



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness (or mindful awareness) is the practice of paying attention to the present moment. Mindful awareness - when practiced regularly - helps children avoid distraction and unhealthy mental habits, while allowing them to improve their focus, regulate their emotions, and engage more effectively with classmates and teachers. Very few of us really pay attention to any activity *as it's happening*. When we do, an entirely new world opens up to us. The more we tune into the present moment, the more fully we can live our lives. We learn to slow down the chattering mind and notice our senses, thoughts and emotions without judging them as right or wrong. We become familiar with the beauty, wisdom, passion and compassion that exist in all of us.

### **Why is daily practice so important?**

Research has shown that in order to experience the many benefits mindfulness has to offer (including self awareness, self-control, resilience, compassion, academic success and a heightened sense of wellbeing), daily practice is necessary. A 10-minute practice - simply sitting with eyes closed and focusing inward - lays the foundation for one to be mindful throughout the rest of the day. It helps to create a healthy habit of mindfulness like brushing your teeth or wearing your seatbelt. Over time, commitment to this practice becomes less challenging as it becomes an integral part of your day. When teachers commit to using the Inner Explorer™ programs on a daily basis for 30 days, they are more likely to stay with the program on a continuing basis and report significant, positive changes for themselves and their students.

### **How is Mindfulness relevant in education?**

As students learn to regulate their attention, emotions and behaviors, they perform better in school, experience fewer discipline problems, and develop resilience to counteract the negative effects of stress and anxiety. When teachers practice with their students, they report a 43% decrease in their stress levels which helps them reconnect with their love of teaching. We are at a critical point in education in the U.S. Declining test scores, high dropout rates and reduced global competitiveness for the past several decades underscore the severity of our educational challenges. Even with recent gains in a few academic categories, many of our children are not adequately prepared to successfully navigate the workforce of the 21st century.

Children who participate in this type of mindfulness training demonstrate improved focus, increased creativity, higher academic performance, less stress and consistent prosocial behaviors. Bolstering these self-regulation skills through mindful awareness training predicts school achievement in reading and mathematics better than IQ scores. The bottom line is that mindful students improve their grades, rate themselves as more happy/content, and improve their ability to get along with their peers, teachers and family members. Discipline issues go down while performance and a sense of community go up.



### **Is there research evidence to support these claims?**

Yes, there are more than 40 years of research with thousands of scientific studies documenting improvements in physical and mental health, academic outcomes, and life outcomes as a result of practicing mindful awareness.

### **With these outcomes, why isn't every school offering mindfulness training?**

Beyond the evidence that exists to support mindfulness in schools, educators and administrators have to evaluate cost, ease of implementation and how the program can be sustained after the initial launch and training phase. The Inner Explorer™ daily mindfulness programs are now being used in more than 4,400 classrooms because they effectively address these concerns. When schools make the minor investment in Inner Explorer™, they realize a significant return.

### **What is Inner Explorer?**

Inner Explorer™ is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide daily mindfulness programs for PreK-12 classrooms to help children develop self-awareness, self-control, resilience and compassion. Each series contains 90 audio-guided practices that can be used every day by simply logging in and pressing play. Students and their teachers participate together in the brief (5-10 minute) daily practices. No prep, planning or curriculum changes required.

### **How is Inner Explorer different from other programs?**

We've created our mindfulness-based programs using the latest scientific research in cognitive neuroscience and developmental psychology. We've also fine-tuned the approach over the past five years with direct feedback and guidance from thousands of teachers, administrators and students. Our programs address the major challenges many school systems face, including academic performance, graduation rates, discipline problems, school climate and bullying. Additionally, our programs are simple to implement and cost effective, so they can be rolled out quickly to deliver significant improvements in student achievement. The Inner Explorer program does not require extensive outside training or facilitator. The "Press Play" format allows for immediate access to the program as teachers and students listen to the guided daily practice together. We offer a parent/caretaker 'TuneIN' so they can listen to the same program as their children each day. There is also a home edition for practice at home or summer use to maintain continuity throughout the year. This allows families to not only practice together, but bridges home and school. Most importantly, our programs help children become more compassionate, responsible and productive citizens.

### **What is social emotional learning (SEL)?**

As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL): *Social and emotional learning (SEL) is "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."*



Inner Explorer provides Mindfulness-Based Social Emotional Learning (MBSEL) programs for preschool through high school classrooms. An MBSEL evidence-based curriculum develops similar values to a traditional SEL curriculum, but the method is entirely different. An MBSEL program helps the children embody the lessons in a holistic and integrated way. By allowing the children to connect with their direct experiences, they learn to value their capacities, their potential and their voice. Values including compassion, kindness, self-control, enthusiasm, openness and tolerance spring naturally from this process. MBSEL provides the foundation for “Readiness to Learn” and for other SEL initiatives.

### **What is “Readiness to Learn”?**

It’s defined as the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors and to inhibit impulsivity. Daily mindfulness practice fosters students “Readiness to Learn”. ‘Readiness’ has become a core focus for educators because research has shown it’s a precursor to school success. Readiness is more predictive of academic achievement than IQ! Readiness is developed through Inner Explorer programs because students simultaneously experience a reduction in stress and an increase in attention. No matter what experiences students are exposed to outside of school, these programs allow them to create strong habits of mind and heart through consistent reflective practices. The result is they improve their grades and test scores.

### **What is the science behind mindfulness?**

The practice of mindfulness has gained much popularity, especially in recent years, as its application proved valuable in fields ranging from the medical community to education and the military. This mainstream popularity has fueled even more research into mindfulness practices. Scientific research clearly supports and documents the benefits of mindfulness to improve not only health and well-being, but also the brain in particular. Brain science tells us that the brain actually has a ‘plastic’ quality called neuroplasticity that allows the brain matter to change under certain conditions. What is significant about this is that whereas we previously thought the brain was fixed, especially by a certain age, we now know that, with mindfulness practice, the grey matter in the brain changes to foster improved function in the areas of the brain that regulate learning, memory, compassion, empathy and stress.

Further, our bodies were designed to respond to stressful situations in our lives with either fight or flight, or what is typically called the “fight or flight” response. When we are in ‘fight or flight’ our muscles tense, our breathing and heart rate increases as our blood pressure rises. While this worked very well when we were hunters and gatherers, activation of the ‘fight or flight’ response on a daily basis, often multiple times throughout the day, leads to unhealthy stress levels. Dr. Herbert Benson, of Harvard coined the term ‘relaxation response’ to describe what is known as the antidote to ‘flight or fight’. Practices such as mindfulness assist us in evoking the relaxation response and when we practice mindfulness, our muscles relax, breathing and heart rates slow down and our blood pressure tends to decrease. In response, our bodies create less cortisol, the stress hormone, which further promotes a sense of calm and well-being.

### **Is Mindfulness a religion?**



Mindfulness is not a religion. It is a set of simple attention practices that promote full awareness of the present moment. These attention practices allow students to develop the capacity to sustain focus. This has been shown to improve academic performance. Similar to lifting weights to strengthen muscle tone, attention practices strengthen brain function. All students can participate just like they would any other part of the school curriculum.

### **How much does it cost?**

Whether you are a school, teacher or parent, we have a program to fit your needs. To see the pricing for each, please select the appropriate program for you [here](#).

### **Where can I find a demo or listen to a few tracks?**

Experience our program with [this trial](#).

### **What's the best way to get this going in my school or community?**

If you are an educator, you can sign up for a trial to experience it in your school right away. If you're a parent or community member, you can contact [jjohnson@innerexplorer.org](mailto:jjohnson@innerexplorer.org) to get access our Ambassador Kit which includes a brochure, a presentation and other tools to share information about the program to others in the community.

### **How do I get a school signed up?**

To sign up as a school, get started by selecting a program option [here](#).

### **If I have other questions, whom do I contact?**

If you have further questions, please contact us at [info@innerexplorer.org](mailto:info@innerexplorer.org), and someone from our team will reach out to you as soon as possible with an answer.

### **Can I use this at home?**

Yes! You can access our Home Edition [here](#).

### **Can you suggest reading material on mindfulness? What are books and articles I could read to learn more about mindfulness?**

Please visit [innerexplorer.org](http://innerexplorer.org) for a complete document with some recommended reading, but here are some titles to help you learn more:

- Child's Mind: Mindfulness Practices to help our Children be more Focused, Calm, & Relaxed by Christopher Willard
- Everybody Present: Mindfulness in Education by Nikolaj Rotne, Didde Flor Rotne
- Everywhere Else (An Instant Help Book for Teens) by Christopher Willard, PsyD
- Master of Mindfulness: How to Be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress by Laurie Grossman, Angelina Alvarez & Mr. Musumeci's 5th grade class



- The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being by Daniel Siegel
- The Mindful Child: How to Help your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder and More Compassionate by Susan Kaiser-Greenland
- A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture an American Spirit by Congressman Tim Ryan
- The Mindful School Leader: Practices to Transform Your Leadership and School by Valerie Brown and Kirsten Olson
- Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness by Deborah Schoeberlein
- Mindfulness for Teen Anxiety: A Workbook for Overcoming Anxiety at Home, at School, and Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation by Dan Siegel
- A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions by Amy Saltzman, MD (Author), Saki Santorelli, EdD MA (Foreword)
- The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal with Stress by Gina Biegel, MA LMFT

### **Parent/Caretaker FAQs:**

#### **How do I know when my child is practicing?**

All of our PreK-12 programs have a radio feature created specifically for parents called "TuneIn" that allows you to receive notifications when your child's class is practicing. With this feature, you can also tune in and listen to the track with your child's class or listen to the track at a later time within 24 hours. Your teacher can send you an invite to this feature once the class has launched their program. Our Home Edition program also comes with access to this feature, along with the ability to share with other parents in your network.

#### **What sort of questions should I ask at home?**

One of the benefits of tuning in with your child's class is that you have the opportunity to talk about it with your child when he/she comes home. While it is not necessary to discuss anything in particular, maintaining an open, receptive and curious attitude toward the mindfulness practice allows for reflection and connection. Feel free to share with your child positive changes you notice in yourself over time or your favorite part of a particular practice and then encourage your child to do the same.

#### **How can I incorporate mindfulness at home?**

There are many ways you can incorporate Inner Explorer and the practice of mindful awareness at home. As mentioned above, you can listen in with your child's class via the "Tune In" feature and ask questions about the practice when your child gets home. Look for opportunities in your everyday family life to incorporate some of the mindfulness practices such as gratitude or deep breathing during a stressful time. Your family can also participate in our Home Edition program ([Details and pricing here](#)). Finally, please see the list of recommended readings in the general FAQ above that will give you more information about mindfulness.



**What if I'm a parent who homeschools my child(ren)? Can I run a program at home?**

Yes. Please see our teacher FAQs below and sign up as a teacher [here](#).

**I'm active in the PTA. How should I present this to my school?**

We have an "Ambassadors Kit", which includes a brochure and other tools to share information about the program to others in the school community

**How can I contribute?**

We appreciate your support! You can make a tax deductible donation [here](#). There are also countless other ways you can help, including emailing your child's teacher about the program, asking local businesses or people in your network to make a donation, sharing information about Inner Explorer on social media or encouraging schools in your area to consider sponsoring another school that might benefit from the program. You can also send us a testimonial, make a personal contribution or start a fundraising campaign in your community.

## **Teacher FAQs:**

**What grades does Inner Explorer serve? Will this work with very young children?**

Inner Explorer programs are designed for use in preschool through high school classrooms. We have four specific programs: Exploring Me™ for preschool and kindergarten. (this program has been shown to be successful with very young children), Exploring Originality™ for elementary classrooms. Exploring Potential™ for middle school classes, and Exploring Relevance™ for high school classrooms.

**How do I show my principal or school that this is important?**

Our Ambassador Kit is designed to provide an overview of mindfulness, why it's important in education, how students and teachers benefit, and a simple way to implement it in your school. The kit includes a brochure, a brief presentation, a video clip of teacher and student testimonials and other tools to inspire engagement. Please contact [jjohnson@innerexplorer.org](mailto:jjohnson@innerexplorer.org) for more information.

**Does every teacher in the school have to sign up?**

No. Launching a program is at the discretion of the teacher or the school.

**How much training is required before I can start a program in my classroom?**

There is a 20-minute online training video along with curriculum resources with related program tools for each classroom. Each teacher training can be done online and can be referenced at any point of time in the teacher's account. The Inner Explorer program is automated and does not require teacher prep or planning time. Research has shown that teachers who participate along with students in the 10-minute program experience a significant reduction in stress, among other benefits.

**What if I don't have my students every day?**



You can still participate and launch a program in your class. You can also encourage other teachers to participate and practice with your students on the days they have them if that is the case in your school.

### **What's the best way for teachers to incorporate Inner Explorer?**

Our audio-guided programs are designed to run throughout the entire school year in 5-10 minute daily segments. Each semester, a series of 90 recordings are available on any networked device including a classroom computer or smartphone. Each day, the classroom teacher can play a recording during a normal transition time (i.e. beginning of the school day or right after recess or lunch), so it doesn't impact the overall curriculum. The students and teacher listen to the recording and participate in the 2-minute journaling integration exercise at the end, which is included in the 10 minutes.

### **How do I explain this to my students' parents/caretakers?**

We encourage you to inform your students' parents about the program. There is a pre-drafted letter in your teacher dashboard that you can tweak and send out to your parents to let them know about this new program.

### **I don't have time for another activity in my classroom. How do I fit this in?**

Teachers who use the program regularly report that they actually find more time in their day due to the reduction in behavioral issues and distractions as well as their students' increased focus and attention. Since the programs only take about 5-10 minutes per day, you can be at ease that this program won't eat up a significant portion of your daily activities.

### **What if I don't have the budget to pay for this?**

There are a number of ways to get Inner Explorer into your classroom and school. We offer monthly subscriptions for as low as \$10 per month. We can also facilitate a mini fundraising campaign that is easy to launch with tools built into our platform. We have donor support for a limited number of scholarships, so please let us know if you're interested to apply. Please contact us if you are interested.

### **Administrator FAQs:**

#### **How do I encourage teachers to participate?**

We find that the program works best when teachers are encouraged but not required to participate in the program. Educating your teachers on the benefits of mindfulness in general and our program in particular is often sufficient to inspire teachers to try the program. It is important that you get them logged onto the platform as soon as you know they are interested. We have training resources to help onboard the teachers and are happy to offer continued support. If there is a teacher, or teachers, who are actively engaged with our program, enlist their support to inspire other teachers. A community of teachers practicing mindfulness increases the success of the program as students experience continuity as they move through the grade levels as well as in their mindful communication and collaboration with other students.



**Do all of my classes need to start the program at the same time?**

No, your teachers have the flexibility to start the program whenever it is most convenient for them.

**How do I monitor the progress for each of my classrooms once they've started the program?**

You can monitor the progress of the classrooms in your school from your Administrator dashboard.

**Do I have to inform our students' parents before the program begins?**

We highly encourage you or your teachers to inform your students' parents about this new program. There is a pre-drafted letter in the dashboard that can be tweaked and sent to parents to give them the information they need to understand the purpose and benefits of the program.

**How do I help my teachers foster daily practice in their classes?**

Encourage your teachers to practice along with the students and to practice daily for at least 30 days. After 30 days, teachers will have developed a routine and often begin to have experiential knowledge of how Inner Explorer benefits their classroom. This knowledge will increase over time with continued use of the program and reinforce the value of a daily practice.

**We don't currently have PayPal. Can I pay for our school subscription with a check or purchase order?**

**Where should I mail the check?**

Yes, you can pay online with a credit card or e-check, or you can mail your check to the attention of Tabitha O'Toole at Inner Explorer, 430 Franklin Village Dr. #325, Franklin, MA, 02038.

**How do I get other schools involved?**

You can get other schools involved by sending them to this site or sponsoring a school that may not have the funds through our fundraising campaign feature on the platform. It can be a way for your students' to "pay it forward" to others in the community. If you copy us on any correspondence, we will be happy to follow up and share more information about our programs.

**How can we help other schools in our community that can't afford this program but need it?**

Here is a list of ways to obtain funding for our program:

- Sponsorship by another school
- Parent-teacher organizations/associations
- Service organizations (e.g. Jaycees, Lions Club)
- Local businesses
- Hospitals and medical clinics
- Education or other private foundations (try searching Funsnetservices.com)
- Mayor's Offices - municipal government
- Private foundations



**Do you offer PD (Professional Development) Days?**

We offer PD days for an additional cost and are happy to coordinate the training and dates that fit your schedule. Please send us a note with your information to [jhoulihan@innerexplorer.org](mailto:jhoulihan@innerexplorer.org).

**Ambassador FAQs:****What is an ambassador?**

Ambassadors are individuals and organizations who want to spread the word about the Inner Explorer's mindfulness initiative to promote readiness to learn in K-12 schools.

**What can I do to help Inner Explorer as an ambassador?**

As an ambassador, you will be given the tools you need to talk to schools, teachers, administrators and others in your community about the benefits of Inner Explorer and mindfulness. There are countless ways you can help, including emailing your child's teacher about the program, asking local businesses or people in your network to make a donation, sharing information about Inner Explorer on social media or encouraging schools in your area to consider sponsoring another school that might benefit from the program. You can also send us a testimonial, make a personal contribution or start a fundraising campaign in your community.

**How do I encourage a school to sign up?**

The best way to encourage a school to sign up is to reach out personally through an email, phone call or personal visit to the school. If you copy us on the email, we will be happy to follow-up and present the benefits of our programs.

**Where can I go to learn more? Are there any upcoming events?**

Please explore our website and stay tuned for announcements about future events.

**Do I have to use the program to be an ambassador?**

No, you don't have to use the program to be an ambassador.

**If have other questions, who do I contact?**

For general questions, please contact us at [info@innerexplorer.org](mailto:info@innerexplorer.org)

For more information on becoming an ambassador or to request marketing materials, please email Jordan Johnson: [jjohnson@innerexplorer.org](mailto:jjohnson@innerexplorer.org)

For technical issues, please email Tabitha O'Toole: [totoole@innerexplorer.org](mailto:totoole@innerexplorer.org)

For more information about making a contribution, please email Janice Houlihan: [jhoulihan@innerexplorer.org](mailto:jhoulihan@innerexplorer.org)