**Peaceful Kids**

**Practicum Placement for**

**Certificate in**

**Mindfulness & Wellbeing For Children**



**Prepared by:**

**Your name here**



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# A picture containing shirt Description automatically generatedExecutive Summary

Mindfulness has great potential as a key strategy for positively impacting on the learning and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people in education settings. Research has shown that the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for younger people are consistent with those observed for adults. In particular, reduction in stress, and anxiety symptoms, and increases in calmness, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-regulation and sleep quality have been regularly observed.

Data from the Australian National Mental Health Survey shows that young people have the highest incidence and prevalence of mental illness across the lifespan, with almost one in seven 4-17 year-olds assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months. Furthermore, COVID-19 has brought about a complex array of factors such as uncertainty, social isolation, and parental angst that have an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents.

With its focus on paying attention to the present moment, Mindfulness is likely to have beneficial effects on the emotional wellbeing, mental health, ability to learn and the physical health of school students. Mindfulness training is one effective and cost-efficient way to promote healthy brain development and function, and foster stress resilience. Mindfulness can be implemented at (school or organisation name here) across a 10-week period in all grades. Details of the Peaceful Kids intervention program for small groups of children who need extra support are also included in this proposal.

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Mental Illness is a major concern facing all Australians. One in five adults will experience mental illness in any one-year and one in two people in their lifetime. The World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts that depression will be the leading burden of disease by 2020. Data from the Australian National Mental Health Survey shows that young people have the highest incidence and prevalence of mental illness across the lifespan,1 with almost one in seven 4-17 year-olds assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months.2 Mental health is an essential part of children’s overall health and has a complex interactive relationship with their physical health and their ability to succeed in school, at work and in society. As such the emotional wellbeing of children is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health allows children and young people to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

# Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has brought about a complex array of factors such as uncertainty, social isolation, and parental angst that have an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents. Predictability which is a major stabilising force for children and adolescents, has been disrupted since the COVID-19 outbreak. Children have many worries such as whether they will see their friends and extended family, go to school, or get sick. I have experienced this firsthand in my own household with my 12-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter. We as parents are usually adept at making plans for children, however, our future plans are also on hold.

Children have many worries related to the consequences of COVID-19 such as whether they will see their friends and relatives, go to school, or get sick. It is often difficult for parents to calm their children’s anxieties because of the uncertainty in their lives. Parents are typically adept at making plans for their children, but future plans are currently on hold. The challenges facing parents may interfere with their usual ability to address their children’s emotional needs.

Whilst COVID-19 is sparing most kids’ bodies, it’s not being so kind to their minds. Living in a universe that is already out of their control, they can become especially shaken when the verities they count on to give the world order-the rituals in their lives, the very day-to-day ways of living get blown to bits.

An online survey administered to children and adolescents aged 7 to 18 years during the spread of COVID-19 in China found that higher than previously reported scores of youth depression, anxiety; youth who had a family member or friend with COVID-19 had higher levels of anxiety than those who did not.

A close up

Description automatically generatedThe emotional impact of the COVID-19 quarantine was also assessed for children and adolescents from Italy and Spain. Participants parents of children aged 3 to 18 years who completed a survey about the effects of the quarantine on their children, compared to before the home confinement period. The study found 85.7% of parents reported changes in their children’s emotions and behaviours during the quarantine.

The most frequently observed changes were difficulty concentrating (76.6%), boredom (52%), irritability (39%), restlessness (38.8%), nervousness (38%), loneliness (31.3%), uneasiness (30.4%), and worries (30.1%). About 75% of parents reported feeling stressed about the quarantine situation. Parental stress was associated with increased reports of emotional and behavioural symptoms in their children.3 According to a report by Australian Human Rights Commission and Kids Helpline surveyed children and young people spoke about worry, stress, feeling tapped, frustration, anger, sadness, loss and grief.4

# Introduction to Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) describes Mindfulness as a way of ‘paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally’. Mindfulness can be explained by giving movement to moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment. Mindfulness is not about trying to relax or to achieve a particular outcome through the process. It is the ability to be fully present without being ‘caught up’ in our thoughts. Children of all ages can benefit from Mindfulness, the simple practice of bringing a gentle accepting attitude to the present moment.

**For children, Mindfulness is an excellent way to provide experiences that enhance their emotional intelligence including:**

* Self-regulation
* Impulse control
* Understanding their emotions
* Controlling their emotions
* Building awareness of themselves as a whole person

**The benefits of regular Mindfulness include:**

* Keeping calm
* Reducing stress
* Being less reactive
* More resilience to life’s inevitable difficulties
* Increased focused and attention & ability to learn
* Increased concentration and memory
* A decrease in anxiety
* Decrease in worrying thoughts
* A renewed energy
* Reservoir of strength and resilience
* Improved sleep
* Allows compassion & empathy to grow

# A picture containing text Description automatically generatedResearch on Mindfulness

There have been thousands of research papers written on the benefits of Mindfulness and its health benefits over the last 40 years. It has been proved that even just a few minutes of Mindfulness a day has enormous benefits and helps children to focus and bring full attention to their tasks. To date, the majority of research into the effects of Mindfulness on children and adolescents has been carried out in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in the United Kingdom, although at least one study has also been conducted among primary school children in Australia.

This research has shown that the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for younger people are consistent with those observed for adults. Reduction in stress, and depressive and anxiety symptoms, and increases in calmness, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-regulation and sleep quality have been regularly observed. In the Australian study, there was found to be a significant reduction in depressive symptoms and the number of children falling into the borderline or diagnostic category of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) following completion of a 10-week Mindfulness in schools programme. Other benefits of Mindfulness training among children and adolescents include improved social and emotional competence, and behavioural regulation.

Research also suggests that Mindfulness practice also has more direct benefits on academic achievement, including an increased ability to transfer previously learned material to new situations, increased creativity, an improved ability to retain instructional knowledge, an improved ability for selective attention, and a decrease in levels of test anxiety.

Lastly, teachers also benefit from Mindfulness training. There is a wealth of research regarding the effects of Mindfulness on adults, which includes stress reduction and positive affect. This can have a great flow-on benefits for students by strengthening positive teacher-student relationships.

# Peaceful Kids in Schools

By teaching Mindfulness to kids, we can provide them with the tools they need to build confidence, cope with stress, and relate to uncomfortable or challenging moments.

Peaceful Kids is a Mindfulness and Positive Psychology program developed by Georgina Manning who is the Director of Wellbeing for Kids. The Peaceful Kids program aims to lessen anxiety and stress and increase resilience in children from Prep to Year 12.

This program helps children to build their emotional resilience and equip them to deal with the day to day stresses that life brings them. Peaceful Kids is based on evidence-based therapy and research from the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR), Mindfulness-integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (MiBCT), Positive Psychology and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.

The Peaceful Kids program is endorsed by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (**BOSTES**). Peaceful Kids is also endorsed by **‘Beyond Blue – Be You’** as a recognised evidence-based program for schools.



# Practicum Placement

To complete the final requirements of the ‘Certificate in Mindfulness and Wellbeing’ course I am studying, I am looking for a school to complete my placement. I would be facilitating three groups of the ‘Peaceful Kids’ intervention program. There would be no charge to the school or families.

Children who may be suitable for the program may be feeling anxious, stressed or have poor resilience. It is more beneficial if children are from the same year level and the groups can be mixed gender. Please see more information on the program on the following page.

Although not necessary, a staff member is also welcomed to join in on the group which is a great way to understand the benefits of the program. I hold a working with children’s check and have professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

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| Program | Group size | Time required |
| ‘Peaceful Kids’8 Week Intervention program for children who need additional support | Minimum of 4 childrenMaximum of 6 children | 1 hour a week over 8 weeks |

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## **Peaceful Kids - 8-week Intervention Program**

Regularly practicing Mindfulness exercises have been shown to significantly reduce the symptoms of anxiety. A mindful approach to anxiety and stress symptoms includes emotional regulation strategies, relaxation techniques and Mindfulness strategies. During the 8-week program we work with children in groups of 4-6 who are feeling anxious, stressed or who are poor in resilience, in 60-minute lessons. Every session includes a Mindful Movement and ends with a guided Mindfulness practice. **Note: Programs for 5 and 6-year-olds are modified to run over 5 weeks instead of 8.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Week 1** | **Introduction to Mindfulness**  Using the breath to calm the body and mind |
| **Week 2** | **Worry & Mindfulness**   * Explaining worrying and normalising anxiety like other emotions * How Mindfulness can help to lessen worrying |
| **Week 3** | **The body, brain and worrying**   * Body sensations, howe worrying affects our bodies * Body scan Mindfulness practice |
| **Week 4** | **Journaling, worry time and worry spot**   * Using journaling to express feelings and cope * Worry spot Mindfulness practice |
| **Week 5** | **Practical & expressive coping strategies**   * Effective problem-solving methods for anxiety * Tense and relax Mindfulness practice |
| **Week 6** | **Noticing thoughts and positive thoughts**   * Noticing unhelpful thoughts and getting to know self-talk * Leaves on a stream Mindfulness practice |
| **Week 7** | **3 great things, peace, and coping cards**   * Being in the flow activities * Mindfulness of feeling practice |
| **Week 8** | **Warm & Fuzzy Book, Peaceful Kids Box & Meditation Bracelet**   * Activating positive memories * Sharing of strategies learnt |

# Peaceful Kids program forward

# by Dr. Craig Hassed

The modern world seems to be literally and metaphorically 'driving us to distraction' more than at any other time in history. This is contributed to by its faster pace, the overuse of technology and the unquestioning adoption of multitasking. Among other problems, poor attention is associated with impaired learning, memory, emotional development and empathy. Amidst this are also rising rates of poor mental health, stress, poor self-esteem and ADHD among children and adolescents. To prevent and manage problems such as these we need to address the root causes of the problem. This is where Mindfulness comes in.  There is an enormous need for children to develop the skills they will need to cope with the modern world including learning to manage attention and developing skills in stress management, compassion and resilience.

There is a rapidly growing research-base on the positive role of Mindfulness for healthy childhood development and learning. Georgina Manning's 'Peaceful Kids' program makes a great contribution to helping children to develop these skills early in life - a skill that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives. It is practical, systematic and can help children to understand themselves better and to develop ways to not just to survive in the modern world but to thrive in it. It is also likely that the adults who learn and teach the program will derive as much from it as the children who experience it which is an added bonus. Let's face it, if adults are not teaching children to be mindful then we are teaching them to be unmindful.

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# About (you or your business name here)

A bit about you and or your business here

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