

**Mindfulness Matters**

**Helping Young Children Reach Their Full Potential**

by

Rosemary R. Symington

BEd, from University of Victoria, 1989

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Area of Early Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

© Rosemary R. Symington, 2022

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This Project may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

**Mindfulness Matters**

**Helping Young Children Reach Their Full Potential**

by

Rosemary Symington

Bachelor of Education, University of Victoria, 1989

Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer S. Thom

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Faculty of Education

Committee Member Chair: Dr. Wanda Hurren

Second Reader: Dr. Ruthanne Tobin

Honorary Guest: Dr. Gloria Snively

### Abstract

Feelings of stress and anxiety have increased in children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown and subsequent months of uncertainty have changed the way people interact. Social distancing, mask-wearing, and the inability to freely socialise how children could before the pandemic have created an extra layer of stress and trauma while educators, parents, and students are navigating returning to school. This project focuses on the practice of mindfulness by considering how Jon Kabat-Zinn's nine attitudes of mindfulness can help children feel grounded and assist them in living authentically in the present moment. This inquiry into mindfulness as situated within curriculum studies and educational philosophies focuses on embodied practices of being non-judging of our thoughts, demonstrating acceptance and patience, seeing the world with a beginner's mind, trusting in the process of meditation while non-striving for any particular outcome. Letting go of expectations, doubts, fears, and feeling gratitude and generosity when experiencing life fully in the present moment may assist children to shift from human doings to human beings connected to the world and showing resilience during challenging times. A 64-oracle card deck entitled "*Sentiments from the Sea*" with three-word mantras has been created to help children develop mindfulness at home or in the classroom.

*Keywords:* mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, compassion, gratitude, sea-life oracle cards

### Acknowledgments

It has been an honour and a privilege to work on this Master's project. It has allowed me the opportunity to reflect and appreciate my experiences over the past 33 years of teaching and look forward to the future. I continue to marvel, along with the young children in my care, at the beauty and wonder of life and feel blessed to share in their joy of discovering the world around us. I am so thankful for all the wonderful teachers for encouraging me to question and inspiring me with their passion for learning. In keeping with Jon Kabat-Zinn's nine mindfulness attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 1990/2005), I would like to thank and show my heartfelt gratitude by dedicating this paper to my wonderful family and friends for their love and for teaching me about:

**Non-judging** - Philip - Thank you for all your love and support. I will always cherish you.

**Acceptance** - Maria - Thank you for being the best Mom in the world and my inspiration.

**Patience** - Ron - You taught me that the best things in life are worth waiting for. Love always!

**Beginner's Mind** - Stephanie - Thank you for sharing your wisdom, beautiful heart, and soul.

**Trust** - Rebecca - Thank you for always making me laugh and showing true courage and joy.

**Non-Striving** - Jennifer - Thank you for encouraging me to “dive deep” and for believing in me.

**Letting Go** - Donna - Thank you for being my soul sister and sharing all life's ups and downs.

**Gratitude** - Tyler - Thank you for your gentle heart and the loving care you always show me.

**Generosity** - Laura - Thank you for being my inspiring friend, kindred spirit, and confidante.

**Contents**

Cover Title page .....	1
Title page .....	2
Abstract .....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
<b>Chapter 1: Mindfulness Matters</b> .....	<b>8</b>
The COVID-19 Pandemic and Increased Use of Technology.....	9
Questions that Make Me Ponder .....	13
What is Mindfulness?.....	16
Jon Kabat-Zinn - 9 Core Attitudes .....	18
Gratitude .....	20
Non-judging.....	24
Acceptance .....	27
Patience .....	29
Beginner’s Mind .....	31
Trust.....	34
Non-striving .....	35
Letting Go .....	38
Generosity .....	41
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review - Merging Mindfulness Through the Tides of Change</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Jon Kabat-Zinn’s 9 Core Attitudes .....	45
Non-Judging .....	48

Acceptance .....	53
Patience .....	56
Beginner’s Mind .....	61
Trust .....	65
Non-Striving .....	68
Letting Go .....	72
Gratitude .....	74
Generosity .....	77
<b>Chapter 3: Project Significance “<i>Sentiments from the Sea</i>” Creating the Cards Project.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Energy Wheels .....	82
Incorporating Connections .....	83
Mantras Made Easy .....	85
Meanings of the “ <i>Sentiments from the Sea</i> ” Cards .....	86
Additional Meaning of the Numbers .....	87
Significance to Practice .....	88
Regulating our Emotions .....	90
Mindfulness and the Brain .....	92
Trauma-Informed Practice .....	95
<b>Chapter 4: Reflections Upon the Mirrored Sea .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Surviving Life’s Stormy Seas.....	100
The Calm After the Storm.....	101
Shifting Tides .....	102

Through the Looking Glass .....	105
Setting Sail in Search of Calmer Waters .....	106
Still Waters Run Deep .....	107
<b>References</b> .....	109
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	127
<b>Appendix A</b> List of the 64 cards from the “ <i>Sentiments from the Sea</i> ” Oracle Deck .....	129
<b>Appendix B</b> Booklet of Additional Information for each of the Cards .....	133
<b>Appendix C</b> Images of the Artwork for the Cards .....	155

## Chapter One - Mindfulness Matters

Children today face many challenges, compounded by the changes necessitated by the COVID-19 virus in how we interact with one another. Months of mask-wearing and physically distancing have amplified feelings of anxiety for many children. Adults have also been adversely affected as COVID has created an extra layer of stress that people are doing their best to navigate. The pandemic has increased feelings of isolation as children living in the First World had to limit contact with extended family and friends, missing birthday parties, regular playdates, and other social gatherings because of the lockdown. The restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of COVID have affected our students' social-emotional well-being as people cannot commemorate milestones in the ways that we had previously. With school disruptions and the requirements for physical distancing during the lockdown, 54% of Canadian parents reported feeling “very or extremely concerned about their children's loneliness or social isolation. Approximately 64% of participants were very or extremely worried about the amount of screen time their children were engaging in,” according to Statistics Canada (2020). These factors raise concern, especially with the flood of images on television, tablets, and other screens contributing to children seeing more than their young brains can comprehend. Being bombarded with these computer images contributes to increased anxiety while minimizing the personal interaction our children need to grow and thrive as they spend more time viewing technology. Our brains continue to grow and develop until we are about 25 years of age, and too much screen time can negatively affect children's mental and physical well-being (AboutKidsHealth, 2020). Thus children need calm, mindful adults in their lives to help them navigate big emotions, teach them ways to tune into their feelings, and then determine the best way to self-regulate and respond.

Furthermore, children may pick up on their parents' stress caused by the changes necessitated by the COVID pandemic regarding their work, income, education, and health concerns for their loved ones.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic and Increased Use of Technology**

An additional factor to consider is that the pandemic also necessitates increased use of technology as children switch to online classes during the lockdown. Even though we are fortunate to have returned to in-person teaching in the Sooke School District, many families still opt for online studies for various reasons, including health concerns for themselves or other family members as they wait for the population to be vaccinated. Now classes from kindergarten to postsecondary level can be delivered online. Though we are fortunate to live in an age when this technology is available, it does not replace the personal interactions students need and crave. Furthermore, with more parents currently working from home, children are experiencing more screen time as their parents turn their attention to their jobs.

According to the CPS Digital Health Task Force's 2017 report, children's optimal learning occurs from live interactions with their family and caregivers when immersed in real play situations, conversing, reading, laughing, and connecting. Authentic experiences are nearly always preferred over screen time. Further evidence also warns of the negative impact of technology on preschool children's sleep patterns, attention, memory, language development, and reading abilities, especially if viewed before 18 months of age (Ponti & et al., 2017).

Children need to engage with other children and caring adults to learn about the world while exploring and developing their abilities. Without such thoughtful guidance, erroneous beliefs, worries, and fears can become overwhelming for children and teens, resulting in

increased stress, anxiety, depression, and even suicide (Schnall, 2011). According to Karen Bluth, teacher, researcher, and passionate advocate for the well-being of youth through self-compassion and mindfulness, "Stress has become an integral and accepted part of daily life in our culture" (Bluth & Blanton, 2014, p. 1298). In my experience, children in my class who had the most emotional and behavioural struggles often missed the thoughtful connections and mindful care they needed to support them when overwhelmed with strong emotions and needed to learn how to self-regulate. To quote Henry David Thoreau, "We should treat our minds, that is, ourselves, as innocent and ingenuous children, whose guardians we are, and be careful what objects and what subjects we thrust on their attention" (Thoreau as cited in Hoff, 1992, p. 65).

Practising mindfulness with our children and students has never been more critical in the history of humanity. Although mindfulness is receiving attention more recently by educators worldwide (Burnett and Cullen, 2010; Grossman et al., 2010; Kaiser-Greenland, 2010), it has been practised for centuries, dating back to the Buddhist and Hindu teachings encouraging students to be more present in the moment and aware of their surroundings. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a Professor and science researcher at the University of Massachusetts' Medical School, has practised mindfulness for over fifty years and created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program, or MBSR, in 1979, incorporating yoga poses, meditation, and mindfulness. According to Kabat-Zinn, nurturing "the 'curriculum' of living with integrity" can support humanity during these challenging times (Kabat-Zinn, 2021, p. 784). He believes one important reason to practise mindfulness is "to relieve suffering and catalyse greater compassion and wisdom in our lives and culture" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 285). He also notes how merging Western science coupled with contemplative traditions is to discover and nurture "our deep interior resources" (Kabat-Zinn,

2014/2022, para. 2). Ultimately, students can reach their highest potential to be happy, healthy human *beings* when practising mindfulness, as described by Simon Fraser University Professor Heeson Bai, whose work focuses on the Philosophy of Education and contemplative inquiry, Zen aesthetics, and Asian philosophies. Bai is an eloquent proponent of the ethics of care and studied the interdependence of contemporary ecological inquiry focusing on the integrity of the mind-body-heart-soul-spirit energies (Bai, 2016). Kabat-Zinn echoes "our intrinsic interconnectedness as *beings*," which fosters "greater spontaneous compassion towards others and toward oneself" (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 293). This project explores mindfulness across curriculum studies incorporating the work of scholars such as Ted Aoki and David Jardine and weaving in the educational philosophy of Heesoon Bai while exploring concepts relating to the educational psychology of Tobin Hart, among others, in a hermeneutic phenomenology approach, while expanding on the gentle wisdom and teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, sharing the value of community and how all life is interconnected.

Mindfulness is even being extended into popular culture by actress and humanitarian Goldie Hawn, who passionately advocates for all children to receive this life-changing guidance. She enlisted the help of teachers and researchers in creating her MindUP™ educational program (Hawn, 2008) for kindergarten through high school students to benefit children's mental health and support their capacity to be happy, whole human beings after the devastating effects of the 911 tragedy. Her MindUP™ curriculum was my first introduction to mindfulness for educators when given to me by my Principal, Scott Manning. Her wish was to share the benefits of mindfulness and meditation with children worldwide to better humanity. According to Kabat-Zinn (2013), for change to happen, mindfulness:

can only be understood from the inside out. It is not one more cognitive-behavioural technique to be deployed in a behaviour change paradigm, but a way of being and a way of seeing that has profound implications for understanding the nature of our own minds and bodies, and for living life as if it really mattered. (p. 284)

Fortunately, when teachers become more mindful, their students also reap the benefits of learning in a mindful classroom. In this context, mindfulness allows the teacher to respond to situations with greater understanding, compassion, empathy, and heartfelt wisdom. This state of "being" can first be experienced by educators by 'walking the walk' before sharing these techniques with their students through 'talking the talk' as mindfulness appears to work best when the messages come from a place of genuine knowing and are shared from the heart.

In schools, educators traditionally focus mainly on the academic performance of their students, with some consideration given to their physical and emotional development.

Traditionally, as Benjamin Hoff relays in *The Te of Piglet* (1992), childhood is seen:

As a waste of time, a luxury that society cannot afford. Its response to the problems of vanishing childhood is to speed up the process - give the students more information, give it to them at a faster rate, and give it to them sooner. Put children in school at the earliest age possible; load them down with homework; take away their time, their creativity, their play, their power; then plug them into machines. That'll whip them into shape. Well, it'll whip them anyway. (pp. 72-73)

Hoff further cautions that by demanding too much academically from our children, specialty programs such as music, drama, art, and creative writing, allowing for creativity and imagination to flourish, are often devalued and even discontinued, taking away opportunities for

students to learn how to “observe, reason, and communicate, as well as keep their spirits and the right sides of their brains alive,” (Hoff, 1992, p. 72). Unfortunately, in the past, very little attention was designated to children's mental health, which is considered the most vital component to becoming compassionate adults who exhibit empathy for others (Bai, 2016).

People are gradually learning how to balance all four dimensions of being, including their “mind, body, heart and soul” (Anderson, Mangat, Scott & Bai, 2019, p. 14). Kabat-Zinn underlines the parallels between practising mindfulness and having it become a way of living genuinely. He noted that it “turns out to be a great joy and a continued invitation to have there be no separation between one's practice and one's life” (Kabat-Zinn, 2019, p. 295). Nevertheless, it is not necessarily easy because “mindfulness in everyday life is the ultimate challenge and practice” (Kabat-Zinn, 2019, p. 296).

As an educator for over thirty years in the Sooke School District on Vancouver Island in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, I have noticed a rise in the number of students who show signs of anxiety and trauma in my kindergarten and primary grade classrooms. This observation led me to wonder how we can lessen the trauma children are experiencing because of COVID-19, compounded by the high rates of anxiety children are already exhibiting today, fueled by over-scheduling and the increased use of technology, leading to fewer opportunities to interact with their parents and extended family and friends. Truthfully, mindfulness matters!

### ***Questions That Make Me Ponder***

How can I help children become more self-aware to manage stress and navigate uncertainty in the future? Furthermore, what does it mean to be “mindful” in everyday life? How can I foster this feeling in my students after becoming more mindful in my own life first? After

practising mindfulness at school, will learning these techniques and increased awareness transfer from my students to their families? How should I start? How do I proceed?

There are many unanswered questions, and further research is still needed. The health and happiness of future generations depend on answering these questions and paving the way for children to be compassionate human beings who are in tune with and listen to their hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits. As Bai (2016) eloquently stated regarding the necessary paradigm shift:

By transforming the heart of “human doings” education, and rediscovering and recovering the meaning of education as the development of whole human beings with courage, compassion, and wisdom, we can significantly affect the ethos and orientation of our culture, which is currently saturated with instrumentalist values and alienated psyches... [to] shift from the primacy of instruction to the primacy of education of human beings toward their wholeness as ethical citizens who feel that contribution to the community and the planet is primary. (p. 116)

My wish is for all children to experience Bai's definition of encouraging our students to be their unique, authentic selves exploring the world, treating themselves and others with compassion while finding their place in society (Bai et al., 2016). However, it has been a battle to achieve this goal, as, for many years, teachers in British Columbia have struggled to teach amidst severe cutbacks to educational funding. Basic supplies and educational resources such as paper or books were in short supply. Teachers were often expected to make up for these funding shortfalls themselves. Furthermore, many special education programs have been eliminated over the past thirty years in British Columbia. Classroom teachers are expected to work with students with severe physical, mental, and emotional challenges integrated into the classroom setting,

often without proper support. Educational assistants were only placed in classes with students with severe physical disabilities and frequently for only part of the day. In addition, the workload of these Educational Assistants has doubled or tripled to cover the children who were not officially designated yet needed the extra support, resulting in teacher and Educational Assistant burnout. Teachers were over-stretched and were frantically attempting to bail water from a sinking ship. Every classroom could benefit from having an extra adult to assist the teacher and help students needing individual assistance. Without this extra help, no one benefits, especially the majority of the class who are ready and willing to learn and are frequently overlooked as educators valiantly attempt to meet the diverse needs of the children in their classrooms.

In addition, while conducting my graduate research, I surprised myself by uncovering my own personal beliefs that I was not consciously aware of that had been passed on through generations of conditioning by my family, friends, and society. This experience has taught me to be more mindful of my core values, beliefs, and even the words I use and how they might colour my interactions with others. For example, previously, I thought that children needed to become productive members of society and contribute in whatever way they could, subscribing to the belief that our worth is tied to our profession. Such wording revealed that I was more aligned deep down with what my students could *do* rather than who they could *be*. It may be a subtle change in linguistics. Nevertheless, it resonates with profound meaning, and it applies to becoming more mindful when I think of my students and my role as an educator in nurturing their potential, not necessarily how our culture, families, religion, or society may dictate.

Furthermore, becoming more mindful of the words I use when engaging with my students to encourage participation, invite questioning, and welcome curiosity by asking more

open-ended questions, is embodied in the struggle when learning new concepts and skills. This struggle is not to be rushed or taken away as it is through such endeavours that learning arises, as described in Lev Vygotsky's theory, developed in the late 1920s, of the Zone of Proximal Development (McLeod, 2019 and 2020, Walker, 2010). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory requires the teacher to be very aware of the student's strengths and capabilities to guide the student, utilizing "scaffolding" as a bridge, to move forward from their current abilities toward accomplishing new tasks at the cutting edge of their learning, while slowly withdrawing the teacher's support. It is a constantly moving target but a very effective technique to encourage learning, as supported by Marie Clay's philosophy embodied in her Reading Recovery Guidebook (Clay, 1993). In addition, Jean Piaget's 1936 theory of child cognitive development espousing "learning through experience" also coincides with the approach to learning mindfulness (McLeod, 2020). Inviting these concepts into my teaching, I realized that I needed to first experience and live the nine attitudes of mindfulness described by Kabat-Zinn (2021) *before* incorporating them into my teaching repertoire. I am learning that mindfulness is more than a teaching technique. It is a way of life. It has enabled me to see the world with fresh eyes and changed how I view myself as a teacher in this perspective, feeling more like a learner alongside my students. There is no place I would rather be.

### **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness means being present with a focused awareness on what is happening in the moment without judgement (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). It is the opposite of mindlessness. The beauty of mindfulness is that it can be done by anyone, anywhere, and requires no specialised equipment, allowing each person to nourish their body, mind, and spirit. "Mindfulness can be done

independently with very little training or expense required, meaning it is something everyone can become proactively involved in for their own benefit, as well as to benefit the world around them” (Green, 2019). Kabat-Zinn simplifies the process by writing, “Mindfulness is basically just a particular way of paying attention. It is a way of looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-inquiry and self-understanding” (Kabat-Zinn, 1990/2005, p. 47). It can be defined as "an open, accepting attention to and awareness of internal and external sensations" according to Adrienne Taren, a researcher from the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Medicine (Taren, 2021, p.12).

Moments when I had put my lesson plans aside and followed my students' lead, such as when a ladybug appeared in our classroom or we spied an eagle soaring overhead, were moments when I felt more at peace and connected to my students. The Montessori approach, created by the world-renowned Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952), is built around this premise whereby teachers closely observe their students. They are encouraged to follow the child’s interests while assessing their needs but follow the child as their leader, guiding their learning, as it is in that space that the most significant learning occurs (Robin, 2021). I have felt in awe of those magical moments when I have been more mindful and present, not tied to my lesson plans at the cost of missing those magical, unplanned teachable moments. During my final practicum, my sponsor teacher, Doris Exton, who had taught for 40 years, was very open to following her students. She allowed me to experience this gift while teaching my science unit on light and shadows to her Grade 3 class. One day, as we explored with prisms, we discovered how light could separate into individual colours and produce rainbows. We could both feel the children's excitement with their discovery, and she allowed me the freedom to

expand on this teachable moment and encouraged us to explore the colour spectrum. It was an exhilarating moment for her class and me, and it was a feeling I will never forget. I continue to be inspired by such teachable moments!

It takes practice to be mindful. As we become adults and assume greater responsibilities, it becomes increasingly challenging to focus on the present. Often our minds are consumed with worry about what may happen or anxious about what still needs to be done. Looking back at the past, we may feel sadness or regret over what has already transpired. The opposite may also be true when we worry about the future and feel stressed about events that may never happen. Chinese Philosopher Lao Tzu wisely stated, "If you are depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present" (Tzu as cited in goodreads, 2022). It seems simple enough upon reading these words but more formidable to put these concepts into practice. Learning to become more mindful is a practice that can take a lifetime to learn, but the journey within is where true inspiration and freedom can exist. The magic of mindfulness comes into being during the process, and the peacefulness that ensues is the product.

### **Jon Kabat-Zinn - 9 Core Attitudes**

According to Kabat-Zinn, the following nine core attitudes are the basis for learning to become more mindful and include: non-judging, acceptance, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, letting go, gratitude, and generosity (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

When interviewed, Kabat-Zinn explains that the nine attitudes of mindfulness are all interrelated and connected, with each attitude flowing into another one simultaneously. These nine sections encompass different ways of describing the essential qualities of mindfulness.

Furthermore, these qualities help us see the connectedness of humanity and include the heart and the mind embedded in the nine attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). Practising mindfulness is an open invitation to explore this way of being further. In her doctoral thesis on Aoki, Liu Baergen (2019) summarizes Aoki's beliefs encompassing the heart in learning in that:

Education is not an object, nor should it be the solution to social problems. It is, rather, a reflection of everyday life that is inseparable from love, gender, growth, self, conflict, accomplishment, decay and death. It is humanity. Wandering off to phenomenological ground and abandoning the mechanistic metaphors for reducing human possibility to putatively predictable and manageable variables, Aoki's approach was to reveal the complex character of individual student and social life – the essence of education. (p. 68)

This essence of education appears to be embedded in the ability to be mindful, curious, present, and authentic to allow our spirits to flourish and answer the calling of our souls to become who we truly are meant to be. I am so fortunate to be in the presence of young children every day, as they embody living in the moment and continuously remind me to do the same. While education has evolved since I began my studies at the University of Victoria in 1984, the one thing that remains is my love of learning. When I reflect on my life, I have discovered that these nine mindfulness qualities emerge as tiny seeds after I have been through a struggle or a challenging experience. Now I can assimilate my life lessons and examine mindfulness practices combined with yoga, dance, Reiki, breathwork, journaling, Tai Chi, the wisdom of Buddhist teachings, and, my favourite, walks in nature along the beautiful beaches and ancient rainforests of Vancouver Island. I hope to share my passions for exploring and protecting our natural environment while learning how best to connect to my students to help them reach their full

potential by becoming more mindful. My teaching pedagogy seeks to invite my students to co-create the concepts we are studying and expand on them, encouraging me to respond sensitively and engage authentically to “learn how to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 15). Being mindful and flexible with our lesson plans encourages this invitation to learning. Here is a closer look!

### *Gratitude*

#### **Figure 1**

*Mermaid clay wall-hanging by artist Lee Stead (n.d.)*



*"Gratitude, like faith, is a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it grows, and the more power you have to use it on your behalf. If you do not practice gratefulness, its benefaction will go unnoticed, and your capacity to draw on its gifts will be diminished. To be grateful is to find blessings in everything. This is the most powerful attitude to adopt, for there are blessings in everything"* Alan Cohen (Cohen, as cited in goodreads.com, 2022).

*Gratitude* is often expressed as a heartfelt appreciation for people, places, and experiences. As represented by the legendary mermaids represented in Figure 1, it involves

paying attention to the present moment to cultivate awareness while being curious, acknowledging whatever feelings are surfacing with loving-kindness. Gratitude for being alive by appreciating the wonders of the human body is also key. Our heart will beat without our need to remind it to do so consciously, and our lungs will exchange air, nourishing every cell with each breath as we inhale oxygen and expel carbon dioxide (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). In much the same way, feeling gratitude can be repeated, akin to the rhythmic beating of our hearts. The Dalai Lama XIV reminds us (Lama as cited in Babauta, 2011):

Every day, think as you wake up, 'Today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. I am going to have kind thoughts towards others. I am not going to get angry or think badly about others. I am going to benefit others as much as I can. (p. 41)

Gratitude is believed to be vital for our mental and physical health, contributing to our happiness and well-being, and is recommended to be taught to children to feel empathy and demonstrate understanding for others (Hawn, 2016). Feelings of gratitude can be especially impactful when we practice mindfulness outdoors. Touching the earth can help us feel more grounded and restore a sense of balance. As Vietnamese Zen Master and spiritual leader, Thich Nat Hanh, who dedicated his life to peace and teaching mindful living by encouraging inner transformation through retreats offered at the Plum Village center in France, explained (Hanh, 2008):

The energy of mindfulness and concentration produced by touching the earth has the capacity to awaken us to the nature of reality, to transform us, to purify us, and to restore joy and vitality in our life. As soon as we begin to practice, we can taste the benefits. And the feeling of being at peace, refreshed and revitalized by the earth will continue long after the sessions of practice. (p. vi)

Whenever I sense that I am becoming overwhelmed, spending time in nature truly restores my energy and feelings of calm. I have experienced these feelings of gratitude when practicing yoga outdoors while feeling the warmth of the sun and the refreshing coolness of the breeze. Walking along the beach or enjoying a hike in the woods, also known as forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku*, named by the Japanese in the 1980s, are very beneficial to restoring feelings of groundedness and can assist in feeling centered in the mind, body, and spirit (Fitzgerald, 2021).

In 2020, I lost many of my loved ones beginning with Jayne, my best friend and teaching partner of over 30 years, who died from ovarian cancer. Shortly after that, my husband, Andy, died after suffering an accident. My loving mother, Maria, died six weeks later from colon cancer. My former Principal, Scott Manning, then died from stomach cancer, followed by my uncle, Walter, who tragically succumbed to COVID-19 as there were not enough respirators in the hospital. My dear friend, Janet, also passed away after bravely battling breast cancer for over a decade. My feelings are bittersweet as I feel immense gratitude to each of them for sharing their lives with me, even though the time with them was too short. My feelings of thankfulness have helped me get through some very dark days as I lost so many of my close support network within a few months. I am incredibly grateful that I could be by my husband's side when he passed, and six weeks later, with my mom, as she made her passage after an eight-year battle

with cancer. Had they died a few weeks later, I probably would not have been able to be by their bedside because of COVID-19 restrictions for hospital visitors, and I would not have had the privilege of telling them how much I loved them in person as they took their final breaths.

Interestingly, the nurses knew that their passing was imminent, mirroring how attune they were to the passage of life, similar to the nurses on the maternity ward who knew when all three of my babies would make their beautiful entrance into the world. Being present when Andy and my mom passed away was important to me as I did not want them to die alone. Gratefully, I could be with them and hold their hand as they made their passage peacefully, knowing how much they were and are loved. It was an honour and an experience I will never forget. It reminded me of the circle of life and that, in the end, only love matters.

This epiphany helped me to see the connectedness of all beings with compassion and permitted me to look after myself after losing my loved ones so soon after one another. Too often, I had let self-care drop to the bottom of my to-do list, but now I realize that I needed to make myself a priority, or I would not be available to help anyone if I did not take care of myself first. The analogy of putting the oxygen mask on oneself while aboard a plane in distress before helping others came to life for me. Being mindful of my need to grieve in my own time and in my own way was healing. I still find it difficult to release my tears. I often worry that my feelings will overwhelm me if I let my guard down. Through the daily practice of mindfulness, I am learning that all feelings simply need to be recognized and then released.

Keeping a Gratitude Journal saved me during these dark times in my life. Going to bed at night and thinking of five things that I was grateful for that day shifted my perspective and allowed my heart and mind to heal. Without focusing on what I have to be thankful for, I spent

too many nights running the same thoughts repeatedly in my head, disrupting my rest. Breathing slowly and deeply while counting my blessings before going to sleep helped me. Slowly, my emotions began to change, and I started to feel hopeful for the first time in months. Focusing on gratitude can help alleviate anxiety and depression, creating a shift in perception from despair to hope. In his book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Hanh shares that mindfulness restores wholeness when our attention is scattered by using our breath as a bridge. Consciously breathing unites our thoughts with our physical body enabling our mind to concentrate on feeling more deeply grounded and centered (Hanh, 1975/2015).

Inviting students to share one person, activity, or experience that positively impacted them that day at school can also have positive repercussions. This daily practice has helped build community as the children genuinely listen to one another and feel accepted as part of the group. Feeling these connections can help participants feel energized, improve the quality of their sleep, and may lessen depression (Baylis et al., 2021).

Expressing gratitude by writing or speaking not only assists students but helps educators because "mindfulness provides a way to reduce stress and enhance teachers' contentment, happiness, and professional perspective by strengthening their inner calm and their competence," according to Barbara Trube (Rotne & Rotne as cited in Trube, 2017, p.161). Maintaining inner calm in the face of sudden change and adversity can help one navigate life's stormy seas and remain afloat by focusing on one's breath.

### *Non-Judging*

### **Figure 2**

*I found these heart-shaped rocks while beachcombing around Vancouver Island and included some rose quartz hearts given to me by my students. Hearts always catch my eye and are a gentle reminder from spirit of how much we are loved.*



*"The Mind is like water. When it is turbulent, it is difficult to see. When it is calm, everything becomes clear"* Prasad Mahes (Mahes as cited in *Life Simple Quotes*, 2020).

*Non-Judging* is an attitude that, in my opinion, is difficult to achieve as my brain is constantly weighing my thoughts amidst the never-ending commentary in my head as either positive or negative. It takes practice to allow our thoughts to drift past without labelling them and compassion for ourselves as we learn not to judge our thoughts as we commit to daily practice. Like the heart-shaped rocks in Figure 2, our thoughts can take on many different forms, yet we can appreciate our unique insights without judging. In mindfulness, it is helpful to be gentle when we notice these thoughts and not berate ourselves for having them. To think is to be human.

Kabat-Zinn wisely reminds us, *"I'm not the curriculum. You're the curriculum"* (Kabat-Zinn, 2012). He referred to the importance of looking within and listening to our inner wisdom for answers while simultaneously being conscious of our relationships with others and

how we are all interconnected. Understanding ourselves amidst the messy complexity of our thoughts and emotions is helpful while becoming more mindful and is a lifelong quest.

Traditionally, the curriculum encompasses what will be taught. Kabat-Zinn turns that notion around and asks us to look within without judgement. He invites us to simply be aware of our thoughts and feelings in the present moment. Thus we can learn (as in curriculum) to make more compassionate decisions when reacting to situations to understand ourselves better. This concept also reminds me that I know myself best when I am brave enough to dive deeper and honestly reflect on my actions and learn from my experiences.

Ted Aoki was a beloved and revered Japanese-Canadian scholar and master of the “space in-between.” He was a life-long educator, coming from a family of teachers who taught well into his eighties. He changed the face of curriculum studies, loving to dwell in the "conjunctive space...(exploring) the tension between curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived" (Aoki et al., 2004) and eloquently echoed Kabat-Zinn’s sentiment:

The teacher in becoming involved with his [or her] students, enters into their world as he [or her] allows them to enter his and engages himself with students mutually in action-reflection oriented activities. He [or she] questions students as well as himself as he [or she] urges students to question the teacher and themselves. Mutual reflection allows new questions to emerge, which, in turn, leads to more reflection. In the ongoing process, which is dialectical, and transformative of social reality, both teacher and students become participants in open dialogue. (p.131)

Aoki encouraged teachers and students alike to scrutinize themselves. He encouraged them to question the curriculum to create a more compassionate world through ongoing, genuine

dialogue. By poetically comparing curriculum to playing a musical instrument, in *Sonare and Videre: A Story, Three Echoes, and a Lingering Note* (Aoki, 2004), he invited teachers to envision curriculum differently by "improvising" and hearing the sounds between the notes. It was, in a sense, bringing the unconscious to our consciousness, which is experienced differently by each person, reflecting our unique, individual perspectives.

Non-judging implies noticing what is happening around us and our thoughts within us without reacting, thus allowing ourselves to reflect on the situation by being still and choosing the best course of action by following our inner guidance (Kabat-Zinn, 2015).

### *Acceptance*

#### **Figure 3**



*“Acceptance is the currency of love”* Teal Swan (Swan/Bosworth, 2016-2022).

*Acceptance* is the quality that helps us persevere when challenges arise in our studies or our lives and enables us to love one another with compassion. Acceptance of oneself, including conscious and unconscious thoughts, is recommended to come before loving another, as represented by the two goldfish in Figure 3, as the other person reflects our vibration. We cannot

expect another person to “fix” what we perceive as broken within us, as we are each on our unique journey. In this context, we are more likely to foster healthier connections by feeling whole and healed before committing to another. However, the benefits of learning to train our minds involve discipline. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2011):

A tamed mind makes you peaceful, relaxed, and happy, whereas if your mind is not disciplined in this way, no matter how wonderful your external circumstances, you will be beset by fears and worries. Realize that the root of your own happiness and welfare lies in a peaceful and tamed mind. (p. 53)

The following story recounts how I had to become more resilient after suddenly losing my hearing in my left ear after contracting a virus at school in 2012. Initially, I thought it was only a cold and that my hearing would return after a few days; therefore, I did not seek medical attention immediately. If I had gone to the emergency clinic within 48 hours, I would have been given Prednisone, and my hearing probably would not have been affected permanently. At the time, I did not know about this possible treatment. I spent several years in denial, assuming that my hearing would return, only to find it more and more difficult to understand conversations when there was background noise. The school's staff room was no longer a place of respite. It was overwhelming and exhausting trying to hear in situations with a cacophony of sound, including in the classroom. Unfortunately, many young children do not speak clearly, compounded by wearing masks in school, making it impossible to lip-read. Not only was I struggling to listen, but what I did hear was distorted, along with experiencing tinnitus and vertigo for over a year. It was akin to the radio station not being correctly tuned and the volume being too low. I felt nauseous every time I moved my head and frequently felt the room spinning

as if I was on a ride at the fair, even if I was lying down on my bed. It was challenging, but my symptoms gradually improved after several years, and I received an in-the-ear hearing aid. Even with my hearing aid, my hearing is not what it used to be.

This experience has taught me to accept the circumstances that I have no control over, similar to the well-known "*Serenity Prayer*" attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference" (Niebuhr, n.d.). In much the same way, during meditation, we learn to allow our thoughts to simply float by and acknowledge that our minds are continuously working while being mindful of accepting, rather than judging, our thoughts. The beauty of mindfulness is that we can return to it repeatedly and not berate ourselves from temporarily losing our concentration when meditating as our minds love to wander. When we become distracted, as we will during meditation, we merely need to notice and refocus on our breathing. Gently reconnecting to the flow of our experience by connecting to our breathing is the best way to resume and becomes easier with practice.

### *Patience*

#### **Figure 4**



*"Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time"* Jon Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

*Patience* is the belief that all will be well in time. It represents calmness instead of irritation and the inability to wait, as represented in Figure 4 by the slow-growing coral. Trust and patience seem to go hand in hand as having patience relies on that underlying confidence, or faith, that what we hope for will happen eventually. Patience means manifesting our destiny through positive affirmations and the belief that our dreams can come true if we work towards our goals one step at a time. An example of patience in my life was the five years I spent as a Reading Recovery teacher. Working with the oldest and the lowest grade one students academically allowed me to practice being patient every day. Reading a book took a very long time as my young students struggled to decipher all the lines and squiggles on the page in front of them. It was an arduous task for many of them. Still, we patiently continued, and I encouraged them, secure in the belief that they would reach their destination and become readers eventually if the recommendations, as outlined by Marie Clay, creator of the Reading Recovery method, were followed (Clay, 1993).

Being patient when learning a new concept or skill is crucial as some skills may come quickly to some people, while others may take a lifetime to learn. Patience also calls for compassion for oneself and others. It implies understanding the situation from another person's point of view and being willing to wait until the time is right.

My daily meditation practice is the perfect opportunity to exercise patience as my thoughts dart in and out of my mind. Our minds truly never stop. Being patient allows our endurance to grow and meditate for extended periods by gently coaxing our thoughts to return to

focus on our breath when our minds wander. In addition, Kabat-Zinn's nine attitudes of mindfulness take time to develop and continue to develop throughout our lives (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Being patient with the process allows the magic of mindfulness to unfold, much like a seed that sprouts when the time and conditions are right. Becoming more mindful involves retraining the brain by allowing it to rest when we turn inward, being truly present, while patiently allowing our spirits to blossom as we make mindfulness a part of our daily life.

### *Beginner's Mind*

**Figure 5**



*In Japan, we have the phrase 'Shoshin' which means 'Beginner's Mind.' Our 'original mind' includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything. It is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few” Shuryu Suzuki (Suzuki, 1970, as cited in Ambler, 2018).*

*A beginner's mind* has a sense of aliveness from having curiosity about the world as if seeing it for the first time, as a young child with a sense of wonder and awe. It lets us experience deeper connections as we observe with fresh eyes, whereby the "ordinary becomes extraordinary" (Kennedy, 2016). Beginner's mind opens up our awareness to new possibilities and increases creativity by noticing how similar things can be different yet also the same, much like the two mermaids shown in Figure 5, who are gazing in the same direction but from a different vantage point. Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki reminds us of the opportunities that arise when our minds are open by truly experiencing whatever we are doing at the moment, such as writing a letter, washing dishes, or drinking a cup of tea, rather than being distracted by our thoughts drifting elsewhere (Suzuki & Dixon, 1989). In essence, to return to the state of purely wanting to learn in the absence of ego, reminding us how much we can learn from children and their sense of wonder by being in the present moment, is the quality a beginner's mind encourages. Charlie Ambler, the founder of the Daily Zen (Ambler, 2018), noted:

To approach any activity with a beginner's mind is to remain open and curious. We remember what we don't know, instead of focusing on stroking the ego. We become radically humble and honest with ourselves about what we're doing. We find joy in simply doing and learning rather than trying to prove something to the world. We let time unfold naturally rather than forcing our expectations upon it. And when we do this, a new sort of excellence emerges, one rooted in joy rather than zeal. (para. 12)

Learning about mindfulness may assist children and adults alike by increasing concentration, improving sleep quality, regulating emotional responses, and physically helping

the body heal more quickly, benefitting people physically, emotionally, and spiritually by enabling them to clear their minds and begin anew (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

However, to experience these advantages, I learned that teachers need to explore what it feels like to be mindful of themselves before sharing this transformational journey with their students. Starting at the beginning of the school year, teachers can set the tone for the coming months together by gently guiding their students to experience the gift of being mindfully aware in September. Exercises using chimes, listening for the length of the sound when playing traditional singing bowls, watching mindfulness videos, practising yoga, and reading books can help children understand their emotions and connect their feelings to their hearts and minds. These understandings, coupled with regular practice, can become a beacon to anchor our students during turbulent times and help them become more resilient during life's storms. Rick Hanson, a psychologist from the University of California, compares this strength to the keel of a boat. The deeper the keel, the more steady the ship, despite how stormy the sea can become, and mindfulness can help provide that stability for our students and us (Baylis, 2020).

Our thoughts are compelling. How we speak to ourselves can colour our interactions and affect our destiny. According to Louise Hay, author and advocate for "*Living a More Authentic Life*," we have to "train ourselves to become aware of our thinking" (Hay, 2017). Moreover, teaching mindfulness is best when offered as an invitation (Baylis et al., 2021), especially when the students have previously experienced trauma. For example, when leading a guided meditation with their class, teachers may invite their students to close their eyes or lower their gaze and provide them the option to sit or to stand, to be still or to pace, if that feels more

comfortable for the participants. It is always an invitation, and our students are welcome to take part wherever they are on their journey, in whatever capacity they feel most comfortable.

### *Trust*

#### **Figure 6**

*Seaweed couple in a loving embrace made from local woven bull kelp*



*"Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do"* Dr. Benjamin Spock (Spock as cited in *Quotespedia.org*, 2020).

*Trust* implies believing in becoming more mindful through meditation, knowing that it will get easier with regular daily practice. As I follow my gut feelings and learn to trust my intuition, mindfulness will slowly become second nature as my faith in my ability grows.

Trusting oneself is a crucial attitude to cultivate to feel healthy and whole, connecting our mind, heart, body, and spirit. Listening to our intuition and our body's inner guidance can often

be overshadowed by the outside world's noise and other people's opinions. Often our fears will be heard like a shout to us, while guidance from our intuition may be quiet as a whisper.

Thankfully, we can trust our physical bodies to keep us alive without consciously thinking about it. Without direction, our hearts pump blood through our bodies. Our lungs breathe in oxygen and dispel carbon dioxide. Our bodies perform numerous other functions to maintain homeostasis on a physiological level. Achieving this state of equilibrium is equally vital for our mental being. Too often, if people disregard their inner wisdom through knowing themselves and their emotions after deep, honest reflection, they can lose sight of what is truly important. Trust is our compass which we can rely on when making decisions. Most importantly, when we trust each other, we can feel safe to open our hearts, much like the kelp couple shown in Figure 6 represents, welcoming our feelings of love to grow.

Personally, whenever I have discounted my intuition, the situation inevitably ends badly, and now I do my best to follow and trust my inner guidance. This guidance may be experienced as a sensation in our stomach known as our gut feelings, or we may feel our temperature change, or quickly “see” an image as a flash or “hear” what we sense as a warning. Each person is on a unique personal journey that is different from everyone else's. When trust exists, there is a higher likelihood that each individual can reach their potential and experience greater happiness despite any detours along the way. Trusting that perceived mistakes can be regarded as potential learning experiences and are all part of our journey fosters compassion for ourselves, knowing that we did the best we could with the knowledge we had at the time. Having trust or faith in ourselves is a way to align with our true calling and allows others the freedom to do the same.

*Non-striving*

**Figure 7**

*Abalone shells shown from both sides*



*"In a gentle way, you can shake the world"* Mahatma Gandhi (Gandhi as cited in *Goodreads*, 2022).

*Non-striving* implies going with the flow rather than fighting against one's circumstances, accepting what is, rather than pushing for the situation to be different. This balance is welcomed while practicing mindfulness and is represented by the abalone shells in Figure 7. Abalones are peaceful mollusks that live in colonies feeding on algae or small bits of kelp. Abalones know their limits and typically go with the flow, yet they can move quickly when necessary, using their large foot to turn their body, and employing torque to escape predators.

Similarly, we are encouraged to be present when practicing mindfulness but not push ourselves excessively to achieve a particular state. It does take regular, daily practice to become more mindful, and depending on what time of day we practice, more or less effort may be needed. This balance is essential, especially if meditating after lunch, as it may be tempting to

fall asleep! Keeping our eyes open rather than closed and walking or sitting up rather than lying down may be prudent. Committing to even a few minutes a day can have a positive impact. People may feel that they do not have enough time or energy to spare in their busy lives to devote to becoming more mindful, though the Zen saying shared by Dr. Sukhraj Dhillon reminds us, “You should sit in meditation for twenty minutes everyday - unless you're too busy; then you should sit for an hour” (Dhillon, 2022).

As highlighted in a recent interview with Lisa Baylis, self-compassion teacher and mindfulness advocate, Rick Hanson shared that mindfulness is the opposite of going through the day on autopilot. Forty percent of American adults have noticed that they are not fully paying attention to what they are doing daily (Baylis, 2020). This statistic makes one wonder how people can feel happy if they are so busy completing mundane tasks that they do not even notice their actual state of being. Moreover, when they do, these feelings are often so intense that they need to numb these emotions with alcohol, sedatives, or other mood-altering chemicals.

People are social beings and naturally want to feel connected to one another. It is one of our basic necessities. Nevertheless, underneath all these emotions is the desire for love, belonging, and connection. Being mindful can help enhance our connection with others and, most importantly, ourselves.

Anyone, young or old, wanting to learn how to be more mindful can often start by picking an activity that they do daily and then becoming more consciously aware as they perform said activity; such as brushing their teeth, walking to and from their car in the parking lot, washing their hands, or eating an apple. Regularly paying attention to these simple tasks and truly noticing what is happening, rather than simply going through the motions, gives our brains

the chance to rest and reset rather than continuously multi-tasking. This mindful awareness can lessen anxiety, reduce stress, and improve our concentration by being present. The opposite feeling can best be described as akin to running on a hamster wheel, unable to catch our breath. This sensation is all too well known by educators, students, and parents alike. Taking a few moments a day to slow down and notice what we are doing can break this cycle before reaching the breaking point. Non-striving also means allowing life to unfold naturally (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). The butterfly will not be able to leave its chrysalis and fly any sooner, or the chick cannot stand on its own two feet if we interfere and pry their shells open before they are ready. Growth and germination also take time as the seed is nourished by water, warmer temperatures, and nutrients from the soil. By non-striving, we accept things as they are, secure knowing that it will happen when the conditions are right and everything is as it should be.

Non-striving during meditation implies that we are not pushing ourselves to achieve any specific outcome. Instead, we simply notice any thoughts or sensations that may arise during our body scans or while meditating and observe, without forcing ourselves to feel something different. It often surprises me how different my body can feel from day to day or from side to side while practising my yoga poses, meditating, or even when I pay more attention to my breathing. These subtle variations are not to be feared and are all part of the human experience, reminding us that we are alive and constantly changing, growing, and evolving. We simply need to notice if something is painful or uncomfortable and then send love to that part of the body, imagining wrapping it gently with love as if in a warm towel (Baylis, 2020).

### *Letting Go*

### **Figure 8**

*Woven seaweed vase with a sea star attached*



*"In the process of letting go, you will lose many things from the past, but you will find yourself"*

Deepak Chopra (Chopra, n.d.).

*Letting go* of preconceived notions of how life should be is incorporated in mindfulness while learning to appreciate the moment with compassion, curiosity, and care, much like the seastar in Figure 8, holding onto the kelp vase before possibly letting go. Releasing our need for control, thus allowing a situation to unfold naturally, can be challenging and rewarding at the same time. It does imply a need for trust when letting go of one thing, person, or thought. Who or what will come to replace it? Will there be something to fill the void, or will we hold space for it until it returns? The answer involves trust to find out!

Embodying the practice of letting go is also essential while eating and noticing what is happening from moment to moment. Too often, in our modern-day society, people, including

myself, are constantly being over-stimulated with sights and sounds in our environment and rushing to get to the next activity without really savouring their food or the experience while eating. Being mindful and slowing down allows us to enjoy our food more and equate the sensation of satiety without needing to overeat, lessening the prevalence of obesity. After eating, the stomach sends signals to the brain that it is full, but it takes time for these signals to register. “Although your stomach may feel full as you are eating, it can take approximately 15-20 minutes for your brain to receive all the different satiety signals and hence know that you have had enough to eat” (Turnbull, 2017). By being mindful, people can improve their digestion by properly chewing their food, savouring the experience of eating, rather than quickly gulping it down. It is incredible how much better food tastes when we take our time to eat. Noticing the aromas combined with the colours and textures of our food can significantly enhance our eating experience. In his book, *How to Eat* (2014), Hanh emphasizes the importance of slowing down when eating by:

Contemplating our food for a few moments before eating can bring us much happiness.

We look at the food in a way that the food becomes real. We think about all the people, animals, plants, and minerals and all the conditions that brought the food to our plate. The food reveals our connection with the Earth and all beings. We remember our determination to eat in a way that preserves our health and well-being and the health and well-being of the Earth. (p. 96)

Letting go and eating mindfully without external stimulation from watching videos or playing games on cell phones can also benefit our health physically and emotionally. Human beings long for connection, and by conversing with each other during mealtimes, we have the

opportunity to connect rather than be distracted by external media. Traditionally, families used to reconnect during their evening meals. Now that opportunity is being eroded with modern life's fast pace. Parents need to drive their children to after-school activities (before being in lockdown during the COVID pandemic) or attend meetings. Families that are more mobile tend to eat out more often, thankfully, though "more than 6 in 10 Canadians (62%) surveyed... said they eat dinner as a family at least five times per week," according to the Vanier Institute of the Family, (Battams, 2017). I am proud to say that our family falls in that 62%. Canadian studies show that eating together more often as a family can help children do better in school and "prevent issues with eating disorders, alcohol and substance use, violent behavior, depression, and suicidal thoughts in adolescents" (Jackson Curran, 2021, para. 6).

Debbie Gray, manager of Mental Health Screening and Early Identification for Alberta Health Services, relayed in a Vauxhall press release that when parents and their children check in with each other, "this connectivity is vital to healthy and supportive family relationships" (2012). The fast pace of modern life is not always conducive to fostering mindful connections resulting in 75% of American adults reporting that they feel lonely, as Hansen relayed when interviewed (Baylis, 2020). With an increase in feelings of isolation, despite the advances in technology, including more ways to be constantly connected via platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Facetime, it is more important than ever to be conscious of letting go and being mindful of our needs for survival, safety and connection to be happy and healthy, emotionally and physically.

### ***Generosity***

### **Figure 9**



*“Be the one who makes others feel included”* (Author unknown, as cited in *OurMindfulLife.com*, 2021).

*Generosity* is closely linked to gratitude and involves giving our time, energy, and positive thoughts to others. We do not need to be rich to be generous. When we spread joy and make other people happy, not only do they feel appreciated and cared for, but we also feel connected, boosting our levels of contentment. Our emotions are transformed when we integrate our heart, body, mind, and soul, and we appreciate the profound realization of how all things in life are inter-connected. This attitude of generosity is represented by the two sea stars shown in Figure 9.

Hanson explains that we need to share how our brains work with our students. Once children comprehend the neuroscience connected to the brain, they will understand themselves better and why they react the way they do in various life situations. He talks about the difference between the "*Stone-Age brain*" versus the "*Modern-Day brain*." In prehistoric times, our brains were made to respond to short bursts of stress, such as eating or being eaten in the quest for

survival. Our "*Modern-day brain*" is not equipped to deal with the effects of continuous low-grade, long-term stress. According to Hanson, when we go beyond ourselves and help others feel good by being generous with our time and abilities, it makes a tremendous difference. By helping others, children can build empathy and compassion and make the world feel safer and happier, leading to feelings of contentment for both the giver and the receiver (Baylis, 2020).

Being generous with one's time and attention is one of the greatest gifts we can share. Often in our busy lives, as part of our fast-paced modern world, people may feel stretched too thin and unable to attend to others fully. I recently attended an Indigenous drum-making workshop with Elder and Wisdom Keeper Frazer Smith, descended from the Sencoten-speaking people of the Coast Salish (Smith, Tsartlip's First Nation, lives in Saanich, British Columbia, personal communication, October 23, 2021). At his workshop, I was reminded of the importance of making time for others. He stated that if someone comes wishing to speak or ask us a question, we can give the gift of our presence. Being generous in this way is critical because, as he says, if we do not make an effort and something happens to that person, we will feel the loss in our hearts for a very long time. This example illustrates that it does not require much to be generous. We simply need to give our time and attention to others on this life journey by sharing our experiences and helping others. The gift of our presence can make a tremendous difference to our students. In addition, we also need to remember to be generous toward ourselves and treat ourselves with the same loving-kindness and compassion as we would a dear friend, family member, or loved one. Often, we are hardest on ourselves and may need to relearn how to speak to ourselves with words reflecting a gentle, compassionate understanding which can be transformative, silencing our inner critic (Baylis et al., 2021).

**Figure 10**

*Beach scene shows how driftwood can be arranged to create whatever we can imagine*



(Photo, Vladvictoria, 2019)

Sitting on the logs that have drifted onto the beach is the perfect place to pause and reflect as it never looks exactly the same the next time you visit. Over time, I have observed that the tides, the sun, the clouds, the rain, and the wind change the landscape with a little help from birds, insects, animals, sea creatures, and people, especially children! Noticing makes all the difference. Nisargadatta Maharaj reminds us of the value of understanding gained after observing (Maharaj, 1973, as cited in Kabat-Zinn, 2019):

By watching yourself in your daily life with alert interest with the intention to understand rather than to judge, in full acceptance of whatever may emerge, because it is here, you encourage the depth to come to the surface and enrich your life and consciousness with its captive energies. This is the great work of awareness; it removes obstacles and releases energies by understanding the nature of life and mind. Intelligence is the door to freedom and alert attention is the mother of intelligence. (from the last page of the MBSR workbook as cited in Kabat-Zinn, 2011)

## Chapter Two - Merging Mindfulness Through the Tides of Change

Mindfulness embodies being purposefully aware, from moment to moment in the present, by paying attention to our breathing commonly through yoga or meditation, (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). It also includes additional contemplative practices in other forms. Haynes, Irvine, and Bridges (2013) explain that:

Sitting, standing, walking, and lying down; using attitudes of not doing; deep listening, pondering, and radical questioning; guided imagery and active imagination; exercises with the body; focusing techniques as those developed by Eugene Gendlin; concentrated language experiments with freewriting, poetry, and journals; beholding; and creation of visual images to represent such experience. (p. 63)

Mindfulness is a practice that takes practice. Essentially, it is "both a verb and a noun, the word means making, doing, and acting ...[which] implies discipline, repetition, and habit" (Haynes et al., 2013, p. 65). Mindfulness implores us to ask ourselves: What is happening in this present moment? Moreover, the practice invites us to repeatedly pull our wandering thoughts back to the moment at hand, which is no easy feat, especially amidst the hustle and bustle of a primary classroom. "Whether alone or in the classroom, when we practice meditation or pray, we sit in silence. In our world, silence is rare and hard to achieve" (Haynes et al., p. 65). The transformative power of gaining insight through silence is invaluable. According to Molly Quinn who describes herself as an educator who embraces a "vision of education that cultivates wholeness, beauty, compassion, and social action" (2022), she reminds us that (Quinn, 2001):

The one who is silent hears, sees the world anew, or we might say, touches reality, and is changed thereby; the one who is silent is alone deemed capable of genuine response,

because only this one has become truly present, perceiving what actually is, and who realizes the self and its freedom within a larger view. From this 'centering' comes awakening. (p. 3)

As William James wrote in the *Principles of Psychology* (James, 1890), it is worthwhile to reach this state of mindfulness with our students because being able to reign in our minds would be an "education par excellence," encouraging us to become kinder and more compassionate with ourselves and others. The former director, Mirabi Bush, of the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society, believed that these pedagogies would create "noble woke-up big-heart beings" (Bush, as cited in Haynes et al., 2013, p. 65). Bai eloquently wrote about the importance of helping our students become human *be-ings*, rather than human *do-ings*, by offering the opportunity to be silent through the study of mindfulness (Bai et al., 2016).

Hopefully, our students may receive the necessary tools through regular practice and moments of silent reflection to view themselves and the world in this way by incorporating mindfulness into their daily lives, lighting their inner world. Tobin Hart, professor at the University of West Georgia, author of the book *the Secret Spiritual World of Children* (2003), and co-founder of the Child Spirit Institute, dedicated over three decades of his life to nurturing and studying the area in which spirituality, psychology, and education merge. Hart echoes the importance of being present. During his first psychotherapy internship, he experienced a way to increase empathy and forge deep, authentic connections with others by listening mindfully to understand another person's perspective. "The challenge may be to extend the practice outside the confines of therapy into all meetings with the world. And what this activity opened to was an awareness of interconnection and often a feeling of appreciation and love" (Hart, 1999, p. 112).

Haynes, Bai, and Hart have all underscored the importance of listening mindfully through being silent to hear what is truly important in our minds and hearts. When we are listening, three stages are activated. First, we hear what is being said. Secondly, we allow the words to register and ascertain how they fit our expectations of how the conversation could predictably flow, and thirdly, we begin to hear ourselves formulate a response. These three listening levels happen almost instantaneously and challenge us not to jump to conclusions by responding too quickly. I have noticed that when I take the time to be present, genuinely listen, and try not to guess what the other person will say before they speak, I can have a more authentic, meaningful conversation allowing each of us to feel heard, especially when I take the time to pause and reflect.

Recently, I was so fortunate to attend a Zoom meeting and have the opportunity to participate in my first “silent retreat” incorporating mindfulness. I did not know quite what to expect and wondered what it would be like to spend four hours together in silence. Our self-compassion teacher, Lisa Baylis, lovingly held the space for us and guided us through various practices, including eating mindfully. I usually rush through my day at school and barely have time to sit for lunch. I felt nourished as we were invited to use all of our five senses and truly savour our meal. We also did several body scans in which I noticed the particular area of my body become warm as if a heat lamp was shining on that spot as we moved through the exercises. Feeling these changes on a cellular level felt very nurturing by not rushing through the practice. I started to notice my energy changing as the morning progressed with a feeling of warmth and love. It is hard to express in words, but the feelings were profound. Being silent and focusing inward evoked feelings of connectedness to the universal energy, and by the end of the

retreat, I felt more loving-kindness for others in the world and myself. The retreat started with all of us turning our attention inward and ended with our energy expanding outwards. It was transformative in every respect and encouraged me to feel more calm, loving, and peaceful.

Spending time in nature enjoying the outdoors has been one of my favourite ways to listen more closely and receive messages from spirit, helping me to feel more grounded. I have always loved the ocean and feel very fortunate to call Vancouver Island home. Listening to the rhythmic ebb and flow of the sea is very soothing and the perfect place to delve deeper into my thoughts and help me navigate my feelings. The ocean beckoned whenever I had a problem to contemplate, and walking along the seashore helped me put my experiences into perspective. During my first camping expedition when I was 19-years old, hiking the West Coast Trail, I remember being gently lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves as we slept in our tents along the shore. The sound of the waves was very comforting as the tides receded and advanced like clockwork four times each day. It was an experience to be savoured. The sea captures all nine of Kabat-Zinn's (2015) mindfulness attitudes, as they are all profoundly interconnected and flow into one another, resembling ocean currents. I invite you to dive in with me to take a closer look!

### ***Non-Judging***

#### **Figure 11**

*Gray Gooseneck barnacles and purple mussels on a rocky outcrop*



*“Judging is acting on limited knowledge. Learn the art of observing without evaluating”*

Pushpa Rana (Rana as cited in *Rivera*, 2020) and photo (NOAA, 2021).

Here on Vancouver Island, Gooseneck barnacles live in clusters in areas where the tide is rough. Fortunately, they have a long flexible neck that helps them withstand the pounding surf and remain attached to the rocks, which will be their lifelong home. As seen in this photograph in Figure 11, the Gooseneck barnacles appear to coexist peacefully with a group of mussels sharing this rocky outcrop. Each species has its own defined area, yet they live together harmoniously, sharing this rocky ledge with enough food to sustain both colonies as they welcome the tide's return twice a day. They appear to be not judging each other but allowing the water to flow over them, bringing nutrients to sustain them. They remind me to go with the flow of life as the universe is abundant and will provide.

What does it mean to have an attitude whereby one is non-judging? Kabat-Zinn (2015) encourages noticing our thoughts and being present with them by not labelling our thoughts as either good or bad. When we label a thought as "good," it requires action on our part to pursue this quality, person, or thing rather than simply noticing it. The reverse is also true. When we perceive a thought to be "bad," it frequently has the opposite effect, whereby we want to run away from the pessimistic implications of that thought or spiral deeper into negativity. When we do not react to thought as being either good or bad, we perceive it as "neutral" and are more

indifferent toward this opinion (Buggy, 2018). Our minds constantly produce thoughts, as anyone learning to meditate will quickly discover! Our brains continuously evaluate these thoughts and feelings, for this is how our minds naturally function. However, when we are being mindful, we notice our perceptions but do not become fixated on them, as we realize that our feelings are only temporary and will change. Surprisingly, emotions only last for approximately 90 seconds (Siegel and Bryson, 2012, p. 103). The physical effects which originate from our feelings, such as an accelerated heartbeat, rush of adrenalin, sensations of heat, and tightness in the throat, dissipate in the body a short time afterward, according to neuroscientist Jill Bolte-Taylor in her memoir, *My Stroke of Insight* (Bolte-Taylor, 2006). Thus our emotions are fleeting, so it is healthiest to *be* with the emotion, notice it, and then let it go. Our feelings do not define us. "Setting down the judging mind, even for a short while, is a refreshing weight off of your shoulders," according to Patrick Buggy in his article, "*Non-Judgement: What is it? And Why Does it Matter?*" (Buggy, 2018). Truthfully, judging speaks more to the person's character, as this action reflects their inner state of mind rather than reflecting on the person in question.

David Jardine, University of Calgary Faculty of Education professor, whose primary research interests include Buddhist Pedagogy, Ecological thinking, and hermeneutics, including the "study of the methodological principles of interpretation" often of Biblical texts, noted when students ask why they have to study a particular subject that "this 'calling into account,' this 'relevance' is not a permanent state. These particular events have already trickled from memory" (Jardine, 2016, p. xiii). Jardine speaks to this juxtaposition of how our minds keep examining thoughts from different perspectives, "It is because *my life keeps coming*, keeps arriving, and

new cases, new afflictions or incidents keep asking for understanding and thus keep bumping against what seemed to be solved or resolved, what seemed to be fulfilled" (Jardine, p. 21).

This reference reminded me of the "spiral curriculum," a teaching strategy developed by cognitive theorist Jerome Bruner, and how by revisiting concepts, we deepen our understanding over time. By integrating different experiences, we can gain deeper insights as we mature, develop new awareness, and broaden our understanding (Bruner, 1960, 2009).

Learning to "train the mind" (Simmer-Brown & Grace, 2011) is not a simple task. It requires regular practice and dedication, but the rewards are great. Many university-level students who studied meditation reported that it was the most valuable course they had taken. Not judging their thoughts benefitted students greatly (Simmer-Brown & Grace, 2011):

Instead of being tossed in the 'waves' of thought and emotions, they can develop the inner discipline of riding 'the crest of the wave' by attending to the precise moment at hand and discover the clarity and openness of the mind itself ( p. xvii).

Such reflection echoes the sentiments of Socrates that, "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates as cited in Simmer-Brown & Grace, 2011, p.xiii), including the need to think for oneself and behave with integrity showing empathy and compassion for other people and remind us that (Simmer-Brown & Grace, 2011):

Aristotle's notions of reflective citizenship, and above all on Greek and Roman Stoic notions of an education that is 'liberal' in that it liberates the mind from bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the world. (p. xiv).

Thus, non-judging challenges include maintaining an openness to be present with the experience noticing whatever the mind is presenting while allowing all thoughts and feelings to float by.

Kabat-Zinn describes the brain's attempts at non-judging by noting, "Non-judgmental means to be aware of how judgmental the mind can be, and as best we can, not getting caught in it or recognizing when we are and not compounding our suffering by judging the judging"

(Kabat-Zinn, 2017, p. 1127).

The benefits of non-judging during meditation are numerous though it can be particularly hard, especially when one is first learning to meditate. Fortunately, it can improve with practice. After completing a forty-minute meditation, University of Kentucky students, according to Simmer-Brown & Grace (2011):

showed more enhanced brain functioning than students who spent the forty minutes taking a nap, reading, talking to friends, or watching television...

[refreshing] the mind in a unique way... [which] suggest strongly that a person's inner life, including subtle states of mental awareness, has a penetrating effect on his or her quality of life and contribution to the human collective. (p. xv)

This study is part of contemplative education research whereby American colleges are striving to cultivate sound judgement and character to build resilience, coupled with a strong and courageous spirit in their students as part of research studies from the Santa Barbara Institute, Stanford University, the University of California at Davis's Center for Mind and Brain, and the University of California Los Angeles's Mindful Awareness Research Center.

Gaining a greater understanding of how we think, through the regular practice of non-judging meditation, may assist students in achieving academic success by alleviating many

stressors such as "emotional and psychological problems (eating disorders, anger, self-hatred, depression, anxiety), sleep deprivation and addiction" (Simmer-Brown & Grace, 2011, p. 243).

Kabat-Zinn wisely reminds us amidst our culture of over-striving (Kabat-Zinn as cited in Borchard, 2014):

When you find the mind judging, you don't have to stop it from doing that, and it would be unwise to try. All that is required is to be aware of it happening. No need to judge the judging and make matters even more complicated for yourself. (para. 10)

I became aware of this phenomenon when I first began meditating and worried that I was doing something wrong. Noticing my fleeting thoughts darting around in my head was part of the process. My mind was constantly busy while I was trying my best to be still. It became frustrating at times until I learned that it was natural for my mind to wander and gently coax it back and focus on my breathing again and again. I learned that I was not alone when encountering these challenges when we shared our experiences as part of our weekly mindfulness group, which considerably eased my mind.

### *Acceptance*

#### **Figure 12**



*"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf"* Jon Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn as cited in Haljas, 2020) and photo (Kanenori, 2017).

The fall is the favourite time of year to test the waters around Tofino, British Columbia, as the ocean is still warm after the summer months, with the winds picking up, but not to the extent of the winter storm season with its unruly swells reaching over nine meters in height. The contrast is remarkable. The waves around Vancouver Island can gently reach land in sheltered bays, barely tickling the shore, or they can pound the beach after producing large swells, as seen in Figure 12, rising from the Pacific Ocean, much to the delight of cold-water surfers. Noticing these differences when walking along the beach during different times throughout the year and experiencing the changes that each season brings reminded me of the importance of acceptance. Often I feel sad when summer is coming to an end, knowing that the wet, winter weather we experience on the West Coast is coming, and I long for spring. Accepting the situation as it is, allows me to appreciate the unique beauty of each season and feel more present.

Interestingly, acceptance is not a passive resignation to our life situation. Instead, it is an active process that entails deciding to trust that we are where we are meant to be and that everything is happening as it is supposed to. Circumstances may not be the way we anticipated, but we can still change our attitude toward ourselves and the world around us once we accept the situation and try not to force it to be different, as doing so will cause unnecessary difficulties (Kabat-Zinn, 2018). Accepting the situation as it often allows us to apply wisdom and view challenges from another perspective. Through shifting our relationship to what is occurring, Kabat-Zinn espouses that this acceptance will encourage transformation and allow healing to occur on all levels, emotionally, physically, mentally, sexually, and spiritually.

Acceptance is critically important, especially when dealing with patients with chronic pain, as regarding their health situation with new eyes can be life-changing and facilitate healing. As Aoki nuanced from Leonard Cohen's iconic lyrics from the song, *Anthem*, included on his album entitled, *The Future*, accepting that we all have wounds is crucial (Cohen, 1992):

*Ring the bells that still can ring*

*Forget your perfect offering*

*There is a crack, a crack in everything*

*That's how the light gets in.*

The cracks refer to the life experiences that make us human. Through these struggles or dark nights of the soul, we grow and become more compassionate and kinder human beings. Cohen shared in an interview that the song, *Anthem*, was what he considered his best work, taking a decade to create, written during a period of turbulent global social change. It highlights that our experiences impact us and can shine a light on areas of our lives that we prefer not to see, facilitating healing when we choose to accept our circumstances (Hilburn, 1995, as cited in Wheeler, 2020). Additionally, even when reading, Hart speaks of the interiority whereby the reader is invited to delve into a book and reconsider the text to contemplate which truth is uncovered once the light shines on the words (Hart, 2008). These inner wounds are in all of us. Mindfulness can spark our healing journey if we view our wounds with compassion as part of our shared humanity.

As educators, teachers are not expected to do formal therapy as psychologists or counsellors, though it may sometimes feel that is what is needed. Thomas Moore, in his article, "*Care of the Soul in Education*" (Moore, 2018), cautions teachers to take care when they are

working with their students while also being aware of their wounds, as their students will come to school with wounds of their own. Being trauma-informed is crucial, especially when people are dealing with so many changes and stressors; therefore, it is safest to assume that everyone is dealing with trauma on some level and handling each other with loving kindness is vital in terms of our thoughts, words, and actions. Moore (2018) further explains:

As Plato said so plainly, that if you are not concerned for your students' souls, you could easily do them harm. More than that, you need to know what it takes to heal a wounded soul...[holistic] education does not merely dispense knowledge; it does so in a way that both the teacher and the student's souls are engaged and benefit. (p. 56)

Accepting the situation as it is, however painful, regarding our students, colleagues, friends, family, or ourselves can be the first step to healing with sensitivity and compassion. Some situations are beyond our control. The only thing we can control is our attitude. Accepting our circumstances, and doing what we can to improve our situation, may foster a healthier mindset. I have noticed that when I no longer fight the circumstances I am in but rather accept the situation and adjust my perception; as my perception is the only quality I can control, my outlook improves. There is more than one way to look at a situation, noting the well-known adage of 'looking at the glass as half-full versus half-empty.' It is all based on our perception and acceptance of the unspoken truth that life is constantly changing. Nothing remains the same forever. This state of impermanence helps me cherish every experience and reminds me to live in the moment. To quote Steve Maraboli, "Acceptance makes an incredible fertile soil for the seeds of change" (Maraboli, 2022).

*Patience*

**Figure 13**

*Estuary where the river meets the sea*



*"Follow the river and you will find the sea"* (French Proverb as cited in *Famous Quotes by Authors*, 2010) and photo (Kessler, 2018).

Beachcombing is one of my favourite pastimes. On Vancouver Island, there are many beautiful beaches to explore and discover polished stones patiently worn away over time to reveal smooth pebbles, as pictured in Figure 13. The river's fresh water mingles with the sea's saltwater in the estuary. Eventually, the force of the water will transform boulders into stones and turn rocks into pebbles to treasure before they slowly become tiny grains of sand.

Much like the weathering of the rocks, patience is an attitude that requires consistent effort to evolve. It is both compelling and transformative. Edmund Burke reminds us that "Our patience will achieve more than our force" (Burke, n.d.). Mindfulness becomes more effective the longer it is cultivated through practicing meditation. Training the mind does not happen instantaneously but requires time, dedication, and a willingness to practice. American deaf and blind teacher and political activist Helen Keller surmised the value of patience by saying, "We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world" (Keller, as cited in 2018). Her quote underscores the reality that challenging thoughts and feelings can arise during

meditation, reflecting the struggles of life. Hoff reiterates the value of struggles in his book, *The Te of Piglet* (Hoff, 1992):

Without difficulties, life would be like a stream without rocks and curves - about as interesting as concrete. Without problems, there can be no personal growth, no group achievement, no progress for humanity. But what matters about problems is what one *does* with them. (pp. 58-59)

Thus, all feelings can be welcomed, rather than shunned, in order to grow, patiently moving through these emotions rather than creating stumbling blocks. I am often reminded in my own life how feeling the pain of difficult situations, regarding my health or my relationships, helped me to appreciate the joy in ways I would not have contemplated before. Being able to savour the sweet, simple moments in life takes on new meaning after experiencing the darkness and helps me feel more empathy and compassion when others are struggling, as I have.

Patiently learning to wait is one of the main components of helping children mature. Learning to be patient helps children make healthier choices and better decisions that build perseverance, dedication, and strength leading to success. "Patience is mindful waiting" (Dean, 2015, p. 390).

Practicing patience is critically important for teachers, especially teachers of young learners. Hoff emphasizes the importance of educating our youngest children and doing it with the utmost care (Hoff, 1992). Children entering kindergarten for the first time in September have to transform from preschoolers to becoming students and learn the ways of the school system. Unfortunately, the educational system can cause much damage to students who do not fit the norm. Corey Denos' research in multilingual classrooms on the lower Mainland of British

Columbia highlighted some disturbing realities and shares these cautions regarding labelling our students (Denos et al., 2009):

Identity assessment is a central practice of schools. Reporting to students, parents, administrators, and ultimately, the state, about the learning achievements of students is part of a teacher's job. We do these assessments for practical and caring reasons. We are aware of the diversity within our classrooms and want the children in our care to be successful. We have been given huge responsibilities, and we take them seriously. But at the same time, we need to be aware that we are participating in a very pervasive and powerful process that ranks and positions our students -- and that this process itself can produce significant, long-lasting damage... [because] once assumed or assigned, [these identities] are difficult to change. (p. 37)

Denos, Toohey, Neilson, and Waterstone's (2009) collaborative action research was conducted over many years and detailed how the labels given to children in kindergarten tend to colour future teachers' perceptions of the children's true capabilities. Assessment and attaching labels to students are where care and patience are necessary. Creating an environment where each child is encouraged to learn and nurture their unique potential according to their individual timetable, much like a baby learning to walk or speak, appears to be beneficial. I have often felt a heavy burden on my heart when making these judgements and labelling my students while collecting data for the school board office or the Ministry of Education. I feel I am casting their future success based on the short time we shared in kindergarten. As with flowers in my garden, some take longer to bloom and are often more breathtaking if I wait to pick them. "Flowers don't

worry about how they're going to bloom. They just open up and turn toward the light and that makes them beautiful" (Carrey, 2021).

Waterstone advocates for Barbara Rogoff et al.'s (2001) model of a 'community of learners' where cooperation and collaboration are the foundation and children are encouraged to work together. "The philosophy of the classroom is that learning is a social activity and participation by all members of the community happens all the time," and by working together, students are "able to achieve what would be impossible to do alone" as each child has his or her unique gifts to share with the world (Denos et al., 2009). As teachers, it is our job to foster an environment where these gifts can flourish (Denos et al., 2009. p. 46). I often think of teaching as similar to sculpting. One of my favourite artists, Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), would describe his sculpting process by taking a piece of clay or rock and releasing the figure inside, similar to my teaching philosophy. When I work with my students, I am conscious of the incredible potential within each child. Everything is possible, and it is a true joy and an honour to share in their metamorphosis! Life beckons, inviting them to share their unique gifts with the world, which is why I love teaching young children so much. As Aoki so eloquently reminds us, "Let us beckon all these voices to speak, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense that stirs within each of us" (Aoki et al., 2004, p. 17). This quote resonates with me as I was one of those quieter students, often too shy to speak in kindergarten, but fortunate to have many thoughtful teachers who were patient and kind and helped me find my voice.

However, the growth that occurs during this metamorphosis cannot be rushed. Jonathan Silin, in his paper, "*Risking Hope in a Worried World*," writes about the three vital pedagogical practices of "letting go of worry, engaging in the pleasures of forgetting, and learning to wait"

(Silin, 2017, p. 91). He encourages educators to be more present. He encourages us not to rush and do tasks for our students in hopes of hastening their learning process due to time constraints, amplified by having to follow too many rules, meanwhile forcing children to fit into the system.

Curbing the urge to remediate and allowing students to perform tasks themselves at their own pace and in their own way may be the most effective teaching method. New Zealand educator Marie Clay (1926-2007) helped young children struggling with literacy learn to read and write with joy and fully believed in allowing children to do what they could independently by working together in the areas of proximal development. Sharing the pen when writing side-by-side taught me to be patient and wait during my years as a Reading Recovery teacher, allowing my students to respond and make connections, strengthening their discoveries instead of jumping in and squelching their initiative. There is tremendous learning potential in discovering the concepts themselves versus being told, and great joy in succeeding independently.

### ***Beginner's Mind***

#### **Figure 14**

*Two starfish on a sandy beach*



*"A walk along the beach offers the gift of the unexpected. Scan the horizon and glimpse the endless possibilities. Stroll head down and encounter one natural treasure after another. Tease the tides and feel a sense of adventure. Dive into the surf and experience the rush of risk."*

Joan Anderson (Anderson, 2021) and photo (UBodnar, 2014).

Much can be learned from both the expert and the beginner. The expert can share much wisdom and life experience, while the beginner looks at the situation with fresh eyes, much like the starfish who can learn from each other as long as they both keep an open mind, are willing to be flexible, and explore new ideas and techniques for survival as represented by Figure 14.

A beginner's mind implies seeing the situation with new eyes and an uncluttered mind (Borchard, 2014). The beginner's mind often dares to go where the expert mind would not, visualizing new opportunities and creative solutions that the more experienced expert might not. As Hanh affirms in his thoughtful book, *Being Peace*, "For things to reveal themselves to us, we need to be ready to abandon our views about them" (Hanh, 1987).

Hart reiterates the importance of having a newfound, fresh awareness that affords each interaction we have to be reexamined according to each individual's personal situation, reconsidering previous conceptions (Hart, 1994). This fresh perspective arises from seeing

challenges without the preconceived notions of how things 'should be' versus how things in life 'could be' when given full rein to express ourselves freely and brainstorm ideas without fear of censorship. Hart reminds us to reexamine situations without judgement. People are constantly evolving and are not the same as they were even a day ago. Allowing each person to be who they need to be in that moment gives them the freedom to be authentic and allows their spirit to flourish. Hart describes a beginner's mind as having a "nondefensive openness" (Hart, 2008, p. 236). This receptivity is much like looking at the world with a childlike sense of wonder, curiosity, and fascination. Hart describes this openness as "leading with appreciation over judgement" (Hart, 2008, p. 236). Such fluidity of the mind can apply to an idea, person, place, or object. In this context, students can integrate quality concentration to learn well and complete tasks, coupled with a willingness to change preconceived notions and regard new situations openly without judgement.

University students who practiced meditation reported that their ability to focus improved. When interrupted, they could return to the task at hand more quickly and refocus, even amid distractions. However, paying attention and focusing appears increasingly difficult for students, especially if they are overly exposed to digital media that rapidly switches the images on the screen. This fast pace of technology does affect children's brain development and their subsequent ability to concentrate effectively. Unfortunately, it is hard to avoid being exposed to such images as our Western society typically has screens in many locales, including banks, restaurants, shops, airplanes, buses, and even vans driven by families with young children. Though these technological developments have many beneficial applications, society is advised to gauge their merit, especially when considering young children's brain development. Chet

Bowers was a professor from California, and environmental activist who has written extensively about the cautions society may consider when incorporating technology, including the possible ramifications. According to Bowers (2014):

Everything exists within complex webs of relationships and interdependencies. These relationships--whether at the micro and macro level--serve as the information pathways through which messages (which may be at the chemical, genetic, temperature, metaphorical, behavioural, and different semiotic pattern) are communicated. (p. 213)

There is a concern that the old practices and ways of doing may be lost forever, along with our elders' wisdom and cultural traditions, much to the detriment of the Earth and all who inhabit our beautiful planet.

A beginner's mind welcomes all possibilities and allows us to see a project's potential in new and creative ways. Businesses increasingly seek employees who can think outside the box and develop innovative methods to solve problems. The approach, talents, and insights from the next generation's beginner's minds are needed to solve the global problems the world is facing today. Many of these problems can be attributed to greed, financial gains, traditions, fear of change, and, sadly, ignorance by not believing the predicted long-term consequences of our actions. We, along with every creature on the planet, are all interconnected.

In the University of Ottawa's student article for the Centre for International Policy Studies entitled, "*Facing the Biggest Challenges of Our Generation*," the question is asked, "What does it mean to take action on these problems? It means not being distracted, restless, self-absorbed, and plugged in to social media. It means plugging in to the world itself. It means *interaction*" (Bichet et al., 2018, para. 8). Students realise that their voice and participation are

needed to solve many of the problems facing our world today, employing the attitude of a beginner's mind and not simply posting on FaceBook or Instagram. Grace further explores the benefits of "*Mediation in the Classroom*" highlighting the importance of social responsibility and cultivating moral, ethical and personal accountability in our students as "self-knowledge, [which] paradoxically leads to self-forgetting and thereby becomes the fulcrum to self-transcendence and service to others" (Grace, 2011, p. 244). My young students teach me a great deal every year and remind me to remain open to life's possibilities. Cultivating and welcoming the spirit of a beginner's mind allows everyone to participate and share thoughts and ideas that can benefit both the young and the old for our planet's future health and survival.

### *Trust*

#### **Figure 15**

*Rockweed washed up along the shore on a sandy beach*



*"The cure for anything is salt water: sweat, tears or the sea"* Isak Dinesen (Dinesen, 2022) and photo (Sullivan, 2016).

Most plants and animals living in the intertidal zone need to have trust and many unique adaptations to survive the stark contrast of living submerged in saltwater for part of the day,

followed by being exposed to the hot sun, withstanding the harsh elements for many hours on end. They need to trust that the tide will return, bringing fresh water and plankton to nourish them once more. As shown in Figure 15, Rockweed has specialized sacs to retain water inside until the tide returns and is perfectly adapted to this harsh environment. It never ceases to amaze me as I learn more about how beautifully nature has connected all creatures, interwoven in the web of life, and how beautifully they have adapted to their unique environment.

When I think of trust, a prime example would be babies' trust in their parents and caregivers to survive by attending to their basic needs while sharing their love, attention, and affection. Babies conversely also help their parents be more present in the moment as the adults care for them. John Vernon Surr thoughtfully reveals, "The perceived truth of the moment is shared simultaneously, precisely and effectively. New parents often speak with awe about the love they are learning from their babies" (Surr, 2017, p. 190). Though this communication is primarily non-verbal, it is nonetheless still profoundly felt. "In fact, babies and young children can teach adults a great deal about spiritually, trust, and living in the moment" (Surr, p. 190). Gandhi revealed, "The law of love could be best understood and learned through little children" (Gandhi, 1931 as cited in 2022). Learning to trust is crucial for healthy mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual development while strengthening babies' bonds to their parents. Surr (2017) emphasizes:

Especially in these days when so much of our attention is devoted to electronic screens. The baby brings us back to communicating with our whole beings, including especially our gaze, with its focus of attention, and our touch, our real-time contact with another human being who responds in kind. (p. 189)

Fostering this trusting connection takes time. It is recommended that it be honoured, or there can be severe "potentially lifelong implications" if this attachment is broken (Bai et al., 2016, p. 4). Interestingly, children can reciprocate healing and assist their parents. "Some parents report having received healing touches from their children, making their headaches or stomach aches go away" (McGregor 2016, 26, 29-30 as cited in Surr, 2017, p.189), illustrating the importance of trust and reciprocation in the healing process.

Trust is reputedly believed to be the foundation from which human beings can grow and healthily experience the world through being intentionally mindful, honouring one another's journey, experience, and essence. Research by Bai reveals that (Bai et al., 2016):

We believe that the ability of the educator to be aware in the moment, self-regulate, and attend with love and care to his embodied experience is the measure of his or her ability to model this behavior to students and develop warmth, connection, and trust in the context of the teacher-student relationship. An educator's ability to perceive and understand students more holistically through heightening... his or her own embodied awareness supports a capacity to become aware of others' non-verbal or non-discursive experience. p. 123

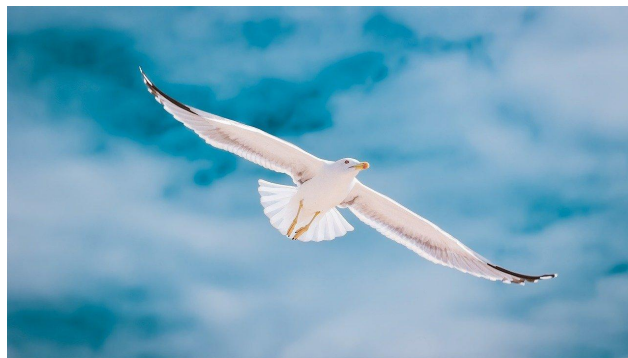
Kabat-Zinn recommends that we start to grow trust by beginning with ourselves. Having a deeper awareness of our breath with each inhalation and exhalation helps establish trust in the more reliable aspects of ourselves that occur automatically. Trusting that we are okay now, by already feeling at home, will allow the next moment to be tolerable and more at peace. Practicing being in a state of non-reactive, non-judgmental awareness helps to facilitate feelings of trust whereby life becomes the meditation teacher (Devroede & Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Firstly, we need to trust the process of meditation. It takes time, and often people become upset and doubt the benefits of mindfulness if it does not happen immediately. It helps to keep in mind that meditation will give us what we need, rather than what we think we need, trusting that the answers we seek are already in ourselves. Letting go and trusting our inner wisdom, or intuition, allows us to be more authentic in our lives because we trust the messages we receive and follow the personal guidance to do what is right for us. Trusting our feelings can also help us align more closely to our spiritual path. Listening with compassion to what our feelings urge us to contemplate honestly can alleviate unnecessary suffering by trusting that we can handle whatever situation arises, safe knowing that we have the skills and the talents needed. Trust is a helpful attitude to cultivate. Trust that we are in the right place at the right time. We are already enough, just as we are. There is no requirement to be perfect.

### *Non-Striving*

#### **Figure 16**

*Seagull soaring effortlessly in the breeze on out-stretched wings*



*"At the beach, life is different. Time doesn't move hour to hour but mood to moment. We live by the currents, plan by the tides and follow the sun." Sandy Gingras (Gingras, 2016) and photo (ddzphoto, 2017).*

Soaring above the water, gliding on outstretched wings, a seagull presents as not having a care in the world while flowing with the breeze. It is not striving to be anywhere or do anything other than enjoy the present moment to the fullest, enjoying the warmth of the sun and the wind under its wings, as seen in Figure 16. I have always been in awe of a bird's ability to fly and soar high in the sky. The ease at which they soar and the freedom they represent appeal to me, especially when I feel under pressure.

Creating a safe space to practice mindfulness can also be an opportunity to practice, much like the image of a bird soaring. We can live in the moment and deal with the present circumstances while letting go of preconceived notions of how it should be. Noticing noise outside the room can be distracting but can also, as McCown points out (McCown et al., 2016):

highlight how the practice helps us in real-life situations, which are seldom perfect or even the way we would prefer. The message that most supports the pedagogy is that "we do what we can, and accept what we must" p. 23

in life and develop the ability to focus on what is important and disregard the rest. "The more a teacher can learn and practice, the richer each class will be" (McCown et al., 2016, p. ix).

Non-striving implicitly implies not trying or forcing ourselves to feel a certain way while practicing mindfulness. It means allowing and observing whatever sensations arise during a body scan or meditation and acknowledging these moments rather than reacting to them. It does not mean pushing away our thoughts or getting angry for having these moments that require us to refocus and return to the present moment. Instead, we can try to meet any resistance with loving-kindness. Celebrate these moments and gently refocus the mind when distracting thoughts arise. Return to the breath, much like anchoring a boat, and stay in one place here and now.

According to Kabat-Zinn, striving to achieve a specific outcome can be a real obstacle. Meditation is meant to be an invitation to be yourself, exactly as you are in this moment.

(Kabat-Zinn, n.d.):

The irony is that you already are. This sounds paradoxical and a little crazy. Yet this paradox and craziness may be pointing you toward a new way of seeing yourself. One in which you are trying less and being more. This comes from intentionally cultivating the mindful attitude of non-striving. (para. 2)

It seems strange to think that we can do more by doing less. According to Kee et al., non-striving is the "temporary departure from the usual orientation of associating effort with outcome, which is typically ingrained in modern cultures" (Kee et al., 2019, para. 8). People are not machines and require rest, especially in our fast-paced modern world. Typically, we try to do more and continuously expect more of ourselves to the point of burnout. Personally, learning to switch the word "*should*" to "*could*" has been life-affirming for me and has permitted me to pause when needed.

Slowing down is necessary. It allows us to see and experience what we could have missed by truly savouring the moment. Mindfulness encourages us to be grateful for each moment and be happy where we are by looking inward with compassion to gain greater insight when we take the time to be still, resisting the urge to multi-task by letting go of the expectation to push ourselves to strive for more continuously.

Having compassion, understanding, and the attitude of non-striving can be very helpful when parenting, especially regarding interacting positively with preschoolers and teenagers.

Bluth and Wahler (2011) explain:

Parents who are more mindful therefore expend less energy in their attempts to meet the needs of the child. It is important to note here that a decrease in parenting effort does not imply either parental neglect or permissiveness, mindfulness... encompasses awareness and attentiveness in the present moment. Therefore, bringing mindfulness to a chaotic event would most likely interrupt and de-escalate the emotionally charged situation... once a less reactive, more nuanced, and emotionally neutral response is chosen, the amount and effort needed to parent is lessened. p. 285

Thus, a delicate balance is necessary for parenting and teaching, as being mindful can defuse potentially emotionally charged circumstances at home and school, improving the situation.

Sellman and Buttarazzi expose the many cautions that need to be considered when implementing mindfulness training in our educational programs because the educational system itself may be one of the causes of the problem. How “we relate to the suffering, rather than the sources of suffering...something disguised as empowering is thus a further source of oppression” (Sellman & Buttarazzi, 2019, p. 68). The authors explain how we discipline our students in school and expect them to participate in mindfulness practices that are the “antithesis of mindfulness” (p. 71). They may be contributing to the mental health issues in our youth when examining the bleak future many of them may envision with the economic, health, and environmental crises the world is facing today on a global scale. Perhaps, they suggest that mindfulness “needs to be a collective way of being ... rather than an individual way of coping” (p. 63). If our goal in education is for our students to feel eudemonia, then perhaps we need to

make the shift in beliefs whereby we allow our students to question what they are being taught, rather than blindly accepting the agenda of the state corporations or society over the individual.

### *Letting Go*

#### **Figure 17**

*Weathered pieces of driftwood washed up onto the shore*



*"A beach is a place of solitude where I can set my spirit free and relax"* M.L. Borges, (Borges, M.L. as cited in Raihaan, 2021) and photo (Cummings, 2019).

If driftwood could talk, what a tale it would tell of its many adventures! How did it arrive at this beach? What tree was it a part of previously? Did it let go after a storm, or did someone break it off, as pictured in Figure 17? Where will it be carried to next? Will it be a toy for a dog to fetch, part of a fort or a raft to sail on, or a creative piece of art? Upon closer inspection, this piece of wood may reveal some of its origins to those willing to observe, ponder and listen.

Much like this piece of driftwood, learning to let go of our preconceived notions and judgements that arise during meditation may take a lifetime of practice. Often these beliefs can arise unintentionally. Kabat-Zinn (2015) advises us to simply notice when this happens and not evaluate if the thought is negative or positive. Simply allow it to be and welcome it like a friend

with curiosity. Looking at our thoughts and feelings with compassion and understanding for our suffering may allow our shared humanity to help us evolve. Practicing body scans and guided meditations can potentially assist in such situations. Experiencing guided meditations can benefit participants by helping us feel whole, transforming our awareness by learning to release and let go of our subconscious fears through these exercises (Hanh, 2009). Letting go of what no longer serves us can be an act of courage. It may apply to people, places, possessions, thoughts, and ingrained beliefs and can change the trajectory of one's life from doing into being.

Mindfulness is not meant to be an extra burden on our already full plates. Instead, it is an avenue to awaken our sense of “being” rather than continuously focus on “doing” to the point of burnout and accept ourselves rather than criticise. As Kabat-Zinn explains, mindfulness emphasizes that "the best way to achieve your goals is to back off from striving for results and instead to start focusing carefully on seeing and accepting things as they are, moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, n.d.). Letting go and moving to the rhythms of life may be advantageous.

Allowing our experience to be as it is, without burdensome expectations, is the basis of non-attachment. Whitehead cautions that "in theory, any attachment or fixation on the self-concept, whether good or bad, can be problematic due to the ever-changing nature of experience" (Whitehead et al., 2018, para. 7). Instead, it is prudent to release any attachment to our definition of self and develop the capacity to observe our thoughts and emotions with flexibility rather than rigidly attempting to control our feelings when interacting with our beliefs (Whitehead et al., 2018). Demonstrating compassion for ourselves and others by letting go of expectations can lessen feelings of anxiety and depression once we release our need to judge. I have found that I feel more comfortable in my own skin with each passing year, as I am letting

go of the need to please others, and I am finding sincere joy in living life more authentically. Letting go can be summarised by the immortal words of Buddha, showing great wisdom and revealing the meaning of a life well-lived: "In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you." (Budda, n.d.)

### ***Gratitude***

#### **Figure 18**

*Mother and children meditating on the beach at sunset, enjoying the healing energy of the sea*



*"The ocean stirs the heart, inspires the imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul."*

Robert Wyland, (Wyland, 2022) and photo (Eugene, n.d.).

Feeling grateful for the simple pleasures in life and being mindful of how much we have to be thankful for are beautiful practices to instill in our children and commit to daily. Having moments to reflect, either in the morning or at night, reminds us of the miracles of life. Zen Vietnamese Buddhist monk and spiritual leader Hanh, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967, takes this concept further and invites us to be mindful in every moment of our lives as a way to experience true joy. He offers the following grounding mantra (Hanh, 2014):

*Breathing in, I have arrived.*

*Breathing out, I am home.*

Feeling at home in our bodies by eating nourishing foods and drinking plenty of water, by interacting with thoughtful compassion and understanding among our family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances, and by appreciating living in our homes wherever we are in the world, are all ways to express gratitude and embody this virtue. Cultivating awareness and an appreciation in all our daily interactions transforms being mindful into a way of life and starts with ourselves. At a mindfulness retreat with Hanh in Colorado, self-described adventurer, activist, and author Lisa Kemmerer notes, "Meals were taken in 'noble silence'... I enjoyed my silent meals immensely; such silence was heavenly" (Kemmerer, 2017, p. 135). Honouring our bodies by being mindful, savouring every bite, rather than rushing through our meal consumed by distractions, allows us to enjoy the experience of eating thoroughly. Hanh also encouraged people to adopt a vegan diet not to hurt other living creatures and thus help heal the planet (Hanh, 2007).

Hanh believed that "happy teachers will change the world" (Hanh, 2019, para. 1) and wrote a book on this subject. According to his teachings, achieving peace in the world can happen when we are at peace with ourselves and know how to handle our strong emotions, safely release tension without hurting anyone else, and adjust our expectations and perceptions. In order to facilitate this transformation, we as teachers need to start with ourselves by turning inward to heal our suffering before assisting students in handling their pain. Hanh (2017) explains that both teachers and pupils need to share their experiences in a new education system as they both suffer. Sitting down and genuinely listening with compassion can lessen each other's suffering. Good communication is the key to facilitating both learning and teaching in order for them to become easier for both the student and the teacher.

Understanding and showing gratitude for each individual's humanity can transform the educational system while enabling our students to understand their emotions better and improve their interactions with one another. In order to accomplish this dream, Hanh developed a program entitled, *Wake Up Schools* in 2008. He believed that (Hanh, n.d.):

Schools can teach much more than reading, writing, math, and science. School programs can also teach young people how to deal with anger, how to reconcile conflicts, how to breathe, smile, and transform. There can be a revolution in education. (para. 32)

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude when we pay attention to the moment during our daily activities allows more positive experiences to flow into our lives. This attitude can be facilitated by helping our students feel less anxious by keeping a Gratitude Journal or simply sharing one experience that positively impacted them that day at school through an Indigenous Talking Circle. Participants hold a feather and are invited to share their thoughts and emotions in a safe space, one at a time, without fear of being judged, as often their homes do not feel safe, so it is beneficial when their classroom feels like a sanctuary. I have noticed that having class meetings can help children feel less uneasiness and exhibit more optimism improving their quality of life.

"Mindfulness provides a way to reduce stress and enhance teachers' contentment, happiness, and professional perspective by strengthening their inner calm and their competence," according to Barbara Trube (Rotne & Rotne, 2013 as cited in Trube, 2017, p.161). Mindfulness can assist in helping educators to feel more present, and when teachers feel calm and engage mindfully, everyone benefits, especially the students. Research from the University of British Columbia's applied developmental psychology department indicates that students can pick up teacher stress, according to professors Eva Oberle and Kimberly Schonert-Reichl's research

(Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). When teachers are stressed, their cortisol levels go up, measured in their saliva. Cortisol levels subsequently also rose in their students, indicating that stress can be contagious, emphasising the importance of having calm, happy teachers in classrooms. Mindfulness can assist in helping educators feel more present and develop practices to reduce stress levels in healthy ways, potentially benefiting everyone.

### ***Generosity***

#### **Figure 19**

*Hermit Crab exploring the beach, searching for a larger home*



*"Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference.*

*They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver."*

Barbara de Angelis (de Angelis, n.d.) and photo (Chan, 2019).

Hermit crabs have soft abdomens that need protection, prompting them to be on an eternal quest to find a suitable home, usually found in an abandoned shell, providing them with a shield to hide from predators, as seen in Figure 19. Fortunately, hermit crabs can borrow abandoned shells from whelks and sea snails, reuse what has been discarded, and proudly live in these new homes until they have outgrown them and need to find larger accommodations.

Nature provides numerous examples of generosity, from sea creatures sharing their shells when outgrown to animals raising orphans, even from other species, caring for them as their own. Reflecting on my experiences with young children, both as a teacher and amongst my family and friends, I have felt blessed to witness the wonder of life as they spied a butterfly fluttering by or the delicate wisps as they blew dandelion seeds into the air. Time appears to stop in these moments. My focus shifts to join the child as we revel in the wonders of nature, seeing the experience through their eyes as if for the first time. It is a beautiful feeling that is easy to lose as adult responsibilities weigh me down. However, when I read about how school-age children expressed the benefits of mindfulness and meditation in their own words, I felt something change in me. I also felt in awe of how the children aged 7 to 12 described their mindfulness experiences at an Irish school over two years. Noel Keating's phenomenological, hermeneutic, and mystagogical methodology research illustrated that the children who participated in regular mindfulness "at least twice each week on a whole-school basis, on average for one-minute per year of age" gained the courage to be their authentic selves and the practice helped them reach a deeper part of themselves where they could be more authentic and free (Keating, 2017, p. 1). There were many beautiful, heartfelt descriptions of the fruits of mindfulness in Keating's study. 11-year-old Lena's observations are an example of a child's earnest wisdom (Keating, 2017):

When your mind is full of worries and troubles, it's like you are locked in a cage and you can't get out, but then when you meditate, you begin to feel free. The bars of the cage just disappear and you just know what to do. You are able to picture your own path and you follow it. (p. 9)

Nine-year-old Derek discovered that meditation “releases kindness in you ... and makes you feel more open-minded” (2017, p. 7). The children often alluded to feelings of unconditional love and connection to others, recognising each person's innate goodness. At age seven, Helena expressed, “When meditation is deep in you, you feel like you are somewhere you’ve always wanted to be since you were small” (2017, p. 6). Lucy, age 10, shared that usually, “you don’t pay attention to your heart. But when you’re in meditation, you don’t use your brain; instead, you are realising what’s inside you . . . what are you inside; and you are your heart” (2017, p. 7). These feelings of divine connection to their authentic selves spoke to the heart of meditation and awoke the seeds to flourish in these children. Mindfulness advocate Sharon Salzberg (2011) writes:

The clearer we are about our emotions and reactions, the more we create a foundation for responsiveness of conscience and caring. The greater our understanding of the nature of life, the more we see of how much we hold in common. We discover a much greater sense of connection to all. (p. 182)

Reminding our students of our connections to each other and all life through insights and understandings gleaned from daily mindfulness experiences, and meditation practices can encourage children to value one another, honour our common humanity, and protect our planet as people will only protect what they genuinely love. Kabat-Zinn connects this expansion we experience within to extend to our whole world (Kabat-Zinn, 2016):

Mindfulness as a practice provides endless opportunities to cultivate greater intimacy with your own mind and to tap into and develop your deep interior resources for learning, growing, healing, and potentially for transforming your understanding of who you are

and how you might live life more wisely and with greater well-being, meaning, and happiness in this world. (p. 4)

Persian poet and 13th-century theologian Rumi believed that humankind could achieve world peace upon reaching inner harmony. Following your calling holds promise for greater compassion and a happier, healthier world. He encouraged people to turn inward to truly listen to the calling of their hearts, "Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray" (Rumi, 1207 - 1273).

### **Chapter 3 “*Sentiments from the Sea*” Creating the Cards Project**

#### **Making Marine Inspired Mindful Messages for Children and the Child in all of Us**

For my project, I created oracle cards entitled: “*Sentiments from the Sea*” (Symington, 2022), a set of 64-cards encouraging mindfulness and living in the present moment for the young and the young-at-heart. I love the messages that one can receive from the universe through tarot and oracle cards! I have been learning more about the healing power of such cards and felt they could help my young students. Several years ago, I received my first deck of cards called the “*Magical Unicorn Oracle Cards*” by the renowned Doreen Virtue (2005). I was drawn to the beautiful images and the pearls of wisdom on the cards and shared them with my kindergarten class. After shuffling the deck, I invited the special helper of the day to choose a card at random. To our surprise, the messages we received daily were precisely the right ones that we needed to hear! The cards appeared to inspire the children deeply. The heartfelt messages seemed to touch their souls. They eagerly looked forward to seeing the exquisite illustrations and hearing the thoughtful guidance from these messages. They would quickly let me know if I forgot to draw a card that day!

My interest in paying more attention to my intuition while learning about spiritual matters through mindfulness and meditation, incorporating my love of the sea and the amazing creatures that dwell within, inspired my set of cards. We are so fortunate to live on Vancouver Island and be surrounded by the vast Pacific Ocean. My husband, Andy, loved the ocean and was passionate about marine biology. He shared his love with me, and I also became fascinated by the animals that live in the intertidal zones along our coast. How do these creatures survive each day when the tide recedes? How do they eat, reproduce, and defend themselves against hungry

predators? During my initial teacher training, I also had the privilege of studying with Gloria Snively, science professor, environmentalist, and marine life educator at the University of Victoria's science education department. She helped answer many of these questions and prompted me to ask many more. She was instrumental in sharing the beauty and mystery of the sea with our cohort and offered lessons and activities that we could try with our students, encouraging them to observe with all of their five senses. I did not fully realize it then, but she introduced us to sharing mindfulness with our students. Every time we went on a field trip with our class, she always began her lessons by inviting us to sit quietly in a meadow, forest or beach and notice the sights, sounds, and smells around us. Over thirty-three years later, those excursions return vividly to my mind as if they were yesterday. I was so grateful to read her guide to our local marine life, "*Exploring the Seashore in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon*" (Snively, 1978), in which she continued to spark my fascination for marine life.

### **Energy Wheels**

These cards also incorporate Kabat-Zinn's (2015) nine mindfulness traits as an overarching umbrella for the seven chakras, or twirling energy centers, beginning with red representing the root chakra at the base of the spine. The remaining colours travelling up the spine include orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. The chakras are described as wheels of energy that constantly twirl, representing our life force or *Prana* from Sanskrit, the oldest language in the world. When our chakras are balanced, we usually feel our best and can work more in harmony with others, living life to the fullest. The sea animal, bird, or plant on the cards represents the ideas stated and helps to illustrate the mindfulness attribute. They are found in the waters and along the coast around my home in the Pacific Northwest.

Initially, I made 63 cards consisting of the nine mindfulness traits times the seven chakras, but I added one more card to complete the set at 64 cards. 64 is a solid number as it adds up to 10 (6 +4), and ten represents the completion of a cycle in the tarot and is the basis of mathematics and the Metric system. In addition, 64 coincides with the 64 signs in *I Ching, The Book of Changes* (Wilhelm & Baynes, 1997), which is believed to date back to between the 10th and 4th centuries BC and incorporates nature's wisdom and diversity with the quest for harmony. This final card's message, "proceed with wisdom," combines all the chakras representing a balanced energy flow radiating all the colours.

### **Incorporating Connections**

*I Ching* holds a special place in my heart as it corresponds to my favourite project for my graduate program. Dr. Jennifer Thom invited us to give one word to encapsulate what 'curriculum' means to us at the end of our summer course. I was very excited at the prospect of trying to define all our learning into one word. I had never done a project like that before. It was an exciting challenge! I went for a walk that afternoon and thought and thought about our assignment. Many possible words sprang to mind until I finally felt that *CONNECTION* was the word that honestly described what teaching and learning were all about to me. In hindsight, learning online was not my favourite learning style, though I am very grateful for completing my studies during the COVID pandemic by primarily using my computer. Although I preferred to be learning together with my classmates and teachers in person, I did feel a valuable connection online. I love to teach and feel my students' energy and excitement while sharing their sense of wonder. Personally, I learn best when I feel connected to my teachers. Making connections with my students, their families, fellow staff members, and the community in person is the key for me.

During the lockdown, I found it very challenging to try and teach kindergarten online. I am not very comfortable with technology, so teaching using Zoom was stressful. Plus, the lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID started only days after my mom passed away, compounding the stress I was experiencing already. I needed to be mindful even more and remember my breathing to stay in the moment. It was not the same teaching online by any means, but it reinforced for me the importance of connection, even if it was over the internet rather than in person. I was very grateful to see the photos and videos the parents sent of my students completing their assignments and special projects at home, even though it made me miss them even more.

The second part of Dr. Thom's assignment involved choosing an image representing our curriculum word. I brought a picture of *I Ching* to our class as I felt the 64 hexagrams representing both the Yin and Yang of the two sides incorporating the light and the dark aspects of life spoke to me of the value of connection. There are always at least two components, or viewpoints, embedded in any situation, and learning to embrace both the light and the shadow aspects are equally important. Interestingly, the Baha'i faith has one of the most beautiful representations of feminine and masculine energies, depicted as the two wings of a bird. Despite their different strengths and weaknesses, both are equally valued and appreciated as the bird needs both wings to fly and cannot soar without the other. The Promulgation of Universal Peace ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1912, as cited in the Baha'i Reference Library, 1982) states:

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary

attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings . . . become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. (p. 375)

Hoff reiterates the importance of equality in that “the masculine and feminine earth energies need to be kept in balance, and that when the masculine is excessive the feminine needs to be advanced” (Hoff, 1992, p. 75). Not only is the equality of the sexes paramount to achieving world peace, according to these teachings, but so is the education of both male and female children allowing everyone the same opportunity to learn and grow. We are fortunate to be able to study regardless of gender, but unfortunately, that is not the case in many parts of the world. Encouraging our students to follow their dreams, especially our girls, may lead to a gentler, more compassionate society and, hopefully, a more peaceful world.

### **Mantras Made Easy**

Finally, the sentiments on the cards are limited to three words. Being brief, clear, and concise was always challenging for me, and the brevity of creating messages of only three words was crucial. In our modern world, sentences and sayings are often abbreviated to only a few letters. Children are very familiar with emojis and abbreviations once they receive their first cell phone, so I wanted to make short mantras to hopefully stay in their minds, be easy to remember, and provide comfort and hope throughout the day. These phrases were meant to be like tiny seeds for children to become familiar with and rely on these words and colourful images during challenging moments. People today appear to be dealing with higher levels of anxiety and stress, despite the prevalence of technology, blocking much of our joy from being felt. I hope that feeling and showing love and compassion becomes as natural as breathing because mindfulness

truly matters! I wish that these cards remind our children and their families that people can be gentler, kinder, and more compassionate towards one another and themselves, for that is our true nature.

### **Meanings of the “Sentiments from the Sea” Cards**

The following definitions are the keywords used for my 64-card oracle deck to describe the seven chakras, as summarized by Yogi Cameron, yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda Guru (2021). According to Kabat-Zinn’s (2015) mindfulness traits, the cards are divided into nine groups and colour-coded with the seven chakras’ colours, starting at the top of the head and moving down the spine.

Please refer to Appendix A for the complete list of the 64 cards and their corresponding mantras, Appendix B for additional information about the sea animals and why I chose them, and Appendix C which shows the images for each of the cards as inspired by the photos and sketches from my favourite ocean life field guide, (Snively, 1978).

#### **Violet/White (Crown Chakra) Sahasrara**

Top of the head - “I Understand.”

The closest connection to the divine for inspiration, creativity, and life source

#### **Indigo (Third Eye) Ajna**

Forehead - “I See.”

Related to our spiritual awakening, understanding by using our intuition

#### **Blue (Throat) Vishuddha**

Throat - “I Speak.”

Allows for clear communication, forgiveness, and non-attachment

**Green (Heart) Anahata**

Center of the chest - “I Love.”

Focused on feeling cared for through balanced love and connection

**Yellow (Solar Plexus) Manipura**

Just above your belly button - “I Do.”

Center of our personal power, strength, and gut instincts

**Orange (Sacral) Svadhisthana**

Just below your belly button - “I Feel.”

Initiates the “birthing” of ideas; creativity allows us to feel joy and the sweetness of life.

**Red (Root) Muladhara**

The base of the spine - “I Am.”

Grounding strength, security, and survival to meet our basic needs for food, water, sleep, and shelter while being the foundation for the other chakras.

**Additional Meaning of the Numbers**

I have chosen the cards to be numbered from 1 to 64 for an added layer of meaning derived through numerology. Thus if there are two digits on the card, these two numbers can be added together and reduced to a single digit from one through nine. For example, if someone picked card number 36 ( $3 + 6 = 9$ ), there may be an extra message relating to the number nine for that person. By combining the numbers, the chakra colours, the three-word mantras, and the images depicted on the cards, we are meant to awaken our intuition and allow our inner knowing to bring forth personal guidance for each person. I have chosen to use the simplified keywords

associated with these numbers from 1 to 9, according to numerologist Katherine Hurst (2021), including:

**One** - determination, motivation, opportunities, new beginnings, gaining momentum

**Two** - partnerships, balance, harmony, teamwork, duality, making decisions, choice

**Three** - celebration, love, wisdom, playfulness and good fortune, chasing your dreams

**Four** - stability, routine, four seasons, a leap of faith needed to push out of comfort zone

**Five** - change, explore, adapt, journey, overcome struggles, gratitude, the five senses

**Six** - family-oriented, follow kindness, eliminate fear, childhood connections, teaching

**Seven** - higher wisdom, intuition, new opportunities, choices, spiritual awakening

**Eight** - luck, abundance, balance, success, cycles, confidence, hard work, infinity symbol

**Nine** - compassion, forgiveness, empathy, sharing talents and wisdom with others

### **Significance to Practice**

Allowing the colours, images, and words to resonate may bring the viewer peace and inner calm. Additionally, the purpose of these cards is to simplify some of the main concepts embodied in becoming more mindful for primary grade students. Young children are naturally open and close to the universal life source, unlike many adults who may have a more difficult time accessing their truth after many years of social conditioning and generational expectations of how a person should think or behave. Nevertheless, adults can benefit from the gentle messages on these cards and hopefully connect authentically, no matter their age.

Sometimes it can be challenging to find this inner peace. Negativity bias means that the brain gravitates to what we do not do well because that could signal potential danger. According to Hanson, our brains are “velcro” for negative thoughts and “Teflon” for more positive thoughts,

which quickly slide away (Baylis et al., 2021, pp. 7 - 8). He advises us to feel good and integrate these feelings into our nervous system to combat this phenomenon. Fortunately, our brains have the power to change and grow new pathways through neuroplasticity. We can experience what we want to grow, and the more we repeat what we practice, the more these experiences become a habit and create more robust neural pathways. Hanson talks about the necessary components to develop positive habits by encouraging our students to stay with the positive experiences longer by lingering in the moment and noticing, rather than moving on too quickly. Happiness can be found in those little moments in life. Enjoying a sunset, looking at the clouds, feeling the warmth of your cup as you hold it in your hands, listening to the birds sing, playing with your pets, or giving someone you love a hug are all examples of savouring those moments of happiness. When we marinate in such moments, Hanson explains that we allow our brains to strengthen those new neural pathways that can bring feelings of contentment and joy into being.

When I was a young girl, I remember often lying on my back in a grassy meadow near my school with my collie, Shane, by my side, watching the clouds floating by. Taking this time to just “be” brought me so much joy. I realize that I need to recognize these moments more often and revel in the beauty of nature, as I remind myself to slow down, linger, and appreciate life now more than ever.

Being mindful also involves helping our students notice where they feel emotions in their bodies. Encouraging them to feel the somatic sense is helpful for developing mindfulness. In kindergarten, we often provide our students with an outline of the body on paper and invite the children to draw where they feel various emotions in their bodies. They also choose a colour such as red for anger or blue for contentment, similar to the four Zones of Regulation (Kuypers,

2021), to express their emotions with spirals, waves, or zig-zag lines. This colourful mosaic is very revealing and can quickly depict how they are feeling at a glance. Though it is helpful to see these illustrations to understand our students' emotional state, it may be an opportunity for the quieter children to let other caring adults know what is going on under the surface. Many students may be reluctant to share what is troubling them verbally, so drawing, perhaps while listening to classical music, can be a way to connect and ask for help. Being sensitively aware of possible traumas and creating an atmosphere of safety where everyone is welcome just as they are, is a way to bridge the gap and connect to our children.

Hanson advises teachers to help students notice and see what feels satisfying. He coined the phrase: "Learning is the superpower of superpowers" (Hanson as told to Baylis, 2020). He advocates teaching our students how their brains and emotions are connected. For instance, educators could ask their students where they feel the intense emotions in their bodies and notice this discomfort. Are their shoulders hunched, or does their stomach feel like it is in knots? Then offer these words that this is a moment of struggle or suffering and that it can feel challenging, but also remind our students that these feelings are normal and temporary. Our emotions are guaranteed to change in time. Everyone has them, emphasizing our shared humanity. (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, p. 103).

### **Regulating our Emotions**

The initial steps to becoming more mindful involve teaching our youngest students to recognize feelings in themselves and others and then label these emotions. Once they learn how to identify these feelings by paying attention to their bodies and the expressions on others' faces, they will understand that feelings are fleeting as they are constantly changing. The four Zones of

Regulation (Kuypers, 2021), which has recently been updated, is an excellent teaching resource to illustrate this concept to the students by depicting children of different ethnicities expressing various emotions. The lethargic blue category includes feeling “sad, sick, tired, bored, [and] moving slowly,” describing an inactive state of the blues. The green zone illustrates our more positive emotions, including “happy, calm, feeling Okay, focused, relaxed,” in which children’s minds and emotions are optimal for learning. The yellow zone depicts feeling “frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited [with some] loss of control.” which often precedes the child moving into the fourth zone or the red category. The red zone can be most problematic for our children to manage, describing feeling “mad/angry, terrified, elated, devastated, [and] out of control” (Kuypers, 2021), especially when our lower “reptilian” brain (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011, p. 6) is activated. Once children understand feelings, they can delve deeper into how the brain works and where these emotions are processed. For many young children, learning how to handle intense emotions involves a lot of individual coaching and role-playing when they feel calm, before they are triggered, so as not to hurt their classmates when they feel angry or frustrated. In his book, *How to Love*, Hanh shares the importance of nourishing our consciousness healthily through our environmental influences, similar to nourishing our physical bodies when choosing healthy, organic foods (Hanh, 2015):

We absorb and reflect what is around us. If we live in a place where people are angry and violent, then eventually we’ll become like them. If we live in a family or community where there’s a culture of being understanding and compassionate with each other, we’ll naturally be more peaceful and loving. Children growing up in such an environment will learn to be caring and kind. (p. 80)

### **Mindfulness and the Brain**

Daniel J. Siegel M.D. and parenting expert Tina Payne Bryson have created twelve key strategies as outlined in their book, *The Whole-Brain Child* (2011), to help improve communication between adults and children and foster healthy brain development to optimize learning and mitigate struggles. Their goal is to help teachers and parents understand how the brain functions to improve their teaching techniques and parent their children to become more resilient, particularly when experiencing intense emotions. Moments of anger or rage can be frightening for children when they are in the throes of these volcanic feelings. Being mindful of how we respond is crucial. The challenge is knowing how to respond to de-escalate situations and create learning opportunities. They advocate focusing on connecting emotionally with our children using our right brains before choosing the specific lessons to remedy the situation (Siegel & Payne Bryson, 2011).

It is helpful to decide what discipline is warranted using the left brain once the children have calmed down and are more receptive to discussing their feelings. Talking through such difficult situations takes time and trust. Inviting our children to tell what is upsetting them as if it were a story is another effective technique in which we “name it to tame it” (2011, p. 27). How the adults close to the child hold space for him or her during and after these interactions plays a vital role in helping the child feel more balanced and ultimately understood so that these outbursts lessen in time and intensity. Inviting children to recite the alphabet, or count back from ten to zero, are some ways to subconsciously distract and help them shift their emotions of uncontrollable anger from the sympathetic nervous system to the parasympathetic nervous

system. After our emotions' turbulent responses, the body returns to the more tranquil state of 'rest and digest' (Myers & DeWall, 2018).

Neurologically speaking, a great deal happens very quickly in our brains when we are angered. The limbic system takes over, and it affects the amygdala specifically. Once the amygdala is activated, we react with the fight or flight response, and we are no longer in control (Myers & DeWall, 2018). Our sympathetic nervous system mobilizes our body by preparing to attack the threat or run away from it. Blood is redirected to our torso, preparing the body to fight or flee. The amygdala is situated in the center of our brains and parallels how our emotions are at the center of our fears and aggressions. Aggression originates from our worries and plays a part in anxiety and is a trigger-like response. The amygdala focuses on the perception of fear rather than the experience making the emotions intensely frightening. Emotional significance is learned and retained in the amygdala, as in the case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.

A powerful video entitled "*Just Breathe*" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman (2015) helps students understand these concepts by showing children talking about becoming upset until their anger feels overwhelming and they lose control. It is a genuine depiction of how irritations can build up, causing us to explode, and what happens in our brain when triggered. Whenever my students watch this video, they are mesmerized by the other children and the jar of water shown in the video with the sparkly glitter swirling around, representing their brains when they are angered. Mindfulness can help significantly in these intense situations by reminding each person to stay present and calm by focusing on their breathing, counting to ten, walking away, or showing compassion and gentle kindness to others and themselves. Hanh helped me realize the value of suffering in his book, *How to Fight* (Hanh, 2017):

To try to run away from suffering is not wise. To stay with it, to look deeply into it, and to make good use of it, is what we should do. It is by looking deep into the nature of suffering that we discover the path of transformation and healing. Without suffering, there is no happiness and no path to happiness. We can even speak about the goodness of suffering because suffering helps us to learn and grow. (p. 17)

Realizing that all human beings suffer reminded me always to try to be kind and show understanding for others by embracing our shared humanity. Hanh further encourages people to fully hug each other in what he describes as a “hugging meditation” in his book, *How to Love* (2015). We do this in order to heal and transform relationships for the better, involving the heart, mind, body, and spirit by holding the other person with intention while consciously breathing and offering your nourishing “care and appreciation” for the other person (Hanh, 2015, pp. 28 - 29).

It can also be helpful to practice breathing exercises daily with our children, helping them feel more grounded and connected to their bodies. Pretending to blow out a candle on a birthday cake or blow the dandelion seeds into the air are effective techniques to help young children become more aware of their breathing. Holding their hands on their abdomens while breathing deeply also helps them notice their breath while trying to fill their chest with air as if there was a balloon inside their belly. It only takes a few minutes, yet these moments are precious in changing the atmosphere in a classroom and can be done during transitions or when entering the room to help ground the students after the excitement of recess. One important caution, though, is that the children will pick up on the tension when their teacher feels stressed and be negatively affected. Therefore, the teacher needs to be calm and mindful. According to mindfulness and self-compassion advocate Baylis, when our mind darts from one worry to another, it is essential

to notice this response and “give it an anchor - a place to go that’s neutral and unwavering - by focusing on our breath, our body, or the sounds around us. We use this anchor to find stillness and keep afloat instead of sinking into the overwhelm” (Baylis et al., 2021, p. xxx). Mindful breathing, practiced daily, can help us find peace and return to the moment at hand. This daily practice of building a strong anchor can be called upon whenever needed for life and is beneficial for students to see that it works for adults and children alike.

### **Trauma-Informed Practice**

Being sensitive to the potential triggers that may arise during a meditation or mindfulness activity can profoundly affect how that activity is received. Each person is unique. One person’s response may vary significantly from another person’s reaction, even though they participated in the same experience. Nevertheless, teachers, parents, caregivers, and other adults need to be mindful of triggers that might release traumatic memories for themselves or their students. These intense emotions can evoke the opposite response than intended. Asking students to close their eyes, do a body scan during meditation, take part in yoga classes or be in a semi-darkened room may not feel relaxing. Traumatic events could have recently occurred for the child on the way to school, on the playground, or there could be an invisible chronic situation. Often it depends on their home life and previous experiences. We may not know all the circumstances, but by being mindful, we can pick up on the signs and hopefully help those individual students by sensitively observing and giving our children options to choose what feels best for them.

Danna Thomas, founder of the international movement known as the “Happy Teacher Revolution” (Thomas, 2021), was once such a student. Thomas shares how she suffered from mental health issues and severe anxiety as a teenager and young adult and wanted to end her life.

Her teachers noticed her distress and helped her prompting Thomas to become a teacher herself. Though her teachers inspired her to become an educator, it has not always been easy. She explains that teachers can consider the magnitude of what has transpired when reflecting on the past two years of dealing with COVID, (Thomas, 2021):

Consider your own personal journey in the world of education. When you began your story, were there any classes that covered how to grapple with teaching and leading during a global pandemic? Did your coursework provide opportunities to learn how to educate students during a worldwide crisis? Did any of your mentor teachers give you a heads-up about how to completely transform your life from in-person instruction to teaching completely online in just a few days?

The truth of the matter is, educators have been grappling with an ever-present demand to be flexible, to think on our feet, and to pivot at a moment's notice. We are accustomed to feelings of uncertainty while simultaneously putting on a brave face as we continue to show up day in and day out. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were tasked with supporting students in the midst of the most seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

And, long before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an educator burnout pandemic.

(paras. 1 and 2)

Thomas' words ring true in me and need to be shared. Thomas makes a valid point in that educator burnout was prominent previously. Teachers have been struggling in silence, trying to do their best every day amidst greater and greater stresses trying to meet the obligations of their students and their families. The pandemic has pushed educators to the limit, and we would be wise to focus our attention on this critical issue by giving teachers the time and space, according

to Thomas, to “heal, deal..and be real” (Thomas, 2021). In my life-saving yearlong mindfulness group, we are asked to summarize how we feel in one word as we begin our Zoom sessions every Thursday. Though the educators who participate are mainly from Vancouver Island and southern British Columbia, with a few joining us from the United States and Europe, the descriptive words are the same: tired, exhausted, overwhelmed, hopeless, fatigued. Stress overload is felt from kindergarten to high school and includes classroom teachers, specialty teachers, counsellors, educational assistants, and administrators. I look at the weary faces of these incredible people, and my heart breaks. Most teachers are naturally empathetic with a strong desire to help others and make a difference in the world. How can we be there for our students and give them what they need if we are barely surviving ourselves?

Thomas gives eight suggestions that incorporate mindfulness and offers hope. These ideas are crucial because if teachers feel stressed, their students will likely be as well, despite their best efforts to ignore the problem. This attempt to soldier on only compounds the suffering for all concerned. We can ignore the pain no longer. Thomas advocates that teachers put self-care at the top of their list. She recommends setting boundaries and prioritizing “professional sustainability” (Thomas, 2021) in addition to eliminating “toxic forces ...and identif[ing] your purpose...that can help you live longer” (2021). Thomas also shares the concept of making time for oneself and scheduling it in the calendar if needed because even though it feels indulgent, teachers need to “recognize that self-care isn’t selfish; self-care is professional development” (Thomas, 2021). She also emphasizes the value of pre-forgiveness to give ourselves and each other the time and space to grieve for the mistakes we will continue to make as human beings while acknowledging that our lives have changed forever. There will be bumps to navigate

throughout life, especially post-COVID, as we recognize that our healing journey may take many unexpected twists and turns (2021), keeping in mind that ultimately these changes happen *for* us, not *to* us, helping us grow.

Thomas advocates that we take healthy breaks by stepping away from technology. Go for walks instead and enjoy being in nature, allowing our minds to rest when moving our bodies (Thomas, 2021). Another powerful suggestion is to practice saying positive affirmations and finding joy in the little moments. Include choices every day such as, “I choose what to let go of,” or “I choose to prioritize the relationships that matter,” or “No matter how the school year started, I choose to finish well.” (Thomas, 2021)

Finally, Thomas encourages educators to prioritize mindfulness and self-care by reminding us that, unfortunately (Thomas, 2021):

The mental-health crisis is only getting worse, and we are posited with the unique chance to prioritize workplace well-being as a best-practice approach, not only professionally with each other, with our students, and with our stakeholders... but also personally with ourselves. (last para.)

Often the stresses of teaching can feel overwhelming, drawing on our last reserves of energy. In such times, it is helpful to lean on our loved ones and colleagues for support, remembering that “individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean (Satoro, 2022). Mindfulness can truly be transformative on every level. Mindfulness matters!

### **Chapter Four - Reflections Upon the Mirrored Sea**

It is an honour to reflect upon my experiences while creating my final project. When I think back to 2015, when I first contemplated starting my Graduate studies in Early Childhood Education, I remember being so excited to begin this new adventure. I have always loved school and learning. Even as a little girl, I wanted to be a teacher, playing school with my stuffed toys and teddy bears. Excited as I was to begin this process, I also felt apprehensive. I was unsure if I could teach full-time, look after my family, and complete my university studies all at the same time. Many of my teaching colleagues who had previously completed the program warned me how difficult and exhausting it would be to do both, handling the responsibilities at home while being present at school. Being a parent, I feel teaching is the most important and sacred profession. I value both and chose to accept the challenge.

Being a teacher is a very demanding job. One has to be at their best physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually each and every day. In the teaching profession, we are working with children and need to be forever conscious of how impactful our words and actions can be, as they have the potential to be remembered for years to come. I often reflect upon my favourite quote from the wise and thoughtful Maya Angelou. She shared, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel” (Angelou as cited in 2022).

Angelou’s words are always at the forefront of what I do, trying to be mindful of how my words and actions may affect others, especially those in my care. Her quote best fits my philosophy for teaching and my philosophy for life. I try to remember that, truthfully, everyone is

doing their best. Life is not easy. The more we can help one another by sharing love, compassion, and understanding for ourselves and others, the better the world will be.

### **Surviving Life's Stormy Seas**

Many life-changing moments occurred while completing my graduate studies. They began when we moved to a new home in Victoria from our small hobby farm in Sooke to better care for my elderly parents as they were recovering from numerous surgeries and cancer treatments. Feeling stretched in many directions is how many adults experience life when entering the so-called “Sandwich Generation,” and I felt the strain, too. During this time, I also transferred to another school after teaching at Saseenos Elementary School in Sooke for twenty-five years. After being in a small rural school, moving to a school with over forty staff members was a significant change. I felt lost in the crowd and missed the closeness and camaraderie of my previous staff. Adjusting to suddenly losing my hearing and experiencing Vertigo for over a year was also tricky. Constantly experiencing motion sickness was tiring, and I wondered if I would ever feel normal again. Caring for my loved ones with severe injuries and illnesses was also exhausting. Then I lost my mom and many close friends and family within a short time. All of this happened while dealing with my own health issues. I was overwhelmed with stress. It was almost too much to handle during this genuinely heart-breaking time.

I met program deadlines while writing report cards and completing the EDI government surveys on my kindergarten students. It often felt like everything was due simultaneously, and I felt under pressure most of the time. In addition, many of these events happened while trying to navigate teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. I felt like I had been thrown overboard and barely clung to my boat when wave after wave came crashing down upon me. I had to use all my

strength to hang on, preparing for the next onslaught. Would I make it to the shore? Would I ever be able to catch my breath?

Thankfully, mindfulness got me through. Mindfulness truly made a difference for me.

### **The Calm after the Storm**

In hindsight, I believe each obstacle was meant to happen. These obstacles helped me grow and become more compassionate with myself and others. These challenges allowed me to dig deep and become fierce in my determination to finish what I started. However, this shift in perception did not happen in a vacuum. I received assistance from many people and surprising sources. My doctors reminded me to focus on my breathing and encouraged me to try meditation. Meditation, they shared, is the single most effective action we can take to improve our health, proving to be even more effective than diet, exercise, or medications! I was intrigued and ready to take steps to change my life for the better.

Feeling this increased stress prompted me to sign up for my first eight-week course on mindfulness with self-compassion expert, educator, and school counsellor, Lisa Baylis and her teaching partner, Stephanie Curran, a naturopathic doctor, yoga instructor, and mindfulness expert. The course was offered through our school district and was open to all educators. I decided to sign up as I was interested in learning more about mindfulness after my Principal, Scott Manning, presented our staff with Goldie Hawn's "*MindUP*" (2003) Program at one of our staff meetings.

Their course was life-changing for me. Focusing on my breathing and learning to meditate daily were momentous in improving my outlook. I am so thankful for all the people who believed in me and helped me believe in myself. This experience has shaped me. It has

improved my teaching by being a more mindful educator, but more importantly, it has also made me a better parent, friend, and life partner. Pursuing mindfulness classes by participating in Baylis and Curran's year-long mindfulness program for a second consecutive year, has helped to ground my initial understandings as I was able to experience the benefits they were sharing and incorporate their suggestions into my teaching and my life.

### **Shifting Tides**

With regular times set aside for meditation, I gradually noticed a shift in my ability to be more present. Focusing on my breath helped me when the waves of grief washed over me as my best friends, husband, and mom died. I learned to turn inward and ask myself the question posed during our mindfulness retreats: "*What do I need right now?*" (Baylis, 2020). Considering what my heart, mind, body, and soul needed to assist me on my path was a crucial component in my healing journey, which often required deep soul-searching and time to reflect upon before I could answer. That one question is so profound and healing. It underlines the importance of self-care, especially for those responsible for the care of others. Self-care was at the bottom of my lengthy, never-ending to-do list, and I did not prioritise it until I felt like I could no longer go on at the pace I was. Something had to give. Self-care is not selfish, but it is necessary and life-affirming. Tuning out the outside world for a few minutes every day allowed my mind to rest while being fully present at the same time in stillness and quiet contemplation.

As Kabat-Zinn reminds us, a delicate balance is needed when learning to focus on our breath while allowing our thoughts and feelings to flow freely without judgement (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). Experiencing the much-needed stillness allowed me to process all the loss that had occurred while viewing myself and others with compassion and gratitude. Sharing our journeys

with others during these mindfulness courses and retreats made me aware of our common humanity as I listened to others share their struggles, hopes, and dreams. I no longer felt so alone, and I began to feel hope for the future. I accepted that looking after myself in the way I would look after a friend or a loved one is not selfish. It is necessary, as necessary as breathing, and only by taking care of myself can I be fully present in the way I would like to be to help others and make a difference in the world.

As Peter Mayer reminds us so beautifully in the song “*Japanese Bowl*” (2008), we may become “cracked” over the years, represented by the cracks in the porcelain bowls developed through the pressures and heartbreaks of life, and rather than discard these bowls; they only need to be mended. In Japan, these cracks were filled with gold making them even more beautiful and meant to be treasured, much like how Aoki welcomes the cracks to allow the light to enter our souls. The golden lines increase the bowls’ value, symbolizing how we gain wisdom and understanding through life’s hardships, enriching our experiences and making our connections with others all the more poignant. Mayer’s rendition moved me to tears. It revealed to me that even though we may consider ourselves “broken” beyond repair, with loving care, we can become whole again and shine even more beautifully than before.

Living mindfully while speaking and listening with intention are ways to shine our light and heal our hearts and minds. Jennie Lee, certified yoga therapist and author of “*Breathing Love: Meditation in Action*” (Lee, 2018), explains how:

daily meditation puts us in touch with the endless spring of love within and we no longer have to be satisfied with fleeting tastes of love externally. Each time we stop the outer

quest and walk through the inner doorway of meditation, we find greater joy and clearer love. (p. 156)

We are reminded that the journey within is healing while connecting to the universal life source. We can live meaningfully by taking our time and going slow while focusing on the present moment, as Hanh explains in his guidebook entitled, *How to Sit* (Hanh, 2014).

I have much hope for the future despite many of the world's problems today. I am so fortunate to work with young children and share their sense of wonder and awe. It is impossible not to feel enthusiastic around their excitable energy. Their curiosity and innate kindness make me believe that our future will be brighter. Yes, the world faces many obstacles. We can only find solutions to our dilemmas by looking at such situations with new eyes, much like the famous quote that many people attribute to Albert Einstein, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them," (Einstein as cited in Kleckner, 2018). Hopefully, our children and future generations will be more mindful and accepting of one another, encouraging each person to reach their full potential. In that way, perhaps our children can do things differently without repeating our past mistakes. Instead, we can hopefully find innovative solutions to restore the health of our planet and finally achieve peace. By practicing mindfulness and growing as a teacher to be the best I can be while sharing the multitude of benefits with my students and their families, I hope we can shift to living in a more kind, inclusive, thoughtful, and compassionate world. Nelson Mandela echos this sentiment with these words: "Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt now to turn our common suffering into hope for the future" (Mandela as cited in Baylis et al., 2021, p. 215).

### **Through the Looking Glass**

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world. During the lockdown and subsequent months, we have realized the importance of family and friends and the need to simplify our lives. Not meeting in person has resulted in meetings over Zoom and other platforms, allowing many parents to work from home. Fewer people travelling to work has improved air quality and shortened the time others spend on their commute as there were fewer cars on the roads and highways. This extra time at home has enabled many parents to spend more quality time with their children and allowed them more opportunities to reconnect. Some parents have stated that since having to teach their children at home, they value teachers even more. This gratitude is also showered on our medical professionals who have worked tirelessly to save lives and be there for our loved ones while they were hospitalized during the pandemic, emphasizing the need for connection. Mindfulness allows us to focus on our shared humanity and connect to others even in a simple breathing exercise whereby we take an inhalation for ourselves and breathe out love and compassion for someone else on each exhalation. Simple exercises can be deeply healing on a soul level, for being mindful can be practiced daily as our way of life.

Feeling gratitude for being alive each morning as we awaken is an excellent place to start. In the book *“Box of Butterflies,”* Roma Downey wrote that she says the words “Thank you” first thing as she steps out of bed and places her feet on the floor one at a time with a “pitter-patter of gratitude” to begin her day (Downey, 2018, p. 183). Establishing routines where we remember to be mindful and appreciate all the blessings we have to be thankful for can create a more positive, resilient mindset. When we remember to be grateful, we can multiply what we have to be grateful for in life. Taking the time to breathe deeply and notice the world around us makes a

tremendous difference, rather than going through life on autopilot. Colours appear brighter; smells are more aromatic, sounds become easier to distinguish, and food tastes more flavourful when we slow down and take the time to notice. When we push ourselves and our children to hurry to the next activity, we miss out on the beauty of what is around us. By not rushing, we allow ourselves the joy of lingering and savouring life's experiences.

### **Setting Sail in Search of Calmer Waters**

Now, more than ever, educators need to find ways to build their resilience and boost their inner strength to meet the myriad of challenges we face every day. Nourishing our minds and bodies, releasing any shame or self-doubts, letting go of guilt, anchoring ourselves to the present moment rather than revisiting the past or worrying about the future, building our defences to avoid teacher burn-out and exhaustion, and dealing with feelings of being constantly overwhelmed from chronic stress may all be diminished with daily mindfulness practices.

Baylis, in her book "*Self-Compassion for Educators*" as well as during her workshops, offers the following beautiful phrases to share loving-kindness and compassion for yourself and for anyone else you choose when you warmly repeat the following words while holding your hand over your heart if you chose, nourishing feelings of peace and serenity (Baylis et al, 2021, p. 88):

*May I be happy.*

*May I be peaceful.*

*May I be healthy.*

*May I live with ease.*

When we practiced this meditation during our silent retreat, I felt the warmth of these words and gratitude for the experience. I hope that everyone can enjoy the connection to each other, family and friends, community, nature, the universal life force, and most importantly, their inner spirit and feel at home, filled with peace and loving-kindness.

### **Still Waters Run Deep**

Lee (2018) expresses how the journey to live life mindfully through meditation and loving-kindness can help us overcome many difficulties and raise our consciousness to reveal our true natures and personal gifts that are unique to each of us when we connect to source energy:

Beyond the personal self that is defined by thoughts and feelings is a spacious, ever-expanding is-ness. As we let go of the mental constructs that preserve and express the personality, what arises is the natural, harmonious state of our inner being, which is love. It is an uncontainable, indescribable state of being that is harmonious and still. In it, we feel a relaxed detached sense of trust in whatever is happening, and a strong commitment to be present in each moment to do our special part. Here we find a similarity in all people, places, roles, and goals, yet there is a deep joyfulness in each unique expression. (p.156)

Connecting our hearts mindfully to the energy of loving-kindness and compassion can transform our lives and the world for the better for our children and future generations. I hope children and their families will enjoy being mindful while using my “*Sentiments from the Sea*” oracle deck (Symington, 2022) and be inspired by the gentle messages. Please share the wonders of this journey with me, as mindfulness truly matters.

**Figure 20**

*Follow the calling of the sea, for that is where you will find me.*



Photo (Astoltz, 2017).

### References

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (1982). *The promulgation of universal peace*. Bahá’í Reference Library - The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Pages 370-376.  
<https://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/PUP/pup-112.html>  
<https://www.bahai.org/documents/nsa-usa/two-wings-bird>
- AboutKidsHealth. (2020).  
<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=643&language=English#/>.
- Ambler, C. (2018, July 25). *Beginner's Mind*. Medium.  
<https://medium.com/@dailyzen/beginners-mind-20eed1a77904>
- AMI. (n.d.). *Biography of Maria Montessori*. Association Montessori Internationale.  
<https://www.montessori-ami.org/resource-library/facts/biography-maria-montessori>.
- Anderson, J. (2021, November 4). *199 beach quotes for people who love the sand and the sea: Phmillennia: Beach quotes, travel literature, Beach Pictures*. Pinterest.  
<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/485966616051676274/>
- Anderson, L., Mangat, M., Scott, C., & Bai, H. (2019). Pedagogical infusion of the Contemplative: SFU's Contemplative Inquiry Master's of Education Program in Canada. In M. Miyakawa (Ed.), *Collected Works of Heesoon Bai Chapter 3* (pp. 1–34). essay, summit.sfu.ca.  
<http://summit.sfu.ca/collection/204?page=1>.
- Angelou, M. (2022). *A quote by Maya Angelou*. Goodreads.  
<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/5934-i-ve-learned-that-people-will-forget-what-you-said-people#>
- Aoki, T. T., Pinar, W., & Irwin, R. L. (2004). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of*

*Ted T. Aoki*. Routledge.

Aoki, T. T. (2004). Sonare and videre: A story, three echoes, and a lingering note (1991). In W. F.

Pinar, & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key* (pp. 387-396). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611390-33>

Babauta, L. (2011). *Zen habits: Handbook for life*. Editorium.

Bai, H., Cohen, A. & Park, S. (2016). Classroom as dojo: Contemplative teaching and learning as martial art. *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 3(1), 113-131.

Bai, H., Morgan, P., Scott, C., & Cohen, A. (2016). Prolegomena to Spiritual Research Paradigm: Importance of Attending to the Embodied and the Subtle. In J. Lin, R. L. Oxford, & T. Culham (Eds.), *Toward a spiritual research paradigm: Exploring new ways of knowing, researching and being* (pp. 77-96). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Battams, N. (2017, September 19). A Snapshot of Families and Food in Canada. *Statistical Snapshots*. The Vanier Institute of the Family.

[https://vanierinstitute.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicWebResources/Documents/Public%20Files/SNP\\_2017-09-20\\_Food-Families.pdf?ga=1](https://vanierinstitute.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicWebResources/Documents/Public%20Files/SNP_2017-09-20_Food-Families.pdf?ga=1)

Bayer Salzman, J., & Salzman, J. (2015, January 26). *Just Breathe*. [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>.

Baylis, L., (2020). *A conversation with Neuroscientist Dr. Rick Hanson* [Video]. Yearlong course on Mindfulness for Educators.

<https://lisabaylis.kartra.com/portal/yearlongmindfulness>

Baylis, L., Neff, K., & Wiens, K. (2021). *Self-compassion for educators: Mindful practice to awaken your well-being and grow resilience*. PESI Publishing.

Bichet, G., Cassavoy, E., Hunt, M., Sebastian, J., & Turner, E. (2018, December 18). *Facing the*

- Biggest Challenges of Our Generation*. Facing the biggest challenges of our generation – centre for international policy studies.  
<https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2018/12/18/facing-the-biggest-challenges-of-our-generation/>
- Bluth, K., & Blanton, P. (2014, October 1). Mindfulness and self-compassion exploring pathways to adolescent emotional well-being. - scientific research publishing.  
[https://www.scirp.org/\(S\(351jmbntvnsjt1aadkposzje\)\)/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2964065](https://www.scirp.org/(S(351jmbntvnsjt1aadkposzje))/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2964065).
- Bluth, K., & Wahler, R. G. (2011). Parenting preschoolers: Can mindfulness help? *Mindfulness*, 2(4), 282–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-011-0071-4>
- Bolte Taylor, J. (2006). *My stroke of insight: A brain scientist's personal journey*. Penguin Books. Random House.
- Borchard, T. J. (2014, April 12). *Non-judging, non-striving and the Pillars of Mindfulness Practice*. Psych Central.  
<https://psychcentral.com/blog/non-judging-non-striving-and-the-pillars-of-mindfulness-practice#3>
- Bowers, C. (2014). *Is the digital revolution driven by an ideology?* Studies in Sociology of Science. <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sss/article/view/5186>
- Bruner, J. S. (2009). *The process of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Budda, G. (n.d.). *A quote by Gautama Buddha*. Goodreads.  
<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/3181192-in-the-end-only-three-things-matter-how-much-you>
- Buggy, P. (2018, July 17). *Non-Judgment: What is it? And Why Does it Matter? (4 benefits)*.

Mindful Ambition. <https://mindfulambition.net/non-judgment/>

Burke, E. (2022). *Edmund Burke quotes*. BrainyQuote.com.

[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/edmund\\_burke\\_101688](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/edmund_burke_101688)

Burnett, R., and C. Cullen. (2010). The mindfulness in schools project.

<http://www.mindfulnessinschools.org>.

Cameron, Y. (2021, Oct. 29). *A Beginner's Guide to the 7 Chakras + How to Unblock them*.

Mindbodygreenmindfulness.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-91/The-7-Chakras-for-Beginners.html>

Canadian Paediatric Society. (2017, November 27). *Screen Time and young children: Promoting*

*health and development in a Digital World: Canadian Paediatric Society*. Screen time

and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world | CPS

<https://cps.ca/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>

Carrey, J. (2021, January 20). *Flowers don't worry about how they're going to bloom. they just...*

Quotespedia.org.

<https://www.quotespedia.org/authors/j/jim-carrey/flowers-dont-worry-about-how-theyre-going-to-bloom-they-just-open-up-and-turn-toward-the-light-and-that-makes-them-beautiful-jim-carrey/>

Chopra, D. (n.d.). AZQuotes.com. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/551421>

Clay, M. M. (1993). *Reading recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training*. Portsmouth, NH:

Heinemann.

Cohen, A. (2022). *A quote by Alan Cohen*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7011563-gratitude-like-faith-is-a-muscle-the-more-you-use>

Cohen, L. (1992). Anthem [song]. On *The Future*. Columbia.

de Angelis, B. (2022). *Barbara de Angelis quotes*. BrainyQuote.

[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/barbara\\_de\\_angelis\\_148253](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/barbara_de_angelis_148253)

Dean, L. (2015). *A thousand paths to mindfulness*. Octopus Publishing.

Denos, C., Neilson, K., Toohey, K., & Waterstone, B. (2009, February 5). *Collaborative research in multilingual classrooms*. Vol. 1. ResearchGate.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332877331\\_Collaborative\\_research\\_in\\_multilingual\\_classrooms](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332877331_Collaborative_research_in_multilingual_classrooms)

Devroede, O. (2021, June 6). *The 9 attitudes of mindfulness according to Jon Kabat-Zinn*.

Mindfulness Based Happiness.

<https://mindfulnessbasedhappiness.com/the-9-attitudes-of-mindfulness-according-to-jon-kabat-zinn/>.

Dhillon, S. S. (2022). *A quote by Sukhraj S. Dhillon*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/719958-you-should-sit-in-meditation-for-twenty-minutes-everyday-->

Dinesen, I. (2022). *Isak Dinesen said: "The cure for anything is salt water - sweat, tears, or the sea."*

<https://www.quora.com/Isak-Dinesen-said-The-cure-for-anything-is-salt-water-sweat-tears-or-the-sea-What-do-you-think-of-this-quote-What-does-it-mean>

Downey, R. (2018). *Box of Butterflies Discovering the Unexpected Blessings All Around*

*Us*. Howard Books.

Family meal times bring benefits. (2012, February 23). *The Vauxhall Advance*

<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/newspapers/family-meal-times-bring-benefits/docview/923549237/se-2?accountid=14846>

Fitzgerald, S. (2021, May 3). *Forest bathing: What it is and where to do it*. Travel.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/forest-bathing-nature-walk-health>

“Follow the river and you will find the sea.” (2010, May 16). French Proverb Famous Quotes by

Authors. *Dictionary of quotes*.

<https://www.dictionary-quotes.com/follow-the-river-and-you-will-find-the-sea-french-proverb/>

Gandhi, M. (1939 as cited in 2022). *A quote by Mahatma Gandhi*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/376634-the-law-of-love-could-be-best-understood-and-learned>

Gandhi, M. (as cited in 2022). *A quote by Mahatma Gandhi*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/67525-in-a-gentle-way-you-can-shake-the-world>

Gingras, S. (2016). *Seashore quotes*. Seashore Quotes - Famous Sea Quotes on Sea and Sky.

<http://www.seasky.org/quotes/sea-quotes-seashore.html>

Green, A. (2019, August 6). *The science behind stilling your mind with mindfulness — MRI*

*scans show the amygdala shrinks while the pre-frontal cortex thickens*. Buddha Weekly: Buddhist Practices, Mindfulness, Meditation.

<https://buddhaweekly.com/science-behind-stilling-mind-mindfulness-mri-scans-show-amygdala-shrinks-pre-frontal-cortex-thickens/>

Grossman, L., M. Cowan, and R. Shankman. (2010). Mindful schools.

<http://www.mindfulschools.org>.

- Haljas, D. K. (2020, November 14). *Mindfulness: You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf*. Triumph Health. <https://www.triumf.health/news/2017-07-mindfulness>
- Hanh, Nhất. T. (n.d.). *Key teachings*. Plum Village.  
<https://plumvillage.org/about/thich-nhat-hanh/key-teachings/>
- Hanh, Nhất. T. (n.d.). *Wake up schools - mindfulness in education*. Plum Village.  
<https://plumvillage.org/community/wake-up-schools/>
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (1975/2015). *The miracle of mindfulness*. Random House UK.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (1987). *Being peace*. Parallax Press.
- Hanh, Nhất. T. (2007). *For a future to be possible: Buddhist ethics for everyday life*. Parallax Press.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2008). *Touching the Earth: 46 guided meditations for mindfulness practice*. Parallax Press.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2009). *The blossoming of a lotus guided meditation for achieving the miracle of mindfulness*. Translated by A. Laity, Beacon Press. ISBN - 13: 9780807012383
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2014, July 13) *I Have Arrived, I Am Home/ Dharma talk by Thich Nhat Hanh 2014 07 13*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7sntErVuQ4>
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2014). *How to eat*. Parallax Press.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2014). *How to sit*. Parallax Press.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2015). *How to love*. Parallax Press.
- Hạnh Nhất. T. (2017). *How to fight*. Parallax Press.
- Hanh, Nhất. T. (2019, October 26). *Happy teachers change the world*. Plum Village.  
<https://plumvillage.org/books/happy-teachers-change-the-world/>

- Hart, T. (1994). In service of a spiritual path. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 22(3), 379–382.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08873267.1994.9976961>
- Hart, T. (1999). The refinement of empathy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 39(4), 111–125.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167899394007>
- Hart, T. (2008). Interiority and Education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(4), 235–250.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344608329393>
- Hawn, G. (2008). *MindUP*. <https://mindup.org/>.
- Hawn, G. (2016, October 11). *Goldie Hawn on the importance of mindfulness - youtube*. Goldie Hawn on the Importance of Mindfulness.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZsGZZA3LNM>.
- Hay, L. (2017, February 9). *Louise Hay - training yourself to be aware of what you're thinking*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0R1M6IwQG0>.
- Haynes, D. J., Irvine, K., & Bridges, M. (2013). *The Blue Pearl: The efficacy of teaching ... - jstor home*. The Blue Pearl: The Efficacy of Teaching Mindfulness Practices. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, (Vol. 33) University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43185109>.
- Heidegger, M. (1968). *What Is Called Thinking?*, J. G. Gray, trans. New York. Harper & Row.
- Hoff, B. (1992). *The Te of Piglet*. Penguin Group.
- Hurst, K. (2021, September 21). *Numerology report: The secret meaning of numbers 0 to 9*. The Law Of Attraction. <https://www.thelawofattraction.com/meanings-numbers-0-9/>.
- Jackson Curran, E. (Sept. 16, 2021). 7 Unexpected Benefits of Eating Together as a Family, According to Science. *Explore Parents*.

<https://www.parents.com/recipes/tips/unexpected-benefits-of-eating-together-as-a-family-according-to-science/>

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology, Vol. 1*. Henry Holt and Co.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/10538-000>

Jardine, D.W. (2016). *In Praise of Radiant Beings: A Retrospective Path Through Education, Buddhism and Ecology*, Information Age Publishing. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/lib/uvic/detail.action?docID=4690981>

June 27, 2016. F. more information. (2017, February 28). *Stress contagion possible amongst students and teachers: UBC Study*. UBC News.

<https://news.ubc.ca/2016/06/27/ubc-study-finds-stress-contagion-amongst-students-and-teachers/>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (n.d.). *The Mindful Attitude of Non-Striving*. Mbsrtraining.com.

<https://mbsrtraining.com/attitudes-of-mindfulness-by-jon-kabat-zinn/mindful-attitude-of-non-striving-jon-kabat-zinn/>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Full catastrophe living - Jon Kabat-Zinn, phd.pdf*. Google.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbm92b21ub2xlc2NlbnNlc3xneDoyZTZmMDIwNzFmYjIzNjMz>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011, May). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12(1), 281–306.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564844>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2012). *Masterclass on Mindfulness with Jon Kabat-Zinn*. Mindvalley.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness* (2nd ed.). Bantam.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2015, October 28). *Link-Springer-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca*. Mindfulness.

<https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/article/10.1007%2Fs11199-010-9797-z>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2016). *Mindfulness for beginners: Reclaiming the present moment-- and your life*. Sounds True.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2017, June 29). *Too early to tell: The potential impact and challenges-ethical and otherwise-inherent in the mainstreaming of dharma in an increasingly dystopian world - mindfulness*. Springer.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-017-0758-2>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2021). Meditation is not what you think. *Mindfulness*, 12 (3). 784-787.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01578-1>

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2021, Feb. 11). *Teaches Mindfulness and Meditation Masterclass*. Mindvalley.

Kabat-Zinn, J., Boyce, B., Staff, M., O'Leary, W., & Smookler, E. (2014/2022, February 4).

*Everyday mindfulness with Jon Kabat-Zinn*. Mindful: Healthy Mind, Healthy Life.

<https://www.mindful.org/everyday-mindfulness-with-jon-kabat-zinn/>

Kaiser-Greenland, S. (2010). *The mindful child*. New York: Free Press.

Keating, N. (2017, November 30). *How children describe the fruits of meditation*. MDPI.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/8/12/261/pdf/1>

Kee, Y. H., Aye, K. M., Ferozd, R., & Li, C. (2019). Effects of a brief strange loop task on immediate word length comparison: A mindfulness study on non-striving. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02314>

Keller, H. (2018, November 30). *We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world. - Helen Keller*. AllGreatQuotes.

<https://www.allgreatquotes.com/quote-168968/>

Kemmerer, L. (2017, November 6). *Engaged Buddhism in Retreat.pdf*. Human Architecture.

[https://www.academia.edu/35035724/Engaged\\_Buddhism\\_In\\_Retreat\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/35035724/Engaged_Buddhism_In_Retreat_pdf)

Kennedy, C. (2016, March 14). *Caroline Kennedy quote: "Falling in love is a series of moments in which the ordinary becomes extraordinary..."*. Quotefancy.

<https://quotefancy.com/quote/2303709/Caroline-Kennedy-Falling-in-love-is-a-series-of-moments-in-which-the-ordinary-becomes>

Kleckner, J. (2018, December 17). *80 Albert Einstein quotes to inspire you for life*. Addicted 2 Success | Quotes | Motivation & Success Advice.

<https://addicted2success.com/quotes/80-albert-einstein-quotes-to-inspire-you-for-life/>

Kuypers, L. (2011). *The Zones of Regulation*. Think Social Publishing.

Kuypers, L. (2021). *The Zones of Regulation®. The Zones of Regulation: a Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control*.

[https://zonesofregulation.com/uploads/3/4/1/7/34178767/english\\_reproducible\\_e\\_2021.pdf](https://zonesofregulation.com/uploads/3/4/1/7/34178767/english_reproducible_e_2021.pdf)

Lama, D. (2011). *How to be Compassionate*. Random.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/29007-every-day-think-as-you-wake-up-today-i-am#>

Lee, J. (2018). *Breathing Love: Meditation in Action*. Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd.

Liu Baergen, P. (2019). *Generative Tensionality: Intellectual Works of Ted Tetsuo Aoki*.

[file:///C:/Users/rsymington/Downloads/ubc\\_2019\\_may\\_liubaergen\\_patriciafuhui.pdf](file:///C:/Users/rsymington/Downloads/ubc_2019_may_liubaergen_patriciafuhui.pdf)

Mahes, P. (2020). *Author Prasad Mahes*. Lifesimplequotes.com.

<https://lifesimplequotes.com/authors/prasadMahes>

Maraboli, S. (2022). *A quote by Steve Maraboli*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/524101-acceptance-makes-an-incredible-fertile-soil-for-the-seeds-of>

Mayer, P. (2008). *Japanese Bowl*. [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hta7R6ZXpk>

McCown, D., Reibel, D., & Micozzi, M. S. (2016, January). *Resources for teaching mindfulness: An international handbook ... Resources for Teaching Mindfulness*.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321531108\\_Resources\\_for\\_Teaching\\_Mindfulness\\_An\\_International\\_Handbook](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321531108_Resources_for_Teaching_Mindfulness_An_International_Handbook)

McLeod, S. A. (2019). *What Is the zone of proximal development?* Simply Psychology.

[www.simplypsychology.org/Zone-of-Proximal-Development.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/Zone-of-Proximal-Development.html)

McLeod, S. A. (2020, December 7). *Piaget's stages of cognitive development*. Jean Piaget's Theory and Stages of Cognitive Development | Simply Psychology.

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html>.

Moore, T. (2018, September 14). *Care of the soul in education: Thomas Moore*: Taylor & Francis.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315112398-7/care-soul-education-thomas-moore>

Myers, D. G., & DeWall, C. N. (2018). *Experimental Psychology* (Vol. 12). Macmillan Learning.

Niebuhr, R. (n.d.). *The Serenity Prayer*.

Oberle, E., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2016, April 24). *Stress contagion in the classroom? the link between classroom teacher burnout and morning cortisol in elementary school students*. *Social Science & Medicine*.

- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953616302052>
- OurMindfulLife.com, A. (2021, September 7). *46 kindness quotes that will put a smile on your face*. Our Mindful Life. <https://www.ourmindfullife.com/kindness-quotes-images/>
- Piaget, J. (1936). *Theory and Stages of Cognitive Development and the Zone of Proximal Development*. Simply Scholar Ltd.
- <https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html?campaignid=70161000000RNtB&vid=2120483>
- Ponti, M., Belanger, S., Grimes, R., Heard, J., Johnson, M., Moreau, E., Norris, M., Shaw, A., Stanwick, R., Van Lankveld, J., & Williams, R. (2017, November 27). *Screen Time and Young Children: Promoting Healthy Development*. AboutKidsHealth.
- <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=643&language=English#/>.
- Quinn, M. (2001, Spring). *Silence in Praxis A Good Word on the Good of Silence*. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 111–125.
- Quinn, M. (2022). *Molly Quinn Ph.D. - LinkedIn*. Molly Quinn, Ph.D.
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/molly-quinn-ph-d-40b82162>
- Raihaan, R. (2021, July 27). *Beach quotes: 100+ inspirational quotes about beach life: Love ocean quotes*. A Rai of Light.
- <https://www.araioflight.com/beach-quotes-life-inspirational-short-love/>
- Rana, P. (n.d.). *Quote by Pushpa Rana, just the way I feel*. Quoteslyfe.
- <https://www.quoteslyfe.com/quote/Judging-is-acting-on-a-limited-knowledge-225431>
- Rivera, C. (2020, April 2). *The practice of no-judgment...* Spiral of Bliss.
- <https://spiralofbliss.com/the-practice-of-no-judgement/>

Robin, C. (2021, May 27). *Montessori concept: What "Follow the child" means*. The Montessori Family.

<https://themontessorifamily.com/montessori-concept-what-follow-the-child-means/>.

Rogoff, B., Goodman Turkkanis, C., & Bartlett, L. (2001). *Learning together: Children and adults in a school community*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rumi. (as cited on 2019, April 6). *Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love*. ø Eminently Quotable -

<https://www.eminentllyquotable.com/let-yourself-be-silently-drawn-by-the-strange-pull-of-what-you-really-love/>

Salzberg, S. (2011). Mindfulness and loving-kindness. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12(1), 177–182.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564837>

Satoro, R. (2022). *“individually, we are one drop. together, we are an ocean ... Ryunosuke Satoro Quotes*.

<https://www.lover-quotes.com/love/individually-we-are-one-drop-together-we-are-an-ocean/>

Schnall, M. (2011, November 17). *Goldie Hawn reveals her mission to bring children happiness*.

HuffPost. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/goldie-hawn-mindup\\_b\\_850226](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/goldie-hawn-mindup_b_850226).

Sellman, E. M., & Buttarazzi, G. F. (2019). Adding lemon juice to poison – raising critical questions about the oxymoronic nature of mindfulness in education and its future direction. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(1), 61–78.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2019.1581128>

Siegel, D. J. and Payne Bryson, T. (2011). *The Whole-Brain Child. 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*. Bantam.

Silin, J. (2017). Risking hope in a worried world. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 18(1), 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949117692282>

Simmer-Brown, J., & Grace, F. (2011). *Meditation and the classroom: contemplative pedagogy for religious studies*. SUNY Press.

Additional research studies can be found at:

Santa Barbara Institute: [www.sbinstitutue.com](http://www.sbinstitutue.com)

Stanford University's Carstensen Life-Span Development Lab:

[www.psych.stanford.edu/%7Elifespan/](http://www.psych.stanford.edu/%7Elifespan/);

The University of California at Davis's Center for Mind and Brain

[www.mindbrain@ucdavis.edu](mailto:www.mindbrain@ucdavis.edu)

University of California Los Angeles's Mindful Awareness Research Center

[www.marc.ucla.edu/](http://www.marc.ucla.edu/)

Snively, G. (1978). *Exploring the Seashore in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon A Guide to Shorebirds and Intertidal Plants and Animals*. Gordon Soules Book Publishers.

Spock, B. (2020, April 9). *Trust yourself. you know more than you think you do. – dr...*

[Quotespedia.org](https://www.quotespedia.org).

<https://www.quotespedia.org/authors/d/dr-benjamin-spock/trust-yourself-you-know-more-than-you-think-you-do-dr-benjamin-spock/>

StatsCan. (2020, July 9). *Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian families and Children*.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200709/dq200709a-eng.htm>.

Surr, J. V. (2017). How children can help adults grow spiritually. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 22(3-4), 187–196.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436x.2017.1373078>

Suzuki Shunryū, & Dixon, T. (1989). *Zen Mind: Beginner's mind; informal talks on zen meditation and practice*. Weatherhill.

Suzuki, S. (2022). *A quote from Zen Mind, beginner's mind*. Goodreads.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/285436-in-the-beginner-s-mind-there-are-many-possibilities-but-in>

Swan (Bosworth), T. (2016). *Best 73 teal swan quotes - the cite site quotes*. The Cite Site.

<https://thecitesite.com/authors/teal-swan/#:~:text=Best%2073%20Quotes%20by%20Teal,is%20the%20currency%20of%20love.%E2%80%9D>

Symington, R. (2022). *The Sentiments of the Sea*. Marine Inspired Mindfulness Oracle Deck.

Taren, A. (2021). The Power of Mindfulness, 12. *Mindfulness Magazine*.

Thomas, D. (2021, September 28). *The pandemic of educator stress*. EdCan Network.

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/the-pandemic-of-educator-stress/>

Thomas, D. (2021, October 5). *The pandemic of educator stress*. EdCan Network.

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/the-pandemic-of-educator-stress/>

Thoreau, H. D. (2008). *Essential Thoreau*. Wilder Publications, Limited.

Trube, B. (2017). Mindfulness practices in mentoring and teaching. *Childhood Education*, 93(2),

159–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2017.1300495>

Turnbull, C. (Oct. 15, 2020). Healthy Food Guide.

<https://www.healthyfood.com/ask-the-experts/how-long-should-i-wait-before-eating-seconds/>

Tzu, L. (2022). *Lao Tzu quotes*. Goodreads.

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2622245.Lao\\_Tzu](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2622245.Lao_Tzu)

The Vauxhall Advance. (2012, February 23). *ProQuest | Better Research, Better Learning, better insights*. Family meal times bring benefits. <https://www.proquest.com/http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/newspapers/family-meal-times-bring-benefits/docview/923549237/se-2?accountid=14846>.

Virtue, D. (2005, April 26). *Magical Unicorn Oracle Cards: A 44-Card Deck with Guidebook*. Hay House.

Vygotsky, L. (2020). *Vygotsky's Theory - an overview* | ScienceDirect Topics. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/vygotskys-theory>.

Walker, R. A. (2010). *Zone of proximal development*. Zone of Proximal Development - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/zone-of-proximal-development>

Wheeler, B. (2020, August 12). *A touchstone for troubled times, Leonard Cohen's anthem took its own sweet time to happen*. The Globe and Mail. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/music/article-leonard-cohen-anthem-oral-history>

Whitehead, R., Bates, G., Elphinstone, B., Yang, Y., & Murray, G. (2018). Letting go of self: The creation of the nonattachment to self scale. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02544>

Wilhelm, R., & Baynes, C. F. (1997). *The I ching: Or, Book of changes*. Princeton University Press.

Wyland, R. (2022). *Robert Wyland quote: "the ocean stirs the heart, inspires the*

*imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul."* Quotefancy.

<https://quotefancy.com/quote/1623527/Robert-Wyland-The-ocean-stirs-the-heart-inspires-the-imagination-and-brings-eternal-joy>

### Table of Figures

#### Table 1: Photo Credits

Astoltz (20/10/17. *Walking on a sandy beach showing footprints*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/walk-on-the-beach-sandy-beach-rock-2872037/>

Chan, E. (17/02/19. *Hermit crab*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/hermit-crab-marine-life-crab-sea-4002529/>

Cummings, K. A. (11/02/19. *Driftwood*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/hermit-crab-marine-life-crab-sea-4002529/>

ddzphoto. (26/06/17. *Seagulls soaring*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/seagull-portugal-algarve-flight-2444497/>

Eugene, N. (n.d. *Silhouette of mother and kids doing yoga at sunset sea*). Shutterstock.

<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/silhouette-mother-kids-doing-yoga-sunset-306922289>

NOAA. (02/26/21. *Gooseneck barnacles alongside mussels*). National Ocean Service Website.

accessed on 11/24/21. <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/barnacles.html>

Kanenori. (02/04/17. *Surfer riding a big wave*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/surfer-rogue-wave-skillfully-2193859/>

Kessler, M. (29/12/18. *Estuary*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/estuary-lake-flow-landscape-water-3898284/>

Stead, L. (n.d. *Mermaid clay wall hanging*. Vancouver Island).

Sullivan, S. (02/07/16. *Fucus distichus* -- rockweed). Flickr.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wildflowersearch/28199149811>

Symington, R. (2021 and 2022). Photos from Figures 1- 9 inclusive, and artwork depicted in Figures 21-85 inclusive.

UBodnar. (14/05/14. *Starfish*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/starfish-sand-sea-star-sea-creature-343791/>

Vladvictoria. (04/05/19. *Vancouver Island Beach*). Pixabay.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/a-avengers-shore-beach-landscape-4174776/>

## Appendix A

### List of cards from the “*Sentiments from the Sea*” Oracle Deck (Symington, 2022)

Here is a list of all 64 cards and the nine mindfulness attitudes (Kabat-Zinn, 2013) they represent, along with the featured sea animals native to the Pacific Northwest (Snively, 1978), the corresponding chakras (Cameron, 2021), and the three-word mantras for each card:

#### **Mindfulness Attitude - Non-Judging:**

1. **Indigo** Observe the moon. (Moonsnail)
2. **Purple** Always be kind. (Sea Anemone)
3. **Blue** Listen with sincerity. (Jellyfish)
4. **Green** Show others understanding. (Mussels)
5. **Yellow** Ask for help. (Butter Clam)
6. **Orange** Permission to pass. (Sitka Periwinkle Sea Snail)
7. **Red** Treat yourself gently. (Frosted Nudibranch)

#### **Mindfulness Attitude - Acceptance:**

8. **Indigo** Cherish every experience. (Scallops)
9. **Purple** Stay perfectly imperfect. (Flatfish)
10. **Blue** Be yourself authentically. (Rose Star)
11. **Green** Daydream while doodling. (Sea Pen)
12. **Yellow** Forgive through love. (Native Oysters)
13. **Orange** Celebrate our differences. (Rockfish)
14. **Red** Follow your instincts. (Sockeye Salmon)

#### **Mindfulness Attitude - Patience:**

15. **Indigo** Savour the moment. (Orange Spotted Nudibranch)

- 16. **Purple** Honour your limits. (Nautilus)
- 17. **Blue** Get more sleep. (Chinook Salmon)
- 18. **Green** Lay the foundation. (Plankton)
- 19. **Yellow** Persevere through challenges. (Coral)
- 20. **Orange** Take small steps. (Whelks)
- 21. **Red** Exercise your muscles. (Coho Salmon)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Beginner's Mind:**

- 22. **Indigo** Always be curious. (Ochre Sea Star)
- 23. **Purple** Notice the details. (Giant Acorn Barnacle)
- 24. **Blue** Ask for feedback. (Sponge)
- 25. **Green** Curious, not furious. (Crago Shrimp)
- 26. **Yellow** Talk it over. (Sea Squirts)
- 27. **Orange** Give yourself time. (Sea Turtle)
- 28. **Red** Explore. Adventure awaits! (Dungeness Crab)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Trust:**

- 29. **Indigo** Believe in miracles. (Isopod)
- 30. **Purple** Power of yet. (Purple Sea Urchin)
- 31. **Blue** Never give up. (Skate)
- 32. **Green** Believe in yourself. (Dogfish Egg Sac)
- 33. **Yellow** Speak with compassion. (Geoduck clam)
- 34. **Orange** Shout out doubts. (Giant Green Anemone)
- 35. **Red** Ride the wave. (Surfer)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Non-Striving:**

- 36. **Indigo** Behave with integrity. (Wolf Eel)
- 37. **Purple** Remember to pause. (Chum Salmon)
- 38. **Blue** Watch clouds passing. (Seagull)
- 39. **Green** Flow with feelings. (Gooseneck Barnacle)
- 40. **Yellow** Name to tame. (Limpet/Chinese Hat)
- 41. **Orange** Try being still. (Great Blue Heron)
- 42. **Red** Breathe, Exhale. Repeat. (Orca Whale)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Letting Go:**

- 43. **Indigo** Dance for joy. (Seahorse)
- 44. **Purple** Splash in puddles (Tidepool Sculpin)
- 45. **Blue** Trust your intuition. (Rock Crab)
- 46. **Green** Share a laugh. (Sea Cucumber)
- 47. **Yellow** Express your creativity. (Sea Plume)
- 48. **Orange** Tidy your space. (Octopus)
- 49. **Red** Walk barefoot outdoors. (Eelgrass)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Gratitude:**

- 50. **Indigo** Love one another. (Sea Otters)
- 51. **Purple** You are safe. (Sand Dollar)
- 52. **Blue** Nurture your body. (Turkish Towel)
- 53. **Green** Memorize musical messages. (Dolphin)
- 54. **Yellow** Express your bliss. (Decorator Crab)

**55. Orange** Drink more water. (Rockweed)

**56. Red** Ground in nature. (Sea Lettuce)

**Mindfulness Attitude - Generosity:**

**57. Indigo** Time to shine. (Abalone)

**58. Purple** Choose nourishing foods. (Kelp)

**59. Blue** Remember to share. (Hermit Crab )

**60. Green** Discover your passions. (Sand Nemertean)

**61. Yellow** Share favourite memories. (Moon Jelly)

**62. Orange** Surprise a friend. (Feather Duster Tube Worm)

**63. Red** Empower one another. (Chiton)

**64 Extra Bonus Card: Rainbow Colours:** Proceed with wisdom. (Mermaid)

## Appendix B

### Booklet of Additional Information for each of the Cards

This section will describe my favourite features of each sea creature, including their scientific names. The scientific names are referenced from Snively's guide, *Exploring the Seashore* (1978). I will add a short description of why I chose each sea creature for the cards. This information will be included in a little booklet with my oracle deck. This information booklet will include the images of the cards to provide some extra details and explanations to assist children, parents, and teachers. When the cards are ready to be professionally printed on sturdy cardstock, the back of the cards will be decorated with a photograph of a local beach, with a heart outlined in the sand with the nine mindfulness attitudes attributed to Jon Kabat-Zinn written inside the heart for its corresponding seven cards.

#### Mindfulness Attitude - Non-Judging

##### 1. Indigo. Observe the moon. (Moonsnail) *Polinices lewisii*:

I have always been intrigued by the moon and mesmerized by its changing appearance throughout the month. The moon's phases remind us to observe and notice that nothing is permanent. Life flows in cycles moving from day to night through the seasons. Our emotional state of mind fluctuates, similar to the waxing and waning phases of the moon, and challenging situations do not last forever. The Moonsnail reminds us that better days are ahead!

##### 2. Purple. Always be kind. (Sea Anemone) *Actiniaria*:

Sea anemones are such beautiful creatures. They always reminded me of flowers. I enjoyed touching them and watching them close up their tentacles around my finger as a child

when exploring our local tidal pools. Still, now, I try to curb that impulse and remember to be kind to these amazing animals and simply observe their beauty.

**3. Blue.** Listen with sincerity. (Jellyfish) *Aequorea aequorea*:

Jellyfish are ethereal in their beauty as they gracefully float through the water. Being able to see through them is a reminder to listen with an open mind when communicating, see beyond the words spoken, and gain true understanding by accessing the heart of the message.

**4. Green.** Show others understanding. (Mussels) *Mytilus edulis*:

Mussels live together nestled in clusters on rocky outcroppings. These tightly packed conditions might prove difficult for those who desire to have their own space, reminding us to show understanding for others when we are in crowded situations. Whether a family member, friend, or stranger, showing compassion is always appreciated.

**5. Yellow.** Ask for help. (Butter Clam) *Saxidomus giganteus*:

Butter clams are a bivalve that is a favourite in clam chowder and are highly sought after. Though they can close tightly and “clam up,” they are an excellent reminder to open up when we need assistance and not struggle alone when we are afraid to ask for help. Clamming up only compounds our problems. Asking for help is truly an act of courage.

**6. Orange.** Permission to pass. (Sitka Periwinkle Sea Snail) *Littorina sitkana*:

Sometimes in life, we may feel the need to pass on participating in an activity or social interaction. It can be challenging to say no to others, but it is crucial to honour our internal compass and set boundaries when necessary. Being aware of how the activity in question makes us feel if we say yes to taking part versus how we would feel if we decline is a way to ascertain how to proceed. Being honest with ourselves is the key. Sometimes responding “maybe” is a way

to give yourself more time to ponder the situation and truly listen to your heart, knowing that a true friend would understand and honour your wishes if you ask to pass. No one likes to feel forced to do something. Though Periwinkles are small, their needs are no less important than another's. We need to respect each other's feelings. Allowing someone to observe and sit out for this round may be all the break they need.

**7. Red.** Treat yourself gently. (Frosted Nudibranch) *Dirona albolineata*;

The Frosted Nudibranch looks beautiful and delicate like a flower. Nudibranchs are so unique and colourful. They remind us that no two people are exactly alike. We need to honour our individual needs and remember to take care of ourselves with gentle kindness. We are more likely to feel our best when we follow this guidance.

**Mindfulness Attitude - Acceptance**

**8. Indigo.** Cherish every experience. (Scallops) *Chlamys hericia*:

Scallops have up to 200 eyes along their shells' mantle! They use mirrors in their eyes instead of lenses to see, similar to a telescope, enabling them to see from numerous perspectives. Unlike other bivalves, scallops can swim freely, and as filter feeders, they only reside where the ocean is healthy. Scallops teach us that situations that initially may have felt challenging can prove beneficial when we can process that each experience happens *for* us rather than *to* us. In much the same way, if we look at our adventures from a different vantage point, we may eventually be able to forgive others who have hurt us when we examine the situation from another point of view, and by gaining understanding, we develop healthier relationships.

**9. Purple.** Stay perfectly imperfect. (Flatfish) *Pleuronectiformes*:

Flatfish are fascinating fish whose eyes migrate during their development to move together on the same side of the body. As bottom dwellers, they spend the rest of their lives with their eyes gazing upwards while the other side of their body lies flat against the sand.

Anatomically, the flatfish may not look perfect, but this evolutionary trait serves them well and reminds us that we are perfect just the way we are in our imperfect way.

**10. Blue.** Be yourself authentically. (Rose Star) *Crossaster papposus*:

Typically, sea stars have five legs, while the beautiful Rose Star has ten. Divers can attest to how rare it is to find one, reminding us to cherish who we are and be our authentic selves rather than feel compelled to copy others. Being ourselves is very freeing as there is no need to put on a pretense, and it is the key to feeling happiest and whole.

**11. Green.** Daydream while doodling. (Sea Pen) *Ptilosarcus gurneyi*:

It is fun to imagine the mythical Merpeople using Sea Pens to write! The Sea Pen resembles an old-fashioned feather plume used as a writing implement inviting us to take up the pen to share what is in our hearts and imaginations. Allowing our minds to wander while drawing or doodling is a great way to encourage daydreaming and give our subconscious minds a chance to reveal our inner wisdom. No one knows the best answer for ourselves better than we do. Allowing our thoughts to flow freely may enable us to access these depths and often surprise ourselves with these insights by exercising both brain hemispheres of the brain with a creative outlet such as colouring, drawing, painting, or doodling.

**12. Yellow.** Forgive through love. (Native Oysters) *Ostrea lurida*:

Oysters never cease to amaze me. They can take a tiny grain of sand that has entered their shells, which could be very irritating, and slowly, over time, work it into a precious pearl!

Oysters take a negative experience and create something positive and highly valued by approaching the irritant with dedication, determination, forgiveness, and most importantly, love.

**13. Orange.** Celebrate our differences. (Rockfish) *Sebastes*:

Rockfish blend so well into their surroundings, utilizing their camouflage to avoid being eaten by larger fish or birds. They utilize their differences to help them swim together in a bigger school, for there is safety in numbers. Our differences make us interesting and attractive and deserve to be celebrated. Similarly, we can acknowledge the same qualities in others and encourage them to be their authentic selves.

**14. Red.** Follow your instincts. (Sockeye Salmon) *Oncorhynchus nerka*:

Salmon are incredible. They can swim vast distances across the ocean and return to the same river where they were born. They can do so primarily by following their instincts. Our intuition does not steer us wrong if we quiet our thoughts and listen to our inner guidance, much like the salmon, and find our way home again whenever we feel lost or adrift.

**Mindfulness Attitude - Patience**

**15. Indigo.** Savour the moment. (Orange Spotted Nudibranch) *Triopha carpenneri*:

Nudibranchs are mysterious, colourful, and unique. They remind us to live in the present and enjoy each moment to the fullest, savouring the unexpected beauty and impermanence of it. The present is all we have. The past is gone, and the future is yet to come. Therefore, this moment in time is what is truly real.

**16. Purple.** Honour your limits. (Nautilus) *Nautilidae*:

Nautilus live in the deepest parts of the ocean and feed off coral reefs. They have remained unchanged for hundreds of millions of years, earning them the name of “living fossils.”

The shell of the Nautilus is noted for its logarithmic spiral design. Nautilus can descend to great depths and remain intact. In much the same way, we need to acknowledge our limits and not push ourselves beyond them continuously if we want to feel healthy and balanced. It is wise to pause and reflect from time to time to verify if we are still on course during our journey.

**17. Blue.** Get more sleep. (Chinook Salmon) *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*:

Every autumn, the Chinook Salmon tackle the arduous task of swimming upstream over raging rapids to spawn. The females make small indentations in the pebbles to lay eggs in nests called redds, which the males later fertilize. It takes all their strength to reach their destination, and they pause briefly before continuing on their journey from the expansive ocean to the river of their birth four years earlier. It is crucial to get enough rest to be at one's best when facing challenges, making sleep a priority.

**18. Green.** Lay the foundation. (Plankton) There are two types, *Phytoplankton and Zooplankton*, *Noctiluca. scintillans*:

Plankton drifts near the surface of the sea and produces half of the world's oxygen. They can be plants or animals, and they are the basis of the food chain for all marine life. Amazingly, the largest animals on Earth feed on these tiny creatures. The marine ecosystem depends on plankton. If plankton is abundant, the water will appear brownish or green. An overgrowth can result in a plankton bloom which can cause severe illness or worse if one eats fish or shellfish from this area when this occurs. Establishing a healthy foundation is the key to any endeavour. Ensuring that the smallest details are in order helps everything flow smoothly.

**19. Yellow.** Persevere through challenges. (Coral) *Anthozoa*:

Life can present us with numerous challenges. Coral reefs have survived for thousands of years, providing food and shelter for an abundance of marine life. Their survival is in danger today as the water temperatures rise and their environment changes. Reach out to others and draw strength from the coral reefs, knowing we can overcome obstacles if we do not give up. There is also strength and safety when we are amongst a supportive, loving community.

**20. Orange.** Take small steps. (Whelks) *Thasis lamellosa*:

Whelks are snails that have beautiful, intricate shells. They carry their homes on their backs, inching their way through the tidal pools searching for food, shelter, and protection from predators. Though they appear to move slowly, they are still moving forward a little bit at a time. Similarly, we can learn from the whelks and proceed with small steps when trying something new. We do not need to rush or dive in head first, but momentum will build as long as we move forward. It is always the most difficult to begin a new activity. Once it is started, the momentum will continue to carry us forward as long as we devote regular, daily time to practise without skipping a day for 90 days. Surprisingly, it takes about three months to solidify a new habit, and the key is not to break the chain. The hardest part is starting, which can become more manageable by taking small steps in the right direction.

**21. Red.** Exercise your muscles. (Coho Salmon) *Oncorhynchus kisutch*:

Coho Salmon illustrates the importance of exercise and keeping our body fit to feel our best. Continuously swimming against the stream to spawn is a strenuous task for salmon. They need to be strong and vital to navigate the rapids and return to the place of their birth four years later to complete the circle of life. The adult salmon then become food for bears, eagles, seagulls, and other animals as they prepare for the coming winter months.

**Mindfulness Attitude - Beginner's Mind****22. Indigo.** Always be curious. (Ochre Sea Star) *Pisaster ochraceus*:

Purple Sea Stars appear to be endlessly curious to explore the marine tidal pools searching for food. They are feared by many other animals who will scurry away as fast as possible when a Sea Star is in the vicinity. Sea Stars can travel quickly and appear curious about whatever they encounter in their path, trying to determine if it is edible or not!

**23. Purple.** Notice the details. (Giant Acorn Barnacle) *Balanus nubilus*:

The feathery tendrils used to filter food for the Giant Acorn Barnacle remind us to notice even the smallest details and pay attention to our surroundings. It is so easy to operate on auto-pilot as we go through our day completing our regular tasks without really being present. This lack of attention happens to people as they drive the same route to work every day and lose focus. Noticing the details by utilizing all our senses helps keep our minds engaged and alert to the wonder of life.

**24. Blue.** Ask for feedback. (Encrusting Sponge) *Phylum Porifera*:

Through surface tension in its pockets of air, a sponge can hold vast amounts of water greater than the weight of the sponge itself. Often we can save many ideas in our heads and may need help from others to be as clear and transparent as possible. Sharing ideas by asking for feedback is beneficial to clarifying one's thoughts and authentically connecting with others.

**25. Green.** Curious, not furious. (Crago Shrimp) *Crago sp.*:

Psychologist Dr. Joy Browne reminded her listeners to be curious when someone conveys a harmful or hurtful statement rather than be immediately furious. Being curious requires the other person to explain their words and hopefully reframe their message not to be inflammatory.

It allows them to rethink how they phrased their comments to clarify, rather than inflame, the situation. The Crago shrimp invite us to improve our communication skills by speaking and listening with intention when conversing with others by always being curious.

**26. Yellow.** Talk it over. (Sea Squirt) *Styela montereyensis*:

It is good to talk it over with someone we trust and respect when dealing with a problem. Taking turns speaking and listening while sharing your feelings with someone who honours your emotions is profoundly healing and can improve the relationship dynamic. The Sea Squirts illustrate this point as they appear to be earnestly discussing a dilemma. Keeping our hearts open and being willing to forgive any past hurts can be deeply healing. Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves as we no longer have to carry the weight of the pain and can be free.

**27. Orange.** Give yourself time. (Sea Turtle) *Chelonioidea*:

Though turtles can swim with speed and are at home in the water, they are somewhat less graceful on land, where they move with a more laborious gait as they make their way to the sea. Though we all travel at our own rate, we will reach our destination, eventually, as long as we keep moving forward. In much the same way, we need to allow ourselves time to reach our goals and not give up showing faith and patience in ourselves.

**28. Red.** Explore. Adventure awaits! (Dungeness Crab) *Cancer magister*:

Dungeness Crabs, much like children, seem to live a life of adventure, darting about the beach and leaving no stone unturned! They are always ready to explore the adjacent tidal pools and beyond! Crabs need to find a safe place to hide while they are molting, growing a new shell of protective armour under a rock over several days before they can safely resume their

adventurous outings. Sometimes people can view the remnants of a crab's old shell and wonder at the beauty of nature.

### **Mindfulness Attitude - Trust**

#### **29. Indigo.** Believe in miracles. (Isopod) *Idotea rescata*:

Never cease to marvel at the wonders of life, from the tiniest creatures to the vastness of the universe and continue to be inspired and acknowledge the interconnectedness of it all.

Looking at an Isopod and other minuscule creatures reminds us of the miracle of life. Children innately have that sense of wonder. Being able to experience this gift can help us feel more grounded and centered in the present moment.

#### **30. Purple.** Power of yet. (Purple Sea Urchin) *Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*:

Sea urchins are equipped with three different types of spines, or pedicellariae, to help them bore through rock to make small indentations to live in areas where the tide is rough. Clustered together, it appears as if they live in an apartment carved out of stone. They remind us not to give up even though we may still be working on a specific skill. Instead, believe in the "power of yet" and gain the necessary skills and confidence with practice over time.

#### **31. Blue.** Never give up. (Skate) *Rajidae*:

Skates appear to float gracefully through the water, moving like birds. They represent the adage of "never giving up" by their ability to swim even though they look like it would not be possible. Their unique features remind us that we each have a gift and that though we may look different, there is something special about each of us waiting to be revealed.

#### **32. Green.** Believe in yourself. (Dogfish Egg Sac) *Chondrichthyes*:

The Dogfish Egg Sac, also commonly known as a “Mermaid’s Purse,” illustrates the message of believing in yourself. There is incredible potential within an egg. It holds all the necessary cellular knowledge to create a new life when fertilized. This miracle is in each of us, encouraging us to create whatever we can imagine as long as we believe in ourselves.

**33. Yellow.** Speak with compassion. (Geoduck clam) *Panope generosa*:

Geoduck clams are sought after for their meat. They can be found on the sandy beaches during low tide by the small holes that appear in the sand. People begin to frantically dig when they spot these holes, indicating that they may be able to find a geoduck below if they are fast enough! Speaking with compassion while being gentle with ourselves and those we interact with will transform our connections for the better. It is always helpful to consider that everyone is doing the best they can with the information they have. Sending love and compassion to the other person when our relationships are strained can transform these connections for the better.

**34. Orange.** Shout out doubts. (Giant Green Anemone) *Anthopleura xanthogrammica*:

Giant Green Anemones can have many particles attached to their sticky tentacles that have arrived with the tides. Some of it is edible, but some may be foreign particles that are not meant to be ingested. Similarly, we need to expel thoughts that divert us from our chosen path and trust our journey by following our intuition and dismissing doubts.

**35. Red.** Ride the wave. (Surfer) *Homo sapiens*:

Going with the flow and allowing the momentum to carry us forward is the message of this card. Rather than swimming against the tide and battling against nature, riding the wave and moving with the current is more in line with mindfully flowing through life in the present

moment, trusting that all is as it is meant to be and that we can handle what we are facing as long as we remain calm and relaxed.

### **Mindfulness Attitude - Non-Striving**

#### **36. Indigo.** Behave with integrity. (Wolf Eel) *Anarrhichthys ocellatus*:

Often Wolf Eels are sometimes described as having a face only a mother could love. Wolf Eels are very loving and mate for life despite their interesting appearance, which is an effective camouflage helping them blend in with their surroundings. The love they exhibit is an excellent example of behaving with integrity. Doing the right thing, especially when no one is watching, speaks volumes about a person's character and makes for more harmonious connections with others and the likelihood of sleeping more soundly at night. We can answer ourselves regarding our behaviour by honestly asking, "Is that the right thing to do?" and acting accordingly.

#### **37. Purple.** Remember to pause. (Chum Salmon) *Oncorhynchus keta*:

Salmon are some of the most powerful creatures when you can witness firsthand their struggles to swim over the rapids to reach their spawning grounds in the river of their birth. Chum Salmon reminds us to pause whenever needed and to make progress at our own pace, in our own time. We do not need to follow anyone else's timetable when discovering the calling of our hearts. Instead, it is prudent to rest and pause when feeling called to do so, verify our bearings, and check our inner compass before proceeding in the direction of our dreams.

#### **38. Blue.** Watch clouds passing. (Seagull) *Larus glaucescens*:

Lying in the grass on a summer's day while watching the clouds float by is so relaxing. Clouds can move slowly, lazily traversing the sky, or be propelled swiftly by gusts of wind on a stormy day. It is fun to see which animal shapes the clouds could be. When soaring in the sky,

seagulls appear to have an excellent vantage point, watching the clouds. Their wings outstretched, supported by the breeze, make it appear effortless when flying above us.

Embodying this attitude of non-striving can help us carry the day's stresses in stride and allow our minds the freedom to soar and perchance to dream.

**39. Green.** Flow with feelings. (Gooseneck Barnacles) *Pollicipes polymerus*:

Gooseneck barnacles grow in groups where the water pounds on the rocks. Being flexible is imperative, allowing the barnacles to move with the tide rather than be broken by the pounding surf. In much the same way, we need to flow with our feelings rather than fight them, as our emotions constantly change and only last 90 seconds typically.

**40. Yellow.** Name to tame. (Limpets/Chinese Hats) *Collisella pelta*:

Limpets also can be referred to by their common name of Chinese Hats, which resemble the shape of their shell. Often being able to label something correctly, be it an object or an emotion, can be very helpful in gaining a greater understanding. Knowing what we are dealing with is preferable to the unknown, diminishing any unnecessary fear or anxiety, but it requires sensitivity, knowledge, and experience to label our feelings. Though emotions are fleeting, they can be intense and make it difficult to process in the moment when the feelings may be the most potent. Giving oneself time to calm down, breathe, and assess the situation are good ways to process and later tame the emotion by naming it when feeling grounded again.

**41. Orange.** Try being still. (Great Blue Heron) *Ardea herodias*:

The statuesque Great Blue Heron is a master at standing still and taking in its surroundings along the shoreline in deliberate, silent contemplation. Quieting our mind is equally important in allowing our brain to rest and heal, taking a break from constantly processing

information, and allowing our inner voice to be heard. Answers can emerge when we embrace the opportunity to be still through living mindfully and meditating regularly. Even a few minutes a day can evoke positive transformations, lessen the effects of stress, and diminish feelings of anxiety.

**42. Red.** Breathe, Exhale. Repeat. (Orca Whale) *Orcinus orca*:

Orcas are similar to wolves in how they cooperate within their family group, helping one another to find food and care for their young. These majestic Orca Whales are a sight to behold when swimming with their pod. Their keen intelligence is evident in their eyes and their ability to work together as a team when hunting for their favourite meal of salmon. They also have an extensive repertoire of sounds when they sing to communicate. When the Orcas surface and breathe out before descending under the waves again, their power shows us the importance of breathing deeply. Too often, when we are stressed and rushing through our day, we forget to breathe. Taking a full, deep breath and consciously exhaling several times throughout the day will activate our parasympathetic nervous system to allow us to experience more relaxation and calmness in the “rest and digest” state of being, in contrast to our more stressful “fight or flight” sensations. Our heart rate slows down when the Vagus nerve is stimulated, and many yoga poses specifically serve this function to induce relaxation. Breathing seems so natural yet tends to be overlooked as a way to feel more present, centered, and grounded.

**Mindfulness Attitude - Letting Go**

**43. Indigo.** Dance for joy. (Seahorse) *Hippocampus*:

Dancing is a beautiful way to express our emotions and simply let go. Moving our bodies to the rhythm of the music is very freeing and healthy. Many native cultures worldwide play

drums echoing the familiar beat of our heart, connecting our earliest aural memories to this steady pulse. When listening to music, young children will instinctively dance and move to the beat. Listen to your favourite music and dance with your family, friends or even by yourself! The Seahorse seems to embody this rhythm as they gracefully swim through the water and remind us to express our joy through the language of dance.

**44. Purple.** Splash in puddles (Tidepool Sculpins) *Oligocottus maculosus*:

Tidepool Sculpins are plentiful in the high tide zone. These little fish are very well camouflaged and are easiest to spot when they dart around the tidal pools as they blend in so well with the rocks, seaweed, and other marine life. Like the Tidepool Sculpins, splashing in puddles is a way to feel like a child again, let go of any inhibitions, and express our joy.

**45. Blue.** Trust your intuition. (Rock Crab) *Cancer oregonensis*:

Rock Crabs are a favourite of many birds, otters, fish, and even other crabs. People especially love to eat them, making it crucial for these crabs to scurry away to safety under a rock or hide in a crevice when danger approaches. Rock crabs, in a sense, have to trust their intuition and act quickly, or else they will be eaten. Listening to our intuition is so important to keep us safe as well. The messages may appear as a quick flash or be felt longer like a nagging sensation that we need to heed. Trouble often results when our intuition is discounted by not listening to these timely warnings.

**46. Green.** Share a laugh. (Sea Cucumber) *Parastichopus californicus*:

Observing the comical Sea Cucumbers, one cannot help but laugh. They are not vegetables but are animals that make their home in the middle and low tidal zones. Some are subtidal species and resemble sea stars and sea urchins, with the five-point pattern visible along

the length of their bodies. Sea Cucumbers remind us not to take ourselves too seriously and enjoy a laugh together. Finding humour in situations is always the best as laughter has many health benefits and brings people closer together.

**47. Yellow.** Express your creativity. (Sea Plume) *Aglaophenia struthionides*:

Expressing our creativity can take on many forms. We can draw, paint, sculpt, compose music or poetry, dance, sew, knit, take photographs, make movies, drum, or sing, to give a few examples. Whatever form your creativity takes, having fun is a crucial component. Exploring our passions by allowing our ideas to flow freely is energizing and can alleviate depression and lessen feelings of anxiety. Many parts of the brain are involved as creativity is a complex function, including the frontal cortex, hippocampus, and basal ganglia, and are not solely confined to the right hemisphere. Sea Plumes are animals that have pod-like structures on their branches that surprise us when they open with their delicate, feathery beauty, similar to an ostrich's plume reminding us to have fun and express our individuality creatively.

**48. Orange.** Tidy your space. (Octopus) *Octopus dofleini*:

The octopus is a very gentle creature that lives in dens under the sea. Divers can always spot their homes by the number of discarded shells found outside their caves. With their eight arms, octopi make short work tidying their space and encourage us to do the same. When our environment is tidy and organized, our stress levels go down. Letting go of what we no longer need makes room for fresh energy and inspires us to grow as nothing holds us back from the past. Recycling also helps the planet and gives away gently-used items for others to enjoy.

**49. Red.** Walk barefoot outdoors. (Eelgrass) *Idotea resicata*:

When the air is warm, the grass invites us to walk barefoot outdoors. Feeling the earth beneath our toes helps to ground us. Walking alongside the ocean conveys the same pull and encourages us to kick off our shoes and feel the sand between our toes. This area where the water meets the land along the shore is an extraordinary zone called the littoral zone, where we will encounter the plants and animals that inhabit the four main intertidal zones depending on the level of the tide. Walking through this shallow water along the coastline is very cleansing and has healing properties by removing impurities from the body.

### **Mindfulness Attitude - Gratitude**

**50. Indigo.** Love one another. (Sea Otters) *Enhydra lutris*:

The playful sea otter is loved by many for its cute appearance and lively antics. Sea otters appear to enjoy having fun. They love to feed on sea urchins and open their shells using a rock as a tool while resting the sea urchin on their tummies. Sea otters convey the message to be kind and love one another, showing gratitude for all the wonderful people and pets in our lives.

**51. Purple.** You are safe. (Sand Dollars) *Dendraster excentricus*:

Sand Dollars can feel like velvet to the touch but are a rare find as they usually like to live submerged under the muddy sand of the lower tidal regions. They are protected, hidden under the sand where they feed on tiny diatoms. Feeling safe is crucial for all creatures, both big and small. Feeling afraid for one's safety can become overwhelming for those who have experienced trauma, so being conscious of our need for safety, first and foremost, is advisable to consider before we can trust in the process of mindfulness.

**52. Blue.** Nurture your body. (Turkish Towel) *Gigartina exasperata*:

Turkish Towel is a type of seaweed that feels rough to the touch. It can be found washed up on the shore after a winter storm and taken home by people wanting to use them as loofahs to exfoliate their skin. Their bright reddish colour makes them very appealing and eye-catching. They grow in the low tide zones and encourage us to take the time to nurture and care for our bodies. When we feel we do not have enough time for self-care, we need it the most. As they say, we cannot pour from an empty cup.

**53. Green.** Memorize musical messages. (Dolphins) *Delphinus*:

Dolphins are well-known for their love of singing to each other through a series of high-pitched whistles and clicks. They communicate through this intricate language of squeaks and even have their signature sound to identify them. Lyrics in songs can also give us important messages. Often when contemplating a decision or thinking of someone, a random song will come on the radio, and there will be a specific message in the lyrics that will apply to the situation. Being open to receiving these musical messages from the universe can be very helpful when we stop, listen, and notice. It will bring a new level of meaning to the music.

**54. Yellow.** Express your bliss. (Decorator Crab) *Oregonia gracilis*:

Decorator crabs are the showstoppers of the crustacean world! They love to adorn their shells with pieces of seaweed to blend in with their environment and avoid being seen by predators. Decorator crabs appear to have a flair for fashion and remind us to express ourselves in the way we dress to suit our personality, taste, and comfort level regardless of what is in style.

**55. Orange.** Drink more water. (Rockweed) *Fucus* sp.:

As human beings are made up of between 50 and 70 percent water (the amount fluctuates as we age and is different for men and women), we need to drink enough water for our bodies to

operate at optimal levels. Women require approximately 2.7 litres of fluids per day, while men need slightly more at 3.7 litres. Age, exercise, and the external environment all play a role in how much water we need each day. Plants and animals living in the high tide zones need to ensure that they have ways to remain hydrated when the tide recedes and are exposed to the sun's rays for extended periods. Rockweed retains moisture in their tiny sacs while the tide is out. People need to remember to bring water with them and remain hydrated to feel their best throughout the day, similar to Rockweed maintaining its water levels.

**56. Red.** Ground in nature. (Sea Lettuce) *Ulva*:

Often in our modern lives, we cannot always enjoy the beauty of nature when we would like to, depending on where we reside. It may require more effort to leave the concrete jungle of the big cities and travel to the beach, the forest, or a mountain meadow. Finding even small green spaces can be rejuvenating. We are growing plants and having container gardens or flower boxes in the city which can evoke feelings of calm and encourage butterflies and birds to visit. Walking outside during our lunch hour and enjoying the fresh air and sunshine whenever possible is incredibly beneficial. The effects of mindfulness and meditating outdoors are even more potent when we can ground ourselves in nature and connect with the Earth.

**Mindfulness Attitude - Generosity**

**57. Indigo.** Time to shine. (Abalone) *Haliotis kamtschatkana*:

Abalone has a beautiful shiny side that is often made into highly prized jewellery. It reminds us that beauty is found on the inside and is treasured rather than focused on our outer appearances. Abalone is also generous to share their precious beauty with us and help us reconnect with our treasured gifts.

**58. Purple.** Choose nourishing foods. (Bull Kelp) *Nereocystis luetkeana*:

Dulse is known for its nutritional properties and is considered a superfood. Seaweeds are filled with many essential vitamins, trace minerals, and antioxidants, primarily helping the heart and nervous system. The more conscious we are of the foods we eat, the more likely we can make healthy choices. Being present during mealtimes is another way to practice mindfulness by noticing the smells, tastes, and textures consumed while eating as many wholesome, organic ingredients as possible. If we cannot pronounce many of the ingredients listed in the foods we are considering, it is best to avoid them and choose foods that are the least processed, organic if possible, as our food fuels and sustains us.

**59. Blue.** Remember to share. (Hermit Crab ) *Pagurus granosimanus*:

Unlike most crabs, Hermit crabs have a soft abdomen. They need to borrow shells from other crabs for protection. When they outgrow their current residence, they leave it for another crab to use and move on to seek larger accommodations. As Hermit crabs are natural recyclers, we can use their example to help the environment by sharing and reusing items.

**60. Green.** Discover your passions. (Sand Nemertean) *Cerebratulus* sp.:

Discovering what makes you happy and excited to start your day is essential to helping you find your purpose in life. Listen to the whispers of your heart and freely explore your interests. Sometimes it takes a while to align with your true path. Know that everything happens in divine timing and trust that you are exactly where you need to be. Realize that there are no mistakes in life, only experiences that help us learn, encouraging us to align with our true calling at any time. The Sand Nemertean can regrow sections of its body. After a setback, we can follow their example by reinventing ourselves to pursue our true authentic passions.

**61. Yellow.** Share favourite memories. (Moon Jelly) *Aurelia aurita*:

Children always like to ask their parents to share childhood memories. Sharing funny memories with family and friends is lovely, building closeness through laughter and tears. The Moon Jelly's name is reminiscent of eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that we enjoyed as children. Savouring these special moments by inviting our children to linger in these moments of closeness strengthens our neural pathways and creates memories to last a lifetime.

**62. Orange.** Surprise a friend. (Feather Duster Tube Worm) *Schizobranchia insignis*:

Feather Duster Worms are full of surprises when they pop up from their tubular bodies. Their feathery-like boas gather tiny food particles that float through the water. They remind us to do the unexpected and share joy and laughter. Gifts are lovely, but surprises are often appreciated more because there are no expectations. They encourage us to live in the moment and enjoy being present.

**63. Red.** Empower one another. (Chiton) *Mopalia muscosa*:

Being one of the oldest tidal pool animals, Chitons symbolize strength and resilience. They have been around for millions of years and remain unchanged. From the smallest to the world's most giant Gumboot Chiton, several different chitons can be found on our West Coast in abundance. Chitons, with their eight bony plates which overlap, resemble a suit of armour. Chitons have no tentacles or eyes to see with, so they do not travel very far, often remaining in the same spot for over two decades. They do have an organ that can perceive light or darkness. They remind us to empower each other and to share our strengths.

**64 Extra Bonus Card: Rainbow Colours.** Proceed with wisdom. (Mermaid):

Mermaids are the legendary sirens of the sea. They embody the wisdom, beauty, and mystery of the ocean. Countless tales of mermaids rescuing sailors and fishermen remind us of the power of the water and to proceed with wisdom gained from our ancestors over many generations. The inclusive rainbow incorporates balanced chakras shining vividly to light up the world, inviting us to live together in loving harmony.

### Appendix C

#### **Images of the Artwork for the Cards - “*Sentiments from the Sea*” (Symington, 2022)**

Here are the images of the artwork depicted on the 64 cards. They were drawn using a combination of pencil crayons and watercolour brush tip pens. They represent the beautiful marine life that thrives on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, making it a favourite destination for divers from around the world. This incredible abundance of sea life awakens something in me. I have had the good fortune to view many of these plants and animals in person on many excursions to my favourite beaches along the fascinating West Coast. I have chosen to share this joy and love of mine with you through art and mindfulness. I hope we can mindfully enjoy these wonders of nature for many years to come!

Figures 21 - 85 inclusive:

