**Mindfulness Curriculum Intervention Plan: 3rd Grade Classroom**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective** | **ASCA Counseling Standards** | **Activity** |
| To help students identify and understand complex emotions and feelings | PS:A1.8- Understand the need for self-control and how to practice itPS:C1.10- Learn techniques for managing stress and conflictPS:C1.11- Learn coping skills for managing life events | Feelings Practice- Help students identify, name, and understand feelings that they may not know are there. |
| To introduce an activity to be used in classrooms by teachers to help students regain their focus and attention | PS:B1.4- Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problemsPS:C1.10- Learn techniques for managing stress and conflictPS:C1.11- Learn coping skills for managing life events | Still Quiet Place- Introduce a place for students to visit when they’re overwhelmed by negative emotions. |
| To present an activity that encourages students to become mindful of their passing thoughts in order to get a better handle on them | PS:B1.4- Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problemsPS:C1.10- Learn techniques for managing stress and conflictPS:C1.11- Learn coping skills for managing life eventsA:A2.4- Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influenceschool performance | Thought Parade Exercise- Present an idea of students to help them watch their thoughts as if viewing a parade and encouraging them to be viewers instead of participants |
| To allow the students to focus on their breath as a method to reduce future stress or anxiety | PS:B1.4- Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problemsPS:C1.10- Learn techniques for managing stress and conflictPS:C1.11- Learn coping skills for managing life events | Jewel/Treasure Exercise- Have students place a stone on their belly button and focus on the movement of the stone with their breath |
| To allow students to build a skill to create a sense of mindfulness about a past positive emotional experience | PS:A1.6- Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviorPS:A2.3- Recognize, accept, respect and appreciate individual differences | Loving-Kindness Practice- Ask students to focus on when they had a positive emotional experience |

**Plan for Implementation**

 The activities listed are geared for a 3rd grade classroom, but it could most likely be used for any elementary classrooms. The plan for introducing the mindfulness practices is a three step process. In the first step, there will be collaboration and consultation with the teacher(s) about the validity of mindfulness practice and how it can benefit their classroom. The teacher(s) will be present with resources and research that shows how mindfulness is effective and what it can do for the function of their classroom. Also, the teacher(s) will be taught the activities that will be used in the second step and will consult with the professional school counselor to determine which activities they feel will be the most useful for them to use. In the second step, the professional school counselor will present a classroom guidance lesson during the class time. The length and time of the guidance lesson will depend on the time that the teacher allows and the length of the period. In the guidance lesson there will be a maximum of three activities, again depending on the length of time allotted for the guidance lesson. In the third step, the teacher will implement the mindfulness practices that were previously decided on in the first few minutes of the class each day. The counselor will meet up with the teacher after a few weeks have gone by to check in with her and see if it’s working and things that they might want to change.

**Mindfulness Activities**

*Feelings Practice-* The Feelings Practice exercise is when the students will try to create words and expressions to describe their current emotional state. The practice asks the students to become aware and name their current feeling. They are asked to try to name that feeling. These names can be ordinary such as angry, lonely, sad, etc. or it can be unusual names like empty. The point of the exercise is to help the students be able to identify their emotions and better express them. After they name the feeling, they are asked to notice where those feelings are being experienced and whether those feelings have colors or sounds. After understanding the components of the emotion, the students are told to ask the feeling what it wants. Finally, they are asked if they are willing to give the feelings what they requested. By identifying the emotion and the request of the emotion, the students are more likely to become curious and want to explore their own emotions.

*Still Quiet Place-* The Still Quiet Place exercise is designed to give the students a place where they can visit when they’re overwhelmed with their emotions. The following is a reading that can help introduce the Still Quiet Place to the students that was pulled from a chapter of the book *Acceptance and Mindfulness Treatments for Children and Adolescents: A Practitioner’s Guide* by Amy Saltzman:

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I would like to share one of my favorite places with you. I call it Still Quiet Place. It’s not a place you travel to in a car, or a train, or a plane. It is a place inside you that you can find just by closing your eyes. Let’s find it now. Close your eyes and take some slow deep breaths. See if you can feel a kind of warm, happy smile in your body. Do you feel it? This is your Still Quiet Place. Take some more deep breaths and really snuggle in. The best thing about your Still Quiet Place is that it’s always inside you. And you can visit it whenever you like. It is nice to visit your Still Quite Place and feel the love that is there. It is especially helpful to visit your Still Quiet Place if you are feeling angry, or sad, or afraid. The Still Quiet Place is a good place to talk with these feelings and to make friends with them. When you rest in your Still Quiet Place and talk to your feelings, you may find that your feelings are not as big and as powerful as they seem. Remember, you can come here whenever you want, and stay as long as you like.

After reading the description to the students about what the Still Quiet Place is, the students will be asked to visit their Still Quiet Place for a few minutes.

*Thought Parade-* The Thought Parade exercise is designed to help the students become more mindful of their thoughts and emotions and learn a technique to become separate from their thoughts and emotions and become mere spectators. During the exercise, the students will sit in chairs and focus their attention on their breath. They then will be asked to watch their thoughts go by as if they are watching a parade and their thoughts are the people, floats, and participants in the parade. The students will be told that some of their thoughts may reappear in the parade and some may be hard to see or understand. However, they are asked to make sure that they are not “marching with the parade” (lost in thought), and when they find themselves doing that, they should return to the crowd to become a spectator again.

*Jewel/Treasure Exercise-* The point of the Jewel/Treasure exercise is to provide the students with a breathing technique that allows them to focus on breath instead of their constant thoughts. The students will be provided with small to medium sized stones that they can choose. They will be asked to sit comfortably with their back slightly slouched. They then will place the stone on their stomach and will focus their attention on their breath. The students will be asked to feel the stone move up with the in-breath and down with the out-breath. They will be prompted to notice the space in between the breaths. After they are given silence to focus on their breath, they’ll be asked what it’s like to focus on their breath instead of their thoughts and feelings.

*Loving-Kindness Practice-* The point of this exercise is to have the children remember a time when they felt loved by someone and to ask them to focus on the positive emotions they felt at the time. After their asked to remember the time, they will be asked to feel the emotion that they felt during that time and receive the love felt in that moment. They will be asked to focus on the love and bond in the relationship between them and that person. Another alternative to this practice is to ask the students to send love to someone that they don’t know well or someone that they have a difficult time loving. Finally, the students will be asked to send this love back to themselves.

**Research Supporting Mindfulness Practices**

 When mindfulness is taught to students, their control of their attention improved. They also are able to better direct their attention to the present issues instead of focusing on the distractions that can cause conflict. Also, students who participated in the mindfulness activities experienced significantly less negative emotion in response to physical and social threats. Also students who participate in mindfulness activities were more compassionate and had fewer signs of depression and anxiety. There’s also an improvement in attention span and emotional processing with students who participate in mindfulness exercises (Saltzman, 2008).

 The research also indicates that mindfulness practices for children in schools results in significant and positive improvements in the students’ positive emotions. The most significant improvement after participating in mindfulness practices is increases in optimism. When mindfulness practices are introduced in classrooms regularly, students gain better attention and concentration skills as well as social emotional competence. Teachers also have significant improvements in self-rated social and emotional competence. Students also experience increased reflection of themselves, which results in a more realistic view of themselves. Finally, teachers report seeing immediate changes in students’ behaviors when mindfulness practices are implemented three times a week (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

**References**

Saltzman, A. (2008). *Acceptance and mindfulness treatments for children and adolescents: A practitioner's guide*. (1st ed., Vol. 7, pp. 139-161). Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre-and early adolescents’ well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness*, *1*(3), 137-151.