

**Statement of Investigation: Using mindful pausing in the classroom.****Lauren Clark****Group 1G*****Rationale***

As part of the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) programme established by the Scottish government, emotional and mental wellbeing is an increasingly important part of the curriculum. It is necessary that children are aware of the wellbeing indicators and have the right support and strategies in place to ensure they get the help and support they need. This means that as well as adults having the responsibility, they have ways of handling different real-life scenarios themselves (Scottish Government, 2014).

Additionally, members of the subject class have expressed worries and concerns about their current academic status as well as other anxieties. To help them adapt and cope in these situations, it is important that they are explicitly taught strategies to ensure they are able to adapt and cope. Having witnessed many disputes among the subject class it has been noticed that their focus and concentration have significantly been affected. Therefore, it is important that at this stage, in preparation for their transition to secondary school, children are secure in managing emotions and have strategies to maintain their wellbeing. These can support them to embrace change and challenge with optimism, develop emotional resilience in dealing with challenging situations and aid their concentration (Scottish Government, 2006).

A recent poll has found that children living in low income households are three times more likely to suffer mental health problems than their more affluent peers (Audit General for Scotland and The Accounts Commission, 2018). Within the education system every child and young person should have access to mental well-being support in school. This is core to the curriculum and is the responsibility of all staff within schools. It is expected that school staff ensure children and young people are included, engaged and involved in their education as this is fundamental to achievement in school (Healthier Scotland: The Scottish Government, 2017). In a document by Smarter Scotland, it highlights the belief of the Scottish Government that through achieving better outcomes for children and young people in Health and Wellbeing it should contribute to improvements in literacy and numeracy (Smarter Scotland: The Scottish Government, 2018).

***Aims***

Through this practitioner enquiry the aim was to establish if carrying out mindful pausing in the classroom impacts on the focus and achievement of the pupils in the subject class. By implementing this technique at the beginning of the day and throughout if necessary. Particularly when the children need to refocus their energy. It was to be established if they could begin and/or return to their classwork refreshed and ready to learn.

## ***Methodology***

The research was conducted over a four-week period with a class of twenty-three Primary 7 pupils. Health and Wellbeing was chosen as the focus for teaching the mindful pause strategies, with the intention of the skills being transferable into other curricular areas and everyday life.

The data was collected from:

- Professional judgement
- Pupil voice (exit slip/post-it)
- Questionnaire

### Professional Judgement

In week one the pupils were provided with an explanation of what mindful pausing is and how it can benefit them. They discussed how they struggle to settle in the morning and focus on their work. In addition, they thought about what they already know about mindfulness and how it is important to maintain healthy mental well-being. They discussed issues and concerns they had as a whole class and looked at topical news articles.

### Pupil Voice

Over the four weeks the pupils engaged in whole class mindful pausing. Each pupil received a colourful post-it where they wrote their name, date and words BEFORE and AFTER.

- BEFORE allowed the pupils to write down how they were feeling at that precise moment before the mindful pause took place. Pupils would then be advised on the position they should adapt for the mindful pause; sitting up straight with their bottom and back securely in the seat, feet planted to the floor, palms resting on their lap or table facing up to release any negative energy. Eyes should be closed in order for them to concentrate on their breathing and focus their minds.

The class teacher would then use her voice to talk the children through the mindful pause, similar to meditation, they would then be read an inspirational quote. (Appendix 1)

Afterwards, there would be a discussion on the 'Thought of the Day' that was shared, what they inferred from it and why they thought it was used. The class teacher was also able to use their professional judgement during this time.

- AFTER was then used to express how they felt following their participation in the mindful pause. If for any reason throughout the day the teacher felt the pupils lacked focus, the lesson or activity would be paused and the strategy would be adopted for a maximum of 10 minutes.

### Questionnaire

Class teacher observations were recorded for pupils who lacked focus, used mindful pausing, and how this impacted on their focus. In addition, work within jotters was used to measure the level of focus in children after using a mindful pause. Finally, at the end of the study, the class were given a questionnaire to measure how they felt about mindful pausing and if it positively impacted their focus. (Appendix 2)

**Findings**

In the below figures it is evident that the mindful pause had a positive effect on a significant number of children in the subject class. From Figure 1 it can be seen that more than half of the children involved in the study felt that it was difficult for them to pay attention to one thing at a time. Figure 2 also shows that they find it difficult to focus on the present. They dwell on the past and have said that they are anxious about future events, such as their transition to secondary school.

The children were taught how to use mindful pause through health and wellbeing lessons. After each morning mindful pause, the children would identify how focussed they felt for the day ahead. Through class observations the teacher would recognise if the children had become restless and lacked focus during learning. The learning would be stopped, “paused” and mindful pause would take place. When everyone seemed refocused, they would continue with the lesson. Figure 4 clearly shows the children felt more focused afterwards.

Over the duration of the four-week study, the class teacher observed children showing an increase in focus after using mindful pausing, which included the following strategies; breathing, encouragement and meditation. It is clear from the findings in Figure 3, where 90% of the class enjoyed the pause, either always or most of the time, with just 10% of children stating they only enjoyed it sometimes. 10% of the class said they can still become distracted, 33% said sometimes and a substantial 57% said not often after taking part in this study (Figure 7). These results are very positive and encouraging.



Figure 1

Figure 2

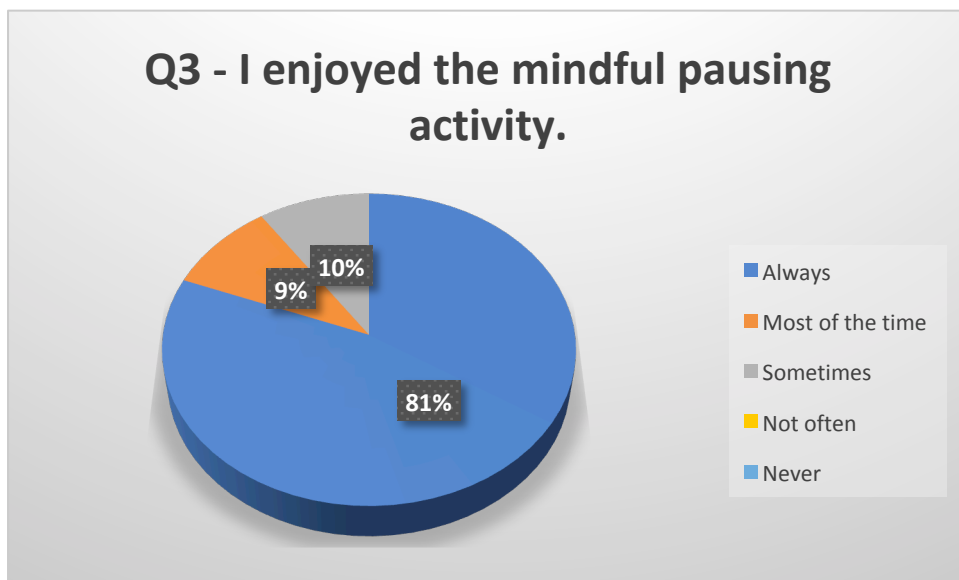


Figure 3

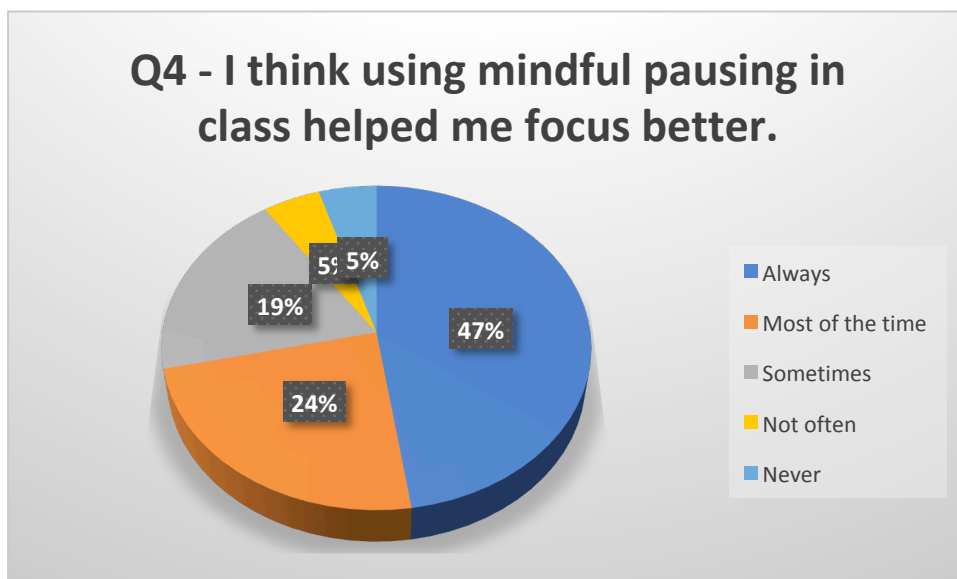


Figure 4

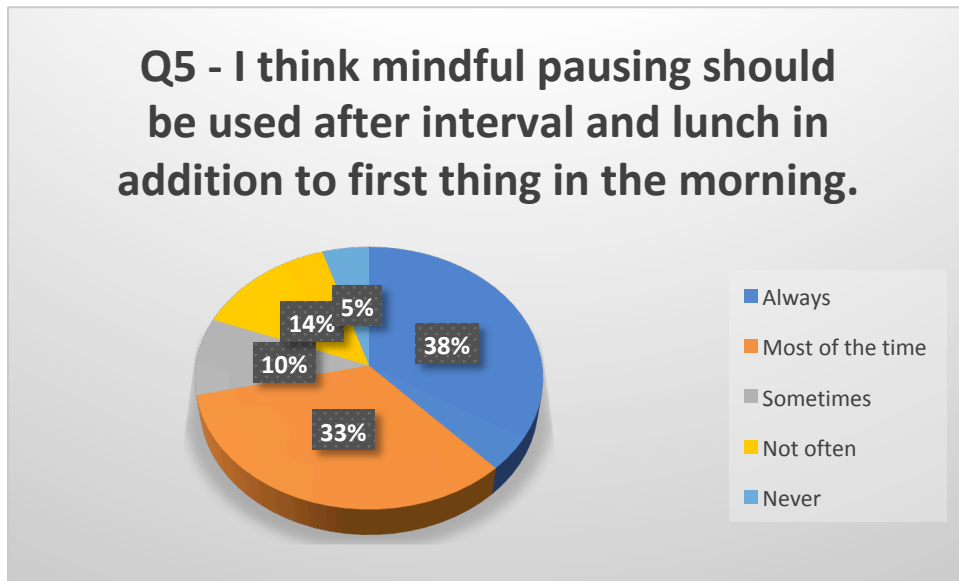


Figure 5

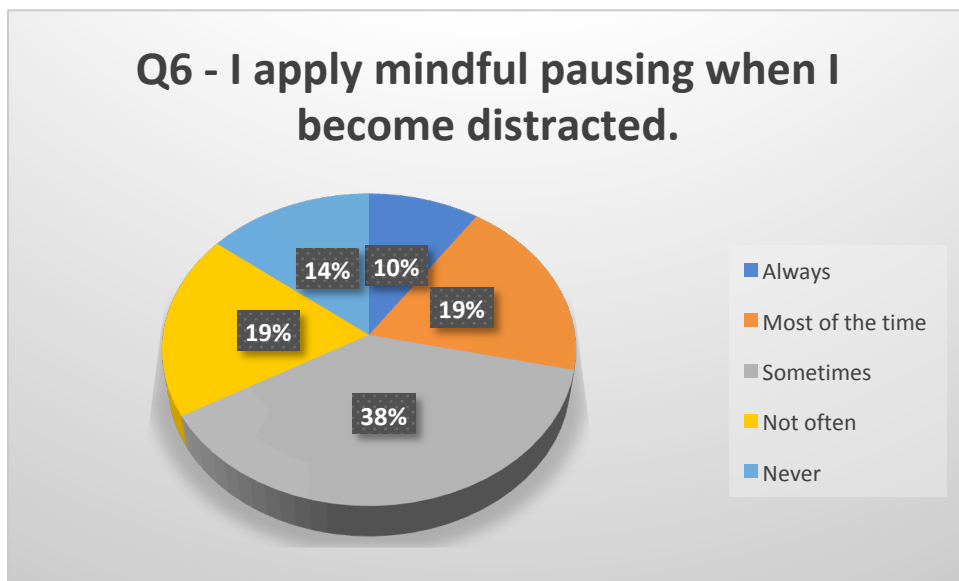


Figure 6

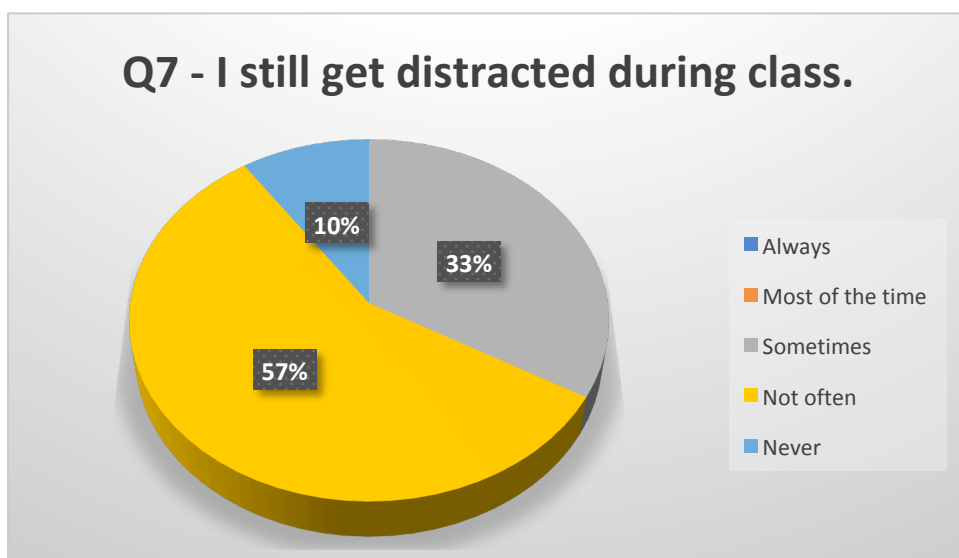


Figure 7

### ***Conclusions***

Through this study, it can be recognised that offering a mindful pause including an inspirational quote on a daily basis, has had a positive impact on a substantial percentage of children in the subject class. From their given verbal responses and their written work, it can be noted that there has been an improvement in the quality and quantity of work they are achieving within a given time period. The subject class have enjoyed participating in this experience; this is shown in their responses from the questionnaire. The outcome of the children's questionnaires show that they feel it has helped them become calmer in school and this has had a positive impact on their focus. It should also be noted that the children would like to partake in mindful pausing after each break during the day to refocus them.

### ***Implications for Future Practice***

This study has signified how important it is to encourage children to practice mindful pausing, by remaining in the present and not dwelling on the past or thinking far into the future. The continued focus on the importance of mental health awareness is at the forefront of society. Therefore, it is extremely important to continue to implement this with future classes. The skills children learn through mindful pausing can be used in their day to day life, helping them maintain a positive mental attitude as they grow. Mindful pausing will continue with the subject class and be implemented in future classes.

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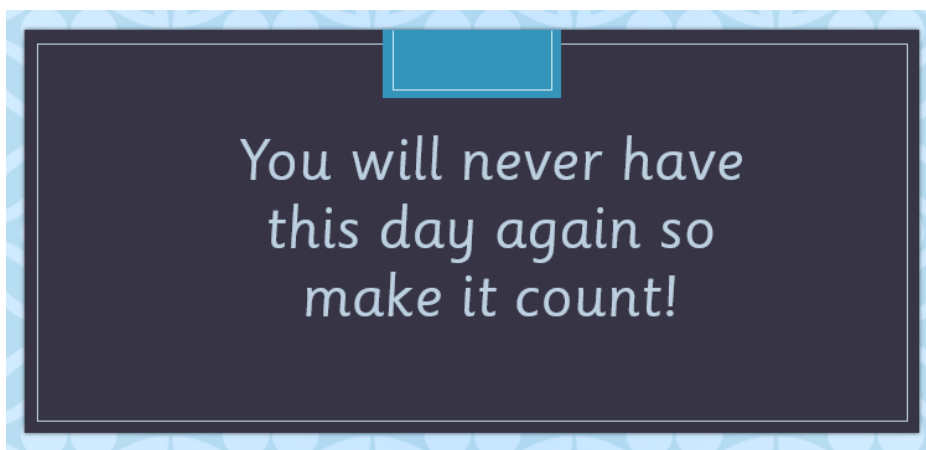
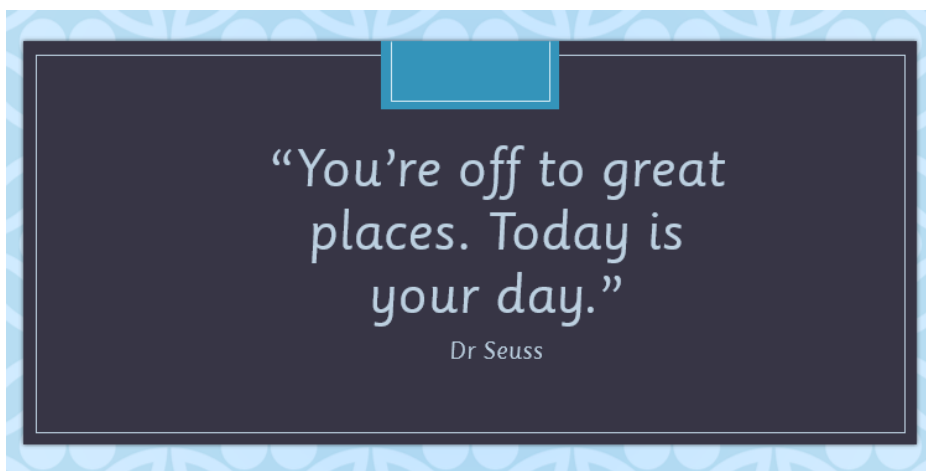
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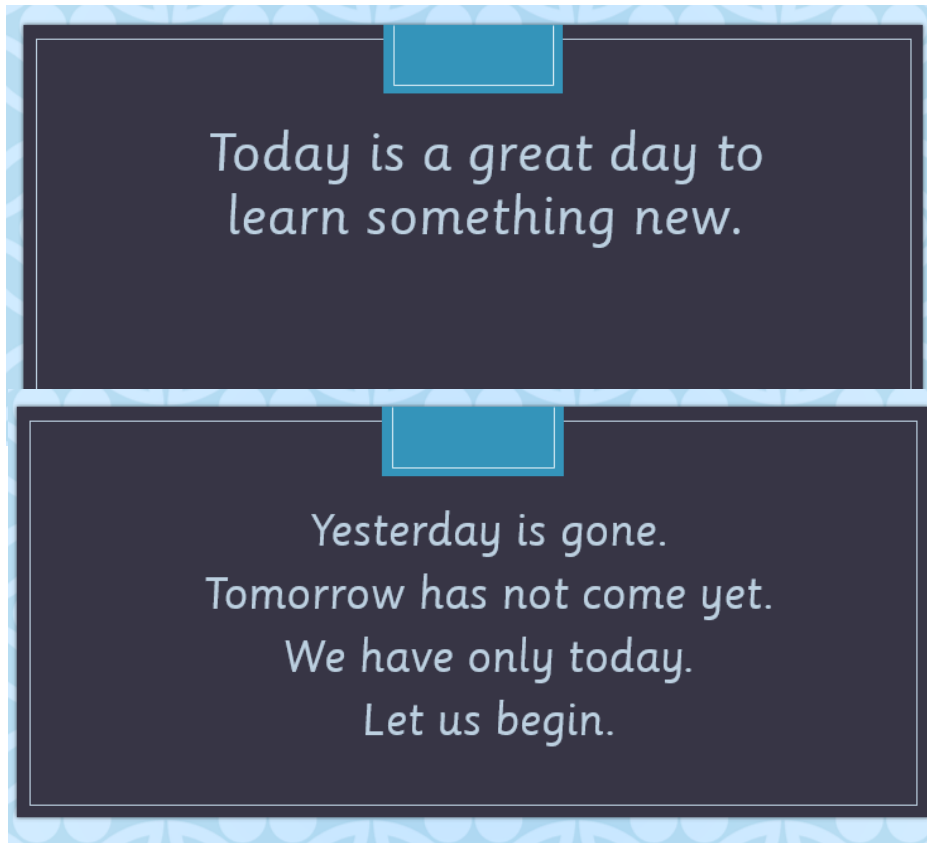
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*Appendix 1*

**'Thought of the Day' Examples**







*Appendix 2*

### Mindful Pausing Questionnaire

Below are statements about the mindful pausing activity that you have taken part in over the past 4 weeks in class. Please answer each statement according to what *really* reflects your overall experience, not just what you think it should be. This is your own opinion and will not be shared with the rest of the class.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Always

Most of the time

Sometimes

Not often

Never

1. It is hard for me to pay attention to one thing at a time.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I think of past events instead of what is happening right now (being present).

2 3 4 5

1

3. I enjoyed the mindful pausing activity.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I think using mindful pausing in class helped me focus better.

4 5

1 2 3

5. I think mindful pausing should be used after interval and lunch in addition to first thing in the morning.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I apply mindful pausing when I become distracted.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I still get distracted during class.

1 2 3 4 5