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Volume 11, Number 1S, Supplement, 2024

Congress 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1110249ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v11i1.409>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

McGill University Library

ISSN

2291-918X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Smith, M., Piguet, C., Hà-Vinh-Leuchter, R. & Merglen, A. (2024). Reflections on teaching mindfulness to teenagers: From research to clinic. *The International Journal of Whole Person Care*, 11(1S), s36–s37.
<https://doi.org/10.26443/ijwpc.v11i1.409>

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REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING MINDFULNESS TO TEENAGERS: FROM RESEARCH TO CLINIC

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Keywords: Mindfulness teaching, Adolescents

Increased stress reactivity during adolescence has been associated with vulnerability for psychiatric disorders in adulthood and mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) seem to be an option to stress. However, there is still debate on how to best teach MBI to teenagers.

For the last 6 years, authors have been proposing the “Mindfulteen” (MT) to teenagers between 12 and 19 years in Geneva. The MT was first applied in different clinical trials and in a qualitative study and, as the results were encouraging, is now proposed in a clinical context at the University Hospital.

Authors aim to share here some lessons learned from this experience: 1. Motivation and curiosity are key to engagement, and this is particularly important in school settings; 2. Even if adaptation is needed for different age groups, the program’s core remains easily the same; 3. Short formal practices with not much silence are needed, and metaphors can help; 4. Clarifying the intention of each practice can improve engagement, and the same explicit attitude can be brought into inquiry; 5. A trauma-sensitive approach is crucial, especially in clinical settings; 7. Proposing different versions of the same practice facilitates home practice; 8. Even if participants are not practicing between sessions, it doesn’t mean that they are not integrating mindfulness into their lives; 9. Creative and playful activities can provide rich mindful moments.

In conclusion, there are open questions about teaching mindfulness to adolescents and authors believe that sharing and exchanging experiences is important to find some of the answers. ■