past five years (FY2018: 5,078 to FY2023: 7,119).
- The most common age groups for teacher mental health leave are those in their 30s, followed by 50s, 40s, and 20s.
- Primary reasons for leave include duties related to student guidance (26.5%), interpersonal relationships at work (23.6%), and administrative/clerical duties (13.2%).

- **Government & School Awareness:**

- The Children and Families Agency acknowledges the seriousness of these findings and plans to analyze suicide causes and improve support systems.

- Japanese schools are actively implementing measures such as deploying School Counselors, providing Mental Health Training for Staff, strengthening internal and external support systems for early intervention, and making efforts to improve work environments by reducing teacher workloads.

This context underscores a critical need for effective, accessible, and culturally appropriate tools to support the mental health and overall well-being of both students and educators across Japan. Mindfulness and Wellness (MW) practices offer a promising, secular, and skill-based approach to address these challenges.

Brain Power's Position & Vision for MW

Brain Power: Our Commitment to Well-being

Brain Power has been a trusted partner in Japanese education for over 30 years, primarily through the dispatch of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). We have witnessed firsthand the dedication of Japanese educators and the pressures faced by both students and staff. This experience, combined with the clear need for enhanced well-being support, has inspired us to expand our contribution.

Our Vision for Mindfulness & Wellness (MW):

Brain Power aims **to become a trusted provider of effective and accessible Mindfulness & Wellness solutions for the Japanese education community.** We envision a future where:

1. **Students are empowered** with practical skills to navigate stress, enhance focus, understand their emotions, and cultivate kindness, leading to improved learning outcomes and overall life satisfaction.
2. **Educators are supported** in their own well-being, equipped with tools to manage workplace pressures, prevent burnout, and foster a more positive and engaging classroom environment.
3. **School communities as a whole** benefit from a culture of greater awareness, compassion, and resilience.

Leveraging Our Unique Strengths:

We believe Brain Power is uniquely positioned to realize this vision by:

- **Utilizing our Existing School Network & Experience:** Decades of established relationships and experience working within Japanese public elementary and junior high schools provide a strong foundation and understanding of the environment.
- **Integrating English Language Learning:** Our expertise in ALT dispatch and English education allows us to create unique programs that seamlessly blend MW skills with English language acquisition, offering added value to our partner schools.
- **Harnessing Specialized Expertise:** We are fortunate to collaborate with international experts in mindfulness, meditation, and holistic well-being (such as *[Cousin's Name]*, known for expertise in

[specific areas like meditation, gong sessions, spiritual well-being], and with a public profile through [podcasts, interviews, etc.]). This collaboration ensures the development of high-quality, authentic, and engaging content.

- **Ensuring Cultural Sensitivity:** Working closely with local educators, MfCP (Mindfulness for Children Project - MiSP's partner in Japan), and our expert collaborators, we are committed to tailoring our MW offerings to be culturally sensitive and appropriate for the Japanese context.
- **Contributing Positively Beyond Language Teaching:** Our goal is to provide tools for life, supporting the development of "Human Resources" into "Human Treasures" (人財 – *jinzai*, where '財' means treasure/assets).

Our Potential Unique Selling Proposition (USP) & Offerings

Our Unique Value: What Sets Brain Power Apart

We aim to differentiate our MW initiatives through a clear Unique Selling Proposition (USP):

"Brain Power delivers culturally-sensitive, English-integrated Mindfulness & Wellness programs, co-created with international experts and tailored for the Japanese school environment. Our offerings are designed to support the holistic well-being of both students and teachers, fostering resilience, focus, and a positive learning atmosphere."

Potential Brain Power MW Offerings (Initial Ideas):

- **For Students (Delivered by JTEs/ALTs or via Video):**
 - **"Mindful Minutes" Daily Sessions:** Short (5-15 min) guided practices (meditations, mindful movement, emotional literacy activities) easily integrated into the school day for ES and JHS.
 - **"Mindful Me" Core Curriculum:** A structured 8-lesson program (plus extensions) for deeper exploration of MW skills in ES and JHS.
 - **Content Focus:** Attention training, understanding thoughts and emotions, stress management, kindness, and gratitude, all inspired by MiSP's age-appropriate curricula (dots, Paws b, .b).
 - **Delivery:** Led by trained Japanese presenters (or [Cousin's Name]), or through professionally produced videos with clear JTE/ALT support guides.
 - **Language:** Primarily Japanese with key English vocabulary integration, or English versions with strong Japanese support.
- **For JTEs & School Staff (Well-being & Teaching Skills):**

- **Personal Well-being Workshops/Modules:** Based on our "Adult MW Foundations" curriculum, focusing on teacher self-care, stress management, resilience-building, and mindful communication.
- **"Train-the-Facilitator" Workshops:** Equipping JTEs and interested school staff with the skills and confidence to deliver Brain Power's "Mindful Minutes" or selected student practices. (This would be a Brain Power-specific offering, complementary to full MiSP certification).
- **Unique "English + MW" Integrated Programs:**
 - **Mindfulness + English:** Lessons integrating core MW themes with targeted English vocabulary and practical communication skills.
 - **Yoga + English:** Gentle, chair-based or simple mat yoga/movement sessions incorporating English instructions and vocabulary for poses, body parts, and mindful movement.
 - **Tea Ceremony (Zen) + English:** Exploring the mindful and calming aspects of traditional Japanese cultural practices like the tea ceremony, with an English language component to discuss vocabulary, steps, and the experience.
- **Specialized Offerings (Future Potential, leveraging [Cousin's Name]'s expertise):**
 - Gong bath relaxation sessions for teacher wellness days, parent groups, or special school events.
 - Deeper meditation workshops or advanced mindfulness resources for adults seeking to further their practice.

Our Commitment & Call to Action

Brain Power's Commitment:

We are committed to an evidence-inspired, ethical, and sustainable approach to introducing Mindfulness & Wellness in Japanese schools. We will:

- Continuously learn from global best practices (like MiSP and MfCP).
- Prioritize cultural sensitivity and local needs.
- Focus on practical, accessible, and impactful solutions.
- Support our ALTs, JTEs, and school partners every step of the way.
- Evaluate and refine our programs based on feedback and outcomes.

Moving Forward Together:

This vision is a journey, and its success depends on the collective effort and insights of the entire Brain Power team. By understanding the critical need for MW in Japan and the potential of our unique

approach, each of us can play a vital role in making a positive difference in the lives of students and educators.

We believe that by fostering inner resources like attention, emotional balance, and compassion, we are not just teaching language; we are truly empowering Japan's future.

Contact Brain Power for further discussion and to learn how you can be involved in our MW initiatives.