Inner Explorer
Beyond The Program for Teachers
June 2016



# **Taking Mindfulness Home**



### & Encouraging Students And Their Families To Do The Same

## Dear Inner Explorer Teachers,

Thank you for what you have done for your students every day this year. As a teacher, you are making a difference in their lives and futures. All of us at Inner Explorer are grateful to you for the work you do.

School is almost out! But life and stress continues... and thankfully, so does your ability and your students' ability to practice mindfulness at home this summer.

Being aware of what's happening is not seasonal. Our goal is to help you and your student to develop mindful awareness as a life-long skill and habit. We are delighted to inform you that you are welcomed and encouraged to use your program during the summer. And we are even more excited to let you know that your students AND their families have the ability to access Inner Explorer at home together this summer.

## Inner Explorer™ Home Edition

Your students and their families have the option of purchasing our Home Edition to gain access to 36 tracks: 15 geared for elementary school students, 15 for teens and 6 specifically created for adults. The program is available for purchase now for only \$30 for the year. Home Edition users can also invite two other families to sign up and try Inner Explorer. Anyone who is interested can simply go to <a href="http://beta.innerexplorer.org/ie/home-edition">http://beta.innerexplorer.org/ie/home-edition</a>.

Inner Explorer's intention is to make mindful awareness easy and accessible for everyone, so please feel free to share this info with your students and their families! In the "Activities" section of this email there is a pre-written email directed at your students' families that you can simply copy and paste into an email or into notices to send home for the summer.

Just as you may have chosen a particular time to practice Inner Explorer with your class, we recommend

you do the same this summer. We've found practicing first thing in the morning is really helpful in creating a routine. You may want to use the program, or perhaps you'd like to try practicing on your own! In either case, find a place where you will not be interrupted. Set your phone to "silent" or "airplane" mode. Use a timer, and if you live with others, let them know you will not be available during your practice time.

Attached to this email are calendars for June, July and August so you have scheduled time to practice.

We recommend you print and post the calendar in your bathroom and make a commitment to yourself not to go to bed until you practice. You may even want to print the calendars and give them to your students to take home for the summer.

In addition to developing and maintaining a formal mindfulness practice, you might also want to engage in a gratitude practice this summer. Expressing your appreciation for the things you are grateful for every day will make your days much more pleasant. You may start noticing how things are going right instead of constantly being on the lookout for what's going wrong. If you tend to have negative thought patterns, try to catch yourself in the moment and ask "Is this thought helpful?"

Our last bit of advice for the summer: Try something new! It could be anything: a new recipe, an art or music class, a new sport or an outdoor activity. You may discover a new talent you weren't aware of!

#### And as always, remember:

**STOP** (Stop, Take a breath, Observe and Proceed) a few times each day to bring your attention to the present moment. It's often quite a lovely place to be!

We wish you a lovely, mindful summer! Look for our next issue of Beyond The Program around the start of the 2016-2017 school year in August!

### **Activities**

1. Encourage students' families to practice at home. We've written the letter to give your students' families the information they need to get started. Please copy and paste into an email to your students' parents or print and distribute it to your students:

"We are delighted to inform you that Inner Explorer, the mindful awareness program that we used in our classroom is available to you for your family's use. The program is effective in developing focus, enhancing impulse control, reducing stress and creating compassion. We have found the program very helpful in our classroom. The program is accessed through the Internet via computer, tablet or phone and is very easy to use. All you have to do is sign up, log in and push "Play". This new Home Edition program has 36 tracks: 15 are geared for elementary school students, 15 are made for teens and 6 are specifically created for adults. Each of the tracks is 10 minutes long. The program is available for purchase now for \$30 for the year. Included in your purchase is the ability to gift the Inner Explorer™ Home Edition to two other families. Simply go to http://beta.innerexplorer.org/ie/home-edition to sign up!"

- 2. Host a brainstorm with students asking them about things they can do this summer to practice mindfulness. Here are some things they may come up with:
  - Pick a time to practice mindful breathing for five (5) minutes a day, maybe first thing in the morning or when returning home from summer school, camp or other activities.
  - Do body scans before going to sleep.
  - Practice breathing before engaging in sports.
  - Try mindfully eating one thing a day. Eat slowly. Pay attention to what the food looks like, its texture, smell and taste. You can even pay attention to what it sounds like when you're chewing!
  - Go for a mindful walk (or run). Simply pay attention to what it feels like to be in motion, picking up and putting down a foot with each step.
- 3. Discuss the importance of practicing mindfulness daily with your students. Ask them why they think it's important to do so. Copy the attached calendars and distribute them to students.
- 4. Encourage your students to be mindful of doing something they love every day!
- 5. Listen to a song you love to sing (this is one of our favorite activities). See if you can get through the entire song without thinking, and be present for every word! If you find it difficult, which many of us do, keep trying! It's really fun. You may find new meaning in a song you've heard a hundred times.
- 6. This is one of our teachings that people find the most helpful: Really try it and see if your life feels better. If you have a particular worry that regularly bothers you, when you notice it arrive, pat yourself on the back and say, "Oh, there's that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, (feeling, concern, relationship, etc). Thanks for noticing \_\_\_\_\_\_ (your name). Soon you may find that thought not reoccurring so much. Every time it comes, do the same. In doing this, you are training your mind to go where you want it to go or at least to not go where you don't want it to go.
- 7. Order a copy of *Master of Mindfulness: How To Be Your Own Superhero In Times of Stress*. Share it with the people you love, and see if you can incorporate it into your plans for the 2016-2017 school year! Buy it here: <a href="maintenancem/Master-Mindfulness-Superhero-Times-Stress/dp/">amazon.com/Master-Mindfulness-Superhero-Times-Stress/dp/</a> 1626254648

## **Neuroscience of Beginner's Mind**

May you enjoy a summer of calm!

When we practice mindfulness, we are aware. When we are aware that we are aware we are connecting neurons from our brain stem, limbic system and prefrontal cortex. Doing so creates brain integration and the best-regulated levels of physical, emotional and cognitive activation. Quoting Donald Hebb, a Canadian neuropsychologist, "Neurons that fire together wire together". By practicing mindfulness over and over we are able to create enduring traits of calm and regulation.

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