



# YOUTH MINDFULNESS KIDS PROGRAMME

AN OVERVIEW

## 16 ONE-HOUR LESSONS



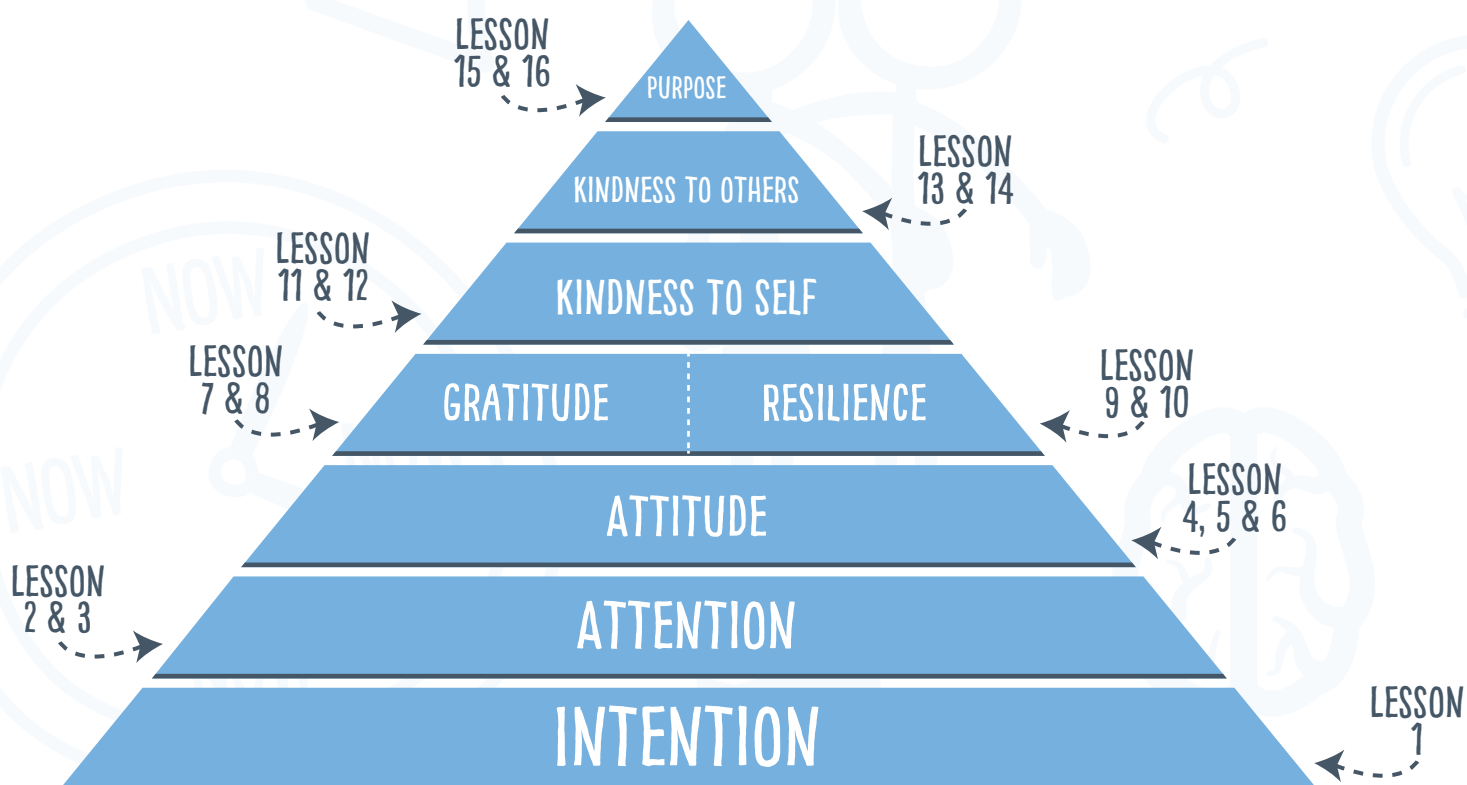
**The Youth Mindfulness Kids programme** is a 16-lesson introduction to mindfulness for 7 to 11 year olds, with a strong emphasis on experiential learning. It's 16 one-hour lessons build up sequentially, introducing and exploring new facets of mindfulness with each lesson. The first six lessons focus on cultivating the foundational axioms of mindfulness: intention, attention and attitude. As the course progresses, children then learn to cultivate gratitude, handle difficult thoughts and emotions, and finally develop kindness towards themselves and others.

Importantly, the key foundations of mindfulness - i.e. paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and warmth - are continually strengthened throughout all 16 lessons.



# STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

The Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme can be broken down into 8 themes: intention, attention, attitude, gratitude, resilience, self-kindness, kindness to others, and purpose.



In a 2006 paper entitled “The Mechanisms of Mindfulness” Shauna Shapiro and colleagues identify three axioms of mindfulness which offer a helpful framework to understand the first six lessons of the Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme. They are, intention, attention and attitude. They can be mapped to Jon Kabat-Zinn’s famous definition of mindfulness: “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present-moment, and non judgementally.”

↑  
INTENTION      ATTENTION      ATTITUDE

Shapiro, S. L., Carlson L. E., & Astin J. A. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, 373– 386.



# THEMES OF THE CURRICULUM

**INTENTION** refers to the inner decision to be mindful. This relies on motivation. In the first lesson the children learn how the brain can change and grow and why paying attention to the present moment can be of benefit to them.

**ATTENTION** refers to the practice of bringing the attention back to the present moment. In lessons 2 and 3 the children learn about attention, how it's key to our experience and how it tends to wander. They also begin training their attention to be present.

**ATTITUDE** refers to the way we pay attention. In lesson 4 the children learn the value of non-reactivity; in lesson 5 the children learn how to cultivate the freshness of the beginner's mind and in lesson 6 the children learn to develop their willpower and diligence.

**GRATITUDE** refers to the practice of recognising and appreciating the conditions of health and happiness that are available for us in the present moment. This is the focus of lessons 7 and 8.

**RESILIENCE** refers to art of handling difficult emotions, thoughts and mind-states with wisdom, courage and awareness. In lesson 9 we explore the natural reaction to turn away from difficulty and instead cultivate the capacity to "be-with" the difficult. In lesson 10 we explore idea that thoughts are not facts.

**KINDNESS TO SELF.** By the time we get to lessons 11 and 12 the children have become quite familiar with their own minds and are ready to begin cultivating an attitude of kindness and warmth towards themselves. We explore what is meant by kindness conceptually, and also how we can be kind to ourselves in practical ways.

**KINDNESS TO OTHERS.** Building on the understanding that everybody wants to be happy and nobody wants to suffer the children then practice cultivating kindness towards others, beginning with friends and extending the practice to classmates and others. The children also have the opportunity to engage in acts of kindness.

**PURPOSE.** In lesson 15 the children reflect on all they have learned over the course of the preceding 14 lessons and in lesson 16 they develop a personal mission statement, articulating a vision for integrating their learning and acting in a way they can be proud of.

# WHAT MAKES THE YOUTH MINDFULNESS KIDS PROGRAMME UNIQUE?

## PRACTICE

As the Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme progresses, more and more time is devoted to mindfulness practice as opposed to talking about or conceptualising mindfulness. In the early lessons the children will be invited to practise for 1, 2 or 3 minutes at a time, whereas in the later lessons 10 and 11 year-old children are often able to practice for as much as 13, 14 or 15 minutes. Each Youth Mindfulness Kids lesson usually consists of a sitting practice, a movement practice and a lying down practice.

## MOVEMENT

Children spend a lot of time at school sitting behind desks and being asked to be still. This at a time when they are biologically programmed to move, explore and adventure into the world. As such, mindful movement is a great way to release some of this energy and often the children are very happy to be still after moving a lot. What's more, mindful movement offers new avenues for the children to deepen their understanding and application of mindfulness in daily life.

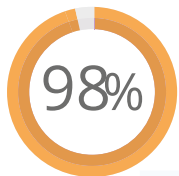
## ENQUIRY

Enquiry refers to exploring in dialogue with the children their experience of practising mindfulness. Rather than explaining or teaching, enquiry offers the teacher the opportunity to take the role of non-expert and explore the children's experience of practising mindfulness with enthusiasm and curiosity. This is a wonderful way to develop a method of communicating that is based on openness, kindness and non-judgment. The enquiry process is a powerful way for the children to develop a sense of cohesion as a group and 'experience' the essential attitudinal components of mindfulness.

## FUN

Mindfulness is not something you can make somebody do. For mindfulness to be mindfulness it has to come from within. If children are to be mindful, they have to decide of their own volition to bring their mind to the present moment and practise being aware of what is happening. As such it is crucial to engage children and for them to decide that mindfulness is something they want to do. If it's boring they simply won't engage, so the most powerful way to do this is to make it fun and interesting! The Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme is packed full of fun activities, games and videos, all designed to illustrate different aspects of mindfulness and encourage the children's engagement.

## WHAT THE KIDS SAY



98% OF CHILDREN REPORT BENEFITS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE YOUTH MINDFULNESS KIDS PROGRAMME.

"My brother was annoying me and I was getting really angry but then I realised that I was angry and I focused on my breath."

"When I got angry I nearly punched someone then I did mindfulness, calmed down and everything was better."

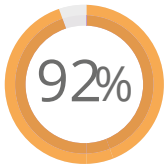
"When I was nervous at an athletics tournament being mindful helped me."

"It has helped me to grow my confidence and to be more calm when hard times come."

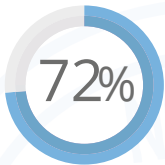
"I am more confident when learning new things, and I have learned to be grateful for life."

## WHAT'S THE RESEARCH?

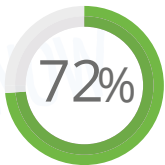
A qualitative study conducted at the University of Edinburgh in 2014, exploring children's experiences of the Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme found that:



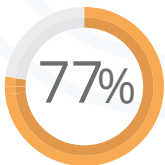
92% of children reported an enhanced ability to regulate their emotions and tolerate strong affect.



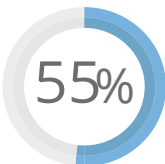
72% of children reported that mindfulness helps them to focus, pay attention, and concentrate.



72% of children report an enhanced ability to be less reactive towards others, being less aggressive and engaging less frequently in physical and verbal confrontation.



77% of children report improvements in peer and family relationships.



Over 55% of children report that mindfulness helps them to enjoy life more, demonstrating enhanced gratitude, happiness, optimism and quality of life.



# OUR FIVE DAY TRAINING

## SEE AND EXPERIENCE ALL 16 LESSONS.

Our teacher training is designed to be an immersive learning experience. Over the course of 5 days all 16 lessons are delivered as they would be in the classroom so that participants can experience the Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme live. In addition to this, we discuss the principles and pedagogy underlying the lessons and course structure and explore the science behind the key elements of the course.

## PRACTISE THE KEY SKILLS NEEDED TO TEACH.

Participants also have the opportunity to practise the teaching skills involved in delivering the Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme, such as guiding practice and leading enquiry. The principal aim of the training is for participants to develop a solid understanding of the aims and intentions of the curriculum as well as of how to deliver each of the 16 lessons.

## WHAT YOU GET:

- 300+ page Youth Mindfulness Kids Teaching Manual.
- All powerpoints and videos needed to teach Youth Mindfulness Kids.
- 5 days of in-depth training led by experienced practitioners with a group of passionate individuals.
- Youth Mindfulness Kids Programme Teaching Certificate.

## PRE-REQUISITES TO APPLY.

In order to teach Youth Mindfulness Kids, it is essential that the teacher has a depth of experiential understanding of mindfulness in relation to his or her own practice and can embody mindfulness in the classroom. As such, all applicants must have an ongoing daily mindfulness practice of at least 6 months duration, as well as have completed an 8 week mindfulness course such as MBSR or MBCT.

Go to our website to find the next training course [youthmindfulness.co.uk](https://youthmindfulness.co.uk)

Dear Michael, Lyndsay, Chloe and Lorna,

I wanted to write to say a huge, huge heartfelt thanks for a truly profound and inspiring week. I feel very blessed that our paths have crossed. The course was fabulous and I'm so excited about going out there and sharing this stuff. If the children can feel even a tenth of what I experienced, then blimey!! It feels such a positive thing to be doing, to foster that sense of community and to get in touch with our hearts. What amazing possibilities. Thank you again for everything.

Warmest wishes,

Anna

*- Email from Anna a few days after she completed the Youth Mindfulness Kids 5-day training.*