

Implementing the Mindfulness-based Awareness Training (MBAT) intervention

Dr Bernadette Carelse
Educational Psychologist

Holistic Education CIC
info@holisticeducation.co.uk
holisticeducation.co.uk

Mindfulness is...

“The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”



Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

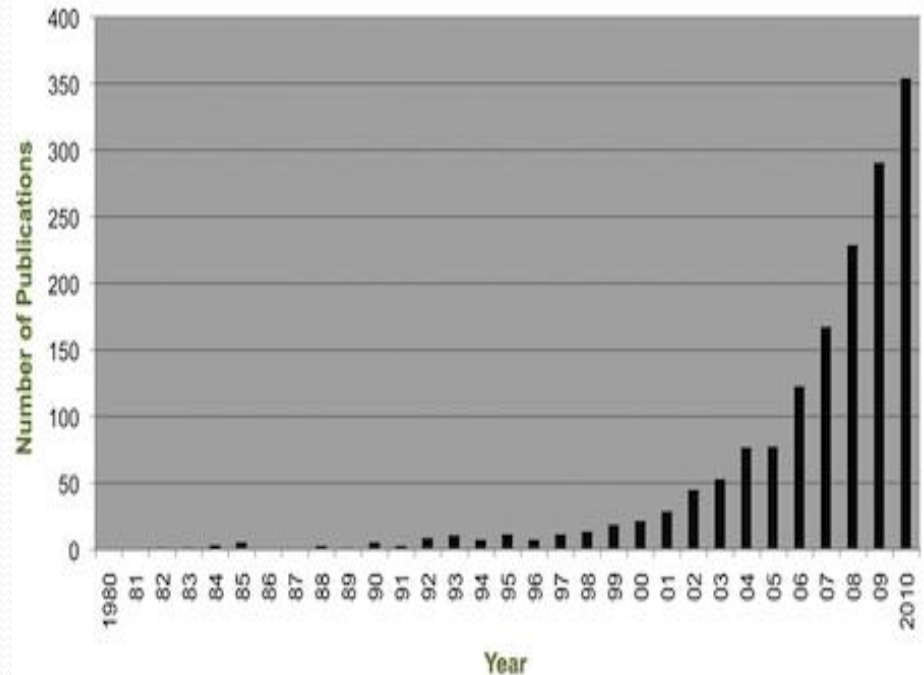
Viktor E. Frankl

Psychiatrist and Holocaust Survivor

Exponential increase in mindfulness research...

- 1960s - Boom in interest in meditation
- 1980s – first standardise secular mindfulness programme: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme
- Benefits of mindfulness:
 - Improves health and wellbeing
 - Reduces chronic pain, stress, anxiety, depression
- 2006 - Mindfulness was recommended by NHS for treatment of depression).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_j-gVnjIY&feature=youtu.be



Neuroscience and mindfulness



- Improves attention and sensory processing (Lazar et al. 2005)
- Heightened empathy and social awareness (Lutz et al., 2008)
- Improved positivity (Davidson et al., 2003)
- Improved immune response (Davidson et al., 2003)
- An improvement in stress regulation by faster reduction in the stress hormone, cortisol (Tang et al., 2007)
- Enhanced relationships by improving autonomy, closeness and acceptance of one another (Carson et al., 2004)
- Social connectedness (Hutcherson et al., 2008)

Rationale for the MBAT intervention

- Emerging evidence that it was feasible to teach mindfulness to children → and it was worthwhile:
 - Improved attentional control
 - Improved emotional regulation and well-being.
 - But, in 2009, there was no mindfulness intervention for use in schools to support children with SEN.
 - I had background training, skills and experience in this area and developed these through researching what was out there and working with/ observing/ learning from others.
- The MBAT intervention was developed!
- Aim: to explore children's experiences of mindfulness

2010: Mindfulness-based Attention Training (MBAT) Intervention

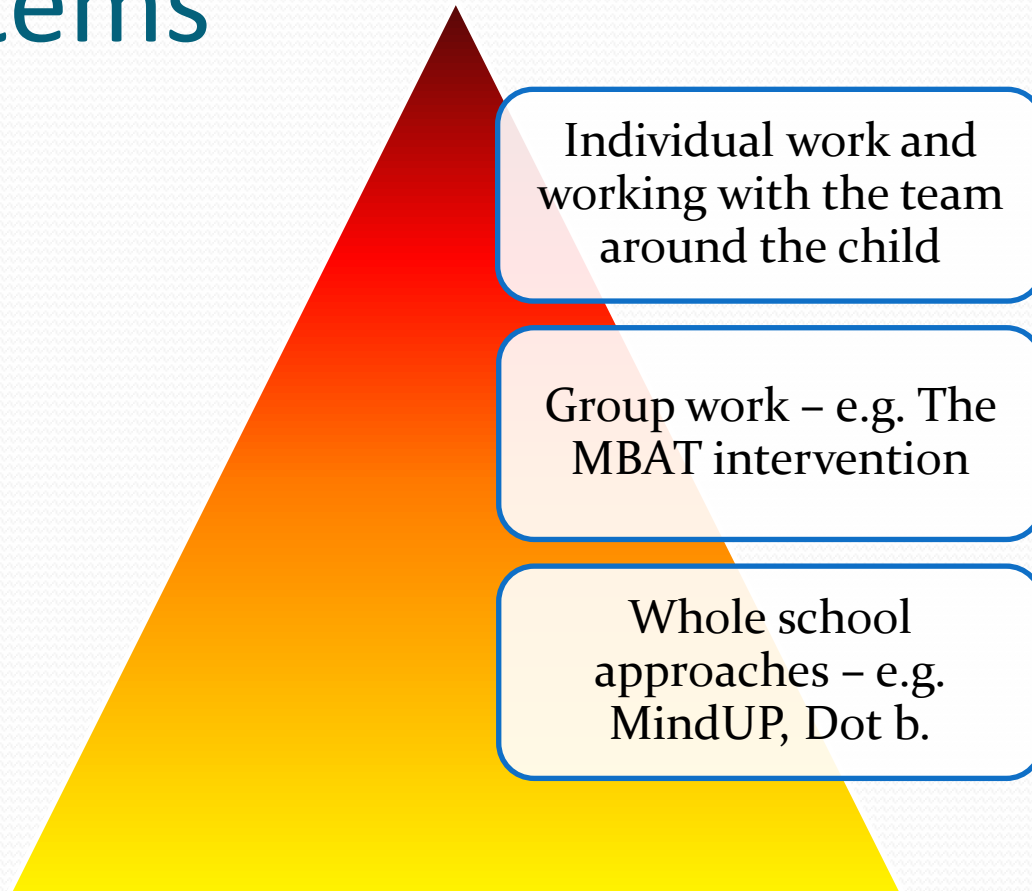
A small-group intervention for use at school action with pupils with mild attentional difficulties

- Was implemented in a mainstream primary school
- Run twice a week over 5 weeks
- Consisted of 50-minute sessions with:
 - Teaching on rational and theory
 - Opportunities to practice
 - Data collection – writing and drawing

Children's experiences of mindfulness and the intervention

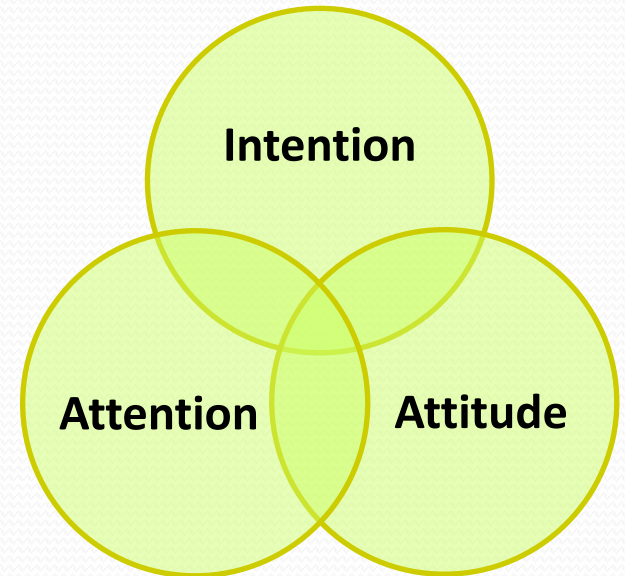
1. Their experiences of mindfulness included:
 1. Enhanced positivity
 2. Mind-wandering: fantasy and recollections.
 3. Metaphorical images for their emerging awareness of attentional processes
 4. Personalisation of strategies to enhance attentional control.
2. Their views on the intervention itself helped understand how to develop it further.
 1. Core practices
 2. Parental involvement
 3. Staff understanding

Reflection 1: How to work within school systems



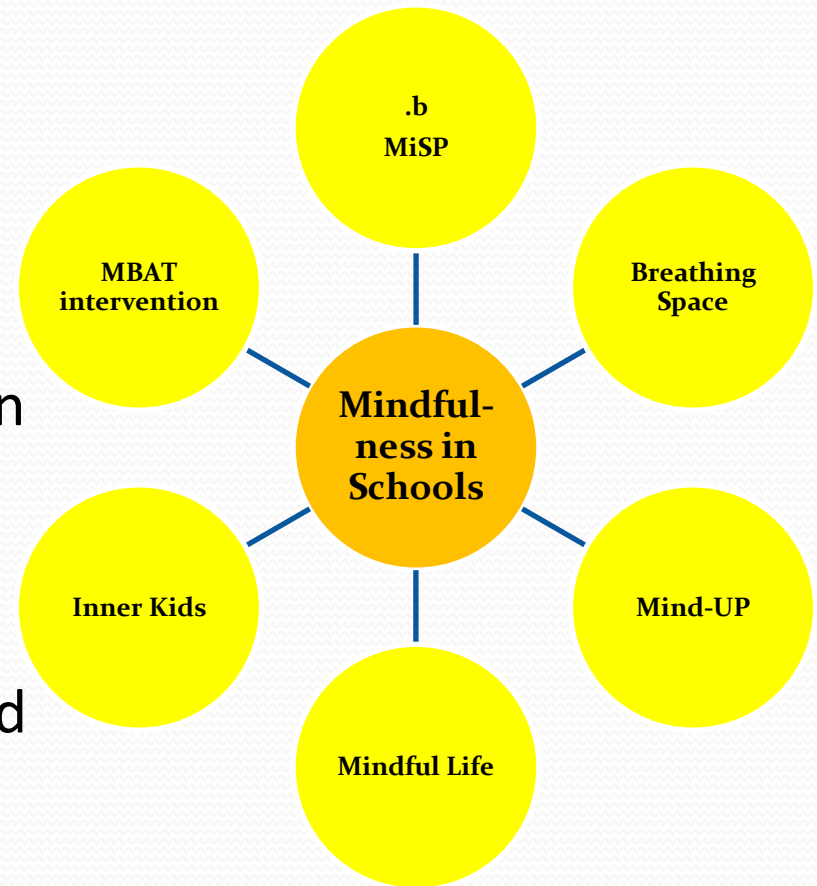
Reflection 2: How to enhance all the components of mindfulness

1. Intention to experience new possibilities
2. Discover embodiment
3. Cultivate observation
4. Move towards acceptance
5. Grow compassion



Reflection 3: How to keep up with new developments

- **“.b” by Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP)** – mindfulnessinschools.org
- **Breathing Space in Schools** – by Srivati - bodhitree.org.uk
- **Mind-Up** – Goldie Hawn Foundation www.thehawnfoundation.co.uk
- **Mindful Life** – by Dr Kristen Race www.mindfullifetoday.com
- **Inner Kids** – Susan Kaiser-Greenland “The Mindful Child” book
- **MBAT intervention** – from doctoral research – Holistic Education



Redesigned MBAT: 2013

New setting, with head teacher's approval, staff inset, MAP meetings, identification of pupils for the intervention...

1. Consultation with pupil, staff and family.
2. Individual introductory session (30 minutes) to set personal targets using a mindfulness questionnaire and solution-focused approach.
3. Group work: 5 sessions (50 minutes), weekly.
4. Individual review session (15 minutes).
5. Option to repeat the group sessions and reviews.

Followed up with: feedback/ review with pupil, school staff and family, head teacher, staff evaluation.

Reflections

The MBAT:

- Children have better engagement and motivation, because the course is personally meaning.
- Value of the drawings: the pupil's 'voice'
- Being able to communicate about mindfulness authentically - having a personal practice.
- Being adaptable to needs of those in a school.

The new context:

- Value of networking: building a team.
- Training needs of staff, families and other professionals