

Cultivating Happiness in Schools



What steps can schools take to increase happiness?

- ▶ Listen to youth – ask questions and learn about what brings joy for each student.
- ▶ Understand what interferes with joy – is it boredom, bullying, anxiety, trauma?
- ▶ Up student engagement - What percentage are highly engaged? What does engagement look like for you students? Could it be improved?
- ▶ Check out laughter – what is the “joy” factor for your class? Is there humor?
- ▶ Add caring, kindness, connection – how are they part of each student’s day?
- ▶ Use mindfulness tools – research-based approaches to increase a sense of calmness and well-being.

What can Cultivating Happiness in Schools provide to help increase happiness and well-being at your school?

- ▶ Virtual and on-site supports to help you assess happiness, joy, and well-being for students and staff.
- ▶ Virtual and on-site book study groups for staff.
- ▶ Virtual and on-site classes and workshops in mindfulness, meditation, and mindfulness movement.
- ▶ Help with interventions – problem solving, meeting with teams.
- ▶ Support for school counselors in helping to decrease anxiety and increase self-regulation.
- ▶ Networking with others in our HeartMind Community.

Contact us: chrismason@edimprovement.org or
kahlilk@gwu.edu

Website: www.edimprovement.org

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Areas of special focus in 2024.

- ▶ Guidance for counselors as they form small groups to address trauma, stress, and anxiety.
- ▶ Addressing racism and bias in early childhood.
- ▶ Heart centered learning and its 5 Cs (consciousness, compassion, confidence, courage, and community).
- ▶ Building compassionate school leaders, increasing equity and empathy.
- ▶ Reaching and uplifting girls – supports to help increase friendships, a sense of community and belonging, confidence, and a positive mindset.
- ▶ Teen-to-Teen peer supports.



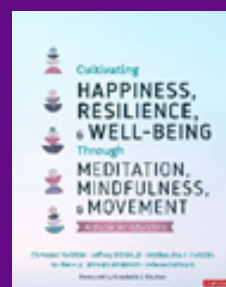
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How can your school participate in the Cultivating Happiness program?

- ▶ Join our HeartMind Community and receive our monthly eNews.
- ▶ Request a private consultation or group instruction in breathwork, mindfulness, meditation, and mindfulness movements.
- ▶ Sign up for our Virtual Book Study – Wednesdays- April 3, May 1, and June 12, 2024, at 5:30-6:15 pm.



- ▶ Read our books, including the Cultivating Happiness, Resilience, and Well-Being through Mindfulness, Meditation, and Movement. Check out books and eBooks under Christine Mason (MINDFULNESS) at Amazon.

What do we know about the effectiveness of Cultivating Happiness?

The Cultivating Happiness program is based on research on children, youth, and adults. We incorporate up-to-date research and strategies as well as advice we have gleaned from experts and from children and youth. The research is explained in our books. See especially *Compassionate School Practices: Fostering Children's Mental Health and Well-Being*, which describes our research in New England, with the Region 10 Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.

The suggestions we have for mindfulness, meditation, and movement come from over 20 years of experience as meditation, mindfulness, and yoga instructors.

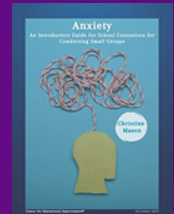
Neuroscience tells us that if students are anxious that self-regulation and learning are more difficult. Students who are anxious are less likely to be able to focus on academics as their brains shift into a flight-fight-freeze mode. However, breathwork, movement, and meditation can help students return to a sense of calmness, with brains more available to listen and learn.

Here is one breath to try. It's called the Whistle Breath and is designed to impact the parasympathetic nervous system to bring about a sense of calmness.

- ▶ Sit with a straight spine – either on the floor or in a chair.
- ▶ Close your eyes or lower your gaze. Slow your breath down.
- ▶ As you inhale, inhale deep into your belly, allowing your belly to expand, almost like blowing up a balloon.
- ▶ Then hold your breath for a few seconds.
- ▶ Exhale, pulling your navel point to your spine.
- ▶ Hold your breath out.
- ▶ Repeat this cycle 3-4 times.

Then, begin the whistle breath.

- ▶ Shift so you are inhaling with a whistle and exhaling with a whistle.
- ▶ Continue for 3-4 minutes.
- ▶ Inhale, feel the sense of calmness, and relax. Open your eyes.



The Center for Educational Improvement (CEI), a 501 c 3 nonprofit supporting research and implementing best practices in schools, has been providing services to educators and schools since 2009. Dr. Christine Mason, Founder and Senior Scholar at CEI is an educational psychologist, researcher, author, and mindfulness meditation and yoga instructor. Kahlil Kuykendall is the Cultivating Happiness Coordinator at CEI and a mindfulness instructor at George Washington University. Kahlil also serves as a mindfulness coordinator with Montgomery County Schools and a youth development consultant.

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