



WELLNESS MATTERS

A Guide for Teens

Wuf Shanti Children's Wellness Foundation

Mindful Kids Peace Summit

Kids Association for Mindfulness in Education

Hi, I'm Adam Avin, a teen mental health education advocate, and I was asked to put together a wellness guide for other teens. I don't love when people lecture to me, so I'm going to do my best to make sure that this doesn't sound like a lecture. Health and wellness is so important though, and if we can learn good habits when we're young, it will definitely help us later in life. Just like everything else, though, it's a balance. And so, I'm going to be really honest with you when I say that some of the things in this guide are obvious, and you may be like, yea, duh, and some may fall under the "Do as I say, not as I do" category (because hey, no one is perfect, and that includes me), and when those things pop-up, I'll make sure to admit it. I'll include some statistics throughout, some lists, some infographics, and some suggestions.

There's an old saying, "Put your own mask on first," and it's right-on, especially for activists, who are using their voices to better our world, because we can't presume to help others, if we don't take care of ourselves first. Everything I'm about to tell you centers around Self-Care. We've learned that, just like we would never allow our phone battery to get down to zero percent without making sure it's charged, so too, should we not allow our own bodies and minds to get down to zero percent. We must take time to nourish ourselves, and that includes body, mind, and spirit. I know a lot of young adults don't make self-care a priority, and I'm hoping that you'll find at least one thing in this guide that resonates with you. So, don't think of this as a lecture, or judge yourself too harshly if you don't currently do some of these things. Simply make a commitment to yourself that you will work on whichever component that calls to you and feels right for you.

Introduction: Who Am I, & Why Am I Writing This Wellness Guide for Teens



What is Wellness & Why is it Important?

- Wellness is defined as the state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal.
- Components: Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, Intellectual, Environmental, and Occupational.
- Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, anger, etc.) are the #1 problem teens face today.
- Suicide is the #2 cause of death among young people (45,000 die by suicide each year).
 - The rise correlates to when the smart phone became popular about 10 years ago because we are more detached and lonely than ever.



Physical Components of Mental Health

- ❖ **Sleep** - Number 1 in the “Obvious” category. Our brains are still growing until we are 25-30 years-old, so we need to get at least 9-10 hours of sleep each night, while in middle and high schools especially. If you can go to bed by 10:30 (easier said than done for a lot of us, I know), then this will truly help you to stay healthy because it allows your body the rejuvenation it needs each night.
- ❖ **Hydration** - We need to drink more water (coke or coffee do not count for hydration purposes) because it helps flush out the toxins in our system, and gives our body a fighting chance. Dehydration can cause a multitude of symptoms, both mental and physical. We’re supposed to drink at least half our weight in ounces, so if you weigh 100 pounds, you should be drinking 50 ounces of water daily.
- ❖ **Exercise** - 30-60 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week is ideal because it helps us to stay in a positive mood (i.e.: lessens anxiety, depression, and makes us happier). [There’s actually science behind all of these things, but I’m not going into that now. Suffice it to say, thousands of research studies have been done on everything in this Wellness Guide for Teens that I’m writing.] Back to exercise - it can be anything that you enjoy, whether that’s sports, recreational swimming, yoga, running, etc. Just learn how to do it correctly so that you don’t hurt your body.
- ❖ **Say No to Drugs and Alcohol** - This includes opioids, which are obvious, but also vaping, which is currently a big fad, but just as unhealthy and dangerous for you. It has really high levels of nicotine and is addictive. People can and have died from it. And believe it or not, this section also include our phones. The World Health Organization now recognizes phone use as an addiction!
- ❖ **Hand Washing** - Sorry, but in this day and age, it has to be added to the list as a separate line-item. Coronavirus, anyone?
- ❖ **Good Nutrition** - We have to stop eating refined sugars, processed foods, chemicals, etc. because these things really affect not only our bodies, and can cause physical illnesses, but also our minds, and can affect our moods and emotions. I know we all know this intellectually, but this is where I tell you that this definitely falls under the “Hypocrite” category because my diet admittedly has way too many chocolate chip cookies in it!

Focusing on Mental Health

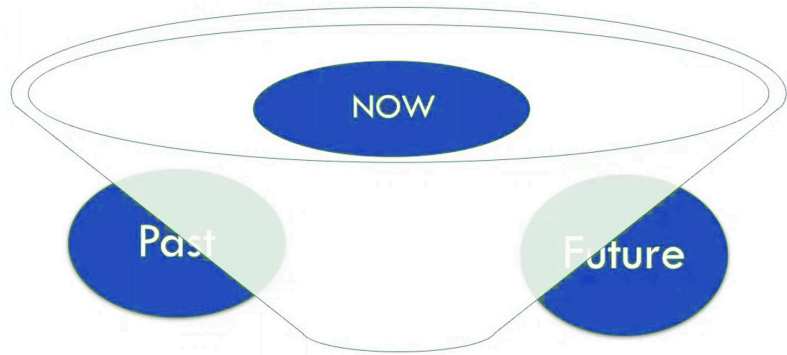
So, just like physical exercise we also need to exercise our brains. We don't just wake up one morning knowing how to be mindful, or knowing how to self-regulate our emotions, or knowing how to stop worrying about the future or being depressed by the past. This is something that must be practiced, daily, so that when we need the tools during the rough times, we will already have them and know how to use them. And everyone, including me, has rough times. So, the best thing we can do is prepare for them by practicing daily.

Because I think this is so important, especially for teens, who are navigating the ups and downs of life, on top of being overwhelmed with homework, relationships, and hormones, the remainder of this Health and Wellness Guide for Teens is going to be centered around this category. I'm hoping that if you find even one thing that resonates with you, and you practice that one thing for at least 5 minutes each day, then you will feel exponentially better able to cope with your stress and emotions.

Here are some topics we will cover:

- * Mindfulness
- * Kindness
- * Positivity
- * Self-Awareness
- * Self-Compassion
- * Communication
- * Connection
- * Stress Reduction
- * Laughter
- * Gratitude
- * Self-Regulation
- * Self-Love
- * Inclusion
- * Empathy

* I want to thank [Gina Biegel](#), of Stressed Teens, [Dr. Christopher Willard](#), Psychologist and Mindful Author, and all the other experts and my [Board of Advisors](#) who have guided me the past 6 years. Throughout this Guide, I will thank more people because I want you to know about other resources that are available to you, so go check them all out.



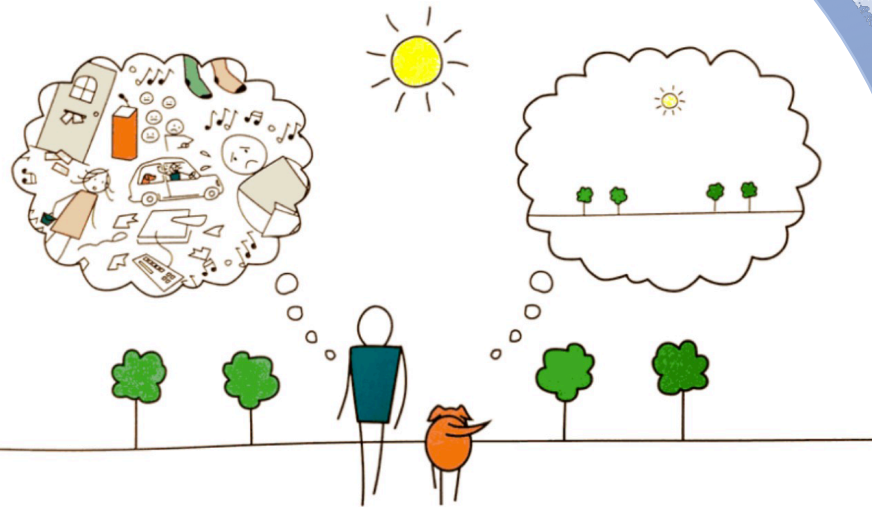
What is Mindfulness?

- ☆ The ability to notice what's happening right now, & not get overwhelmed by what's going on around us.
- ☆ Being present now, paying attention to the present moment, living with kindness towards ourselves and others.
- ☆ It's not about stopping all negative thoughts! It's about knowing that we can acknowledge those thoughts, then release them because they don't control us or define us.
- ☆ We have power over how much we want to focus on a thought or event.
- ☆ We can make a choice not to worry about yesterday or tomorrow, and to be happier and healthier.

How to Practice Mindfulness:

❖ Mindfulness is more than just breathing... although breathing IS important 😊
Breath can be your anchor. If we take slow deep breaths, it has the potential to prolong our life by years. Other ways to practice include:

- ✓ **Movement:** Yoga can help the mind and body to de-stress & focus on the present.
- ✓ **Self-Regulation:** We can get a handle on our emotions, and practice responding instead of reacting. We can respond with love.
- ✓ **Stress Reduction:** Different techniques work for different people. Find the one that works for you. Meditation can help us stay calm & focused. Spending time with animals can be a source of calm for some of us. Talking to someone we trust is super healthy.
- ✓ **Positive Affirmations:** We can choose our thoughts, which will help boost our self-confidence, reduce our anxiety, and help us cope with emotions.
- ✓ **Music/Art/Sports:** Find something you're passionate about. Do things that make you happy, & things that relax you. This helps get the negative loop out of our heads because when we do these things, we're living in the moment and focused on that activity.
- ✓ **Kindness to Self and Others:** The body and mind are connected so if we can train our brains to be happier, then we can be healthier too, both individually and as a society.
- ✓ **Self-Reflection:** We can spend time journaling, or in a peaceful environment.
- ✓ **Self-Compassion and Compassion for Others:** Give yourself a break. I know it's hard for us as teens, but don't judge yourself, or others. Realize that while we are all different, we are also all the same. Believe in yourself - you are capable, worthy, & special! The first step in loving others is to love ourselves.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Yoga for Teens

Yoga is a mind/body movement & breathing practice tool which helps teens mentally, physically, & emotionally.

Improves mood, concentration, focus, attention, memory, learning ability, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-acceptance

Increases flexibility, sports endurance, sports performance, balance, core strength, posture, physical activity, alignment; reduces risk of injury in sports



Lowers depression, anxiety, stress, tension; improves sleep; helps to calm the mind, relax the body, and focus on the present

Boosts immunity; provides for better respiration, circulation, digestion, adrenal gland function, & endocrine balance; lowers blood pressure; improves lung capacity, & cardio-vascular fitness, bone strength, muscle & joint strength; helps children with ADHD, Autism, Cancer, Obesity and Anxiety.

Teaches love, peace, tolerance, empathy, understanding, acceptance, coping techniques, more productive ways of dealing with emotions & stress; helps the healing process and promotes health, wellness, and happiness

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Meditation for Teens

Helps keep teens relaxed, centered, and calm

Increases feelings of happiness & peace; teaches empathy, tolerance and acceptance; increases energy flow, focus, & concentration; helps sleep better

Teaches positive thinking, peace, love, & kindness for self & others, and gratitude



Lowers blood pressure, depression, anxiety, stress, risk of heart attack, chronic pain & insomnia; helps to cope with stress, calm the mind, relax the body, and focus on here & now

Boosts immunity; regulates breathing & heart rate; helps the healing process with cancer and other illnesses; helps fight heart disease and control asthma, arthritis, IBS, Psoriasis and eczema.

"Think Well to be Well"
"Smile & the World Will Smile With You"
"Smile & Say Thank You"

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Benefits Infographics – Practicing mindfulness off the mat, even 5 minutes a day, helps us to live in health and wellness.



What's the proof?

More than 6000 Studies!

Science shows mindfulness helps the healing process as well as:

- Helps increase clarity, tolerance, emotional intelligence, and compassion.
- Helps to boost immunity, cope with emotions, deal with stress, live in wellness, peace and positivity.
- Helps reduce anxiety, depression, absenteeism, and suspension.
- Helps increase focus, concentration, attention, flexibility, understanding, endurance, positive behaviors, and connection.
- Helps do better academically in school, and athletically in any sport.

When Can I Practice?



Even practicing for 5 minutes every day can help!



You can do it when you're feeling stressed, like before a test... and no-one will even know you're practicing.



It takes practice to live mindfully, so that when stressful things happen, and they will!—you'll already have the tools to help you deal with it.

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?



- ☆ Self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills.
 - ✓ If we can recognize, understand, and accept our emotions, then we can learn to respond instead of react, and this will give us a better relationship with ourselves and others.
- ☆ Coping with stress and emotions, self-compassion, and resilience.
 - ✓ This is going to help us reduce self-harm and harm to others. The goal is to end violence.
- ☆ Compassion and Empathy.
 - ✓ To get to compassion and empathy, we must first understand diversity and inclusion.
- ☆ No one controls them other than you.
 - ✓ We can learn the tools to help us be happier and healthier. We have control.
- ☆ Communication, Connection (interacting with others), and Collaboration.
 - ✓ *If we are really going to be healthy and happy, then we need to look up and put the phones down.*

Why Should We Put the Phones Down?

❖ Statistics:

- Bullying (1 in 3 kids reports being bullied). Cyberbullying does not stop at our front door, it's 24/7, and in front of all peers.
- Suicide #2 cause of death among minors under 18. Anxiety, depression, anger, & other Mental Health issues are the #1 problem among teens.
- WHY is this?
 - Phones, social media, video games, etc. lead to detachment and loneliness, a comparison of our lives to the fake perfect lives of others, and a willingness to be unkind.
 - Yes, adults need to model the behavior, & mass shootings may or may not have to do with increased phone usage, but this is something that WE have control over.
 - Spending 8 hours in front of media every day, leads to increased aggressiveness, desensitization, and lower self-esteem.
 - * I deleted social media from my phone. It was hard (although it has gotten easier). I'm still on my phone a lot, but my screen time has reduced by half (8 hours down to 4 hours per day) and more importantly, I FEEL better, freer, happier. I'm not telling you to throw your phone in the ocean, because that would be super hypocritical of me, but I am suggesting a balance. Maybe have phone-free Fridays, or make a choice to put it down and look-up for 15 minutes every day, have a conversation with someone face-to-face, and connect with people in an authentic way.

Why is this Important?



These are essential life skills. They are necessary to get a good job, keep a good job, be happy, healthy– and to navigate life.



We need to be able to know and understand how we're feeling and be able to cope and respond in appropriate ways;



To know we have support systems and learn to communicate with each other so we can build resilience and bounce back;



To ask more questions of ourselves and others and put ourselves in other people's shoes to gain compassion and empathy.



In order to lower suicide rates and violence, we must build our capacity for well-being, self-awareness, social skills, empathy, and self-management.

Discover Healing: The Emotion Code

- EC theorizes that our mind really may affect our body. And that may include our subconscious mind. As an EC practitioner, we believe that emotions may be trapped inside of us, which potentially cause physical or mental conditions. It's like emotional energy that sits in our body, and needs to be released. The emotions come from a specific time or event that was experienced either by you or someone else that you inherited or absorbed the energy from. It may be from when you were 3 years-old, or even from an ancestor. The premise is that all of these emotions can be released, and may help us to feel better.
- After I met with Dr. Bradley Nelson, of Discover Healing, and he performed the Emotion Code on me, I became a believer, and decided to get certified in the Emotion Code. I believe this is a very healing technique, and allows us to feel lighter, better, and in a more positive space. It truly is awesome to witness!

Putting it into Practice: Intentionally Bringing our Thinking Back On-line.

Things you can do which are portable:

Repeat positive affirmations in the mirror or put sticky notes around the room (e.g.: I am healthy, I am worthy, Everything is okay, etc.)

Take 2 minutes & do a body scan or mindful movement (i.e.: stretch, breathe, visualize, feel yourself grounded to the Earth).

Practice Gratitude by focusing on the 3 things that you are thankful for each day.

Reflection:

- ❖ Take a few minutes to simply breathe and notice how you feel.
 - ✓ Our mind wanders 50,000 times per day, so it's ok if your mind wanders. The goal is not to stop all random thought, but to acknowledge them, release them without judgment, and begin again.
- ❖ Respond instead of React
 - ✓ What normally stresses you out and makes you flip out? Name the Feeling, Make a choice to Breathe and Not React. Take full responsibility & accountability for you, & control of yourself.
 - ✓ Have you ever thought or said something you later regret? It's ok, pause and be kind, compassionate, and non-judgmental with ourselves. #BeginAgain

STOP: Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed with Kindness; THINK: Is it true, helpful, inspiring, necessary, and kind?

Look at the person next to you. Recognize that we are all different, yet we are all the same. We each have a body, mind, & emotions. We each have experienced happiness, sadness, pain and suffering, joy and exhilaration. We are all one, so have compassion for each other.

Putting it into Practice: Intentionally Bringing our Thinking Back On-line.

Things you can do which are portable:

Focus on the drum beat or guitar in a song you love, and listen to that song at least once per day. If thoughts enter, it's okay, acknowledge, release, and begin again. If you had 500 random thoughts the first time, you will have 499 the next.

Visualize a movie screen in front of you, filled with things that stress you out, and one by one they disappear until the screen is blank, and then deliberately fill up the screen with things that make you happy, and focus on those.

Go outside and ride a bike, play a sport. I like to go to the golf range and listen to music. Find what works for you.

Journal about your feelings. If we can get them out (whether by speaking or writing), it will help us to understand and accept ourselves, and to process our emotions in a healthy way.

Put the phones down and talk to each other for real. We think we are more connected than ever, but really, we are more disconnected than ever. Human connection and interaction is so important to our well-being.

Know that you are not alone. Studies show that we only need one person. Find that person. It can be a friend, family member, guidance counselor, or therapist. If we broke our arm, we would not be embarrassed to go to the ER for help, and the same is true of our emotions. There is no shame in reaching out for help.

About Us

- ☺ The Wuf Shanti Children's Wellness Foundation is a non-profit organization which teaches mindfulness and mental health social emotional learning to K-12.
- ☺ We have two curriculums: one for 3-10yr-olds, with a dog character, fun & games, and one for 11-17yr-olds, minus the dog character, with more serious content.
- ☺ I'm certified in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for Teens, Kidding Around Yoga, and the Emotion Code.
- ☺ I speak and write about mental health education, and use my voice to get these programs into all schools.
- ☺ We do this to help kids learn how to cope with stress and emotions so they are less depressed and anxious teens, healthier happier peace loving content adults, and can hopefully solve problems without violence to themselves or others.



For Younger Siblings: Wuf Shanti

- ❖ Mindful dog character for early learning 3-10 years old, with fun, games, videos, books, a mobile app, and the mascot visits schools and hospitals.
- ❖ Kids love our laughing and gratitude games, our music videos, & dancing with Wuf Shanti.
 - To play the laughing game at home, make up a fake laugh, and ask your sibling to copy your laugh and then make up one of their own. Keep doing this until the laughter becomes authentic (trust me, it will). And then explain that our brains don't know it's pretend; they get the signal from our bodies, and then it becomes real. Our minds and bodies are connected.
- ❖ 7 books, a free mobile app with signature games, 100 videos have played on
 - Local PBS stations,
 - Children's TV Network (the station in children hospitals across the nation),
 - Adventure to Learning (health and fitness video programming in 25,000 schools),
 - KidoodleTv (safe streaming network for kids)



Mindful Kids Peace Summit



**MINDFUL KIDS PEACE
SUMMIT**

www.mindfulkidspeacesummit.com

- ☮ Online Programming for tweens and teens. Hosted by me, and taught in an interactive innovative way. I think kids appreciate that it's not a lecture, & that it's a peer delivering the content in an interesting format.
- ☮ Learn tools to help cope with stress, deal with emotions, and grow into happier peace loving adults.
- ☮ More than 80 subject matter experts talk, demo, or give a presentation, and in between segments, celebrities speak about their health and wellness, and why mindfulness is so important.
- ☮ 50 hours of content and lots of different subject matters to choose from.
- ☮ Videos, lesson plans, suggested activities, projects, and discussion points for parents and teachers to download if they want as well.

MKPS 2020 Daily Themes

DAY 1 We Are All One: Diversity, Inclusion, and Communication

DAY 2 Living Together in Peace: Kindness and Anti-Bullying (Stop the Violence)

DAY 3 Mindfulness Matters: Tools for Kids to De-Stress and Cope with Emotions (include Yoga, Meditation, Breathing, Positivity)

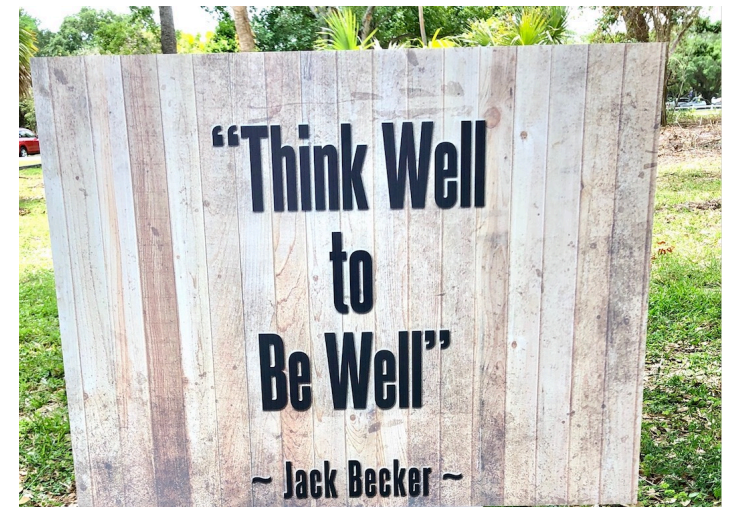
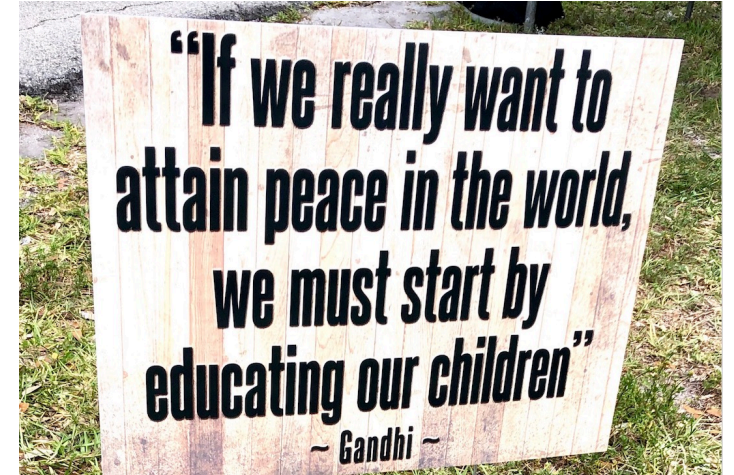
DAY 4 Doing Good: Things We Can Do Together to Make the World a Better Place, Interacting with others, Compassion, and Collaboration

DAY 5 Social Emotional Learning (including Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Self-Compassion, Resilience, & More), & Positive Psychology: More Mindfulness for Kids, and how Teachers and Parents can help.

New Content Added: Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Suicide Prevention, Trafficking

*I want to thank all of our experts for sharing their knowledge with us. There are too many to name, but check them out at www.mindfulkidspeacesummit.com.

*I want to thank my MKPS mentor, Helen Maffini, of MindBe-Education, for teaching me how to build a summit (it's A LOT of work!). 😊



Kids
Association
for
Mindfulness
in Education



*Kids
Association for
Mindfulness in
Education*

- A place where teens can come together to mindfully do good in the world and help get these programs into all K-12 schools across the country.
- Interest-based student-run clubs. If you're interested in starting a KAME Club at your school, send us a note at thinkwell@wufshanti.com.
- We have some mindful activities and discussion points so we can help you get started!

*I want to thank Dr. Amy Saltzman, of Still Quiet Place, for allowing KAME to be under the auspices of the adult version - the Association for Mindfulness in Education.

Words Of Advice

Put the Phone Down

- *Social Media*
- *Bullying*
- *Time*
- *Connection*

Use Your Voice

- *Stand Up for What You Believe in*
- *Make a Positive Difference in the World*

You are Special, You are Worthy!

- Believe in yourself
- Think Well to Be Well

Assignment

- ★ Has anything stood out to you that you would want to practice?
- ★ Choose a Practice that resonated with you and practice for 5 minutes every day.
 - ✓ If your mind wanders, it's okay, bring it back.
- ★ Write 5 ways that we can implement these ideas into our school and/or daily life.



TEDXTalk – Check it Out!

https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_avin_mindfulness_in_education_to_lower_stress_and_violence

- ❖ If you want to learn more, please watch my TEDxYouth Talk:
 - ✓ Getting mindful social emotional learning programs into schools,
 - ✓ Why mental health education is so important to stopping violence,
 - ✓ Using our voice to make a positive difference in the world.
- Schools must implement mental health social emotional education as part of the curriculum!

*I want to thank [Bob Roth](#), of the David Lynch Foundation, and my Grandpa, [Alan Becker](#), for helping me prepare for this huge opportunity (I'm not gonna lie – it was scary! Thankful for my mindfulness!).

Contact Us

- To learn more about [research and resources](#) that can help, visit us at www.wufshanti.com.
- Please join us at on all socials [@wufshanti](#):
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/wufshanti
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 - YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/wufshanti



Thank You!



**MINDFUL KIDS PEACE
SUMMIT**



Think well to be well