

We're gonna explore right now why we start with ourselves when we're practicing mindfulness. I really like the idea of personal development before professional development. So we begin with this inner work and we do the work of transformation... education as transformation. So the personal development piece. I work with a lot of schools and you know, a lot of schools reach out to me and they... very understandably they reach out and say "Hey. You know, our kids are stressed, they have ADHD, they've got all these different things..." and they see all the signs and they say "...Can you please come in and get our kids to calm down and be more present." And which is you know, of course, everybody would want that... that we know what mindfulness is like magic but that's like "Oh my God! Everything that's bad, regulates you know and everything that's good it strengthens." But the piece of it is that it's not... it's not just like a pill that you can swallow. You actually have to practice, diligently to be able to do it. You, as the teacher, and the kids. You have to look in to what's going on inside in order to have the desired effect. You know, all of these researches coming out about how mindfulness is actually more effective than anti-depressants with long term depression, right. It's an amazing research but it's not that... it's not like one pill or the other. You get the effect when you sit regularly and you actually look inside and do the introspective work.

And so, what we will need to do with these schools, when they reach out to me is generally I say "Yes, I would love to come and work with your school but I... I'm gonna start with the teachers. Let's spend some time, just doing some mindfulness trainings, some emotional-intelligence training, some communication training. Like if you want your classrooms to be calm and connected. How about the faculty room, can we get you know, that group to connect with each other and not be so hostile. Maybe that'll have an effect. And that happens over and over again. That's some people have been saying, yea right. There's a research project recently where they were teaching mindfulness to the caregivers of kids with autism and then studying the effects for the teachers or the caregivers. But they are also studying the effect on the kids with autism. And there's a measurable effect of how...when the caregiver is regulated, you know taking care of a kid with autism. You know, when the caregiver is disregulated, what does the kid do in that situation. They need a regulated caregiver, right. It's like if you're the captain of a ship and you're freaking out like "Where are we going?! Where we gonna hit..." you

know like that, you're fellow seamen are not going to feel very safe, right. They need somebody who feels like "Yeah. We got this." So that's where we're starting. There's a lot of research coming out, Tish Jennings is doing amazing research on this. Researching teachers, practicing mindfulness just themselves, Tish Jennings. She has written a bunch of books. Most recent one is Mindfulness for Teachers, I believe...I believe she's at the University of Virginia. But yeah, a lot of great research around. Just the teachers practicing and that inner practice, that we're doing now, creating a transformative effect for the kids, right.

Here, a couple of years ago when I was leading this same training, there was a participant who...when we're doing the mindfulness practices, she said to me...she said "Every time we are sitting, like I just you know, in my mind I imagine myself down in those hot tubs, looking at the dolphins and the whales. And like, why shouldn't I do that? It's boring up here, we're just sitting here. Why shouldn't I just be like fantasizing about something better?" and like that, it's a great question. Yeah, why not? Why not just like fantasize about something cool? Why just sit here in this like boring experience you know. And so I asked her, which is the kind of mindful way, I inquired. It's like "Ah. It sounds like you're really appreciating...getting to sit and look at the ocean...the dolphins and whales..." and she was like "Actually, it's really frustrating like I'm down there and everybody else is spotting whales and dolphins, but I'm so worried about my daughter who's back at home, who's doing all these things like I keep being distracted and like I'm not seeing the whales and the dolphins. It's so frustrating." Right, it's like you go and you spend all your money and take a vacation and you lay on the beach and you can't...still can't actually settle. So my explanation with that was, this is about learning to be present to your life, right. We're practicing here so you can be present there. Like you'll see more dolphins if you were able to watch your breath, right. The more breaths that you can watch, the more dolphins you can watch. And it's an interesting one to look into. That's so easy for us to want to go out and like why look inside, why be present to this...so we can be present to that. We need to do this in our work.

So the thing about it is...the major aspect of what mindfulness is introspection, right. Which is a huge thing to actually look inside. It's not what we're taught, generally,

in our culture. And the difficulty with introspection is there's parts of introspection which are inherently vulnerable. To look inside is looking at this backlog of emotions that we usually try to look away from. So you stop, you look in, you're kind of tying yourself to the mess where you're saying "Okay, I'm just gonna be with what is...", when we do that, when we open the view...the mindful view "Ah, there's some discomfort in my back, there's some anxiousness in my heart."

There's also types of great things you know, like all of a sudden you're more present when you see the stars or you see a beautiful tree or your breath feels relaxed but when you open to one of them, you have to open to all of them, right. It's not...sometimes we view mindfulness and it's easy to think like "Oh, mindfulness is about being relaxed and happy." But if you're really present to relax and happy, you're also present to stress and sad. Like it's like "Oh wow! Hoooh I'm really stressed," that's being mindful.

I'm very often...I go into a classroom and I end...when I say "the best answer is the right...is the true answer...", I really mean that. Like I ask kids, you know, "What's happening?" and very often that kid says...if kids learned mindfulness before, their answer is like "I'm happy and relaxed." I don't actually know if that's honest or if that's them like having heard that mindfulness means being happy and relaxed. So I'm really like...I really wanna know. Let's like really get in there. Stop and notice your mind, your heart and you know kids will say "I feel really like mindfulness is like...makes me feel really annoyed and angry. I really don't like this." I'm like "Wow, you're doing mindfulness really well. You're really noticing." What do you think that's about that you'd stop for one minute...we stop and we look inside and feel all this energy and it feels really bad. That's really interesting, don't you think that's interesting. That you know we have a minute just to relax and we stop and there's all these commotion. Why do you think there's so much commotion in there? That type of question for me, that's the need for mindfulness. Let's actually do some kind of healing, some learning, some working with the internal states of mind and body and heart.