

We all see the terrible reality of increased depression and anxiety disorders, and a general decrease in life satisfaction for our school-aged children. We also see how technology addiction seems to be correlated with these observations. Most educators feel like their hands are tied and there's nothing that can be done. Classroom behaviors are deteriorating, social-emotional skills are disappearing, and test scores are dropping.

A frightening decrease in awareness of oneself and others in the present moment is the simplest way to conceptualize the negative effects of technology addiction and the slipping away of our children's minds. This is what leads to lack of self-control, lack of focus and attention, and lack of emotional regulation. This is a recipe for disaster in the classroom.

A program called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction is sweeping the American educational system. Mindfulness in schools is rapidly being deployed as a response to this crisis. Thousands of schools across America every year add a mindfulness program to their daily and weekly schedule. The results are overwhelmingly positive. Depression and anxiety are decreasing, learning objectives are being met faster and in greater percentages, overall morale increases, and multiple facets of human development are enhanced.

What is Mindfulness?

On the surface, mindfulness is simply learning how to pay attention to the present moment. Digging a little deeper, we can see profound effects on the brain that come from guided exercises to counteract the attention-killing behaviors related to passive phone, tablet, and computer use. Mindfulness resets the brain's capacity for paying attention, and helps develop patterns of awareness that lead to better self-control, increased focus, and emotion regulation.

There is one problem- most mindfulness programs are Buddhist in nature. Mindfulness training programs that trace their genesis back to Buddhist roots (including the largest trunk of program development in the US by Jon Kabat-Zin) can become problematic. The aim of mindfulness, to decrease the sympathetic "fight or flight" response, mixed with underlying Buddhist themes such as "the oneness of all being," the "nonexistence of the self," or the "illusion of pain" can be unconsciously or even consciously disorienting to a person who lets those ideas sink deeply into the psyche. These ideas all deeply conflict with a Christian worldview and anthropology. The science of mindfulness is undeniable, but some of the messages that flow through from the worldview in which it was popularized are non-essential and potentially harmful. This is why we need Catholic Mindfulness in our schools.

Catholic Mindfulness delivers the same positive effects of a normal mindfulness program, but without the Buddhism. It improves measures of Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Social Literacies, and adds in an extra dimension of Spiritual Literacy founded on a Christian worldview. Mindfulness is built on a foundation of understanding that we are safe in this world - it is *healthy* to feel safe because the truth is that we have a Father who created and loves us. As Catholics we have the answer to why we should feel safe, peaceful, and happy - Jesus Christ

is the answer. Connecting the dots between our faith and our emotional life opens up new pathways to healing, happiness, and flourishing.

Once we train our minds to work in a way consistent with this reality, on the most practical level, people (including children) experience dramatic increases in:

Executive Functioning	Self-Compassion
Emotional Self-Regulation	Open-Mindedness
Metacognition	Contentment
Focused Attention	Gratitude
Empathy	Cognitive Flexibility
Stress Reduction	Resilience

Can you imagine what your classrooms would look like if your students all improved their marks in those twelve categories? Can you imagine what your staff meetings would look like if your teachers' classrooms all improved overall in those twelve categories?

Our children need Mindfulness, and our Catholic schools especially need Catholic Mindfulness. Dr. Greg Bottaro and the CatholicPsych Institute have created a program that provides for this need.

Dr. Bottaro first introduced the integration of Catholic Psychology with his book, *The Mindful Catholic*, and created the only program of Catholic Mindfulness for adults. He then saw the power of using this for children (practicing at home with his own 5 under 6) and wrote the next book with his wife Barbra called *Sitting Like A Saint; Catholic Mindfulness for Kids*. The next developmental step is a program for schools: *The Mindful Catholic Classroom*.

Dr. Bottaro and his team have created a robust program with individualized curricula for students in grades K-12 based on developmental differences all aiming for reaching the same basic human literacies. His team provides training, resources, and ongoing support to bring Catholic Mindfulness to your classes, faculty, and staff.