

Teaching Mindfulness

Integrating Prevention & Intervention

Illinois Behavioral Health
Annual Conference
September 4, 2024

Brenda Nelson, DSW, LCSW
Prevention & Wellness Coordinator-
Libertyville High School
Therapist- BZA Behavioral Health

A photograph of a gravel path winding through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The path is made of light-colored gravel and leads into the distance, flanked by mossy ground and tree trunks. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

What brought you to this session?

People hear about mindfulness and meditation, but often are left to apps (e.g., Calm, Insight Timer, Ten Percent Happier, etc.), books, or their own guessing to learn how. This session will make a case for the importance of the practitioner's own use of mindfulness practice, and then discuss how an accessible, well-designed mindfulness program can be effective with adolescents in any setting (classroom, small group, or individual), or with adults in recovery. Participants will learn about a program called Learning to Breathe, by Patricia Broderick, PhD, and the research that supports its use and effectiveness in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.

My influences (what are yours?)

- Trish Broderick - Learning to BREATHE author
- Pema Chodron
- Tara Brach
- Dan Harris
- Amishi Jha
- Mark Epstein, MD - Zen of Therapy

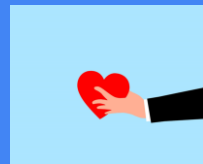


Mindfulness - what are we talking about?

Definition

Paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally (Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Noticing what is happening right now, without making up a story about what you're experiencing (Amishi Jha)







**Does a personal mindfulness
practice really matter?**

Just start.

**Then, start
again.**

And again.

- Just sit
- Breathe
- Notice
- Pay attention to
your attention
- Be gentle
- Keep coming back

Methods for Mindfulness Practices

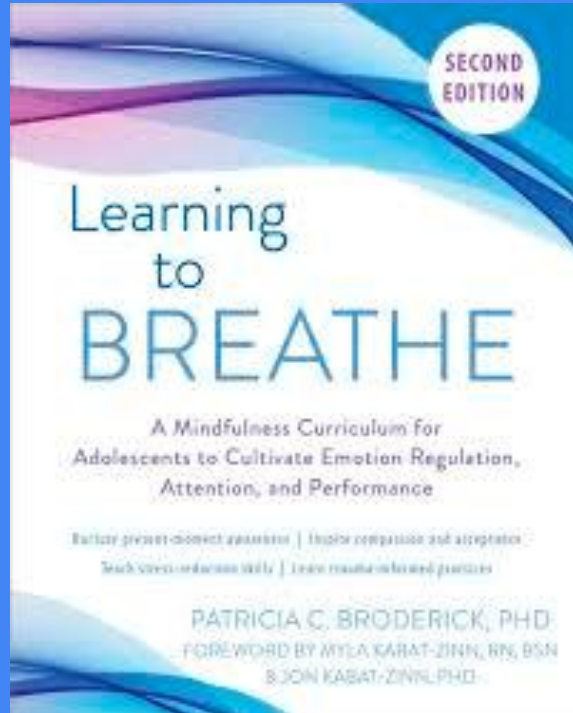
- Find a training
- Go on a meditation retreat
- Dial into a teacher or app you like
- Make the time - it won't just appear
- Make it a daily thing
- Resist overthinking it
- Find an accountability partner



BENEFITS

- Less hijacked by well-worn thoughts habits
- Improved emotion management
- Clearer seeing
- More present
- More compassion

Learning to BREATHE



By Patricia Broderick, PhD

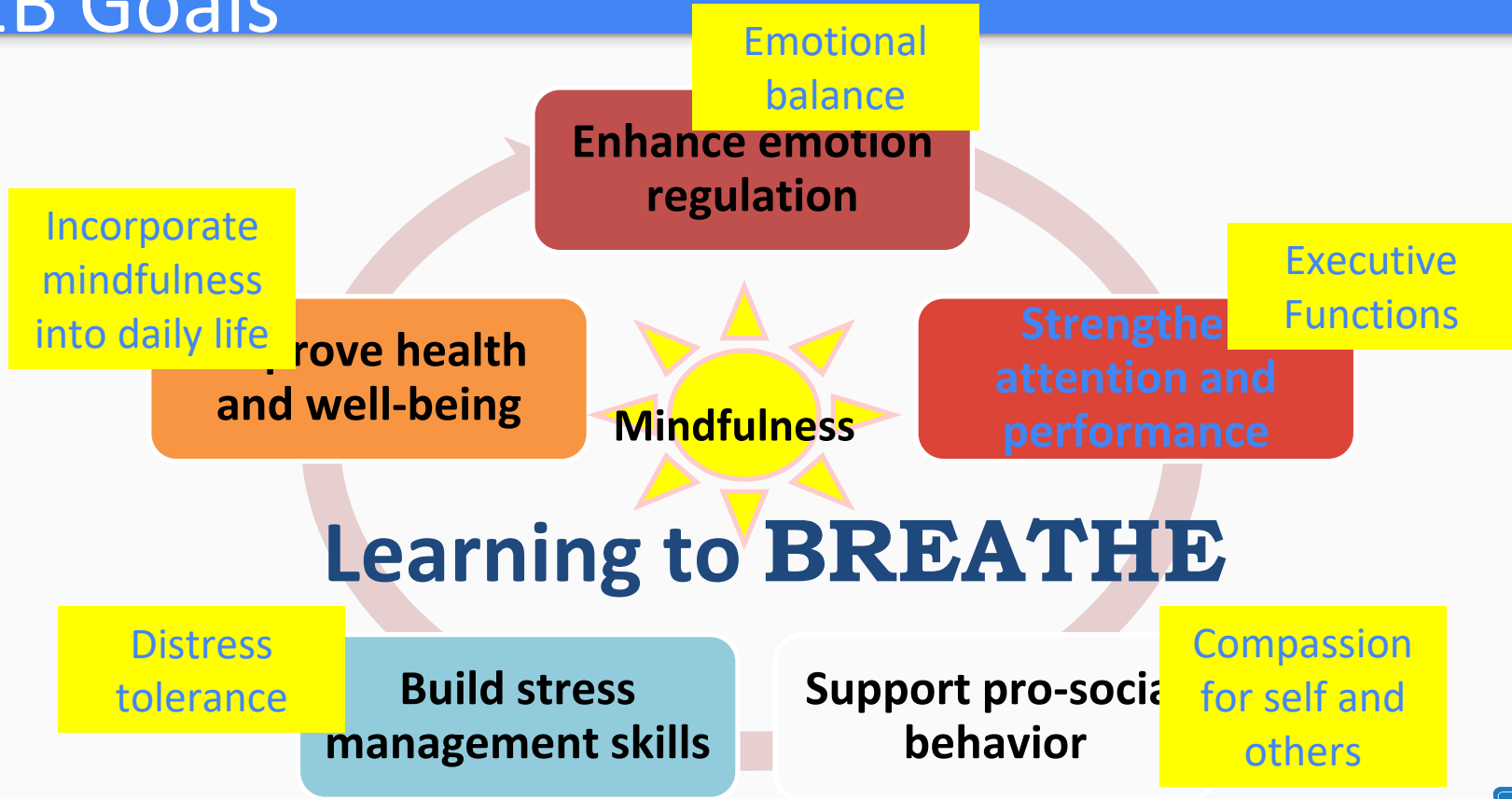
Research studies in all tiers
of intervention:
See learning2breathe.org

Mindfulness goes to school

	Practices	Programs
Individual Classrooms or Groups (Targeted)	Teacher guides students in belly breathing before lesson.	Teacher implements a sequenced program in her/his classroom.
Whole grade or school wide (Universal)	Short practice delivered on daily announcements.	School implements a sequenced program in a whole grade.

Most Research;
SAFE
guidelines





Find ways to practice **mindful attention** in every aspect of your life.

H (Healthy Habits of Mind)

In addition to reducing stress through mindfulness, we can **train attention** through practice of healthy mind habits, such as kindness and compassion, which lead to greater balance. Stress comes from external and internal events. **Paying attention** to body, thoughts, & feelings mindfully can reduce chronic stress.

T (Tenderness)

A (Attention)

E (Emotions)

Emotions are like energy surges. We can mindfully **pay attention** to them, notice if they are pleasant or unpleasant, and not cover them up.

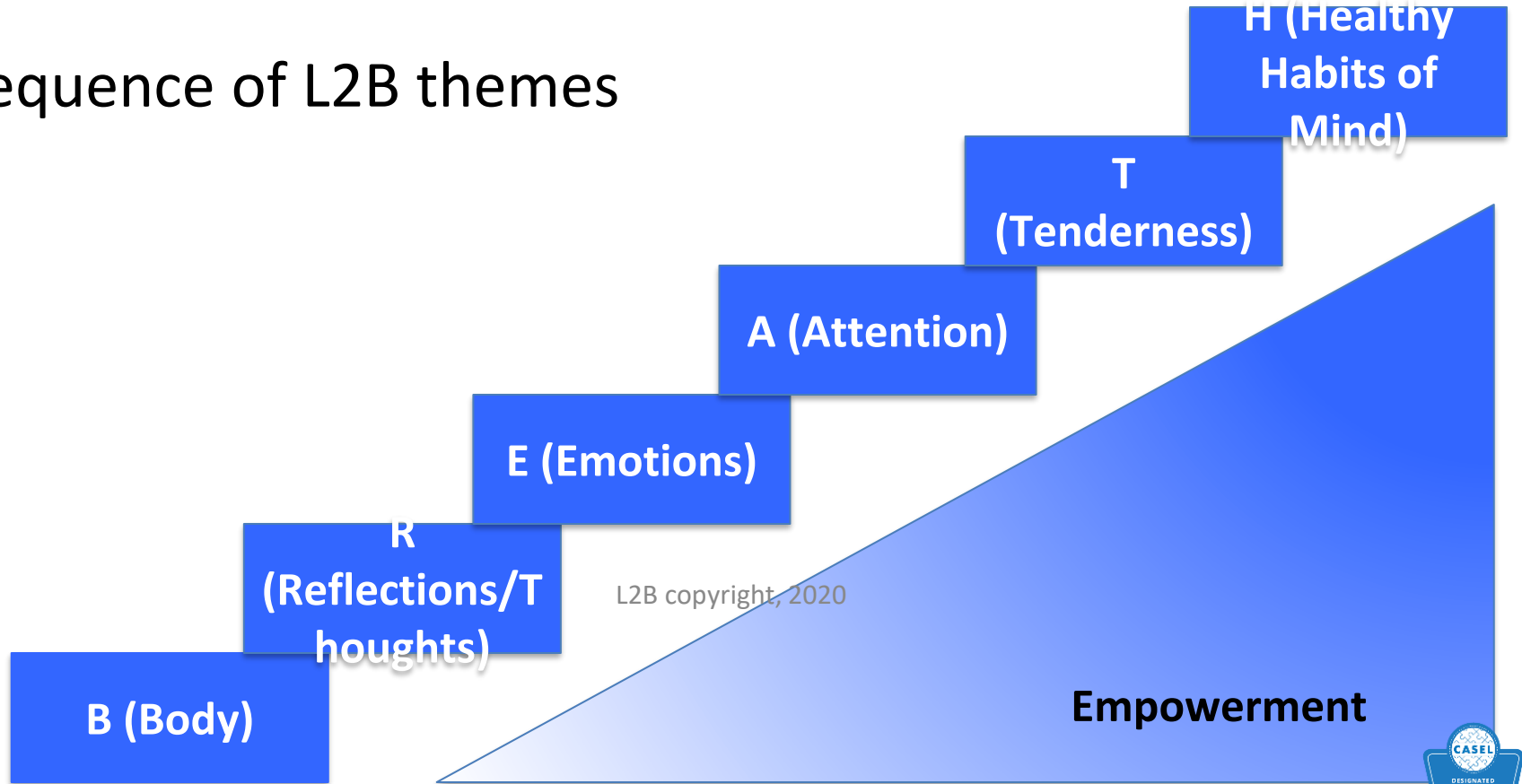
R (Reflections/Thoughts)

The mind constantly chatters. We can handle the chattering mind by mindfully **paying attention** to thoughts and watching them come and go.

B (Body)

Mindfulness is a way of **paying attention** with interest and mindlessness is inattention. We can start to practice mindfulness by paying attention to simple things in life and to what's happening in the body.

Sequence of L2B themes



L2B Session Structure:

Practice, Activities, Practice- 6, 12, 18 sessions

Short
mindfulness
Practice

Review of
Themes

Introduction
to
New Theme



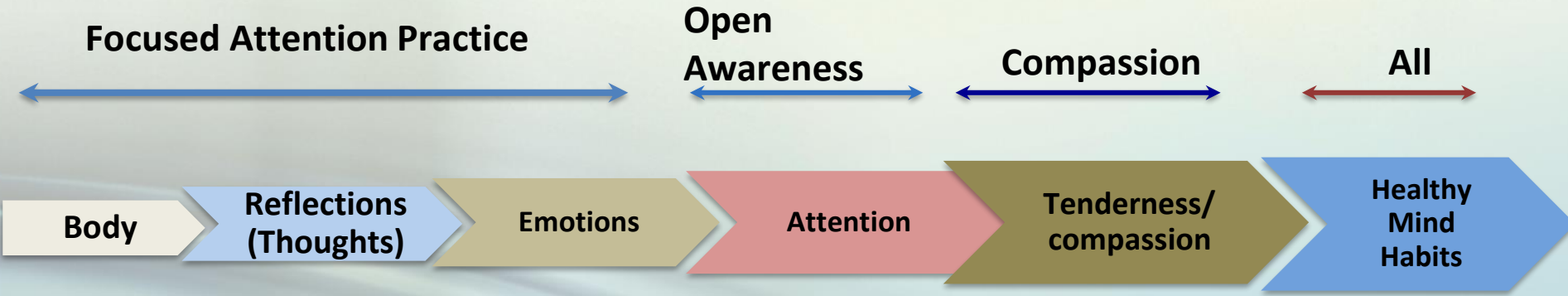
Activities
and
Discussion



Longer
Mindfulness
Practice

Invitation to
Home Practice





LEARNING TO BREATHE

L2B copyright, 2020

Gaining the inner edge.

see Lutz, Slaughter, Dunne & Davidson, 2008



Summary of Studies

(Published, Peer-reviewed with controls)

Setting	Citation	Outcomes (Increases)	Outcomes (Decreases)
Private High School Pennsylvania	Broderick & Metz, 2009	Calmness; self acceptance	Tiredness, aches and pains
Public High School Pennsylvania	Frank et al, 2013	Self-efficacy; Emotion regulation	Perceived stress; Somatic symptoms
Alternative High School Kentucky	Bluth et al, 2015	Credibility of mindfulness program compared to current curriculum	Depression, Anxiety
Public High School California	Fung et al, 2016		Parent-reported behavior problems; Student reported internalizing problems, emotion suppression); 3 month follow-up

L2B copyright, 2020



Setting	Citation	Outcomes (Increases)	Outcomes (Decreases)
PA Public University, Undergraduates	Dvorakova et al, 2017	Life Satisfaction, Sleep Quality	Anxiety, Depression, Lower Alcohol Peak, Fewer alcohol consequences
Alternative High School (17-20 yr old males) Washington	Eva & Thayer, 2017	Self-Esteem, ER, attention; Acceptable	Perceived Stress
12-17 yr old girls at risk for depression & diabetes Colorado	Shomaker et al, 2017	CBT and L2B -both acceptable	L2B –greater reductions in insulin resistance at posttest and 6 mo follow-up compared to CBT
Public University, Pennsylvania	Kerr, Lucas et al, 2017	Emotional clarity and improved emotion regulation	Shielded from increases in depression

L2B copyright 2016



Setting	Citation	Outcomes (Increases)	Outcomes (Decreases)
Public High School, California- public schools- Vietnamese and Latino students with elevated symptoms	Fung et al, 20	Emotion expression, cognitive reappraisal	Rumination, emotion suppression, perceived stress
Public High School, At risk youth New York	Felver et al, 2018	Stable Resilience	Decreased resilience over time compared to intervention group
Public High School, PA	Frank et al, 2020	Improved executive functions	No changes on self-report measures
College (first year) students enrolled in a positive psychology class who received L2B, Missouri	Braver et al, 2020	Trait mindfulness, life satisfaction	Anxiety

L2B copyright, 2020



Case Study - Nathaniel

History

- 50s
- First course of treatment - age 15
- Significant interaction with legal system
- AA participant for 20+ years
- Primary presenting clinical issue: anger
- 2nd attempt at individual therapy

“We sought through prayer & meditation...”

Strengths:

Regular AA attendance - sponsor and sponsees

Recognition of ego interferences

Familiar with prayer

Strong awareness of need for the tool of meditation

Open!

“We sought through prayer & meditation...”

Therapy approach with *Learning to BREATHE*:

- Stayed with guided discovery pedagogy
- Adapted lessons for 1:1 virtual sessions
- Recorded meditations each session and sent them via text
- Used as language for therapy, with flexibility
- Revisited themes as needed, adding in Person Just Like Me

“We sought through prayer & meditation...”

Results - 18 months in

- Greatly reduced anger
- Verbalized awareness of emotions
- Recognition of unhelpful thought patterns
- GRATITUDE
- Improved family relationships
- Continues to ask to meditate in sessions - fine tuning, particularly with mindfulness of thoughts

What I've learned:

- One size does not fit all
- Not all clients are ready
- Provides me a structure that serves as undercurrent to my therapy approach
- How mindfulness normalizes the human experience of “monkey mind”
- Mindfulness can serve as a strong tool for therapeutic connection

Summary

- **Defined meditation**
- **Moving from auto-pilot to empowerment**
- **Why a personal practice is essential**
- **The value of a research-based prevention program that has a structure and pedagogy that respects inquiry - guided discovery**
- **Described the Learning to BREATHE program**
- **Described case of Nathaniel - using L2B as intervention tool**

Questions?

Contact info:

Brenda Nelson

- LinkedIn
- brenda.nelson@d128.org