



UMS Counseling/Guidance News

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Go Cougars!

From the desk of . . . *Corie Gaylord, Director of Student Academic and Counseling Services:*

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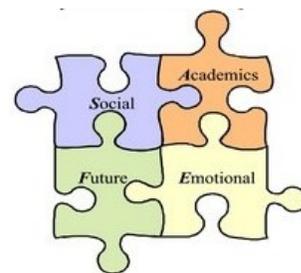
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It's hard to believe that it is already November and we are at the end of the first marking period.

Students have adjusted well to life in 7th and 8th grade and it is so rewarding to watch them grow academically, emotionally, and socially.

Back to school night was very successful with a great turnout. Thank you, parents!

Our next Parent Education Series presentation will be "Being an Inclusive Community." There will be a presentation by The People Project (an MHS student group) and a panel discussion. Please submit questions for the panel in advance [on this form](#). For additional information and resources go to the [District Counseling/Guidance website](#).



Fitting the Pieces Together

Important Dates:

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Nov 19: Parent Education Series: "Being an Inclusive Community" MHS MPAC 7pm

Dec 11: Vo-tech staff and students visit with 8th graders during flex assembly

Jan (date TBD) Interested 8th graders visit SCVTHS campus for tour (info about programs at www.scvths.org)

Parent Conferences:

Nov 15: afternoon & evening
Nov 16 & 19: afternoon only

Early dismissal: during conference days and Nov 20

Happy Thanksgiving!

Please continue to visit the UMS Counseling/Guidance [website](#) for valuable information and resources.

UMS Counselors

Grade 7: Jeanne Fedun
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Grade 8: Allison Doyle Smith
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Also part of the counseling team:
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Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is to always try one more time.

~Thomas Edison,
Inventor

The Mindful Minute

The little things? The little moments? They aren't little.

– Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness. It's a buzzword we see and hear more and more often in all aspects of life, from business leadership and education, to wellness apps that help us be mindful. Even bags of popcorn claim to be mindful these days!

Seeing this word show up on social media feeds, as well as in the news, in so many different forms - often misused, misinterpreted, or watered down for mainstream-sake, has made me realize the importance of keeping the basic principle of mindfulness at the forefront of my mind.

So what is mindfulness? My favorite definition of mindfulness is from Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of MBSR:
"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."

I love the focus on this idea of purposeful attention. We have no problem paying attention to what's happening around us, but how often do we pay attention *on purpose*? *Our attention can drift from one thing to the next without us even noticing that it's happening. As a high-tech-low-engagement society, we also have a tendency to focus on whatever takes up the most the space with the least amount of effort - the bigger, louder, more dramatic and altogether mindless, the better!*

Our own thoughts play this role regularly. The trouble is that our thoughts are rarely based in the present moment - or reality. Our thoughts tend to focus on the past or the future, and are constructed with deeply rooted stories containing our beliefs and value systems. For example, when we begin to notice our thoughts many of us notice they tend to concern themselves with an event that has caused us discomfort, which can lead us to start the cycle of replaying stories of what we would have, could have, or should have done. Similarly, we can find ourselves focused on an upcoming event, which drives our thoughts to paint elaborate pictures of what the experience could or should be. This is not to say that there's anything wrong with reflecting on the past or thoughtfully planning for our future. Mindfulness helps us notice if and when our thoughts are *on purpose, as opposed to if and when our mind is obsessively ruminating or planning for unrealistic expectations.*

The last part of Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness really captures the basis of mindfulness; nonjudgement. For me, this seemingly simple word is often the most challenging part of mindfulness. When I teach my students about non-judgement, we talk about the way a scientist observes something under a microscope and then describes its color, shape, texture, etc.. When scientists observe, they objectively describe what they see, listing concrete details rather than subjectively, or emotionally, attaching it as something that is 'good' or 'bad'.

We can practice this in our lives, too, by noticing what is happening and identifying it just as it is. It is the idea of allowing all things to be in our experience without pushing it away or assigning judgement or value. Let's start with a simple 2-minute practice to help you be more present in this moment. The best part is you can literally do this right now, just as you are!

Let's begin. Set a timer with a gentle and pleasant alarm for 2 minutes. Find a comfortable place to sit. You may sit on the floor or in a chair, but wherever you are, sit up tall with a strong and neutral spine. Bring all your attention to your breath and focus on the sensations in your body as you gently breathe in and out. Notice your thoughts and feelings as you continue to breathe deeply. Whenever you notice your mind wandering, smile, because simply noticing your thoughts and feelings means you're being mindful! Be kind and gentle with yourself, inviting breath to fill your lungs and fuel your body with much-needed oxygen. You can use your breath as a focal point, returning to when you need. Continue noticing your breath, as well as your thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations until your timer goes off. To close your practice mindfully, take a moment to invite natural movement back into your body. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Roll your wrists and ankles, and make time to release tension from your head, neck, and shoulders. Stretch deeply. Take a huge breath and audibly sigh. Challenge yourself to hold this sense of purposeful awareness, perhaps coming back to your breath throughout the day.

*If you are comfortable to do so, you can continue this exercise with your eyes closed.

Stefanie Lachenauer is a certified MBSR-T instructor, graduate of the Mindful Schools Mindful Teacher program and certified yoga teacher. She currently teaches Character College and Career Readiness and Global Leadership at UMS where she weaves mindfulness into her classes.
