



MINDFULNESS RESEARCH TRIAL: **Introduction and Information sheet for school students**

Students in your class are being asked to take part in a research project to help find out whether we can measure something called “mindfulness”, which is linked to mental health and wellbeing. This will help us develop programmes to prevent conditions like anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

In term 2 this year, all students in your class will be asked to complete questionnaires, which take about 20 minutes, on one or two occasions. The questionnaires ask about things like your mood, worry and stress levels, thoughts about your body, and the way you pay attention. Example questions include “When I am upset, I acknowledge my emotions”, “How often over the past week, have you felt down-hearted and blue?”, “When I am upset, it takes me a long time to feel better” and “In the past year, how often has your weight made a difference in how you feel about yourself?”.

At the start of the questionnaires, you will be asked to sign an “assent” form if you are happy for your questionnaire answers to be used in our research. Once we collect the questionnaires, your answers will be anonymous and confidential.

We think that being part of this project will be fun and interesting for you, but sometimes it can feel a little uncomfortable answering questions about how you feel about yourself. If filling out the questionnaires brings up some troubling thoughts, and you would like to discuss these issues with someone, you can speak to your teacher or parents, or alternatively see your school counsellor, call the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, or speak to your family doctor.

If you have any further questions about this project, you are welcome to ask your teacher, principal, or contact the supervisors on this project, Catherine Johnson, directly by email as per below or by ringing the Psychology office on the number at the top of this letter.

Dr Catherine Johnson, PhD
Catherine.johnson@flinders.edu.au

Ms Marcela Radunz
Radu0009@flinders.edu.au

MINDFULNESS RESEARCH TRIAL:

Introduction and Information sheet for parents:

What is the purpose of the research?

This research is part of a 4-year study investigating the use of mindfulness as a programme to help reduce anxiety, depression, stress and eating disorders and increase student well being.

What does this research involve?

Students will be asked to do an online questionnaire on one occasion that takes about 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaires involve questions regarding mood, worry and stress levels, body image and mindfulness. Example questions include “When I am upset, I acknowledge my emotions”, “I break or spill things because my thoughts are elsewhere”, “I push away thoughts that I don’t like”, “When I am upset, it takes me a long time to feel better” and “How often over the past week, have you felt down-hearted and blue?”. We would like to use the results from the questionnaires in our research so we can determine if and how we can measure different aspects of mindfulness. These include skills such as being aware of emotions, being able to step back from distressing thoughts, and having a friendly, self-compassionate attitude to oneself rather than the all too common harsh self-criticism.

The results from the questionnaires are anonymous. A list of support options is provided in the information sheet given to all students in the unlikely event that the process of students answering questions about how they feel about themselves raises any concerns.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a secular (non-religious) and scientific approach to increase mental resilience and happiness. The programme sits harmoniously alongside any religious approach. Mindfulness involves learning to switch mental gears from our tendency to “live in our heads” (in the past and future) and instead become fully aware of what is happening in the present (both internally, with our thoughts and feelings, as well as external events). This way we can change from reacting habitually to things in automatic pilot mode (mindlessness), and instead pause, see clearly what is actually happening, and make conscious, skillful choices about our actions. Mindfulness also involves fostering an attitude of curiosity, non-judgement and self-kindness (rather than harsh self-criticism). Mindfulness also increases the capacity to tolerate intense emotions without resorting to avoidant or other unhelpful behaviour.

Research over the last 30 years show consistent benefits from the adult mindfulness programmes for stress, anxiety, depression and chronic pain. Mindfulness for youth is a much newer field but evidence is emerging for positive benefits. This research is the first step in a trial that will add to the evidence regarding the usefulness of this approach in a school based setting.

Who is doing this research?

The research is being undertaken by Marcela Radunz, a Psychology Honours student under supervision of Dr Catherine Johnson, at Flinders University.

Participation is voluntary

Please note that your child may not directly benefit from taking part in this research. Your child's participation in the study is entirely voluntary and no reason needs to be given if they don't wish to take part on the day of collection. Survey data is anonymous once collected. In accordance with usual practice, study results (non-identified questionnaire data) become the property of the researchers and will be published in scientific journals at a later date. The school will also receive the results of the research upon the study's completion to disseminate to parents.

How do I agree to, or opt out of, participation?

If you are happy for your child's questionnaire data to be used for this project, there is no need to take any action.

If you are **not** willing for your child to participate, or your child does not wish to participate it is easy to opt out by one of the following options:

- Letting your child's teacher know by email or by sending the OPT OUT form at the end of this information sheet
- Emailing the principal supervisor directly via Catherine.johnson@flinders.edu.au

Please note that:

- Whether your child participates or not, or withdraws after participating, will have no effect on his/her progress in his/her course of study, or results gained.
- Your child may withdraw at any time from the study without disadvantage simply by alerting the teacher or researcher
- Your child is free to decline to answer particular questions

Questions about this project?

Should you have any questions about the project before, during or after the study, you are welcome to contact Catherine Johnson in the School of Psychology at Flinders University as per the email addresses below. Please keep this information sheet for reference, but if you need another copy, simply ask your child's teacher to let the researcher know.

Thank you for your time.

Dr Catherine Johnson, PhD
Research Fellow
Catherine.johnson@flinders.edu.au

Ms Marcela Radunz
Radu0009@flinders.edu.au



College of Education, Psychology & Social Work
Sturt Road
Bedford Park SA 5042
Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: +61 8 8201-3784
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

**PARENTAL AND STUDENT “OPT OUT” FORM
FOR RESEARCH
(By experiment)**

Please note: If you are happy for your child’s questionnaire data to be used for this research project, there is no need to return this form or take any action.

If you **DO NOT** wish for your child’s questionnaire data to be used, please complete and sign the following and return to your child’s class teacher. Alternatively, you may email your child’s teacher or the principal researcher, Catherine Johnson, directly via Catherine.johnson@flinders.edu.au

I, being over the age of 18 years **DO NOT CONSENT** for my child

..... to participate as requested in the Information Sheet to allow use of the results from their assessment questionnaire as part of the research project on improving wellbeing in adolescents (Mindfulness in Schools Programme).

1. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the information sheet and opt out form for future reference
2. I understand that
 - Whether my child participates or not, or withdraws after participating, will have no effect on his/her progress in his/her course of study, or results gained.
 - My child may withdraw at any time from the programme without disadvantage.

Parent/Guardian signature

Date.....