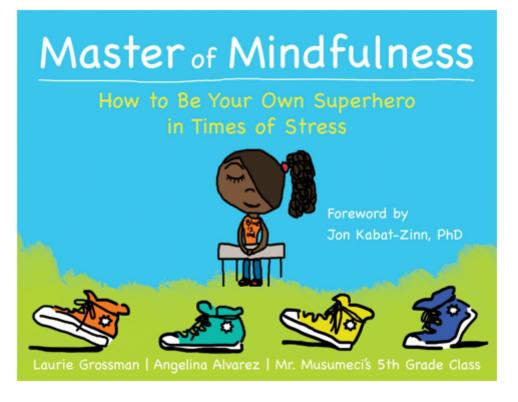
Inner Explorer
Beyond The Program for Teachers
March 2016



5th Graders from Reach Academy Publish Book on Mindfulness!



On March 1, 2016 New Harbinger released a book about mindfulness written by Laurie Grossman (IE staff person), and 5th graders from East Oakland and illustrated by Angelina Alvarez! The book is called Master of Mindfulness, How to Be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress. The foreword was written by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Dear Inner Explorer Teachers,

Kids have a lot to say, so let them say it. Better yet, let them put it in writing. Students in Mr. Musumeci's 5th grade class in East Oakland, CA loved learning about mindfulness. In fact, in a brainstorm about superheroes, 11 year old Isaac Camacho suggested the class create a mindfulness superhero. He further recommended that the superhero be called Master of Mindfulness, with an acronym of Mom. Why Mom? Isaac, who lost his mom at a very young age, said because moms care about you and they would want you to have mindfulness.

The brainstorms ensued, "Do you think other kids would want to know about mindfulness?" The answer was a resounding "YES!" Well, how can we let them know about it? After several minutes, the answer was we could write a book! "And how should we start this book?" "What are ways you have used mindfulness?" "Can you describe the brain science behind mindfulness?" And so, Master of Mindfulness, How to Be Your Own Superhero was born.

The book begins by asking, "Have you ever been mad, sad, disappointed, angry or afraid? What should you do when you feel like that?" The kids suggest you should do mindfulness. They describe it and in detail write about how they've used it. Just a few examples are: when they've been startled by being hit in the face with a soccer ball, when they are nervous because their parents are fighting, when they are frustrated because they can't figure out their password on the computer, when they are sad because their mom is in Mexico and they feel lonely, and when they are procrastinating on a school project. The middle section of the book describes the brain science behind mindfulness and the last section describes several different practices including mindful breathing, walking, eating and body scans. Inside the book there is a

URL which enables readers to go the internet to listen to the authors leading the practices. The final pages of the book include the scripts themselves so kids can record their own voices and then practice to their own voice! (Future voices of Inner Explorer!)

The book was designed by Angelina Alvarez using the kids' photos and drawings. The words are all their own.

Laurie Grossman is the directing author of the book, cofounder of Mindful Schools, and Director of Program Development and Outreach for Inner Explorer. She believes that Inner Explorer is the most effective way to spread mindfulness in schools throughout the US & beyond. "As someone who has worked with vulnerable communities my whole life, I can attest to the fact that mindfulness is a game changer for kids. Inner Explorer has figured out how to spread this vitally important life skill easily, effectively, sustainability and with scalability. The reason IE is so effective is that it makes mindfulness very accessible and daily practice easy. I pinch myself every day at the effectiveness of this program. Daily practice enables students to call on their mindfulness when things happen in life that are challenging, and even when things are good or easy. All students and teachers can be their own Master of Mindfulness superhero. Keep listening! Bravo to Mr. Musumeci's 5th graders."

Should you wish to purchase a copy of Master of Mindfulness for your class, you can do at local bookstores. If you wish to order the book, use our Amazon Smile link below and help Amazon support Inner Explorer while making your purchase!

Click here to register for Amazon Smile to support Inner Explorer with all of your eligible online purchases.

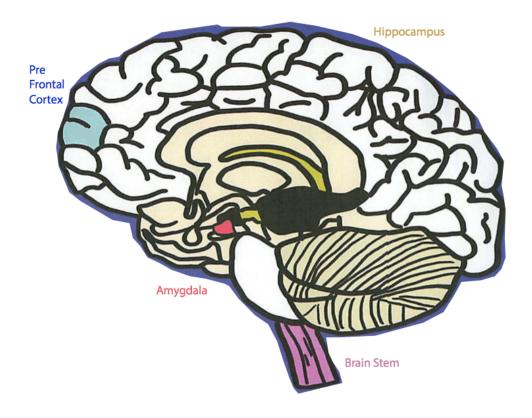
Activities for Inside the Classroom and Outside the Classroom

- 1. Host a discussion about how your students have used mindfulness inside and outside of school.
- 2. Invite students to listen to others' use of mindfulness and ask them to attempt to bring mindfulness into a similar situation. Ask that they write it down and then hold another conversation inviting students to share in which new situations they have brought mindful awareness.
- 3. Ask students if they have taught mindfulness to family or friends. Let students hear from one another. Request that they choose someone to teach and have them report back. As you are well aware, teaching is one of the best ways to solidify learning.
- 4. Have your students write a letter to the editor about the importance of teaching mindfulness in schools or about any topic for which they feel strongly.

- 5. Should you wish to create a class project that will take considerable effort and time, have the students write their own book. Perhaps they can get it published! Doing so is quite empowering.
- 6. Use the attached information about brain science and create a lesson about the neuroscience of mindfulness. Attached is a picture of the brain that younger students may want to color.
- 7. Create a peer to peer mindfulness program. Have your students teach younger (or even older) students how to practice, or if everyone in the school is already practicing bring younger and older classes together to practice and then have them buddy up to talk about how they use mindfulness. You can have them teach kids at your own school, or even for a more ambitious project at another nearby school.

8. Have students write a newsletter for parents about mindfulness.

Neuroscience of Practicing Mindfulness



Usually when you practice mindfulness it makes you feel calm and relaxed. The reason for this is that you are connecting four different parts of your brain: your prefrontal cortex, your limbic system which includes the hippocampus and the amygdala, and the brain stem. Brain cells are called neurons and there are almost 100 billion of them in our heads! When the neurons from the four parts of the brain touch each other we feel good; it's easier to concentrate, be kind, and make good decisions. To achieve this connection, you have to be aware of what is happening. For example, when you are practicing breathing, you know you are breathing, when you are angry, you recognize you're angry, when you are happy, you know you are happy.

Our brains are amazing but sometimes the way they work can get us in trouble. In order to keep us safe, brains look out for danger. The brain can't tell the difference between real danger and a small argument, or a broken toy. When the brain thinks we are in danger the amygdala gets activated, the hormones cortisol and adrenaline get released, and that's when we fight, flight or freeze. We all know what fighting means. Flight means we run away and freeze means we can't do anything.

If we are in real danger, running away or fighting might be a good thing. However, when we have an argument with a friend, or we're yelled at by the teacher, we don't need to run or fight. If we're not really paying attention to how we are feeling, we are reacting instead of responding.

We actually "flip our lids" and the result is a variety of bad choices. It's so much easier and more fun to be mindful.

We can take some breaths. When we do that, the amygdala calms down, the three brain parts connect, and instead of screaming, hitting, throwing things, or running away, we can make a wise choice and the situation will turn out better.

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