

**INCORPORATING CHILDREN'S  
PICTUREBOOKS ON MINDFULNESS IN BIBLIOTHERAPY**

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# Abstract

Picturebooks are powerful forms of stories because the illustrations work in concert with text. In this dissertation, I explore how picturebooks are used in bibliotherapy to enhance and teach the concepts of mindfulness. I discuss bibliotherapy from a developmental and clinical perspective. Bibliotherapy is a medium that encourages school-aged children to express emotions to develop empathy and coping strategies for emotional wellness. This dissertation aims to examine the picturebooks used in bibliotherapy in educational and therapeutic contexts. Picturebooks, can often facilitate children's ability to deal with their emotional concerns and prepare children for life events.

Incorporating children's picturebooks, teaching mindfulness, and promoting empathy development in children is crucial for emotional well-being and needs to be situated in the literature circle. In this dissertation, I explore how picturebooks can be used for therapeutic purposes and incorporated into educational and therapeutic contexts. The main objectives of bibliotherapy are to promote empathy development and emotional wellness in children. Through stories, children can learn about empathic responses to situations and, over time, grow in their empathy. Adults need to listen to children's voices. Once adults have created a space to listen to children, they can use various picturebooks to access children's emotional realm.

Scholarly research has just begun to examine the literature on mindfulness as a window into children's educational and therapeutic worlds. There is a growing body of literature on the effectiveness of mindfulness for children. My research will illuminate ways regarding teaching mindfulness to children. Picturebooks can help children develop the capacity to learn mindfulness strategies. It is widely acknowledged that children cannot practice mindfulness in the same way that adults do because their executive functioning is not fully developed. *The Present*, an interactive colouring book on mindfulness that I have written, focuses on allowing children to par-

ticipate mindfully within a contemplative and performative capacity and will be discussed in this dissertation. Academic writing must tell a story. Even the most specialized academic writing, such as research reports, must tell a story. This dissertation tells a story of the therapeutic benefits of picturebooks for children and children's responses to these stories.

## Dedication

For my parents Leah and Morris, who believed in me, and taught me the value of education.

My husband, Larry, and my children Marlon, Jessica, Zachary, and Rachel, who gave me space to pursue my dream.

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## Definition of Terms

*asana*-seat (Sanskrit)

*annica*-impermanent (Sanskrit)

*avidya*- delusion, ignorance (Sanskrit)

*com*- together (Latin)

*dvesa*- aversion (Sanskrit)

*dukkha*-suffering (Sanskrit)

*gyan mudra*- when the index finger touches the thumb (Sanskrit)

*ha-motzi*- Hebrew blessing of God, who brings forth (grain) from the earth; recited before meals (Hebrew)

*karuna*-compassion, loving-kindness (Sanskrit)

*klesha*-unwholesome mental state (Sanskrit)

*pati*-to suffer, to permit, to allow (Latin)

*pratitya samutpada*- the interconnectedness of all things (Sanskrit)

*raga*- clinging, attachment (Sanskrit)

*sati*-mindfulness, awareness, remembrance, or recollection (Pali origin)

*savasana*- corpse pose in yoga (Sanskrit)

*smrti* -mindfulness, awareness (Sanskrit)

*sunyata*- ‘emptiness’ or ‘spaciousness’ (Sanskrit)

*tzedakah*- Hebrew work for justice: used for doing just deeds to help people instrumentally, such as giving charity (Hebrew)

*vipassana*-mindfulness practices (Sanskrit)

*zen*-a state of calm attentiveness, guided by intuition rather than by effort (Sanskrit)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The love for stories is universal: stories are everywhere. Indeed, as Francis Spufford argues in *The Child That Books Built*, “Storytelling may even be what made language worth acquiring” (2002, 46). David Lewis states that “the picturebook is thus ideally suited to the task of absorbing, reinterpreting, and re-presenting the world to an audience for whom negotiating newness is a daily task. The reading of picturebooks takes place at a point where adults, children, and the broader culture meet” (2001, 137). Lewis states that “we need to understand the role of this interaction in the complex interchange of gesture, language, ideas and images that makes up the picturebook reading event” (137).

David Loy, the acclaimed author discusses the meaning of stories in his book, *The World is Made of Stories*. He is very profound when he says, “we do not see our stories as stories we see *through* them: the world we experience as reality is constructed with them” (2010, vii). Loy goes onto saying that “stories are not abstractions from life but how we engage with it. We make stories, and those stories make us human. We awaken into stories as we awaken into language, which is there before and after us. The question is not so much ‘What do I learn from stories? As ‘What stories do I want to live?’” (25).

Howard Deitcher, scholar, states that “researchers concur that stories represent cultural, social, political, and economic ideologies, as well as values and attitudes that reflect certain perceptions of the world, and thereby socialize young children into particular contexts” (2013, 235). The relationship between the story, children, and the adult reading the story is crucial to the process. Deitcher further “reiterates the need to reflect on the nature of reading, the story’s hermen-

eutics, the child's process of meaning-making, and the critical role of the storyteller" (237). The parent-child interaction and reading transaction are critical to understanding the story.

Lewis stated that "the picturebook began to be taken seriously as an object of academic study during the latter years of the twentieth century. The first major works in English to address the picturebooks form and its nature were, for example, *Ways of the Illustrator* by Joseph Schwarcz, 1982, and *Words about Pictures* by Perry Nodelman (Schwarcz 1982; Nodelman 1988)" (2001, 31). Lewis says, "*Words about Pictures* was one of the first attempts to analyze the workings of the picturebook, and it has since become something of a standard work on the subject" (2001, xi). Picturebooks can communicate and address complex ideas in a compact and novel format, incorporating the art of storytelling. Picturebooks are incredibly powerful forms of stories. Lewis says, "picturebooks are read by readers and the combination of words and images working together in a picturebook I refer to as picturebook text "(xiv). Children are first introduced to the world of literature, art, and stories through picturebooks. Therefore, picturebooks are pivotal and the gateway to literature, art, and culture for children.

Lewis asserts that "the picturebook renews itself by adapting to whatever languages and images are available to it, and this gives the form an open-ended quality" (2001, 74). As such the flexibility and openness of the picturebook is conducive to bibliotherapy as children can explore so much within the picturebook. Children can extrapolate what is meaningful and resonates with them from the story.

Empathy is a central component of emotional literacy and is inherent in humans, according to Frans De Waal and others. We do learn to use empathy or suppress it over time. In this dissertation I will examine students' empathy before and after teaching a mindfulness program, "Mindfulness Matters to Us." I will explore the literary, aesthetic, and storytelling strategies of

picturebooks as multimodal texts to elucidate emotional literacy. When children empathize with believable story characters, they can understand themselves and others better. The vicarious experience of reading is less threatening than the reality of everyday life. Kathy Short says that “during and after reading people construct understandings in light of their experiences and re-think their experiences in light of the text, by making meaning of a text through the process of inquiry” (2010, 51). Children who are learning to be empathic, for example understanding how someone feels if they are left out and excluded from a game, can focus on what they read about or hear about in the story, which allows them to show empathy towards others or connect with their own emotions.

Mindfulness is situated within the context of spirituality and has been linked to religious practices. Karen Armstrong, a world authority on religious affairs, indicates “that theologians and philosophers insisted that our idea of God is entirely distinct from and bears little relation to the unknowable reality itself. We only know the ‘God’ we have created, and we should remind ourselves that what we call “God” is greater than we can conceive. Man depicts God as part of a profound dimension of the human personality” (2019, 472). Armstrong says, “our brains, as we now know, can present us with only a representation of the reality that surrounds us—not the reality itself—and that includes the divine” (472). Armstrong further says, “every scriptural canon has within it texts which, read literally, can be taken to endorse narrow particularism, suspicion of strangers, and intolerance toward those who believe differently than we do. Each also has within it sources that emphasize kinship with a stranger, empathy with the outsider, the courage that leads people to extend a hand across boundaries of hatred and hostility” (229). Mindfulness, too, is centred within a spiritual domain. Empathy is linked to kindness and compassion which are key components of mindfulness.

The roots of mindfulness are linked to the Buddhist spiritual tradition. According to scholar Deborah Orr, the history of mindfulness begins with the young Buddha sitting under the bodhi tree, observing his surroundings, and contemplating. After years of Yoga practice, while meditating, he remembered his experience. “His experience was not provoked by other people (he was an infant and alone) nor by any spiritual education, from which his father had completely shielded him. The first support of the position that Buddhist ‘ethics’ seeks is the end of the suffering of all beings, lies in the Buddha’s earliest experience of empathic *karuna* when, as an infant, he empathized with the suffering of grasses and insects” (2018, 233). Orr states, “as in Buddhist meditation practice generally, ‘mindfulness’ is not about thinking; it is about paying attention and awareness, but awareness of what? *Sati* (Pali) or *Smṛti* (Sanskrit) have a sense of ‘recognition’ or ‘remembering’. One begins with awareness of the breath by practicing mindfulness; one becomes aware of and can drop the delusional views and ‘remember’ or ‘return to’ undeluded awareness” (2018, 234).

Iain McGilchrist, a psychiatrist and researcher, suggests that there needs to be a paradigm shift in terms of understanding brain function and understanding of the mind. He offers a descriptive, phenomenological model to understand the science of the brain. “Understanding the hemisphere difference offers a perspective on the structure of mind which is not available merely by introspection” (2019, xxi). He further argues that the “relationship between consciousness and the brain—unless the brain plays no role in bringing the world as we experience it into being, a position that must have few adherents—its structures has to be significant. It might even give us clues to understanding the structure of the world it mediates, the world we know” (2019,1). The right brain is the intuitive, empathic, emotional part of the brain and the left brain uses language, logic, and linearity. The right brain sees things more holistically, and the left brain sees a more

analytical and fractured view of reality. Mindfulness accesses the right brain more. McGilchrist argues that we need more right brain access for ourselves and our culture. We need to express more empathy, kindness, and compassion in our world. Armstrong argues that empathy and the other capacities like story formations which is essential as it manifests in metaphor, interconnectedness, and construction of a sense of self and accessing the transcendent, are involved with the right-brain activity.

McGilchrist, says, “time is the context that gives meaning to everything in this world, and conversely everything that has meaning for us in this world, everything that has a place in our lives, exists in time” (2019, 75). According to McGilchrist, “the sense of time passing is associated with sustained attention and arises in the right hemisphere, subserved by the right prefrontal cortex and inferior parietal lobe. The ability to compare duration in time is performed by the right hemisphere and relies on the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. Virtually all aspects of the appreciation of time, in the sense of something lived through, with a past, present, and future are dependent on the right hemisphere, principally the right prefrontal and parietal cortex” (2019, 76). Mindfulness incorporates the concept of time in a real way by focusing on the present moment so that one can really experience the moment. McGilchrist further states that his “thesis is that for us human beings there are two fundamentally opposed realities, two different modes of experience; that each is of utmost importance in bringing about the recognizably human world; and that their difference is rooted in the bihemispheric structure of the brain. It follows that the hemispheres need to co-operate, but I believe that they are involved in a sort of power struggle and that this explains many aspects of contemporary Western culture” (2019, 3).

According to McGilchrist, evidence from the teaching profession suggests “that between a quarter and a third of children aged as old as five to seven are now having to be taught how to

read the human face, something that until recently would have been taught only to children with autism. Additional research suggests that young people today are less empathic than children thirty or forty years ago “(xxii). Children now are on screen devices much of the time, and this involves more left-brain activity. Jean Twenge has studied the iGen and has noticed a connection between screen time and teenagers’ mental health. She found the teenagers’ continual use of social media exaggerates a sense of alienation or loneliness, which is linked to depression in young teenagers (2017). McGilchrist refers to his new paradigm shift and quotes Henry Thoreau, “The question is not what you look at, but what you see” (2019, xxvi). This quotation is also pertinent when studying picturebooks to examine how the reader perceives a picturebook and what they see. Thoreau’s profound statement suggests how relevant bibliotherapy is, and what children see will help them master, create meaning or come to terms with what they are dealing with emotionally.

Reading gives children power and agency. It helps them feel they can make a difference. When children read picturebooks about mindfulness or picturebooks are being read to them about mindfulness, they learn to take deep breaths and be compassionate to others. That is what they do. When you are eight years old, you can only do what you can do, and you need to feel that you can do something. Learning to take breaths and calm down is something children can do practically to develop agency and practice mindfulness. Taking deep slow breaths allows the breath to come to a normal rhythm. This allows the sympathetic nervous system to shift into the parasympathetic mode or relaxation response. Children feel empowered when they do these breathing techniques and they see their breathing slow down and they begin to calm down, it gives them agency and control too. Bibliotherapy, too, can help children to articulate their feelings and emotions as they identify with specific situations.

According to David Jardine “the term “environmental education” can give us pause to consider how ecological awareness, ecological attunement, might be more than simply a particular topic among others in the classroom. It might help us glimpse how it is that education itself, in its attention to all the disciplines that make up schooling, can be reconceived as deeply ecological in character and mood” (1996, 48). In most elementary schools the pace is very quick, and children are often making fast transitions and rushing from one activity to the next activity. A sense of quiet and mindful awareness is undervalued and needs to be considered and cultivated as a new way of being for all students and teachers who share their classroom space as a place for educational learning. Jardine described post-modern culture in North America as “an onslaught of frenetic, disconnected, fragmented images and free-floating meanings, a twirling free play of signs and signifiers and surfaces, none of which requires or deserves care or attention, none of which has a strong or vital link to any other fragment” (1996, 50). This could be the point where education can become environmental, where we could slow down and have students develop the capacity for mindful awareness for themselves, others, and their environment.

Jardine says, “ecological awareness, in the richest sense, always and already involves the presence of our children. Ecology thus always already involves images of pedagogy and the teaching and learning of the tales that need to be told for all of us to live well. As with pedagogy, ecology is always already intergenerational” (Friesen, Clifford and Jardine 1996, 48). Education, environmentally understood, involves not engaging in the ecological disaster of a hectic curriculum filled with laminated pages, crammed programming, teachers, and children constantly on the go, and many other things, it requires attention and focus on mindfulness being taught in the classroom with teachers and students paying attention with good intention to the quality of education and the environment.



Chapter One introduces my research and my rationale for doing this research in the elementary grades. I outline and discuss my research question, which integrates the use of bibliotherapy and mindfulness-based strategies to facilitate children's level of empathy in an educational context. In this chapter I outline an extensive literature review covering the main themes of my dissertation. I lay the foundations for my dissertation with the different threads and then throughout the dissertation I will weave in the different strands to allow this text to unfold. I examine bibliotherapy, children's picturebooks and specifically picturebooks related to mindfulness for children. I also examine the concept of children as seen as "the other" in children's literature. Empathy is an aspect inherent in human nature as De Waal explores in his work, and empathy is fundamental to mindfulness practice. How children develop their inherent empathy in different ways and to different degrees is examined in this study. It could be argued that mindfulness fosters greater empathy so it would be useful in developing children's capacity for its use. I intend to integrate the findings of my research and contextualize them within the Humanities.

Chapter Two in this dissertation will outline teaching mindfulness to Grade Two students using picturebooks on mindfulness to ascertain how mindfulness lessons have an impact on children's empathy development. Chapter Two is the methodology chapter in which I will outline the scholarship on the importance of conducting research with children ethically. This dissertation employs a mixed research design.

Chapter Three discusses the paradigm of mindfulness and how picturebooks on mindfulness relate to helping children in the classroom learn the basic tenets of mindfulness. In turn, this practice educates children in terms of their capacity to be empathic towards others. Further, this chapter explores the different picturebooks about mindfulness and how they can be incorporated

in the classroom setting to foster a sense of well-being for children aged seven to nine years. I address the use and efficacy of picturebooks on mindfulness in the educational context.

This dissertation in addition is also concerned with the intrapersonal and affective dimensions of children's experiences and reactions to certain picturebooks. This dissertation focuses on children's emotional attachment to picturebooks and how picturebooks become personally meaningful. Chapter Three highlights the implications and benefits of using specific children's picturebooks to promote and teach mindfulness to children in the classroom. The program "Mindfulness Matters to Us" which I designed, is outlined in this chapter. Mindfulness fosters wellness and the development of empathy. This chapter incorporates a discussion of picturebooks on mindfulness. It also highlights how children relate and respond to these picturebooks in the classroom. I further investigate how teaching mindfulness to children can enhance their empathy.

An interactive picturebook, *The Present*, my original contribution, is incorporated in chapter three. This interactive, colouring picturebook is contemplative and therapeutic. *The Present* is an example of a mindfulness workbook that focuses on the present moment, giving children a starting point for bringing mindful awareness into their lives. *The Present* allows children to participate, be engaged in the process of colouring, and grasp the concepts and experience of being mindful. The intention is to utilize this interactive picturebook on mindfulness as an adjunct in the classroom, as an educational tool, and in therapy as a therapeutic tool with children.

Mindfulness has become mainstream and has made inroads in classrooms as teachers seek ways to centre and focus their own attention and that of their distracted students. Teaching mindfulness to school-age children in the school and in therapy, arguing, illuminating, or ex-

amining past research, and adding to it with my research findings on mindfulness, is the core of this dissertation. I describe the relevance of teaching mindfulness to young students, including its potential to alleviate stress, foster kindness, compassion, and empathy for others and the environment, while enhancing children's learning and social relationships.

Further, I outline the children's responses to this interactive picturebook, *The Present*, and how they understand the concepts of mindfulness from this picturebook. I examine how to include picturebooks and workbooks on mindfulness in the educational and therapeutic contexts. I will share the children's feedback on this interactive picturebook, shedding light on their relevant perspectives. This chapter summarizes the information gathered from a reflective questionnaire the children completed after the picturebook was read, the colouring completed, discussion about the story, mindfulness exercises and a mindful practice.

Chapter Four gives an overview of how picturebooks tell stories in an "interweaving of words and pictures" as Allan Ahlberg says. "A text in this sense is something woven together, a cohesive patterning of inter-related strands that adds up to more than a mere accumulation of individual parts" (qtd. in Lewis 2001, 33). Reading picturebooks involves a transaction between reader and listener, which is pivotal as the story unfolds, and the children process the information. The transformative nature of picturebooks relates to children absorbing the meaning of the story's narrative and the story's relevance. This chapter will examine the text, the visual, and performative processes in children's picturebooks. This chapter further explores bibliotherapy to help children learn to be mindful and develop the capacity to be empathic by incorporating mindfulness picturebooks in the classroom and in therapy. It is my intention to examine picturebooks in bibliotherapy both developmentally and clinically. Bibliotherapy is a medium that encourages

school-aged children to express emotions to develop empathy and coping strategies for emotional wellness.

Bibliotherapy incorporates the use of picturebooks in a therapeutic manner, allowing children to deal with existing problems they face and the preventative measures to prepare children for life events. I discuss selected picturebooks that I have incorporated within the therapeutic and educational settings that foster emotional wellness. Therapeutic picturebooks are part of children's literature since they enable children to work through their emotional and psychological challenges and enhance their empathy, resilience, and flexible thinking. Children often identify with one of the characters, be it the protagonist, victim, or hero in the story. Chapter Four discusses how children can engage in discussions with relevant adults during the reading of the story and post-story conversations. This chapter positions the act of reading a picturebook as a mindful experience as children are so focused on being in the moment and following the storyline. I discuss selected picturebooks that have a transformative capacity that influences children's psychological development.

Chapter Five highlights the discourse of children as seen as "the other" and the imbalance of power between children and adults. I explore Levinas' conception of "the other" as separate from the self and the concept of otherness. I also examine the child as "other," investigating the ways children have sometimes been othered by adults and authors. Alterity is a state of being different or other and this too is examined.

It is relevant to notice the imbalance of power between children and adults in children's literature. Children have an opportunity to express themselves during the post-story phase of bibliotherapy. During this collaborative space, children can speak up and out. Hearing children and what they have to say is vital and can help resolve the experience of "othering." I discuss and

elucidate different picturebooks that help children access their emotions. To contribute to the field, I examine such picturebooks in terms of the picturebook's educational and therapeutic value.

Chapter Six highlights the procedure and implementation of mindfulness training for the use of bibliotherapy with children in the classroom and understanding its effects on children's empathy development. This chapter focuses on the strengthening of empathy in children, which is a central concern in this dissertation. In this chapter I discuss and delineate the concept of strengthening empathy in children and the use of the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents, (EmQue-CA)<sup>1</sup>, as an assessment or measure of empathy. All the parents of the children involved in the study signed the Assent form, and all the students in the two Grade Two classes at Bialik Hebrew Day School gave their verbal consent and participated in the study. Students were given clear instructions in terms of completing the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA). This chapter reports on the data collection from the thirty-four Grade Two students at Bialik Hebrew Day School.

Chapter Seven, the results, and discussion, focuses on bibliotherapy for Grade Two students regarding their mindfulness lessons. I discuss the effectiveness, relevance, and meaningfulness of these lessons concerning learning about mindfulness and empathy enhancement. I illuminate the responses obtained from all the children from their reflective sheets, done in a post-eight-week mindful lessons session, about what they gleaned from the mindfulness lessons "Mindfulness Matters to Us. I highlight further recommendations in educating children on mind-

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<sup>1</sup> Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents – EmQue-CA English © Carolien Rieffe, Developmental Psychology, Leiden University.

fulness and how it influences their level of empathy. Some specific differences in the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) scores before and after the eight mindfulness lessons are delineated. This research is worthwhile as it adds to the data on mindfulness-based training to help children learn about mindfulness in school and to practice empathy and compassion.

Chapter Eight in this dissertation encompasses the concluding remarks regarding applying and implementing mindfulness education for children in Grade Two using bibliotherapy in the classroom. I discuss the applicability of incorporating the workbook *The Present* as an adjunct to the lessons on mindfulness. I raise further questions arising from this study in terms of future research and development.

#### 1.1.1 Rationale for this Research

I organized this dissertation around the idea that using picturebooks with children helps them deal with their personal and emotional issues. As my research developed, the focus evolved to pivot around how to teach children about mindfulness to promote emotional wellness and the enhancement of empathy. Research on children learning and practicing mindfulness and mindfulness experiences in schools is sparse as this is such a new study area. The gaps in research literature inspired the main research questions: How can children experience mindfulness, and how can mindfulness be taught to children?

I am a registered social worker and work as a school counsellor in an elementary school. I am also a qualified yoga teacher and have taught children yoga in school. I began to question how I can use what I know and practice as a yoga teacher and incorporate it with my therapeutic and educational knowledge and clinical experience working with children in the school setting to enhance children's emotional literacy and well-being. Teaching children mindfulness was part of my research question. This research aims to introduce contemplative or mindfulness practices

through bibliotherapy to children in school and ascertain whether teaching mindfulness to children affects their level of empathy. Children can build compassion for others as they connect with the characters' feelings in picturebooks.

This dissertation is structured thematically, and each chapter delves into the essential components of my research. This dissertation is a qualitative ethnographic study where I explore bibliotherapy in teaching mindfulness practices in the educational and therapeutic setting. I view my research in the category of practice-based and practice-led research as I created an interactive picturebook *The Present*, to supplement children's learning about the concept of mindfulness, which I have incorporated in this research study.

Few studies have focused on the relationship between mindfulness education and the enhancement of empathy. Due to children's socialization process, they are sometimes influenced to suppress the empathic experience of others. I will focus on how mindfulness may be considered relevant to enhancing empathy in children and being mindful of others and their environment.

This dissertation examines the intersection among mindfulness, bibliotherapy, empathy and what children glean from picturebooks. I will discuss how picturebooks help children develop the capacity to learn mindfulness strategies. Mindfulness can help children access or uncover their inherent capacity to be in the moment and to be aware of others and think about how to respond.

#### 1.1.2 Rational for Study

Mindfulness practice in the school is a burgeoning field and can benefit children and their thinking processes. Mindfulness training allows children the ability to cultivate a different way of working with the mind. If mindfulness is made relevant and accessible to students, they can apply it to their own lives. In terms of introducing mindfulness to children, educators of mindfulness should teach authentically and with good intention, with the right attitude and detailed atten-

tion. I intend to introduce and impart the fundamental core values and tenets of mindfulness to the Grade Two students at Bialik Hebrew Day School in a meaningful way that can resonate with the children, and that they can engage with it and use it in their lives.

### 1.1.3 Literature Review

#### 1.3.1 Contextualizing Mindfulness

Jon Kabat-Zinn believes that mindfulness is not a belief system, ideology, or philosophy, but is a “spiritual practice” (1994, 264). Mindfulness is often considered to have two major aspects according to Kabat-Zinn, awareness and acceptance. Awareness involves monitoring experiences, and acceptance refers to monitoring those experiences with an attitude of non-judgmental openness, making no attempt to change or avoid anything that pops up in the mind (1994).

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, poet, and scholar, states that “you cannot transmit wisdom and insight into another person. The seed is already there. A good teacher touches the seed, allowing it to wake up, to sprout, and to grow” (2011, 15). In the foreword to Thich Nhat Hanh’s book *Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children* (2011), Dharmacharya Shantum Seth says that “mindfulness is increasingly recognized as an essential educational tool. It develops attention, emotional and cognitive understanding, and bodily awareness and coordination, as well as interpersonal awareness and skills. Most importantly, by diminishing stress, anxiety, and hostility, mindfulness enhances our total well-being, peace, confidence, and joy” (qtd. in Nhat Hanh 11).

The educational curriculum in most schools focuses on academic achievement, and social, emotional learning is a minor component of the education process. Academic excellence is essential; however, it is my belief that it is just as important for schools to be teaching children about cultivating and nurturing emotional wellness by students learning to develop tolerance,



empathy, and a mindful presence. Cultivating mental health is just as paramount as it is to maintain physical health.

Daniel Simpson argues that “mindfulness has obvious benefits. It can be useful to watch thoughts and feelings come and go, without getting caught up in reactive habits. It makes sense to teach children this skill, and to highlight ways they might immediately use it in their lives. If this is all they are taught, however, their understanding of mindfulness, and how it might alleviate human suffering, will be limited” (2017, 21). That is why it is important to teach mindfulness incorporating critical thinking, teaching compassion, empathy, kindness, and social justice that could be beneficial in helping other people in the process too.

Jon Kabat-Zinn developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program to teach patients how to cope with and manage their pain and suffering by practicing mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn says, “mindfulness is a simple concept” (1994, 4). Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness is: “the awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment” (1994, 4).

In her recent article Orr, reviews different works and refers to Aislinn O’Donnell who begins by asking if “mindfulness has been co-opted as a coping technique in a world of information and sensory overload and if so, what does it mean for students encountering mindfulness in schools” (2018, 236). Oren Ergas argues “that teaching mindfulness to students is a worthwhile part of education in that it enables them to access their meaningful present-moment inner experience, which teaches them that meaning can exist in the *here* and *now* and that the aim of education does not lie solely in some future attainment” (qtd. in Orr 2018, 236). Orr says “Ergas’s discussion of pedagogy critiques a Friereian banking model of education in which students focus on

“out there” for lessons that will serve future purposes, but which in the process impoverishes them by ignoring the “in here” or “me.” The approach of guiding attention “in here” not only enriches the student’s self-understanding but it also “transform(s) the social understanding of ‘education’ and ‘the educated person’” (Ergas 65, qtd.in Orr 236).

Mindfulness is becoming increasingly prevalent everywhere, from the medical, health and wellness arena to the corporate world to the educational realm. According to Patricia Broderick, a research psychologist, the term mindfulness “comes from ancient Eastern cultural traditions and derives from the verb: to remember or take a mental note. Mindfulness is a translation of *sati*, a word in ancient India’s Pali language; *sati* means ‘remembrance’ and ‘recollection.’ However, when used within a meditative context as in mindfulness teaching, it does not refer to historical memory. Instead, it refers to a mental state in which one recollects and remembers the activity that one is engaged in, in the present moment” (2019, 2).

According to Tim Lomas, untranslatable words are terms without an exact equivalent in our language. These words can expand our horizons and transform lives. They have the potential to help us better understand and articulate our experiences. They can even reveal new phenomena that had previously been veiled to us, like the word *sati*, which we have modernized and westernized to mean mindfulness. “Mindfulness can refer to both: (1) a state or quality of mind; and (2) a meditation practice designed to foster this. The Buddhist teacher Anālayo states that *sati* involves remembering to focus on what is otherwise too easily forgotten: the present moment” (Lomas 2020 2). *Pratitya samutpada*, means interconnectedness, it is the realization or experience of our interconnectedness with all else and can refer to that experience. It is grounded in empathy and early empathic experiences, which are also reflected in aspects of literature.

Broderick says it is essential to realize that “practicing mindfulness to have any particular experience, like relaxation, is not the goal. Mindfulness is a much more expansive construct than simply a fleeting pleasant feeling” (2019, 5). Kabat-Zinn and others refer to “mindfulness as a *way of being*, a practice of opening mind and heart for greater awareness and attunement to oneself, other people, and aspects of the world” (Broderick 2019, 5).

Broderick claims that “mindfulness is not about feeling a certain way; it’s about feeling whatever is present in your life right now, to have greater discernment about how to respond. This involves changing our relationship to feelings, especially to unpleasant ones. Rather than trying to escape as soon as we notice them, we acknowledge them and perhaps even make some peace with them. This is what the practice of awareness and nonreactivity fosters” (2019, 87). Most importantly, it’s how children observe, non-judgmentally, with curiosity, and without reactivity, that helps to promote emotional regulation for them.

Broderick further says, “the process of observing thoughts and emotions non-reactively offers us a glimpse into the operations of our mind” (2019, 88). It also gives children permission to notice their difficult or strong emotions and allows them to be brave to feel these big feelings without being judged.

Amy Saltzman states that mindfulness is “paying attention to your life, in the here and now with kindness and curiosity” (2014, 2). Kabat-Zinn argues that the “overall tenor of mindfulness practice is gentle, appreciative, and nurturing. Mindfulness is not simply about the practice; it is also about the intention and attitudes we bring to our practice” (2005, 6). Kabat-Zinn states, “knowing what you are doing while you are doing it is the essence of mindfulness. This knowing is a nonconceptual knowing or a bigger than conceptual knowing. It is awareness itself” (2013, 16). It is an experience and the awareness that is paramount. According to Nhat

Hanh, mindfulness “is our ability to be aware of what is going on both inside and around. It is the continuous awareness of our bodies, emotions, and thoughts” (2008, 7).

According to Ron Purser and David Loy, mindfulness has been refashioned into a safety valve to calm down. A side effect of being mindful is to be calm and composed with an ability to respond. However, this mindfulness aspect is often not the only way for children and adults to learn to calm down. In the “Beyond McMindfulness” article, which Loy and Purser co-authored in the Huffington Post, they stated “most scientific and popular accounts circulating in the media have portrayed mindfulness in terms of stress reduction and attention-enhancement. But mindfulness, as understood and practiced within the Buddhist tradition, is not merely an ethically neutral technique for reducing stress and improving concentration. Rather, mindfulness is a *distinct quality of attention* that is dependent upon and influenced by many other factors: the nature of our thoughts, speech, and actions; our way of making a living; and our efforts to avoid unwholesome and unskillful behaviours while developing those that are conducive to wise action, social harmony, and compassion. People are receiving tangible benefits from their mindfulness practice: less stress, better concentration, and a little more empathy” (2013, 14).

Purser and Loy state the real purpose of mindfulness is to develop self-knowledge that reveals one’s interconnectedness with others, *pratitya samutpada*, and, as a result, fosters compassionate action. Purser and Loy argue that “there is a dissociation between one’s transformation and the kind of social and organizational transformation that takes into account the causes and conditions of suffering in the broader environment” (2013,14). Their main argument is against the misuse of the practice, for instance, in the workplace to get workers to blame themselves for their discontent and so ‘chill out’ with mindfulness and be more productive workers. However, if empathy and sympathy are sufficiently developed, this need not happen.

The authors of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale 2013), argue: “the very act of gently turning toward and attending to the present moment is a powerful gesture of kindness and self-care.” They also infer: “seeing kindness in action is the most powerful teaching, whether the instructor is guiding the in-class practices or responding to doubts. More significantly, and contentiously, ‘moments of mindfulness’ are said to ‘naturally bring with them kindness, compassion, and a sense of balance” (qtd. in Simpson, 2017). Simpson says most of the way’s children are taught mindfulness in schools is based on the MBCT programs (2107).

Nhat Hahn says “breath is aligned to both the body and mind, and it alone is the tool which can bring them together. The breath remains the vehicle to unite body and mind and to open the gate to wisdom. Our breath is the bridge from our body to our mind, the element which reconciles our body and mind, and which makes possible one-ness of body and mind” (1976, 23). Through doing mindful breathing daily and doing yoga poses, children can learn to manage their emotions and become more focused. Incorporating picturebooks on mindfulness in the classroom as part of the curriculum enables children to learn and practice mindfulness’s basic tenets. Children enjoy doing yoga, practicing breathing exercises, and appreciate doing the body scan. These are powerful ways to bring about self-awareness. This energy can be generated and integrated into the day. Currently, mindfulness is being incorporated in schools to teach children new skills to respond more appropriately and help them to learn to self-regulate. Children are learning to take deep breaths; to pause and reflect and choose how to respond; they can sit and colour; take a mindful walk in the hallway; they are encouraged to be in the moment and take time and go to be quiet and mindful in the ‘peace corner’, ‘calm corner’ or ‘zen den.’ These

mindfulness strategies help children to pay attention and focus more on class and combat their levels of stress.

Nhat Hanh says “Breath is a tool. Breath itself is mindfulness” (1976, 23). The method gleaned from the picturebooks on mindfulness can be transformed into coping strategies for children’s wellness. According to Nhat Hanh, “the practice of mindfulness teaches students how to pay attention, and this way of paying attention enhances both academic and social learning” (2011, 19). Mindfulness encourages mindful learning, which enhances children’s daily functioning. Kabat-Zinn says, “to find our way; we will need to pay attention to this moment. It is the only time that we have in which to live, grow, feel and change” (1994, xv). Research and clinical practice support, that to teach mindfulness to others, it is best to embody it. The teaching comes from practicing mindful awareness. Kabat -Zinn says that “mindfulness is part of an ancient Buddhist practice that has profound relevance for our present-day lives. Mindfulness has everything to do with waking up and living in harmony with oneself and with the world” (1994, 3). Kabat -Zinn says “I think of mindfulness simply as the art of conscious living. You don’t have to be a Buddhist or a yogi to practice it. In fact, if you know anything about Buddhism, you will know that the most important point is to be yourself and not try to become anything that you are not already. Buddhism is fundamentally about being in touch with your own deepest nature and letting it flow out of you unimpeded. It has to do with waking up and seeing things as they are” (1994, 6). According to Kabat- Zinn “mindfulness will not conflict with any beliefs or traditions-religious or for that matter scientific...It is simply a practical way to be more in touch with the fullness of your being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action” (1994, 6).

Orr argues that “there are two major reasons for the recognition and incorporation of *karuna* as an aspect of mindfulness practice in its educational uses. First and foremost is to avoid the distortion, devaluation and misuse of mindfulness practice that has been largely the fate of its mother discipline, Hindu yoga with its focus on *asana* practice. The second broad area which demands attention is that compassion is widely appealed to by Buddhist leaders as the foundation of moral action in addressing a wide range of issues, from overcoming personal suffering, to human rights, to peace work, to environmental issues and beyond” (2014, 42).

Ruth Baer states that “meta-analyses show that mindfulness-based training benefits both mental and physical health in a broad range of populations” (2003, 125). Baer et al. concluded that their “findings support an idea that is well established in Buddhist meditation traditions (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987): that meditation practice leads to increased mindfulness in daily life, which in turn facilitates well-being” (2008, 340). Orr says “developing a compassionate orientation in students can begin with the classroom practice of mindfulness. *Vipassana* or mindfulness practices are possibly the most ancient forms of contemplative practices known and the most widely utilized Buddhist practices in Western classrooms today” (2014, 50). Orr also comments on how in Western cultures mindfulness mainly focuses on the breath initially, however, this is just the first step. Mindfulness application is not just about stress management and behaviour management. Mindfulness can increase a person’s empathy level and the full range of emotional intelligence, interpersonally and intrapersonally.

Orr discusses contemporary scholars’ views on mindfulness in education and quotes Robert Thurman (2006). Thurman argues for “the role of mindfulness in education today which is not simply to destress and develop concentration, but to develop the wisdom and compassion out of which moral action develops and which can be brought to bear on our knowledge to

develop skillful solutions to our social and global problems” (qtd. in Orr 2018, 137). Children can experience mindfulness through sitting, walking, journal writing, eating with mindful attention, and developing concepts such as kindness, compassion, empathy and gratitude to people, animals, and the earth.

Psychiatrist Dan Siegal in his book *Mindsight* (2013), discusses the term “mindsight” and describes it as insight into oneself by paying attention to one’s own needs and others’ needs. This process can be systematically taught. Mindfulness, coupled with compassion, is learning to “attend and befriend” an experience. According to Sharon Salzberg, author and mindfulness teacher, mindfulness is a process whereby the person practices to become more aware of their expertise in a way that is not judging and not rejecting. Mindfulness allows the person some time and some space to accept the present moment. The emphasis is to create a safe space for children to be calm and safe enough to rage when angry. During this holding period or space, children can still feel contained and feel a connection between the therapist, teacher or parent when they are in that state. It is about having that deeper connection and relationship with the parent, teacher or therapist when they are so emotional that children feel they are in a safe space (2014).

Contemplative practices like mindfulness allow children to heal and soothe themselves rather than distract themselves from the pain (Salzberg 2014). Mindfulness creates an internal space, an inner holding place for all. In therapy, it is essential to create an area where children can be vulnerable enough to open and look at their pain and big emotions and close that up again. Ultimately a therapist’s work helps a child create that space inside to look at their problem and to give some space around it.

When children are stressed out or experiencing anxiety, anger, or other strong emotions, they tend to breathe more shallowly or hyper-ventilate and they often complain saying their



stomach aches. They are in the autonomic nervous system's sympathetic mode, which is the fight or flight mode. Bringing the breath to a more regular rhythm and then slightly extending the exhalation brings children's breathing into parasympathetic or relaxation mode. This exhalation is like letting out a long breath of air when the emergency is over, or like yawning when sleepy. Teaching children how their brain works and how their breath can help them through mindful awareness is vital. When something is perceived as a threat, the stress system is activated. "A full rush of adrenaline, cortisol and other chemical messengers prepares our bodies with sufficient resources and energy to vanquish the threat. The amygdala and other parts of the stress response system move into ascendancy, rendering the more reflective parts of the brain less functional" (Broderick 2019, 24).

"Mindfulness practice, or the systematic cultivation of present-moment non-judgmental attention, operates on the brain and body systems involved in the stress response system to do just that" (Broderick 25). Practicing the breathing techniques for children is imperative as it is a strategy that can be developed over time that can facilitate emotional well-being and has a calming effect on the body and mind as it stimulates the parasympathetic system.

The autonomic nervous system comprises the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. McGilchrist says, "there is evidence that the sympathetic nervous system is more important for modulating heart rate and blood pressure in response to emotion, which the left-brain controls. Simultaneously, the right hemisphere is more involved with the parasympathetic nervous system, which produces the autonomic function's relaxation" (2019, 69). According to Semple & Willard, "learning how to breathe during difficult moments sustains a normal breathing rate, which provides the appropriate amount of oxygen to the brain and body. Children learn to take slow deep breaths in and release their breath slowly; this allows the parasympathetic

nervous system response to produce a calming effect on their bodies and minds. This ability to regulate intense emotions through the breath and body is an essential and powerful skill that can help children manage uncomfortable emotional states” (2019, 37). Children need to learn these strategies and practice them when they are calm and regulated to have the resources within them to use these techniques when required.

Broderick argues that mindfulness can help address challenging moments for educators with their students. She argues that the premise of mindfulness is to accept and acknowledge the students’ feelings without passing judgments (2019). I think that is critical to allow students to feel safe and contained in the classroom, if they are to share their feelings and thoughts. Mindful awareness of one’s thoughts and emotions involve being aware of all situations, positive and negative, being present and attuned to these situations and the feelings engendered by them.

Broderick argues that “emotions become more tolerable because we dare to feel them, and from a new vantage point, we can see the ebb and flow. There is less pressure to fix them and greater acceptance of basic human experience. Dispassionate observation and acknowledgment of experience, both pleasant and unpleasant, is a lot easier to do when the focus is on the breath or on some activity like eating” (2019, 88). Mindfulness teachers begin by teaching breathing or mindful eating to students as it is a concrete exercise to start teaching mindfulness in the classroom. Broderick states that “a foundational mindfulness practice is generally considered a practice that trains attentional focus because attention is centered on the breath in the body” (2019, 42). Teaching children to be compassionate to themselves regarding their big emotions is helpful and decreases their stress overall. Allowing children to pay attention to their feelings and letting things be is important (Broderick 2019). Mindfulness will enable children to steer away from trying to solve the problems of their unpleasant emotions. Children worry less and are not

so reactive in terms of working with difficult issues. Bibliotherapy positively encourages children to be in touch with their feelings and develop a concern and understanding of their feelings.

Angela Duckworth, academic psychologist, says that students learn to recognize when they have strong feelings and become out of control and how they need help to restore that balance once again. Teachers can be role models and assist children by acknowledging how they feel frustrated, upset, or angry at times too. If a teacher notices something that is causing discomfort to someone in the classroom, it would be necessary for the teacher to deal with it mindfully, responding skillfully, thereby modelling a mindful approach to a challenging situation. Modelling skillful responding is key for students learning mindfulness. When stress builds up in the classroom, teachers can offer students some mindful stretches, visualization exercises, or mindful breathing. By doing this, teachers can indicate to their students that they are in touch with their needs and respond mindfully. Teachers can, for example, say, “I know we’ve been working hard, and you’re feeling tired...” Students then can notice their levels of stress and learn to manage it. They can learn to adopt the teacher’s mindful practices to take that mindful break.

Lantieri states, “classroom ‘peace corners’ are places in the classroom where students can go to self-regulate” (qtd. in Broderick 2019, 93). This space within the classroom is a space for children to be within themselves to take a breath and have this space and time for themselves.

Martin Seligman is recognized as the founder of positive psychology and speaks to the relevance of learned optimism, an essential trait of happiness and well-being. “Positive psychology is the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits, and the institutions that facilitate their development. It is a field concerned with well-being and optimal

functioning. Positive psychology aims to broaden the focus of clinical psychology beyond suffering and its direct alleviation” (Angela Lee Duckworth, Tracy Steen, & Martin Seligman 2005, 630). Nielson, referring to Seligman, addresses the discrepancy between what we teach our children and what we want for our children. He begins his international conference presentations by asking the audience one of two questions: What do schools teach? What do we want for our children? Experience demonstrates that participants who respond to what schools teach used terminology like knowledge, facts, and content. Those who respond to what we want for our children identify happiness, well-being, health, kindness, and love. This is a recurring dichotomy between what schools teach and what we want for the students (2008).

Nielson poses the seminal question: why are well-being, happiness, and kindness, not part of and support the regular curriculum? This is a valid ethical query that is being addressed more often by educators who are introducing social emotional learning into the curriculum so that children can learn how to live with others. “Research indicates that well-being is an integral component of educational success promoting creativity, capability and productivity” (Nielson 2008, Seligman 2002). Students further learn to be resilient and develop grit. Learning mindfulness and developing empathy through educational lessons helps students focus on developing emotional literacy. “Satisfaction, argues Seligman (2011), comes from belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self”, while ‘connections to other people and relationships are what give meaning and purpose to life” (qtd. in Simpson 2017, 16).

### 1..3.2 The Evolution of Empathy

According to McGilchrist, the right brain is the source of empathy, and mindfulness is a right-brain practice developed out of oral culture. McGilchrist says, “self-awareness, empathy, identification with others, and more generally inter-subjective processes, are largely dependent

upon right hemisphere resources” (2019, 57). McGilchrist says “the right hemisphere plays an important role in what is known as ‘theory of mind,’ a capacity to put oneself in another's position and see what is going on in that person’s mind” (2019, 57). Orr argues that when one baby cries in a neonatal unit, most of the other babies begin to cry. This crying is recognized as empathy and affirms that empathy is present at birth, innate and not acquired. At first, infants don’t distinguish between others and self because they haven’t learned to do this. This accounts for the neonatal innate phenomenon. This is the necessary innate empathy, and other reactions build on this. Empathy is an intuitive process for all children; however, some children have difficulty being empathic. This difficulty is generally attributed to problems with upbringing. Children need to develop empathy for others (2019). Parents, teachers, and therapists can help children increase their capacity for compassion by examining and discussing others’ feelings portrayed in stories and illustrations in picturebooks incorporating social stories and the practice of mindfulness to enhance empathy. Empathy allows children to be at one with another’s experience.

“Empathy is a basic human capacity that is important in daily social life” (Carolien Rieffe, Lizet Ketelaar and Carin Wiefferink 2010, 362). Empathy is feeling at one with the other. It can result in compassion and the urge to help others. Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, (1992) state that “in fact, empathy is supposed to be the important motor behind many prosocial behaviours or behaviour that strengthens group cohesion and cooperation” (Rieffe, Ketelaar and Wiefferink 2010, 362). Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; LeSure-Lester, 2000; Miller & Eisenberg, (1988) state that “deficits in empathy can play a critical role in developing externalizing behaviour and other behavioural problems” (Rieffe, Ketelaar and Wiefferink 2010, 362).

There is an interconnectedness between stress and mindfulness, as well as stress and empathy. When a person is so focused on their stress level, they seem to pay less attention to others' needs. Mindfulness programs that reduce personal stress can also enhance empathy. Compassion and kindness are taught as part of the mindfulness curriculum. Buddhism holds that *karuna*, which is compassion, and which is grounded in empathy, is fundamental to human nature. Compassion is one of the essential aspects of mindfulness. Researchers raise two critical questions in this context. First, how are mindfulness and empathy connected? Second, by teaching children mindfulness, can children's level of empathy be enhanced? These questions are especially important for therapists and educators and propelled me to explore these questions in this dissertation. By introducing mindfulness in schools, students learn to be mindful of themselves, and others and learn to develop self-awareness, an aspect of which is empathy, self-care, and care for others.

### 1.3.3 Historical Review of Bibliotherapy

"Afolayan stated that "the first documented use of bibliotherapy as an intervention technique was in 1840" (qtd. in Iaquina and Hipsky 2012, 1). Samuel McChord Crothers stated, "in 1916, the term 'bibliotherapy' was used in a published article in *The Atlantic Monthly* to describe the process of presenting books to medical patients who needed help understanding their problems" (qtd. in Iaquina and Hipsky 2012, 1). Howard Deitcher scholar and educator mentioned "that the field of bibliotherapy is rooted in an ancient practice that believed that written materials provide human beings with extraordinary resources to enhance their social, emotional, moral, and spiritual lives. A testimony to words' ability to impact human behaviour is recorded in an epigraph on the library in Alexandria (circa 300 BCE): Medicine (or remedy) for the mind" (2018, 1). "Bibliotherapy has evolved beyond the limits of its highly therapeutic

origins—where it was used only by health professionals, and only for adults with “severe problems”—to being a simple educational tool equally suited to adults and children” (Deitcher 2018, 2).

In 1975, “Bruno Bettelheim's endorsement of stories as therapeutic made him a pioneer in the field” (qtd. in Spufford 31). “Bettelheim said, “for a story to truly hold the child’s attention, it must entertain him and arouse curiosity. But to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems that perturb him” (1976, 5). “Today, bibliotherapy is the term applied for the use of fiction to explore a) children's feelings about self-esteem; b) the experience of living with a chronic condition including disability; and c) the ability to relate to the main character with a similar condition” (Jaquinta and Hipsky 2012, 1). Bibliotherapy is always evolving as it is a dynamic process.

### 1..3.4 Bibliotherapy in Practice

Bibliotherapy for children involves using picturebooks to help children cope with personal challenges that they encounter. Bibliotherapy incorporates the use of picturebooks enabling a therapeutic interaction between children and adult readers. The assumption is that during the reading, children will identify with a particular character, either a major and minor character, “good” or “bad” protagonist and the situation in the story. The hope is that this identification will enable children to develop insight, release emotions, explore problem-solving methods, and develop coping skills. Bibliotherapy allows children to confront their issues. The parent or therapist supports children as they connect with the characters in a picturebook facing similar situations to those in their lives. The picturebook is used as a catalyst in therapy and not a

substitute for therapy. Therapeutically using picturebooks is very effective. Still, it requires careful planning and selecting appropriate literature regarding the nature of children's medical or psychological problems.

Bibliotherapy is a collaborative process where children can read stories with an adult to help shape how they think about certain situations. When children empathize with believable story characters, they can understand themselves and others better. The vicarious experience of reading is less threatening than the reality of everyday life. Teachers and therapists cannot change the children's home situations in their care, but they can provide positive role models. Adults often select picturebooks for children that address elements of empathy and resilience or strategies for strengthening children's empathy and resilience. Bibliotherapy has become more prolific lately, possibly because of the increase in societal and familial problems, increased rates of stress and anxiety at home and school, a rise in divorce, excessive peer group pressure, mass media and internet stress, gender identity issues and the onset of cancer in children and more recently living through this pandemic with COVID 19.

Bibliotherapy deals with existing problems children are confronting to prepare them for difficult life events. Wei Tu, a psychologist working with children and trauma, explains this shift, saying, "Through literature, children can understand that they are not alone in encountering problems" (1999, 2). Bibliotherapy can help children deal with some of their issues. Teachers and therapists realize that children must deal with their emotions to confront their challenges. Picturebooks depict change and elicit feelings in children, and they offer a model for children in terms of managing their life situation in a meaningful way. Both children and adults often overlook the therapeutic power of the picturebook. From my therapeutic experience, I have discovered that picturebooks are often read at a surface level only. However, if the story is



examined more in-depth, multiple layers of meaning can be gleaned in post-story conversations, releasing the picturebook's real therapeutic power. I will address some of the educational ways to incorporate bibliotherapy in educational lessons or in therapy.

Bibliotherapy serves many functions: to provide information, to provide insight, to stimulate 'collaborative talk.' Bibliotherapy offers a process enabling children to increase their emotional capacity for dealing with developmental life issues. Deitcher mentions that "in the school setting, developmental bibliotherapy can be implemented in the classroom where the goal is to facilitate children's normal development and to educate students about issues such as divorce, death, bullying, and so on. One of bibliotherapy's great advantages is its ability to draw children and adults into meaningful discussions in ways that are user-friendly and non-threatening" (2018, 2). In picturebooks, this process is achieved through the text and accompanying art as children hear or read the words and view the illustrations back and forth. Moreover, children typically encounter the reading of the picturebook together with an adult. Janet Evans also refers to "collaborative talk" between adults and children in the post-story discussion, which becomes a powerful dialogue between the children and adults about the picturebook's meaning and impact. This shared experience is potentially rich and valuable for both. The adult readers and children listeners are dynamic and crucial to the reading experience of picturebooks (2009). According to Lewis "the picturebook comes to life in the reading event" (2001, 55)

Emotional intelligence can be learned and improved through modelling other people's behaviour, enhancing social skills, feedback from others, and learning through and from stories. Emotional intelligence contributes to the foundation of a healthier, more mature person. Bibliotherapy is a pleasurable experience. Children love to listen to a story in a picturebook and

gaze at the pictures; these stories help them deal with emotional and social difficulties. Therapists and educators use bibliotherapy in the classroom setting to access children's emotional realm as this is part of children's social-emotional learning.

A review of the scholarly literature indicates how bibliotherapy can be used with children as a therapeutic medium. Picturebooks evoke feelings in the child as they trigger some recollection of feelings or prior experience. Ellen Spitz says that adult readers provide roles other than the just being the reader. They can be there for children by giving them both a psychological embrace and a physical embrace (1999). Spitz further states that in a world where make-believe and reality spill over into one another, the presence of a parent is comforting. Picturebooks may elicit anxiety, pleasure, and laughter, but the adult can provide containment. Since I am interested in this therapeutic relationship, I will highlight the adult reader/children listener dynamic during bibliotherapy. David Lewis argues "that adults and children look at picturebooks differently and therefore see different things. Children tend to see many more specific details, especially in the illustrations and adults have a more general purview" (2001, 129). Children are usually looking for clues to substantiate what they hear whilst listening to the story and have more ability to play within the picturebook. Margaret Meek says, "well-crafted children's books link what children know, partly know and are learning about the world, to ways of presenting the world in books" (Mikkelsen 79).

Bibliotherapy, according to Anita Iaquinta and Shellie Hipsky, is a shared experience that includes meaning-making, which is potentially rich and valuable (2012). According to Elizabeth Schlenther, author and bibliotherapist, the first step in the bibliotherapy process is "identification." Here the adult reader asks the children questions about characters or events and probes ideas to stimulate meaning-making. Alternatively, the adult reader can answer questions

raised by children or ask children to stop the reader when something in the book compares to something they have experienced. “Catharsis” follows identification, during which children’s feelings are connected with the story, and children can express their feelings in this regard. The “discussion” permits children to collaborate with the adults to help them identify their feelings and create that space to think about how they can deal with their situation. Follow-up activities could include role-playing, drawing, reading, journaling, writing, or telling more stories. Discussion helps children understand not only their personal feelings but also the fact that they are not alone. Therapists use this approach when children face difficult situations, and a parent, teacher, or therapist recommends a book that triggers or connects with something for those children. This adult reader children listener scenario is vital in the bibliotherapy process, allowing the picturebook to be a vehicle in the therapeutic encounter (1999).

Heesoon Bai and Avraham Cohen argue that teaching involves focusing on various goals within the educational context, for example transmitting new skills and knowledge to students, fostering social interaction and social emotional learning that can transform children’s thinking and being. Bai and Cohen state that “transformation, is the most complex and challenging yet, in our view, the most worthwhile since it is through transformation that we as individuals and cultural groups re-invent and renew ourselves in response to the exigencies of the time and in the service of being more whole and more fully alive. However, teaching for transformation is not to be mistaken for directly changing our students or children. Teaching, we must re-emphasize, is not a moral practice even if it has a moral content, for example, teaching moral values and virtues. Any intention and direct attempt at changing another person, no matter how worthy and important the aims and reasons are, fundamentally contradict, we argue, the heart of morality, which requires seeing another being, human or non-human, as having their own subjectivity and

intrinsic worth. From this understanding, then, the task of the moral educator is to find or create suitable and conducive conditions in an educational environment that are optimal for the facilitation of the growth and development of students as moral beings and invite them to try out what is available in the environment” (2014, 6). Mindfulness transforms the way children think and behave towards themselves and others; teaching children mindfulness is worthwhile and can benefit their well-being and the well-being of others.

Bai and Cohen’s contribution to storytelling lends itself to bibliotherapy and informs the way children are transformed by a story. According to Bai and Cohen “Transformation of the person is about the person seeing the world differently, feeling different emotions, desiring differently, or different kinds of things, having different attitudes, relating to the world differently, and acting differently” (2014, 9). Bai and Cohen say that children must grapple with their identity and come to terms with themselves. “Given that education for transformation that does not violate or compromise the students’ subjectivity and capacity for agency necessarily has to be one that invites students to try out, for their evaluation, different ways of being in the world and seeing the world, we suggest that a most powerful pedagogic means to support this goal is storytelling” (Bai and Cohen 2014, 9).

According to Bai and Cohen, “the Bakhtinian notion of the ‘space of authoring’ (Holland et al. 1998) offers us a good way to understand the power of story as a transformative teaching tool. A story presents to the reader or listener a virtual world populated not only by human action but also by intention, desire, emotion, perception, volition, and sensations” (2014, 9). When children get absorbed in the story, children are released into an imaginative world where their previous understanding of things becomes

flexible. They are more receptive to trying out new methods of examining things.

According to Bai and Cohen when children listen to a story being read to them, “stories have the potential to facilitate a different state of consciousness in the listener, at least temporarily, and in that altered state, an openness may emerge that allows for new possibilities of being-possibilities that are predisposed to be in line with the experience of awakening and seeing the world nondually” (2014, 9). Therefore, it is essential to understand that when children listen to a story, they share the space with the reader.

Something happens within them while they are processing that story internally. At the same time there is a vital connection between reader and children during the stories reading in this shared space.

### 1..3.5 Existing Scholarship on Picturebook Illustrations and Language

In the context of mindfulness, I would now like to discuss the use of picturebooks to teach mindfulness to children and to enhance their empathy level in order to facilitate their well-being. To begin with, the following are some general properties of picturebooks according to reading researchers. Martin Salisbury suggests that “the very best picturebooks become mini art galleries for the home, a coming together of concept, artwork, design, and production that gives pleasure to and stimulates the imagination of both children and adults” (2012, 50). Salisbury states that “most picturebooks are inspired by a simple narrative idea, presented in such a way as to engage the interest and capture the imagination of the child” (2004, 74).

Salisbury further states that “in picturebooks, the relationship between words and pictures is a unique and sometimes complex one. The respective roles need to be considered and balanced, complementing rather than duplicating each other's statements” (2004, 84). This dissertation sheds light on both the images and texts of picturebooks and the interanimation between

them. Readers realize the narrative in picturebooks through the illustrations and text. To engage with the picturebook, referred to as a multimodal text, the picturebook needs to be read and viewed. Lewis discusses the ecological perspective on picturebooks revealing “that the words are never just words, they are always words-as-influenced-by-pictures. Similarly, the pictures are never just pictures; they are pictures-as-influenced-by-words” (2001, 74). Salisbury says “children’s picturebooks provide powerful reading experiences as most of the time the words and pictures are “speaking” simultaneously, so we need to rearrange the balance between them” (2004, 84). Salisbury says, “at its best, children’s picturebook illustration is a subtle and complex art form that can communicate on many levels and leave a deep imprint on a child’s consciousness” (2004, 6). Evans argues that “the playfulness of picturebooks encourages children to feel confident to adventure further with their meaning-making of the story” (2009, 7). The vicarious experience of reading is less threatening than the reality of everyday life.

According to Lewis, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1968), a “philosopher of ordinary language,” argues that we gain meaning from picturebooks in several different ways. He implies that from an academic perspective, there are other routes for appreciating and understanding the subject. Lewis states that “we can apply the methods of semiotic analysis to picturebook images or look for the ways that pictures and words interanimate one another. We can try to understand the picturebook as an object of aesthetic contemplation or as an imaginative experience for a child” (Lewis 2001, 136). Lewis says that “Wittgenstein opens up perspectives upon how the pictures in picturebooks come to have meaning for the readers” (2001, xv). According to Orr Wittgenstein frequently looked at how a word is learned. For that he begins with the “primitive” and “pre-linguistic” (1975, §540 – 541) behaviors into which the words are woven in language-games. For instance, how does a child learn the word ‘pain’? “A child has hurt himself and he

cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.” He continues to explain that “the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe [or name or picture] it” (1968, §116, qtd. in Orr 2014, 48). So even reading about pain can bring out what that experience is.

According to Margaret Meek in picturebooks “words are being pulled through the pictures and the pictures brought into focus by the words and how pictures and words on a page interanimate one another” (qtd. in Lewis 2001, 35). Language is situated in the left brain, and McGilchrist focuses on its use there, but the right brain uses it as well, for example, to develop metaphoric myths. “The right hemisphere specializes in non-verbal communication, it deals with whatever is implicit, where the left hemisphere is tied to more explicit and more conscious processing” (McGilchrist 71). Still, the right brain’s attention is focused on everything in context, and pictures provide the context. McGilchrist states that “the left hemisphere may have a lot to do with language, but the right hemisphere plays a vital part in language too. It uses language not to manipulate ideas or things but to understand what others mean. The right hemisphere’s particular strength is in understanding meaning as a whole and its context. It is with the right hemisphere that we understand the moral of a story” (2009, 70). When children comprehend the story so much is at play and their brain must integrate it all to make sense of the meaning of the story and how it is personally relevant and resonates with them.

“The first art children see is often in a picturebook” (Lewis 2001, 1). Lewis further argues “that there is a special relationship between picturebooks, child readers, and the concept of play” (76). Children reading picturebooks are beginning to understand this process. Lewis says, “play is what children do, not because they are in a state of innocence, but because they are perpetually learning, perpetually becoming and the best picturebook makers are their allies in this”

(81). Lewis explores “what it means for the picturebook that its makers are not only dealing with a form that is uniquely flexible and malleable but are also creating imaginative fictions for an audience for whom the world itself is in a perpetual state of becoming” (75). Children, too, are continually changing and becoming as they grow and evolve.

Children’s literature scholars Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer in the *Pleasures of Children’s Literature* argue that readers get absorbed in their reading. “Reading is a transaction and seen as an “event” or an exchange between text and reader” (1992, 219). Children and adults reading the text together are the interpreters. They must decipher both the words and artwork, and this interrelationship explains the story’s meaning. The relationship between adults and children is core and distinctive to the reading of picturebooks and the process of bibliotherapy. Through the picturebook’s artwork, children begin to understand the story’s world, where and when it takes place, who is in the story, whether it is a familiar or new story

Children are introduced to the emotional realm of characters through picturebooks. They can pick up the cues in terms of the characters’ emotions and their interactions with others in the story. Children begin to read the facial expressions and body language of the characters from the illustrations. Reading plays a vital role in developing and reinforcing empathy for children.

American picturebook illustrator and author David Wiesner argues that a great deal takes place in a picturebook, therefore picturebooks are significant texts. Reading visual images is vital to children's development. Children can put a story in context by exploring the sequence of events following a storyline as they read or follow the text. In addition to this, children are also able to learn to contextualize language (2012).

For a picturebook to be of therapeutic value for children, the story needs to be age-appropriate, entertaining, educational, and non-traumatizing. In this dissertation I analyze several



picturebooks and their therapeutic implications, blending theories about picturebooks, therapeutic contacts with children, and actual classroom discussions. This analysis helps me to explain the picturebooks' value as an educational and therapeutic medium. The children's responses help me articulate my story in this dissertation of children's picturebooks' tremendous academic and therapeutic value.

Stories used in therapy are compelling as children often project themselves in the story and see themselves identifying with the characters in picturebooks. They create and retell their own story from the story they have heard. Many picturebooks are liberating. Some picturebooks allow children to feel relief when reading about other children's experiences similar to theirs in a picturebook. There are some picturebooks that are too threatening for some children, and these are often rejected by these children. Children are usually able to absorb a great deal from life-affirming picturebooks in times of crisis. Whilst other children often need time to come back to a picturebook when they are at a different stage.

Thomas Newkirk says, "reading is not just a treasure hunt for the main idea; it is a journey a reader takes with the writer" (2012, 31). Reading is a journey of agency and learning. The author and illustrator decide what to tell the reader by selecting what and how a story can unfold. Children might or might not make meaning of the picturebook's story as the author and illustrator intended. The adult often selects the picturebook to read to the child, and the child can either listen to the story or choose to request a different story. The information does not come to the reader raw; it is organized and mediated by a teller who participates in this journey.

Perry Nodeleman, scholar and author says, "that child psychology and children's literature can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with childhood-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, set-

ting it, ruling over it; in short, child psychology and children's literature is an adult style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over childhood” (1992, 29). Nodelman adapted this analysis from Edward Said’s work on Orientalism. Nodelman is eloquent in his discussion and interpretations on the understanding of childhood as being the “other.” Children must be introduced to and learn to function in society. However, children are active participants in the process too. Children construct meaning from the text they hear read to them, and from the illustrations, they simultaneously view by relating what they hear and see to what they already know. Discussing the story with the adult or classmates allows children to understand the meaning of the story and it often then becomes more apparent. Children will either agree to read or reread the selected picturebook or choose another picturebook.

Nodelman says that adults’ voices always come through in children’s picturebooks. In terms of bibliotherapy, there are times when a story can be overly prescriptive and didactic in terms of the message or moral implication the author is conveying and therefore seen to be controlling. In this instance, many children often find the story too contrived as it does not leave room to make the story meaningful for them. However, the picturebook allows children, reading the picturebooks more freedom in meaning-making than all-word texts. Children can make assumptions and take meaning from the illustrations and the gaps in the text, especially when their emotions are involved.

Through emotional literacy, children learn to develop a growth mindset, they learn to be more flexible and less rigid in their thinking, they strengthen their empathy, and can become more resilient. I promote the use of bibliotherapy in the therapeutic context and the educational/classroom setting to increase children’s emotional capacity for empathy. The enjoyment of a picturebook and the playfulness and openness of a picturebook makes the picturebook a suitable

catalyst for promoting self-understanding. Through bibliotherapy, children discover and come to terms with certain aspects of themselves to understand and make sense of what they are experiencing or feeling emotionally.

Lewis argues, “that picturebooks always open at least two windows upon the text” (2001, 4) so that children can see the story in more than one way. There are at least two ways of looking at a picturebook, illustrations and text and meaning making of their combination. Besides, when opening a picturebook, there are usually two pages to scan, a double page spread. Picturebooks tend to feel more open and permeable than more determinate forms. Children can just start by enjoying the pictures and ignoring the words. They can enter the picturebook partway through and enjoy an appealing image. Children, too, can look at the picturebook as a composite whole and just appreciate its openness, as well as the three-dimensionality and novelty of the picturebook.

Authors take children and adult readers with them on a journey, often a personal journey. Children can engage with the storytellers through the story. This intimate relationship allows children effectively and cognitively to access the subtleties the storyteller has to offer. Children can sense the writer's cognitive energy, humour, irony, or sadness. A relationship, even a sense of trust, develops with the storyteller. This trust is pertinent for children and caring adults, who trust the author to write a story age-appropriate for children, with content dealt with sensitively instead of traumatizing children. Children's emotional states are of paramount importance as stories stay with them long after reading the book.

Picturebooks evoke feelings in children as they trigger some recollection of feelings or prior experience. Raymond Mar, Keith Oatley & Justin Mullin argue that “emotions can also be elicited by a narrative in the form of affect that accompanies the recollection of the personal

experience. Different emotions are evoked when entering the narrative world, known as narrative emotions” (2010, 826).

The experience of reading the picturebook is a complex process, and children interpret or clarify what is meaningful and relevant to them. Literature in this field demonstrates that picturebooks possess the power to heal and are, thus, powerful therapeutic tools for children. “Literature can make children emotionally stronger” (Eichler-Levine 15). Writers must use their words to engage children in their stories by considering the protection of children’s emotional well-being.

### 1..3.6 Children as Other

In this dissertation I will outline the discourse among researchers of children’s literature over the years regarding children as “other.” The discourse spans authors who silence children’s voices and move to more recent trends where children are given more agency and their voices are heard in children’s literature. The adult writer is often writing for children, as the “other,” what the adult writer feels would benefit children. Children’s “otherness” in children’s literature is usually portrayed as follows: adults in control and children often seen as the “other,” and dis-empowered.

According to Emmanuel Levinas, French philosopher, some relationships are asymmetrical. The focus of this dissertation will examine some of these asymmetrical relationships in the educational and therapeutic context. The first-time children encounter ‘the other’ is when they are infants with their mother/father and or primary caregiver. The mother is the first ‘other’ for children. In education, when the teacher is teaching, and the students are learning, this important relationship is an asymmetrical relationship. This asymmetrical relationship too, exists in the therapeutic context.

Clarence Joldersma says “Levinas’s notion of the other provides a good way of describing the relationship between people in asymmetric relations. Levinas paints the asymmetry by taking a first-person perspective rather than a third-person, spectator perspective. This gives him a powerful approach to discover something novel and important about human relations” (2001, 181). Joldersma also mentions that “Levinas means to say not merely another person, one who may well turn out to be very much like me, but that person in his or her strangeness, alterity, difference, foreignness. The other does not fit within my categorization and expectations, my totality and economy, my sameness. The other is a stranger that I welcome into my home” (2001, 182). In Levinas’s scheme, “for the teacher to be other the student must be a ‘me’ rather than an ‘I.’ Otherwise the student would not be able to welcome the teacher as other. Without the student as a me rather than an I, the potential exchange would be forced, a violence” (184). Joldersma argues that “there are thus two ways in which pedagogy is pedagogy of the other. First of all, ‘of’ refers to the student: the student being taught is the other. And the second, ‘of’ refers to the teacher: the teacher who teaches is the other. Both are vital in pedagogy” (2001, 188).

This Literature Review sets the stage for this dissertation with an overview of the uses of bibliotherapy in teaching mindfulness to children to ascertain their level of empathy. In the next chapter I make a transition to the dissertation’s methodology by examining the use of picturebooks on mindfulness for children to facilitate children's empathy. Children can learn how to practice mindfulness from picturebooks about mindfulness and learn the basic tenets of mindfulness. Children can also learn to incorporate strategies in their life to respond calmly from these picturebooks on mindfulness. Skilful responding, especially during challenging moments, is contained in the education of children in mindful practice. Sometimes children need to be taught how to be in the moment, move forward, and not get stuck. Children need to be taught

how to move on, let go of their fears, worries, or anger, and go forward, moving through their anxieties or anger. In context, the quotation below by Robert Frost is so poignant and resonates with me in terms of not giving up, or opting out, but instead moving through the difficult moments and big emotions.

“The best way out is always through.”

A poem by Robert Frost (1915) “*A Servant to Servants*.”

I intend to lead you through the methodology chapter to see how principles and practices of mindfulness can be taught to students and to examine the impact on children’s level of empathy.

## Methodology and Critical Discussion

### 2.1.1 Aims of this Research

#### **Aim 1: To Understand How Mindfulness Can Support Children's Wellbeing**

I aim to understand how mindfulness-based interventions may support children's development of empathy. I will examine theories of empathy and explore different interventions of mindfulness for children. I have begun to think about how mindfulness practices may support children in developing empathy, which I outline in the discussion, Chapter Seven. The aim is to develop mindfulness for children and focus on its relevance in educational and therapeutic contexts.

#### **Aim 2: To Execute Original Research<sup>2</sup>**

The research is original and extends knowledge in education and mindfulness as mindfulness in education is a relatively new research area. I have developed an eight-week mindfulness program, "Mindfulness Matters to Us", to implement in the classroom using bibliotherapy for elementary division students. This research will evaluate such a program within the educational context in Chapter Seven.

#### **Aim 3: To Conceptualize, Design, and Implement the Research**

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<sup>2</sup> This research study has been approved by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is a delegated authority that reviews research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board.

This research aims to immerse children in an educational experience of participating and practicing mindfulness. Before I implemented a mindfulness-based classroom intervention program, there was no program available at Bialik Hebrew Day School. As a result, the research included constructing, planning, and advocating for this mindfulness-based intervention program to be implemented, in this case, for Grade Two students at Bialik Hebrew Day School. I outline this procedure and the program's execution in detail in this Methodology Chapter.

#### **Aim 4: To Initiate New Research in the Area of Mindfulness**

The research aims to explore ways to investigate and evaluate my mindfulness program by administering an assessment instrument for this study. To analyze the effects of participants' mindfulness experiences on empathy. I administered the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) questionnaire to ascertain the students' level of empathy before and after the eight lessons on mindfulness. I selected this assessment instrument and implemented the questionnaire, which I outline in this Methodology Chapter.

#### **Aim 5: To Design an Educational Program Using Bibliotherapy**

A central aim was to create a course suitable for children to teach them mindfulness. This course included developing an approach using bibliotherapy to teach mindfulness to elementary-division students through mindfulness experiences. My original work, *The Present*, is incorporated as an interactive workbook for children, thereby contributing an experiential element of the children's exposure to understanding and practicing mindful awareness. The workbook, *The Present*, is an educational, interactive workbook for both children and their parents to read and integrate some of the tenets of mindfulness. I will discuss the use of *The Present* in Chapter Three. I further highlight the research component that includes the children's



and parents' feedback regarding learning and practicing mindfulness. I outline this feedback in the discussion chapter, Chapter Seven.

#### **Aim 6: Contribute to Research for Children**

I aim to incorporate research methods of study from childhood studies and education. I am responsible for communicating my findings to Bialik Hebrew Day Schools regarding the mindfulness courses for future curriculum planning and integration within the school system.

At the forefront of this research, I aim to be ethical and responsible when researching with children to understand their needs and interests. This research contributes to the field of mindfulness by using bibliotherapy in the educational setting for the development of empathy.

#### **2.1.2 Overall Research Goals**

This research focuses on children's experiences of mindfulness to help them to develop their level of empathy. I carried out my research in an elementary school setting, Bialik Hebrew Day School, Toronto. Grade Two students participated in this study. I am the school counsellor at Bialik Hebrew Day School in Toronto and obtained permission from the school administration to carry out my research in two, Grade Two classrooms. I developed a curriculum of eight lessons incorporating bibliotherapy using relevant picturebooks on mindfulness. I summarize the overall research study in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

According to Kay Tisdall, John Davis, and Michael Gallagher, "children have been a focus of the psycho-social sciences tracing back to the start of the twentieth century, but they were most often the objects of research. Now, there is intense interest in children as the subjects of research, perceiving them as having something salient to contribute to the questions at hand, and this is a growing trend" (2008, 1). "Arguments are well established that researchers should

recognize children's agency, their citizenship as human beings now and not just in the future and involve children as the main research participants. More fundamentally, childhood studies have challenged taken-for-granted ideas of childhood" (2). Tisdall, Davis, and Gallagher "share a desire to see children as active beings, and not just passive recipients of parental or professional care" (2008, 3). "Like many others in the field, research guidelines have been influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC with its commitment to children's rights, particularly to participation" (3). According to Tisdall, Davis, and Gallagher "much of the recent research activity in the children's rights and participation field is termed "consultation." The line between research and consultation is a matter of contention. "Evaluation" is yet another similar term, which aims to assess the effectiveness of a particular program, policy or service in achieving its objectives, and it typically seeks to contribute to improvements in this program, policy or service in the future" (2008, 4).

Michel Foucault (1985) argues that "understanding research in the broadest sense, including consultation, evaluation, and many forms of participation, can determine why such activities are worthwhile. First, research might open new possibilities for children and society more generally. It can question how we have always done or thought about things. It can raise issues that might not otherwise have been considered and suggest options that would otherwise not have been conceived. Research can help us to think differently" (qtd. in Tindall, Davis, and Gallagher 2008, 5). Further, "research can be a transformative practice in itself, undermining the distinction between process and outputs, means, and ends. Action research and participatory models of practice have become increasingly popular in work with children" (Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher 5). As well, "childhood studies are inherently interdisciplinary, with leading contributors ranging from historians to literature analysts, from education practitioners to youth

workers, legal philosophers to psychologists and sociologists” (Tisdall, Davis and Gallagher 7). Tisdall, Davis, and Gallagher state that “research can also be a means of representation, a way to ensure that children’s views and experiences are not only listened to but heard by other groups” (2008, 5). My research encapsulates many of the points mentioned above in educating children on mindfulness by empowering them with a lifelong skill that can be developed and nurtured. I recognize children as active participants in their emotional development of empathy, resilience, and wellness. I respect the children’s rights in this study, and I obtained consent from both the children and their parents to be part of this research.

### 2.1.3 Rationale for the Research

I used a qualitative ethnographic research design to explore teaching mindfulness practices in an educational setting. Ethnography refers to the gathering of data of a specific group of people, Grade Two Students at Bialik Hebrew Day School, to ascertain how they would respond to a mindfulness-based program in the classroom setting.

I will now outline my central research questions in this dissertation. Can children learn mindfulness practices and concepts through bibliotherapy in the classroom? Does the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” curriculum and the interactive workbook, *The Present* facilitate the learning of mindfulness concepts and practices for children in the classroom? Does learning mindfulness in the classroom over an eight-week period program affect children’s level of empathy? Can mindfulness be incorporated as part of the school’s social, emotional literacy curriculum to enhance personal well-being in children?

I also see this research situated in the category of practice-based and practice-led research. “Practice-led research is a conceptual framework that allows a researcher to incorporate their creative practice, creative methods, and creative output into the research design and as a

part of the research output” (Research Methodologies for the Creative Arts & Humanities: Practice-Based & Practice-Led Research. 20 July 2020). I created an interactive workbook, *The Present*, that involved creativity on my part, in terms of both the text and images. I incorporated it as part of the curriculum in my mindfulness lessons, “Mindfulness Matters to Us,” program, that I designed to suit Grade Two students’ needs at Bialik Hebrew Day School.

My research also fits into a mixed methods category. Charles Kadushin, Shahar Hecht, Theodore Sasson, and Leonard Saxe state that “studies that compare quantitative and qualitative observations at the conceptual or propositional level, as opposed to those that conduct statistical comparisons, should more properly be described as mixed methods studies. A mixed-methods design excels at bringing insights derived from diverse methods to the analysis of a given phenomenon” (2008, 47). I also incorporate an aspect of literary analysis when I analyze the emotional affordances of specific picturebooks for use in bibliotherapy in Chapter Four. I can see my research as transformative as students learned about mindfulness, as their new knowledge and participation have transformed their way of thinking about being in the present moment, responding instead of reacting, being empathetic, and being mindful of themselves, others, and the environment. These lessons are of paramount importance and contribute to children’s social-emotional learning in the classroom.

According to Gillian Bendelow and [Berry Mayall](#) “an analysis of qualitative data shows how children recognize the role of emotional learning in sustaining a balanced and ‘healthy’ lifestyle in relation to their self-identity, mainly through the importance of enlisting and sustaining friendships as protection across the public/private divide and the institutional order of school life. Furthermore, the data shows that children understand their subordination to adults

and the role of ‘emotion work’ in the negotiation of these hierarchical relationships” (2002, 291).

#### 2.1.4 Original Research

I have developed and implemented an eight-session, mindfulness “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program for use in the classroom, incorporating bibliotherapy and an interactive workbook, *The Present*, to supplement the lessons. This research aims to impact the educational field by incorporating mindfulness using bibliotherapy to support children’s social-emotional learning and children’s capacity for empathy enhancement. It focuses on how children can apply mindfulness techniques taught to them in the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” classroom program. This dissertation further explores how the teaching of mindfulness lessons through bibliotherapy influences children’s empathy level, which will be delved into in this dissertation’s discussion. Mindfulness is learning the essential skills of being present with each moment in life. This research focuses on teaching children to be mindful through a program of lessons using bibliotherapy to bring intentional awareness to their thoughts, feelings, body sensations, speech, and behaviours as they move through their daily lives. Randy Semple and Christopher Willard say, ‘that for children learning to practice mindfulness, it is a powerful tool with which to develop essential social-emotional competencies” (2019, 2).

I have designed an eight-session program that I have implemented for Grade Two students using picturebooks on mindfulness. I have operated as the principal researcher in this endeavour. This chapter contains the data and analysis of how mindfulness relates to children’s empathy enhancement.

#### 2.1.5 The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA)

Empathy is crucial for success in children’s everyday social world. According to primatologist Frans De Waal, who has done extensive research in this area, he recognizes that

humans can connect with another in distress. De Waal says, “humans are hard-wired for empathy” (2009). This view is independently reinforced by recent biomedical studies showing that our brains are built to feel another’s pain. Jean Decety and Phillip Jackson (2004) found “that infants are “hardwired” to imitate automatically and synchronize affective expressions” (qtd.in Rieffe 2010, 362). Vreeke and Van der Mark (2003) say that “infants this young, cannot differentiate between self and other, which causes them to act as though what happened to the other person happened to them” (Rieffe 2010, 362).

According to Carolien Rieffe, Lizet Ketelaar, and Carin H. Wiefferink the outcome of their study confirmed “the three levels of empathy that are frequently noted in the literature to be apparent in very young children. Empathy is considered to be a keystone in children’s social development” (2010, 366). The researchers felt that “future studies could be used to more closely examine the unique predictive value of the different levels of empathy for children’s emotional and social functioning and examine how these levels contribute to different aspects of children’s development” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 366). Therefore, I deemed this questionnaire suitable for my proposed research. I contacted the author and her colleagues to discuss the feasibility of using their questionnaire for my study. They advised me to do so and felt it would be suitable to use with 7-8-year-old students as other studies had used it on young children too.

De Waal (2008) supposed “that the different levels of empathy are like a Russian doll model, suggesting that each following level builds onto the former levels” (Rieffe, Ketelaar, and Wiefferink (2010, 362). Martin Hoffman “distinguished four levels of empathy. Although these levels are assumed to develop sequentially, they are not mutually exclusive (Hoffman 1990). Hoffman identified the first level of empathy as ‘Global Contagion,’ ‘Global Empathy,’ which manifests in the first year of life. At this level, infants attend to others’ emotions, albeit in

adaptive ways because witnessing someone in distress may result in a similar affective response, for example, the crying of one infant may trigger equal responses in other babies” (Rieffe, Ketelaar, and Wiefferink 2010, 362). “It is assumed that people are ‘hardwired’ to imitate automatically and synchronize affective expressions (Decety & Jackson 2004), but infants in their first year of life, cannot yet differentiate between self and other, which causes them to act as though what happened to the other person happened to them (Vreeke & Van Der Mark 2003). This response can occur at any point in one’s life. Alternatively, infants, this young, might still have difficulties to control their level of arousal.” (Rieffe, Ketelaar and Wiefferink, 2010, 362).

Although infants cannot differentiate between themselves and others, they can become overwhelmed when witnessing others in distress. (Rieffe, Ketelaar and Wiefferink 2010, 362). However, according to Decety and Jackson (2004), it is “assumed that people are ‘hardwired’ to automatically imitate and synchronize affective expressions” (Rieffe, Ketelaar and Wiefferink 2010, 362). This stage is also the foundation of language acquisition, which begins to develop in the first year. “Empathy accounts for the naturally occurring subjective experience of similarity between the feelings expressed by self and others without losing sight of whose feelings belong to whom. Empathy involves not only the affective experience of the other person’s actual or inferred emotional state but also some minimal recognition and understanding of another’s emotional state” (Decety and Jackson 2004, 1). Wittgenstein saw how language was connected to human emotions and behaviours and he grounds personal and interpersonal language acquisition to emotions. Orr alludes to both “Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein who believe that humans are relational beings, and that care is an integral part of healthy relationships. Thus, it has been argued that natural care can be deepened and widened using mindfulness practice into

Buddhist *karuna*. This, in turn, can serve as a moral grounding in contexts beyond the family and even the human” (2014, 52). Mindfulness can make us become more empathic and connected with each other and how we treat one another. In addition, the ethical questions are vital to consider as one is connected to the other in an ethical relationship, where it is important to recognize the application of rules in such relationships, where everyone is ethically responsible for each other, for example in the classroom community.

The second level, “which is labelled ‘Attention to Others’ Feelings’ is assumed to start at about one year of age. At this level, Hoffman argued, infants become aware that although they feel distressed, it is not oneself but someone else who is in actual danger or pain. Infants can pick up others' feelings of distress, and they become concerned for the other person. Moreover, infants develop the capacity to attend to others’ emotions with less personal distress. Their response to the distress of another child may now be transformed into concern for the victim” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 363). According to Decety and Jackson “it is this affective mirroring of others’ emotions that enables the development of concern for others during the second year of life, once the ability to distinguish between self and other has developed, that will ultimately induce prosocial behaviours such as helping or comforting others” (2004, 1).

At the third level, which is “termed ‘Prosocial Actions,’ Hoffman argues that children become more responsive to others’ emotional displays and start to react pro-socially. A longitudinal study by Zahn-Waxler and colleagues (1992) showed that children develop this capacity to intervene on behalf of others during the second year of life, which can take various forms, including helping, sharing, and comforting. (Rieffe et al. 2010)

“The fourth level of Hoffman’s theory is “Empathy for Another’s Life Condition” which develops in late childhood and refers to empathic responses not only confined to a situation, but



also with another's general level of distress" (Rieffe 2010, 363). This level of empathy involves individuals donating money or organizing a food drive for homeless people. Rieffe believes that young children can feel what other people feel, which would be seen as "Emotion Contagion." Carolien Rieffe decided that this level will not be incorporated into the questionnaire because the fourth level develops in late childhood. Decety and Jackson report "that children who show higher levels of empathy are better liked by their peers and teachers and are judged to be more socially competent in general" (2004, 1).

I used the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) in this research project, it is "an eighteen item self-report questionnaire. This questionnaire examines the level of empathy as reported by the child (9-16 years) in three domains: Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, and Prosocial Motivation" (363). This questionnaire, according to Rieffe et al., "is aimed at observing the first three levels of empathy in infants' and young children's behaviour" (2010 366). This questionnaire is used to assess empathy of children's self-reported reactions to hypothetical situations.

#### 2.1.6 Children's Rights

Ellen Key (1909) wrote her classic text, *The Century of the Child* in which she focused on children's rights in the next century. Lisa Farley, scholar states that Key believed that "her focus on children's well-being and progressive development was central to the invention of childhood as a modern concept. Indeed, her ideas maybe thought of as the precursor to the now commonplace metaphor of the child in need of care on the way to adulthood" (2018, 1). Currently scholars still address the adult/child binary. "As a myth, childhood is neither a natural stage of development, nor a neutral category, but rather a placeholder for political struggles, philosophical ideals and social anxieties that reflect the preoccupation of adults (Ariès, 1962;

Gelman, 2003; Koops, 2012, qtd. in Farley 2018, 2). Kathryn Stockton argues saying “and this century was famously named before it began, ‘the century of the child’ by Ellen Key in 1900, in audacious anticipation of how historians (at least, predictably, childhood historians and scholars of childhood) would thematize this period. I myself stick with this specific artifice—the discourse of ‘the century’—so as to show the trouble with ‘the century of the child’ as scholars conceive of it (2009, 8). Coats discusses the discourse of studying children and childhood as a special place of inquiry as everyone has some investment in it. She says, “we were all once children and many of us love children, and most of us care deeply about the future of our society” (2001, 141).

In terms of doing research for this dissertation, I was extremely mindful of my position as a researcher and social worker/school counsellor in the school and had two lenses through which to examine my work. I was extremely aware of how I implemented my research, considering the ethical considerations by acknowledging children’s rights to participate in the study and recognizing their agency. Doing research involving children has changed from children being seen as objects of study by adult researchers to granting students the ability to consent and voice their position and opinion to participate in the research. I am mindful of the issues related to being protective of children’s rights and their research participation. I have been both reflective and ethical in the research process. I am aware of the multiple relationships occurring throughout this research process, including students’ protection and participation and my dual role as researcher and school counsellor. I was extra vigilant of ethical principles, such as respect, benefit and justice in research involving children. I paid close attention to these specific aspects in terms of informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. I took great care in terms of these principles, and I obtained informed consent from both the parent and the child (the other) for this

study, making sure that no harm could come to anyone partaking in such a study. The names and any identifying details of the children studied in this research have all been kept confidential. I have stripped all identifying information from the case illustrations I have mentioned in the dissertation supporting the use of bibliotherapy. I showed respect to the students and obtained informed consent from them and their parents for my research. The principle of beneficence refers to a researcher's responsibility to increase children's well-being through the research. I was ethically responsible in this study by educating the children and teaching them about mindfulness, a new skill that benefits their well-being. Beneficence ensures that both the research process and outcomes are beneficial to the students. In this study, students were given their own copy of *The Present*, to facilitate the continued practice of mindfulness.

Overall, I involved the children in a meaningful way during the research process. I maintained the dignity, well-being, and rights of all the children's participants throughout the research study. "While involving children and young people in the research holds many possibilities for enhancing research, practice, and policy (Greene & Hill, 2005; Hinton, Tisdall, Gallagher & Elsley, 2008), researchers have a clear responsibility to ensure that no harm comes about from their inclusion. The dignity, wellbeing, and rights of all children, irrespective of context, are fundamental to the ERIC (Ethical Research Involving Children) Philosophy and Guidance" (Graham et al. 2013). I have taken the utmost caution to comply with these guidelines to ensure that my research is ethical, professional, and meets the York University Ethics Board's standards and the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service reviewed my thesis proposal and issued me consent to write up my dissertation without referencing any specific children's personal details.

### 2.1.7 Procedural Details of Study

- The Delegated Ethics Review Committee reviews research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee; York University's Ethics Review Board approved this research study. See Appendix A
- Bialik Hebrew Day School Administration gave the study permission to be conducted with Grade Two students in both Grade Two classes at Bialik Hebrew Day School. See Appendix B
- I sent parents a letter introducing the study and asking them to complete an Assent form giving their child permission to participate in this study. Parents confirmed in writing their consent for their children's participation in this study. Students took the forms home in a sealed envelope for their parents to read and sign the form, and the parents returned the forms to the researcher at school. See Appendix C
- Subjects: Thirty-Four Grade Two students (ages 7-8) at Bialik Hebrew Day School were the participating subjects for this study. The researcher verbally informed the students about their voluntary participation in this study in the classroom prior to beginning the sessions. I explained and read through the verbal consent and explained to the students the contents and told them that even though their parents had signed the forms they could choose not to be part of the study. I then went to each child individually in the classroom and obtained their verbal consent. None of the students objected they all agreed verbally to be part of the study.
- I administered the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) to the Grade Two students before introducing the eight lessons on Mindfulness. See Appendix D

- Eight Mindfulness lessons: I taught eight lessons titled “Mindfulness Matters to Us” to students. The lesson plan outlines are in Appendix E
- I taught both Grade Two classes the same eight lessons on mindfulness using bibliotherapy and an interactive workbook, *The Present*. See Appendix F
- I administered the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) to the Grade Two students after the eight lessons on “Mindfulness Matters to Us” were presented to them. See Appendix D
- A ninth lesson was delivered to wrap up the studies on mindfulness. I read *The Present* together with the students as the book had been coloured and creatively designed by the students. Reading *The Present* together was a reading event as the children read parts of the book together with the researcher. The wrap-up lesson took place on January 15, 2020. The students completed a reflective sheet to obtain feedback from students on the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program and the book *The Present*. Appendix G
- Results of T-Test, Mean, Median, Mode, and Graphs. See Appendix H
- I have included samples of the student’s work from *The Present* in Appendix I
- Parent Reflective Sheet. See Appendix J

#### 2.1.8 Research Design

Smith and Dean “note that practice-led research arises out of two related ideas. Firstly, creative work is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs” (2009, 5). “The product of creative work itself contributes to the outcomes of a research process and contributes to the answer to a research question. Secondly, creative practice-led training and specialized knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art, can lead to specialized research insights which can then be generalized and written

up as research” (5). Smith and Dean state that “the content and processes of a creative practice generate knowledge and innovations that are different, but complementary with, other research styles and methods” (5). “Practice-led research projects, according to Smith and Dean are undertaken across all creative disciplines and, as a result, the approach is very flexible in its implementation and able to incorporate a variety of methodologies and methods within its bounds” (2009, 5)

#### 2.1.9 Design and Implementation of an Interactive Workbook, *The Present*

*The Present* is an interactive picturebook, that explains what it means to be present and mindful to children. I incorporated it within an eight-session program on mindfulness to complement the lessons I designed and implemented, incorporating bibliotherapy. The creative process of creating and writing the workbook, *The Present*, involved thinking about a concept to engage children to understand the essential components of mindfulness and incorporate it within a story format to captivate the interest of children in a novel way. I decided to produce an interactive picturebook to help children understand and appreciate what mindfulness is and to enjoy being in the moment and experiencing a meditative exercise. I then designed the artwork and illustrations using the computer program ‘Sketchbook Pro’. Initially, when designing the picturebook, I surveyed many children at different ages at Bialik Hebrew Day School, asking them for their opinions about what colours I should use for my illustrations. Many children told me to leave my illustrations with the black and white images and not to add colours to the images, as they wanted to colour the pages. I had not thought of that possibility at all. I used the children’s idea to turn my picturebook into an interactive colouring book. I took their opinions seriously. Their voices were heard. I designed *The Present* for children, and I incorporated the

children's feedback into the final product. This picturebooks design then became a collaborative effort between myself and the children, which subsequently defined my book, *The Present*.

The word "the present" has a few relevant meanings that children can glean from this text. The present means being here and now, in the moment, being present and fully aware; and a gift; the present or gift in terms of viewing one's life as a present a gift; and understanding mindfulness practice too as a gift. This creative work enabled me to pilot the picturebook and include it as one of the mindfulness strategies I incorporated in the classroom setting. I have been further able to evaluate its use after students completed this book. I observed children in their classrooms, their interactions with each other, and witnessed how they engaged with the workbook's colouring activities. I further evaluate the mindfulness program that I delivered in the two Grade Two classrooms. In addition, I administered The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) before and after the delivery of the eight lessons on mindfulness, "Mindfulness Matters to Us" program.

I view my research as longitudinal as I measure children's empathy with the questionnaire before and after the mindfulness lessons were delivered to the students. My research incorporates mixed methods research design as it is "an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)" (Smith and Dean 6).

To be a mindfulness facilitator, I embodied mindfulness in that I was a role model for the students. I practiced mindful minutes when leading the lessons. I reminded students that while they were listening to the picturebook that I was reading to them that they were being mindful, as the act of listening to a story can be contemplative, as it is an in the moment experience itself.

Each lesson was fifty minutes in length. At the beginning of each lesson, I would start with a mindful minute practice. I incorporated bibliotherapy in each of the lessons by reading a specific picturebook on mindfulness selected for that lesson. I then carried out the follow-up or post-story discussion with the students and allocated a related mindfulness activity during each lesson. The specific section of the book *The Present* was then read to students and the students coloured these sections. I ended each lesson with a mindful meditation practice.

I read the related section of *The Present* to students in segments in the last part of each lesson while they coloured their copies of *The Present* mindfully. This way, the students listened to the section read to them and coloured the corresponding specific pages. I organized the lessons to link in with the relevant pages of *The Present* to reinforce the concepts explored in both the bibliotherapy of that week and the section from the interactive picturebook, *The Present*. Students' learning was supported, and the specific topic addressed in the bibliotherapy for that day was consolidated. Each week, *The Present* was recapped so that the students could keep up with the picturebook's flow, and all the concepts were reinforced and integrated.

#### 2.1.10 Rationale for the Use of Bibliotherapy Lessons on Mindfulness

This dissertation tells a story about how children learn about mindfulness through a collaborative process incorporating bibliotherapy. I am positioning the genre of therapeutic picturebooks and workbooks on mindfulness within the broader field of children's picturebooks.

I delivered an eight-session program on mindfulness in the elementary school incorporating selected picturebooks and a workbook on mindfulness to teach mindfulness techniques to school-aged (7-9 years old) students. I chose Grade Two to participate in this study as the students can read and write more independently and work on an interactive book at their own pace instead of Grade One students who are often just learning to read and write. Grade



Two is a wonderful time to start teaching children mindfulness as children are receptive to learning new strategies at this age. I evaluated this program in terms of how students develop the capacity to be mindful of themselves and others.

Mindfulness lessons aim to teach students how to be mindful by teaching them what it means to be in the present moment and encouraging them to develop compassion and empathy for others. These mindfulness lessons can be an integral part of the curriculum. The study intends to teach mindfulness to students and then examine the students' level of empathy before and after the lessons on mindfulness were delivered.

I created an intimate and secure environment in the classroom for students to speak, and more importantly, to be heard. The lessons on mindfulness are creative and engaging. I taught students how to focus on being present and in the moment by facilitating experiential moments of mindfulness. Mindfulness occurs when children are being aware and paying attention to what it is to be right here and now, non-judgmental, open, relaxed and connected to their environment.

Mindfulness is letting go of *kleshas*, that is unwholesome mental states or impediments that block realization or experience of *pratiya sumutpada*, the interconnectedness of all things and beings. However, mindfulness can be learned by practicing mindful meditation as it is a non-cognitive process. Picturebooks can help explain to children what the basic tenets of mindfulness are in a story format. Just listening to a story is a contemplative experience. The act of colouring attentively in the interactive picturebook, *The Present*, helps children to focus on the book, be present and in the moment. Colouring itself can be an experience of being mindful. This colouring experience also offers children an accessible calming exercise.

Teaching children to relax and become aware of their breath and just to 'let go' can be done through body muscle scanning and *savasana* or corpse pose, an *asana* (*asana* means seat)

in hatha yoga. *Savasana* is a restorative pose children can benefit from at the end of a yoga session. Body scan in *savasana* can be a powerful experience in that it may bring up past trauma, or *klesha* (unwholesome mental experience). It is important to be aware of this when teaching children and how to deal with emotional issues if they arise. Children need to learn to manage and cope with their stressors by learning to be in the moment, and their breath that is with them all the time can calm them down and be a reminder for them to be mindful. However, the way I taught it to the Grade Two students was by allowing them to experience muscle tension and tightening the different parts of their body and then releasing that tension. No students in this sample reacted in a negative way to this body scan and experienced the body scan as a release of any tension from the day. They felt safe enough in this community space to experience this body scan and relaxation practice.

I taught the students to breathe deeply and to let go of their breath throughout the lessons with deep inhalations and deep exhalations, using different techniques to maintain a state of peace and ongoing mindfulness. Children were introduced to the autonomic nervous system and the fight or flight response in a rudimentary way.

I established ‘calm corners’ or ‘peace corners’ in each classroom and introduced the students in Grade Two at Bialik Hebrew Day School at the start of the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program to the ‘calm corner’. The ‘calm corner’ or ‘peace corners’ or ‘zen den’ are spaces where children can go on their own to take a break, to take the time to be reflective, to think, calm themselves down in a mindful way. These safe spaces allow children to recalibrate their emotions when they realize they need to be reflective as their emotions are interfering with their ability to work independently or collaboratively or when the teacher recognizes children need some space. It is a place in the classroom ‘to be’, when they are experiencing strong emotions,

and when they are ready emotionally, they can rejoin the class. The classroom is warm comfortable space for all children to express their emotions, where children feel safe to explore together in this community space. Children learn to accept each other with their varying degrees of behaviour and learning styles. The classroom and teacher contain all levels of affect and behaviour daily. Therefore the ‘peace corner’, ‘calm corner’ or ‘zen den’ is a space within the classroom community that is available when children feel overwhelmed emotionally in the present moment and need to take a pause in their day. It is a place and a safe space for them to think about what to do next and respond skillfully and mindfully. There is a box of items in the ‘calm corner’ to help children stop and think consciously. There is a stress relief or stress release ball, a glitter jar made by students in the classroom, paper, and pencil. There is also a Hoberman sphere (which is a toy structure patented by Chuck Hoberman) that can be opened and closed in a synchronized format with children’s breathing, so it is a playful way to teach children to slow their breathing down in a rhythmic way to help them calm down. Children can learn to pause and take mindful breaths to help them with their self-regulation. Teaching children to pause and have the space to take a breath and plan for a different choice by responding mindfully and thoughtfully is ultimately one of the main aspects that I hoped to achieve by imparting these mindfulness lessons. By students being mindful focusing on the present, they can learn to be mindful of others and develop the capacity to be empathic. Throughout the implementation of the lessons on mindfulness in the program I designed, the students are reminded to be mindful of themselves and what they say and do and be mindful of others. To recognize that, they are reminded not to pass judgement on other students’ work when working on their book, *The Present*.

Mindful strategies can enrich children by teaching them a new way of managing their emotional wellness from a preventative perspective as well as coping with the stress in their lives, especially as the picturebooks on mindfulness outline specific techniques or coping strategies. In the next chapter, I discuss how children learn strategies from picturebooks to understand mindfulness. Mindful attention is based on conscious awareness of the present moment. Mindfulness helps us be in touch with what we are doing in the present and helps us to be aware of the awe surrounding us and our inherent connection with others and with all things in our lives. Mindfulness addresses the interconnectedness of all living things in our environment. Nhat Hanh says “mindfulness is at the same time a means and an end, the seed and the fruit. When we practice mindfulness in order to build up concentration, mindfulness is a seed. But mindfulness itself is the life of awareness: the presence of mindfulness means the presence of life, and therefore mindfulness is also the fruit (1975,15).

## Chapter 3

### The Paradigm of Mindfulness Through Bibliotherapy

#### 3.1.1 Scholarly Operational Definitions

I now focus on defining mindfulness and contextualizing it within a curriculum-based learning program for elementary school children. It is vital to develop a pedagogy of well-being for children in schools.

Kabat-Zinn says, “when you are grounded in calmness and moment-to-moment awareness, you are more likely to be creative and to see new options, new solutions to problems. It will be easier for you to maintain your balance and sense of perspective in trying circumstances” (2013, 269).

Nhat Hanh (2008) states that “mindfulness is our ability to be aware of what is going on both inside us and around us. It is the continuous awareness of our bodies, emotions, and thoughts” (2008, 6). Nhat Hanh says, “clarity flows from mindfulness” (2008, 7).

#### 3.1.2 Mindfulness Defined and Re-conceptualized

The word most referred to for meditation is the Pali word *sati*, which has a sense of recalling or recollecting. Meditation is about ‘remembering’ your true self or ‘original face’ in Zen. We have a constructed ego that we take as our true self, but it is problematic in many ways. This is often the cause of *dukkha*/suffering, and so meditation helps the meditator to relinquish the ego’s importance by lessening its focus. Awareness of the present moment is only the beginning of mindfulness awareness and practice. Mindfulness originates from Buddhism.

Kabat-Zinn situates the word meditation in context for people of the Western world, saying, “Until recently, the very word meditation tended to evoke raised eyebrows and thoughts

about mysticism ...” (2013, 7). Kabat-Zinn explains that “mindfulness is a skill that can be developed through practice, just like any other skill. You could also think of it as a muscle... (which) grows best when working with a certain amount of resistance to challenge it and thereby help it become stronger” (2013, xxxiii). Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program (1991) and Zindel Segal, Mark Williams, and John Teasdale’s (2001) Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) programs have infiltrated health care, mental health, and wellness facilities. Recently there has been a surge of interest in bringing mindfulness into the education realm, and programs to help children learn mindfulness in school are being developed.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi talks about a state of flow. In “flow,” time passes quickly, and people are so focused on what they are doing, they are engaged in the present moment. Csikszentmihalyi further says, “loss of self-consciousness can lead to self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward” (2008, 64). As an illustration of flow, he describes a rock climber, “focusing all her attention on the small irregularities of the rocks and stones that will have to support her weight safely ... a sense of kinship that develops between body, fingers, and rocks, between the frail body and the context of stone, sky, and wind” (Csikszentmihalyi 2008, 64). This peak performance and state of flow, allows the person to be in sync with themselves and their surroundings.

Bai et al. outline the concept of inner work as a way of “putting mindfulness to work in the larger context of psychological inner work is rather different from most mindfulness practices that typically gives instruction to quiet the mind and calm the emotions through techniques such as mindful breathing” (2018, 22). Inner work according to Bai et. al. can occur through dialogue with various people that are part of a person’s past memory. “Mindfulness is an

essential part of adulting work that can be brought into intrapsychic conflicts to facilitate relational dialogue that didn't take place previously in one's past" (2018, 23). Bai et al. stipulate that "the quality of consciousness - including those linked to acknowledging and embracing of discomfort and suffering in facing reality - is not done just for its own sake, rather we do so for our individual and collective well-being and "well-becoming." The process towards well-being is our well-becoming. Thus 'adulting' more generally, and inner work in particular, are forms of our well-becoming, our path towards our well-being or at the collective level towards an ethic of sustainable well-being" (Falkenberg in preparation, qtd.in Bai et al. 2018, 24). As well, "mindfulness-based inner work holds great promise to help to develop a sustainable self (Murray 2011), self-compassion (Neff 2011) and compassion as a way of being" (Armstrong 2010, qtd. in Bai et al. 25). Children too, are always in a state of becoming so their sense of well-being is truly a phase of "well-becoming" and practicing mindfulness can certainly influence their state of "well-becoming." (Bai et al. 2018)

Soloway says, "mindfulness is a literacy we are all capable of developing through practice. Just like learning to read a book, mindfulness is a literacy of learning to read the present moment as it is – minus the storylines we typically attach to experience" (2015, 83). Mindfulness thus facilitates "a clearer understanding of one's emotions as well as the emotions of others" (2015, 83). Geoffrey Soloway argues, "over the past thirty years we have witnessed the growth of mindfulness-based training and its benefits toward health and well-being in adult populations. The next thirty years is on a path toward uncovering the role of mindfulness in education and human development" (2015, 83).

There are a few research questions that I explore in this dissertation. Can mindfulness be taught as part of the school's social, emotional literacy curriculum, and does mindful awareness affect empathy and personal well-being in children?

A higher level of mindfulness concerning one's 'original face' or true self, which is the essence of mindfulness, is too advanced for most young children to understand. However, with practice children can understand suffering just like the little Siddhartha Gautama sitting under the tree and seeing the results of spring plowing seems to have understood the suffering of insects. Children understand when another child is suffering, they have a sense of what is going on with other children when they are in pain. However sometimes they are not able to address, articulate or deal with other children's pain. For example, in the school setting, when children are being bullied, some children seem to understand how sad other children feel when they are constantly being bullied, but are fearful to intervene in case, they will be the next target for being bullied and do not know how to deal with the bully or the victim.

### 3.1.3 Everyone Present

Mindfulness practice in schools is a burgeoning field and can benefit children and their thinking process. Mindfulness helps children recognize what is going on in the present moment and enhances their ability to focus and learn. Mindfulness education allows children the ability to cultivate a different way of working with the mind. Through awareness training and doing deep breathing daily, children can learn to manage their emotions, self-regulate, and become more focused. This energy can be generated and integrated into the day. Planting seeds of mindfulness in children, according to Nhat Hanh, is so important as "the more we practice mindfulness, the stronger this seed will grow" (2008, 7). Mindful practice in the classroom helps children become



more aware and reflective of what they are doing and saying, which leads to children being more self-regulated.

The questions I pose is, can children become more aware of what they say, and do collectively and how they respond when faced with challenges? Is there a way that children can be together in a more harmonious way by being mindful of themselves and the choices they must make to express their basic humanity in a dignified manner?

Broderick says, “Mindfulness practice reduces the amygdala’s overactivity and related brain structures, lessening their susceptibility to constant intense triggering by stressful events” (2019, 27). Broderick further states, “that researchers propose that attending to internal and external events in a mindful, nonreactive way moderates the wear and tear on our bodies and minds that leads to illness and burnout. Broderick says “a mind under stress, just like a mind on automatic pilot, is a mind that is not ready to learn and cannot see things. It is obvious from years of research that we should take stress seriously, especially in the field of education” (2019, 27). Broderick says, “stress comes from external as well as internal events. Mindfulness is an antidote to stress because it alters this mental and physical cascade and reduces wear and tear on our systems” (2019, 31).

David Hughes, scholar, advocates, that students take a few minutes to focus on a guided meditation in the middle of the day. There can be soft background music playing while students focus inwards doing some slow deep breathing. Over time, this practice can help students learn to be more attentive and strengthen their capacity to be mindful. There have been so many books published in the last ten years on mindfulness for children. This increase in publications indicates how important it is to be teaching children about mindfulness. Hughes discusses teacher-student connectedness and reports that “most people report that their favourite teachers were identified

not by the content taught, but because the teacher showed empathy and made all students feel valued” (2019, 1). I feel students, too, can see how empathy is expressed by observing their teachers. Learning about empathy from a role model is critical for students at this stage in their development.

Psychologists and educators are interested in mindfulness; thus, there has been a surge of articles about mindfulness published in scientific journals over time, from one article in 1982 to six hundred and ninety-two in 2017 (American Mindfulness Research Association, qtd. in Broderick 2019, 14). According to Broderick most research has been done with adults, but recent studies have also documented students’ benefits. “Although research in this field is still in its early stages, well-done meta-analyses (analyses of multiple studies) show improvements in secondary students’ emotional wellness and cognitive processes. Overall, stress and anxiety are reduced, attentional processes are strengthened, and well-being is enhanced (Carsley, et al. 2014)” (qtd. in Broderick 2019, 14). Many prevention specialists believe “that gains will come from the seeds teachers sow, that bear fruit over time” (Broderick 2019, 15). I concur that teaching children at a young age will give them the tools to learn to be more mindful of themselves and others at an earlier age and grow up with these strategies to enrich their lives and their well-being and perhaps attain ‘original face’ or true face. In the past, mindfulness has been mainly taught to adults in the West, however children went into training elsewhere in Buddhist institutions in the East, as did the Dalai Lama. These children were immersed in an environment that was made up entirely of advanced Buddhist monks and everything had to do with Buddhism, a very different lifestyle than that of the Grade Two students in this study.

A major component of mindfulness is being aware and noticing feelings within and in others and strengthening one’s sense of empathy for others. Tolerance and acceptance of

distressing thoughts and emotions are crucial to mindfulness and social-emotional literacy. They arise, and children need to learn to tolerate them just as they are. As children improve their ability to stay present with distressing or uncomfortable feelings, they are less inclined to react impulsively to emotional triggers. “Staying present with distress is a skill that allows children to see where they are right now and allows them to examine their choices; it also gives them the space to think before responding” (Semple and Willard 2019, 2). One significant component of mindfulness and the practice of meditation is learning to tolerate discomfort. Sitting in the same position without distraction, focusing on the breath is uncomfortable; this is the reality too of life. “Embedded in the practice of mindfulness are opportunities to observe feelings as they arise and tolerate them just as they are.” (Semple and Willard 2019, 2). Children need to build a tolerance for discomfort and an ability to disengage from it. Then they can start to build resilience and grit for those more challenging moments ahead. Mindfulness practice is a time for deep breaths, where children can create that space for themselves before responding to others. Children also need to learn to take care of themselves, by learning to manage their own level of stress. Mindfulness practice is a suitable practice for children. Mindfulness practice can be applied to both teachers and students as teachers are role models for their students, and students are role models for their peers. Stress is undoubtedly another name for certain unpleasant feelings. Resilience develops by mindfully cultivating positive experiences. Children often find themselves in awkward social situations in class and do not know how to respond appropriately, and often react impulsively. Teaching students to respond calmly and skillfully is the mindful way of dealing with challenges. This mindful way of responding is taught through mindfulness and is a cornerstone of the lessons I teach on mindfulness.

One way to teach mindfulness to children involves teaching children breathing strategies. I will describe a few methods of breathing techniques suitable for children. Breathing techniques are simple ways children can use on-the-spot when they are feeling overwhelmed, need some space to think, and when they want to calm down to take the time to make better choices. Children can use it anywhere, at any time. These exercises anchor children to their breathing to help them focus on the present moment with their breath, as their breath is with them all the time.

Five finger breathing is a breathing exercise where children spread their hands and stretch their fingers out like a star. They use the finger of their one hand to trace around the outline of their fingers on their other hand, and as they inhale, they trace their finger up the one finger and exhale as they come down the other side of the finger.

Triangle breathing is when children use their finger to draw an imaginary triangle on their stomach. Drawing the triangle helps children to focus on their breathing. They inhale when they draw the line from the base of the triangle up on their stomach, then hold their breath for the line drawn down to the bottom of the triangle and then exhale when drawing the horizontal line to complete the triangle.

Hand on Heart breathing is when children place their hand on their heart and listen to their breath, regulating their breathing with slow deep breaths, and they calm themselves down.

Figure-eight breathing is when children draw a figure eight on the palm of their hand or their thigh, they count to three as they mark the first part of figure eight, hold their breath for the count of three and then exhale for three when completing the figure eight.

In all these breathing exercises, touch is involved. The oxytocin released through contact, as children touch their skin or when someone touches them appropriately as they are

doing these breathing exercises, these physical contacts help children to feel good, grounded and calm. When children are calm, they are more receptive to learning and they absorb all the information more readily, they can truly experience the benefits of learning about mindfulness when they are in this calm state. When children engage in mindful practice, they become aware of their breathing and focus on deep breathing which in turn helps to calm their body and minds. Oxytocin is a neurotransmitter that acts on the limbic system, the brain's emotional centre, thereby promoting feelings of contentment, and reducing stress and anxiety.

According to psychologist Karen Young “oxytocin is the ‘bonding chemical,’ and it’s released when children touch and feel close to significant others. The amygdala is a part of the brain that controls how children deal with stress, and it has receptors for oxytocin. Breathing helps to calm the amygdala, and when the amygdala receives a dose of oxytocin, it has a calming effect on the brain. When children practice breathing, it helps develop the brain’s pathways, which calms them down. Resilience is related to the capacity to activate the prefrontal cortex and calm the amygdala. The amygdala regulates the body’s fight or flight reflex. This is the place where anxiety and fears are generated and live. The practice of daily mindfulness decreases the activity in the amygdala and helps it to help the brain regulate itself better” (2020, 1). Mindfulness practice strengthens those areas of the brain like the prefrontal cortex. Young says, “practicing mindfulness intentionally changes the brain’s plasticity by teaching the brain to focus on positive thoughts. By focusing on qualities such as happiness and the present moment, children learn new distress tolerance skills” (2020, 2).

To continue to focus on the value of breathing in mindfulness education, Kabat-Zinn argues that “if you can manage to bring your attention to your breathing even for the briefest moment, it will set the stage for facing that moment and the next one mindfully. The breath itself

is calming, especially when we can tune in to it at the belly” (2013, 269). Teaching children to practice these breathing techniques with breathing buddies or classmates is so essential. Children are so keen to work together with their breathing buddies and this interpersonal connection fosters empathy as students help each other through this process of practicing their breathing together. Children learn to take these deep breaths on their own or move into the ‘calm corner,’ ‘peace corner’ or ‘zen den’ in the classroom, to take mindful moments to recalibrate when they feel emotionally overwhelmed and need to restore their sense of balance.

I find that by teaching children, elements of mindfulness and meditation playfully, mindful strategies then become accessible to them. Children understand how mindfulness helps them develop the capacity to be mindful of themselves and others and how they can incorporate it in their daily lives. During the lessons, I teach students either some yoga poses, breathing techniques, visualization techniques, mindful walking, mindful sitting, mindful eating and or body scan and relaxation. The purpose is that students would then have these techniques in their repertoire, which they then can access. I taught the students different breathing techniques, so that they have different strategies in their toolbox.

Mindfulness involves both an understanding of the philosophy and the practice of being in the present moment. However, for children, mindfulness is more relatable for them to understand what it means to be in the moment, that is, to do one thing at a time, to be grateful for what they have, to be kind, to care for the environment and to strengthen their empathy for others. In life, children often find that they pivot between thoughts about regrets or actions of the past and worries about the future. These may be significant concerns or even mild distractions that pop into children’s minds and prevent them from being fully present in the here and now. Children need to learn to focus on being in the present moment.

Teaching children about being grateful for what they have and learning to express their gratitude to others and showing compassion for others is so important. Mindfulness help children to build their capacity to be compassionate to others. In the lessons on “Mindfulness Matters to Us” the children wrote notes of thanks to significant others, embarked on journaling and did mindful drawings. As a result, children become aware and understand how to engage in some mindful practices, by feeling grateful and thanking and thinking of others in their world by expressing their gratitude.

Mindfulness practice in the classroom can change the ambiance in the classroom where a calmness can prevail. Mindfulness helps students learn in a calm environment. Teachers are modelling this calmness too by being mindful and present when they teach and institute mindful breaks, mindful breathing, or mindfulness elements in the classroom. Children have a remarkable capacity for articulating the wisdom of mindfulness. This is evident in the way children respond so well when they learn and practice the different forms of breathing as a method to take control of their emotions.

I think using picturebooks to teach children about mindful awareness is so apt. When children listen to a story being read to them or read a wordless picturebook, the experience itself is an exercise in being mindful and contemplative. Recently there has been a surge of picturebooks for children on mindfulness to help children of various ages and stages to understand the strategies of being mindful. They are also able to identify and understand the feelings of the characters in the picturebooks, both positive and negative, and potentially articulate empathy for them. Examples of such books are *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Lauren Alderfer and Kerry Lee MacLean, (2011); *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean (2004); *Moody Cow Meditates* by Kerry Lee MacLean (2009); and *What does it Mean*

*to Be Present* by Rana DiOrio, and Eliza Wheeler (2010). Children get to experience mindful awareness even when reading these picturebooks. Mindfulness involves learning to focus one's attention on one thing at a time and to orient oneself to the present by being open, aware, and accepting. In addition, mindfulness allows children to attend to and take note of the feelings of the characters which in turn becomes an exercise in enhancing their empathy. In the following segment I highlight additional books that I incorporate in teaching children about mindfulness.

### 3.1.3 Mindfulness and Bibliotherapy used in “Mindfulness Matters to Us”

I will highlight the value and importance of bibliotherapy as an educational and therapeutic medium, to help children develop an understanding of mindfulness. In each of the lessons in the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program I included a mindfulness minute meditation practice at the beginning and end of each lesson. I used a rain stick as a tool to generate a beautiful sound to introduce and conclude the meditation. The rain stick is a musical instrument probably from Chile originally. It is a hollowed-out cactus branch with seeds or rice inside which makes a beautiful lyrical, harmonious sound. The students were enthralled by this musical instrument's beautiful and calming sound and took turns to use the rain stick to designate the start and closure of the mindfulness minute practice.

Each lesson started with mindful listening and breathing. I refocused the students by doing mindful breathing. When the children became too noisy, I would tell them to pause and breathe. I reminded the children to be aware that no-one was to distract others. I would invite the students to be mindful. I would let the students know of my disappointment if they did not listen to my request, and then I would show them how, by taking a breath to calm myself down; I was mindful. I was modelling how I was in touch with my feelings and how they could identify and



name their feelings. The students became more adept at being mindful, with practice in subsequent lessons.

I would now like to discuss relevant picturebooks that I incorporated into my bibliotherapy lessons on mindfulness. There are so many wonderful picturebooks that are being published and I chose the ones that I have found to be most salient for children in Grade Two.

*What Does it Mean to Be Present* by author Rana DiOrio and by illustrator Eliza Wheeler (2010)? This is an excellent book to teach children what it means to be present. It has practical suggestions for what it means to be present—for instance, noticing when someone in your class needs help and taking the time to help them. This book gives children great insight into what being present means. The beautiful illustrations depict the value of presence while teaching children about achieving a presence in mind and peacefulness. This picturebook is well-illustrated, highlighting feeling grateful for everything. These are some of the basic tenets of mindfulness that can be gleaned from this picturebook.

In my mindfulness classes, this was the first book I used to introduce the concept of being fully present to the children. When I first asked the children what it means to be present, only one student in both classes (thirty-four children) was able to say, “being here in school today.” Others did not understand the concept, however, after reading the picturebook, all the students understood this concept as focusing on what is happening now, really listening to what is being said, being fully present and in the moment. In this session I taught the students to do a seated mindful practice with accompanying deep breathing.

*Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by author Lauren Alderfer and illustrator Kerry Lee MacLean (2011) teaches children the value of mindfulness and doing one thing at a time. This picturebook is intended for children of any spiritual background, as it describes mindfulness in

secular and straightforward terms. The monkey and his friend, Happy Panda, guide children to focus on one thing at a time resulting in Happy Panda being happy and calm. This picturebook story captures the essence of mindfulness by doing one thing at a time with attention, intention and being present in the activity or task at hand. The students understand this message of doing one thing at a time very clearly from this book. Children of all genders and backgrounds can identify with animals. We practiced the tree pose together as a focused balanced pose or *asana*.

*Just Me and My Mind* by Kerry Lee MacLean (2014) is a picturebook that educates children to name and acknowledge their feelings. Children often have big emotions and must learn how to manage these emotions. *Just Me and My Mind* aims to help children to identify and acknowledge these emotions. The different emotions are outlined in this picturebook exploring why children have these emotions. The picturebook indicates how children can clear and settle their minds by being quiet and contemplative. Children enjoy the interactive nature of this picturebook and can connect their thoughts and feelings to their actions. After reading this book, in one of the lessons, the students did a mindful, silent walking meditation and noticed with awe what surrounds them. On their mindful walk, they noticed the trees, the snow-white starkness outside the classroom windows and saw their feet moving one step ahead with each step they took. In the discussion after the mindful walk a few students mentioned how beautiful the snow-covered fields outside the classroom were and how they had not stopped to notice it before.

*I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness* by author Susan Verde and illustrator Peter Reynolds (2017) is a beautiful picturebook that teaches children how to develop a free mindfulness practice by expressing their emotions and connecting empathically through imagination. It is universal that mindfulness helps children to be in awe of the world's natural beauty, making children savour the moment. This is a beautiful picturebook to read to a class. I

read the author's note to the students about the importance of mindfulness and guided them through a visual meditation, which they enjoyed. This para-text (textual elements surrounding the main body of a text, such as introduction, notes to readers, front covers) puts this picturebook in context for the children, parents, and educators who read this book. It helps children understand that to find peace, they need to take the time to turn inward. This delightful picturebook uses practical mindfulness tools such as relating to their breath, taking a moment to feel present in their bodies, and saying positive affirmations to usher peaceful energy and calmness into each moment. The children responded very positively to the tenets of mindfulness in this picturebook. The last line of the book is so powerful and resonates with children "My thoughts begin to settle. My mind begins to clear. I am Peace."

*I am Human: A Book of Empathy* by author Susan Verde and illustrator Peter Reynolds (2018) introduces children to the concept of empathy, compassion, and mindfulness. The author incorporates mindfulness exercises for children in this picturebook and includes some information about empathy for children and adults reading this picturebook. Verde's text starts by celebrating the main character's uniqueness, depicted by Reynolds as a young African American boy. "I was born. A miracle! One of the billions, but unique!" This is how the picturebook opens, setting the stage for what will follow, examples of how children experience common dreams, hopes, and fears. The character shows how people can connect by being empathic with others. This picturebook shows how children need to respect themselves and value others. These are relevant topics both at school and at home. *I Am Human* shows children that we are only human and make mistakes. Children understand how important it is to do the right thing and be kind to others. This picturebook is a celebration of life, empathy, and compassion and focuses on how we are all part of humanity irrespective of our race, ethnicity, or religion. After

the reading, I did a full-body scan relaxation exercise with the children, where the focus was on releasing tension in all their body parts while lying on the carpet and learning to let go of their stress. Children are genuinely so involved and helpful when it comes to being kind to others, and they will actively engage in doing acts of kindness for others most of the time. I noticed how kind children were to one another after I read this book to the children. They were sharing crayons and being extra kind to one another as kindness was certainly highlighted in this bibliotherapy lesson.

*We're All Wonders* (2017), by R. J. Palacio is a picturebook that connects with children's sense of fitting in and accepting themselves. This book facilitates a discussion about empathy to which children can relate. Palacio, in her book, states, "I know I can't change the way I look. But maybe, just maybe, people can change the way they see" (Back cover). This statement is just one of the important ones from this powerful picturebook that impacts children. *We're All Wonders* is the poignant story of an "ordinary boy with an extraordinary face." Through this picturebook, children learn that being kind and compassionate is crucial. I asked students in this session to think of something they could do for another student in the class and perform that random act of kindness during the day. So many acts of kindness were carried out and followed through that day. This exercise was a wonderful way for children to express their empathy in terms of deciding what to do for another person and how to express kindness to others. The mindful minute now became mindful minutes during which students were able to sit quietly and focus inward for a few more minutes.

*The Thank You Book* by Mo Williams (2016) is a book dedicated to having children see how vital it is to thank others. This book certainly makes children reading feel very present in the story, and thus children feel acknowledged and important as the author takes them into account

and thanks the children reading this picturebook in a real way. This book allows children to know that they count, they are crucial, as the author makes a point to thank them, the children, the readers for their participation. Adults do not often thank children. Children are always the ones having to thank others. In this real way, they, too, felt appreciated for their role as readers and learners. In this lesson, students wrote a note of gratitude to a significant other and took it home with them to give to that particular person. The students were so engaged in doing this act of kindness and compassion after they experienced what it felt like to be thanked during the story. At the end of this lesson, I brought it to students' attention to eat mindfully. Before students eat, they say a Jewish blessing in Hebrew (*ha-motzi*). This blessing is said before meals to express gratitude and thankfulness to the Creator of food. Students took out their lunches, and I then had the students become mindful of how their food tasted and to savour each bite and to be thankful and appreciative of the source of all foods. They were made aware of the farmers on the land growing their harvests, the truck drivers and grocery store owners delivering the food to the stores and then to the people. I asked the students to write a note of thanks to their parents or caregivers who made them their lunch. After they finished eating, they wrote a letter to express their gratitude and put it in their lunch box for their parents or caregiver. I received many emails from parents in this regard thanking me for this lovely gesture from their children. By having mindful, awareness one is reminded to consider others and express gratitude to others.

*Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids* by Maud Roegiers (2009) is a simple contemplative vital picturebook that shows children how to take the time to do things calmly. Both the text and illustrations guide children to be mindful. This book serves both as a reminder for parents and children, and this straightforward book spells out the essential things children and parents all

need to be aware of, that is to take more time to do things that are meaningful and appreciate what they have in their lives.

After reading the book I introduced the students to an active, experiential mindfulness exercise called “a cup of mindfulness.” I passed around a full cup of water to the children while they were sitting in a circle. Students must be fully present and mindful so as not to spill the water and focus on doing one thing at a time as they pass the full cup of water to the person sitting next to them in the circle. I outlined the concept of giving and receiving. Holding on to something and letting it go. This concept was discussed, just like inhaling and exhaling the breath. The students were so engaged in this process and understood how vital awareness and attention are to do a task and what is required of them to give complete attention when being mindful.

*My Magic Breath, Finding Calm Through Mindful Breathing* by authors Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor and illustrated by Michelle Polizzi (2018), is a beautiful picturebook that helps children discover calm through breathing. *My Magic Breath* helps children understand the space of mindfulness. Students in Grade Two practiced their breathing with their “breathing buddies” after this story was read to them. They also practiced Five Finger Breathing, Triangle Breathing, Hand on Heart Breathing and Figure Eight Breathing. I ended this lesson with a mindful practice using breathing techniques they had learnt.

Kerry Lee MacLean’s, *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* (2004), is another beautiful picturebook which introduces children to meditation and the reasons why it is useful to meditate. It is a very thoughtful book to introduce children to meditation. It helps them learn to control their emotions and become more empathic towards living things. Unfortunately, the book gives the sense that meditation is easy and that it can help with all of life’s problems. I feel like this

underestimates the child reader; children need to know that it takes practice to meditate. It is not a quick fix, which I emphasized in the post-story discussion with the students.

*Moody Cow Meditates* by Kerry Lee MacLean (2009) teaches children how to manage their big emotions by encouraging children to be mindful. This picturebook is a good introduction for children to learn about meditation. It teaches children to understand their feelings. This picturebook is a practical book that entertains, educates, and teaches children about the struggle to teach meditation. It incorporates instructions on creating a mindfulness jar as a concrete way to help children calm their minds. This book explains to children how to meditate using the glitter jar, just as the glitter, and the sparkles settle, their minds too can become calmer as they focus only on the glitter slowly subsiding. Children's random feelings can be seen as acting like the chaotic glitter inside of the mindfulness jar. As children learn to calm their thoughts and emotions by taking deep breaths, or just focusing in on their glitter jar this can be seen akin to the glitter settling at the bottom of the jar settle. They learn to tune out to anything around them, and they are so focused on being present.

Students made their own glitter jar (Mind- in-a -Jar). This Mind-in-a-Jar can be used before meditating. When the jar with its glitter and tiny objects is shaken up, it shows the students how their mind is in a hurry whirling around like one's thoughts, but if they let the jar settle, all the sparkles and objects drop to the bottom. The water above is clear, symbolizing how their minds too can become clear if they just sit still, be mindful, wait and meditate. When everything calms down, and the glitter jar sits still on the table, everything settles. Students can learn to watch their thoughts settle down, leaving their minds clear instead of cluttered. As their thoughts settle down, students can act peacefully and respond appropriately instead of just reacting because they can now think clearly. Students practiced mindful minutes using the glitter

jar to begin their practice at the end of the class lesson. The children created their own mindfulness jars in this lesson, which was undoubtedly a highlight for them.

Picturebooks are beneficial for developing a healthy state of well-being by learning how to nurture the self mindfully. These picturebooks, that I incorporated into the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program, outlines the key elements of mindfulness. The bibliotherapy lessons provided children with an understanding of what it means to be present and in the moment by being aware and attentive to the self and others. Key components of mindfulness that were outlined were being grateful, kind, empathic and expressing thanks and gratitude to others.

Understanding children’s humanity, sense of awe for the environment and accepting their differences and the differences in others are basic tenets of mindfulness which were highlighted in these picturebooks. Breathing techniques and simple meditative experiences, yoga poses, thinking and learning to be calm are crucial elements of mindfulness that were gleaned from these picturebooks and practiced during the lessons. Mindfulness was taught in a playful and relevant manner that was accessible to children.

#### 3.1.4 Bibliotherapy

Children’s picturebooks can serve as therapeutic enabling children to deal with their emotional world. Picturebooks are an excellent medium for children to access a perspective other than their own. A generation of children can be encouraged to be more tolerant, resilient, mindful, and accepting of their life situations and those of others. This can be done by listening to and reading stories in powerful picturebooks that can shed light on children’s own life stories that they are living and experiencing. Emotional literacy can facilitate and ensure children’s states of emotional well-being. Reading aloud can become a mindfulness practice. Mindfulness means being fully awake and in the moment. Mindfulness is being engaged with and aware of



the moment, being fully present. When children read picturebooks with another, this joint reading turns into a reading event and becomes a meaningful connection. When children listen to adults read aloud, they become absorbed in this process, which can be a very contemplative mindful experience. During the process of bibliotherapy, children encounter an adult reading them a picturebook. Both are so focused and in the present moment, children listening and the adults reading the picturebook.

“The feeling of getting lost in a book, blissfully unaware of your surroundings and daily worries, is familiar to a large number of people. This experience is called narrative absorption — or immersion, transportation, or narrative engagement-and it involves sustained attention to an honest reflection on the world of the story (Kuijpers, 2014; Kuiken and Douglas, 2017; Kuijpers *et al.* 2018). Absorbed reading leaves the reader unaware of their surroundings, their bodies, and the passage of time (Nell 1988). Such reading experiences often involve a sense of being transported to the story’s world, accompanied by an intense emotional engagement with the characters inhabiting that world and vivid visual imagery of what that world looks like (Gerrig, 1993; Green and Brock, 2000). And most importantly, absorbed reading usually feels effortless to the reader and is generally considered to be an enjoyable experience” (Green et al. 2004, qtd.in Kuijpers 2018, 1).

Most children are so engaged in the story when adults read picturebooks to them. For the children who find it difficult to read or sit still, the picturebook is also an effortless experience, listening to and being absorbed in the world of a story. According to Kuijpers, reading is an enjoyable experience and can enhance children’s well-being and says, “the shift away from the immediate environment and the self is what releases a reader’s psychological constraints, such as self-awareness, this can facilitate a transcendent experience” (2018, 1). A transcendent

experience is an experience that goes beyond our ordinary, everyday lives. It connects us with something more significant, more profound, and more powerful than we've ever known.

Reading can be mindful when children are absorbed in a story. They unconsciously think about how the story makes them feel and if they can take anything from the story that can be meaningful for them as they are paying attention to their own emotions and what is elicited from the story. Reading itself can be contemplative as children's full attention is in the reading experience.

### 3.1.5 Cognitive and Creative Bibliotherapy

Cognitive bibliotherapy involves the use of self-help books or other non-fictional texts in therapeutic settings. Kuijpers uses the term "bibliotherapy exclusively for creative bibliotherapy and how picturebooks are utilized in therapeutic contexts. The bibliotherapy practice can take many forms, a shared reading experience or actual therapy using reading selections. In all cases, bibliotherapy involves reading plus talking about reading, and thus this practice doubles up on what literature has to offer. The act of reading a novel can be beneficial in itself, but the act of talking about what you have read is adding an extra layer of mental health benefits" (2018, 1). Picturebooks about mindfulness are incorporated in the bibliotherapy process. These picturebooks help to fortify children's emotional well-being as they teach children another way of functioning. David Loy says, "a story is a point of view. There is no perspectiveless perspective" (2010, 11). In other words, every story sheds light on a particular perspective. He further says, "the stories that make sense of the world are part of the world. It is not by transcending the world that we are transformed but by storying it in a new way. We transcend this world by being able to story it differently" (2010, 11).

### 3.1.6 *The Present* - Mindfulness Workbook - Original Contribution

The picturebook, *The Present*, that I wrote, translates the concepts of mindfulness in a meaningful way for children to comprehend. Its approach is innovative and interactive since it marries an active mode of colouring and creativity with the simple practices of attending, noticing, being curious, and mindful about an experience as it is occurring. *The Present* explores the basic tenets of mindfulness and simultaneously encompasses an experiential component of mindfulness, by being in the present moment by hearing or reading and colouring the book. *The Present* is unique in that it incorporates focused attention on the task at hand in the present moment, actively reading and being mindful while colouring. I designed this picturebook to allow children to practice mindful awareness, which can help them practice sustained attention. *The Present* is geared for and suitable for all beginners of mindfulness and allows for time to be spent on doing the task while simultaneously understanding the principles of mindfulness. Today, colouring books are trendy because mindful drawing has become mainstream to induce focused attention and mindful creativity.

It is acknowledged that children practice mindfulness differently from adults because their executive functioning is not fully developed. Executive functioning are skills that depends on how the brain functions in three specific areas to help in daily functioning: working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control. Children thus often need help to focus, follow directions, and handle emotions. Mindfulness can help children understand what they are experiencing and help them deal with big emotions by allowing them to take a pause to think before they respond.

In the eight-week program that I developed called “Mindfulness Matters to Us,” I introduced the students to mindfulness through bibliotherapy. The name of the program was chosen to reflect the “we rather than I” component of mindfulness. I could have termed the program “Mindfulness Matters to Me” but I wanted the program to reflect the importance of the

concept of ourselves and others and not just personal awareness and mindfulness and hence I called it “Mindfulness Matters to Us”.

The students involved completed the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) questionnaire on empathy before and after the series of eight lessons on mindfulness were delivered. Students completed the interactive workbook, called *The Present*, at the end of the lessons on mindfulness that spanned eight sessions. Finally, I held a ninth lesson to read the book, *The Present*, in its entirety, which was completed by the students, and we read as a reading event, reading the picturebook together as a class, noticing and celebrating their personal unique coloured illustrations. This reading event was compelling and a time for me to thank the children for their participation in this research, their keen learning about mindfulness, and the picturebook’s completion. Students were so appreciative of this mindfulness learning and were so grateful for the book, *The Present*, that I had given them. They were so excited to take the book home to read with their families and share what they learned, coloured and contributed to the book’s completion. The students were so proud of their work. The students thanked me for their involvement in my study.

I analyzed the data and made observations based on the students’ reflection sheets regarding their experience after completing this interactive picturebook, *The Present*. I examined how and to what extent the students had coloured the interactive picturebook. I will reflect on the students’ reflections and offer analyses on *The Present*, in Chapter Seven in the discussion and results section.

The scope of this dissertation is limited to a Canadian school, Bialik Hebrew Day School; however, the research may contribute to the field more generally in the transmission of

mindfulness as part of an educational curriculum or as a therapeutic model for children in therapy.

### 3.1.7 Reflections on *The Present* in the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” Program

The students were terrific. The students were so engaged in the lessons on mindfulness. Their honesty, intelligence, integrity, willingness to learn and be open to learning about mindfulness were palpable. The students were so eager and intrigued to learn about mindfulness. The students were genuinely excited to work on a book that I had written. They thought that it was unique that they knew the author. The students were so excited to use the interactive colouring book. It was a creative experience for most students, and they enjoyed this opportunity immensely. They worked diligently and at their own pace, and I prompted them as I read each page while the students coloured the relevant pages. Students selected their colours and worked on their design to express their individuality. Most of the students were so excited to colour and created their extensions of the images in the interactive colouring book. Some students were more detail-oriented, whereas other students just used one colour to colour pages. Many students were so creative in terms of what they inserted in the presents and drew what they thought was inside them. Two students in each class required extra encouragement to do the colouring as they resisted doing the colouring at first. I had to offer support and scaffolding to those students for them to colour. These students had difficulty due to their learning style: they found it difficult to do any paper and pencil tasks and had trouble initiating a task independently. Once I helped scaffold the task and supported them, those children could do the rest of the colouring independently.

Students in general, enjoyed being creative and working mindfully and silently on this picturebook. I felt that it helped them understand, integrate, and experience what mindfulness

meant to them. I reminded the students to colour the book mindfully and quietly as they were so excited to share what they had drawn and come up with and wanted to share it with their friends at an adjacent table. I reminded students that this was not the time to share but that I would allow them to do so at some point at the end of the lesson. Calm music was playing in the background while the children were drawing. The calming music helped keep them on task, and they could focus on their creativity.

I felt encouraged to see how much the students wished to complete the colouring and be creative in this book. I explained to them at the start that they would be able to design their book the way they wanted: they could use the pictures to colour and the blank spaces or pages to be creative. Students worked at their own pace. Some created their own story within mine as the colouring led them someplace else, whereas others coloured the specific pictures with wonderful colours and designs. Creativity abounded. Students were learning to work on their own, however they shared some of their stories they were creating or their designs with each other and there was some shared listening taking place. Students were sharing the crayons at the table. They took ownership of their book. *The Present* was an invitation for students to explore and expand their minds, and their creativity flourished. It was also a time to work independently at their own pace in a quiet and mindful manner.

Some children decided to make end pages for the book. I had not suggested this. However, some students who had extra time extended their work. A few children finished quickly as it was a task to do, and they did not wish to do anything more than was required. For many children, their fantasy and concept of play came to the foreground beyond the expected requirements. They were exhilarated and came to show me their work and creativity and to share their embedded story with great pride. It was evident how much the students enjoyed doing this

colouring and felt proud of their work and creativity and could not wait to take their books home to read the story and share their illustrations with their parents. They looked forward to this activity each week. I found an equal number of girls and boys doing different creative images in the book. Their imaginations and designs were exceptional. Many boys and girls expanded their work by developing additional related stories that flowed from the story. Other children were very focused on colour and design combinations of the images in the book. Two boys in one class tended to rush the process and used one or two colours to colour in less detail in the illustrations and completed their task earlier as they just went ahead each week colouring. Still, they did it and finished it with their style and were quiet and mindful in the process. I felt the colouring process engaged the students and certainly allowed for continuity and flow of the lessons.

The following demonstration of Fish and Sipe's five conceptual categories emerged from this analysis; it describes what "constitutes literary understanding for this group of children: what their interpretive community valorized as appropriate ways of responding to picturebooks" (Fish 1980; Sipe 1998, qtd. in Sipe 1998, 377).

### **1. Analytical responses, which focus on aspects of the text itself.**

Most children interpreted the texts and illustrations as exciting as they could colour and make their designs in the images and began to see the connection in terms of their lives compared to a gift or present and understood the word present as having a few meanings. Undoubtedly, there is a genuine desire to understand mindfulness and see how it can improve their well-being and emotional health, a testament to this new generation. Students enjoyed practicing the mindful minutes, the breathing techniques taught to them, and the mindful colouring to slow down, calm down and think before they respond. MacDermott, Sean T,

Eleonora Gullone, J. Sabura Allen, Neville J. King & Bruce Tonge state that “there was increased recognition of the importance of children learning how to regulate their emotions functionally and adaptively for healthy psychological development” (2009, 301). The contemplative nature of colouring, being an opportunity to be creative with colour choices and picture extensions, and playful after having heard the story being read to them was most noticeable and helped students be in the moment and present with the task at hand. I know the book’s aim, *The Present*, was achieved as the students understood what it means to be present after discussions, clarification and understanding of the two meanings of the word ‘the present’ from the interactive picturebook, *The Present*. The experience of students learning to be mindful of themselves and others was evident. During the drawing activity, students would share crayons. They were kind and took turns to share the crayons they wanted to use. Students complemented one another on their creativity.

## **2. Intertextual responses, which are directed across texts.**

Many students could connect ideas in the bibliotherapy picturebook that was read to them in the first part of the lesson, with the concepts highlighted in *The Present*. They were able to make relevant connections and relationships to the ideas of mindfulness between the different texts that were read as part of the bibliotherapy in each lesson.

## **3. Personal responses, which focus on readers’ personal experiences.**

Most students could make an emotional connection between their own lives as they all understood that their lives were like a present, a gift. They made connections between their personal experiences and the relevant references in the text. They commented for example on what was inside their present, and many of them drew hearts or saw love coming out of their gifts. The students’ responses regarding whom they wanted to dedicate this book to with



gratitude were mainly to share this with their family. A Grade Two girl said, “I dedicate this book to God, my mom, dad, and baby sister as I feel so grateful for all of them in my life.” It is evident from the students’ work in their book how the students understood how meaningful their families are in their lives.

#### **4. Transparent responses.**

Rosenblatt (1978) says “the reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence working the mind and emotion of a particular reader (1978, xii). Suggesting that children become engrossed in the aesthetic experience of the story in the moment resulting in their world blending with the experience of the story world. In this study, the student’s mindfulness on the task at hand, colouring and drawing, was the primary way children showed their deep engagement. They participated in the colouring quietly, listening to the story, and hearing how the story talked back at them. They were mindfully working on colouring and connected to the story as if talking to them directly. They were in “their world” when creating their drawing and were focused on the present moment in the “secondary world,” creating what they felt was relevant and meaningful to them.

#### **5. Performative responses.**

Cecily O’Neill says, “the successful creation of an imagined world depends to a considerable extent on the degree to which participants can make links between the world of illusions and their understanding of the real world” (1985,161). The reading event for children is a creative, and a playful space. Roland Barthes states “text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria: the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading” (1975, 14). Barthes further explains “here moreover, drawn from psychoanalysis is an indirect way of establishing the opposition between the text of

pleasure and the text of bliss: pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss (*jouissance*) cannot (1975, 21). “Like little deconstructionists, the children regarded the text as their playground, as an archaic array of signifiers with potentially infinite meanings, and over which they exercised complete control” (Sipe 1998, 377). Personal responses, transparent responses, and performative responses help children understand and respond to texts.

The students enjoyed being creative and playful and were so free in their expression. They drew such amazing stories within and surrounding the text, which they explained to me after they had drawn their pictures. In the last session, the students read their book out loud with me in a performative manner and were so empowered by their story and artistic, creative designs and could not wait to take the book home to read to their family. Sipe says, “taken together these five categories describe what constituted literary understanding: what their interpretive community (Fish 1980) valorized as appropriate ways of responding to picture storybooks” (Sipe 1998, 377).

It is essential to recognize and reflect on how non-textual elements of a picturebook, illustrations, dedication pages, and end pages can contribute to the story’s meaning. This is evident in the student’s creative work in *The Present*. which includes visually satisfactory responses to *The Present*. I obtained feedback from students’ parents and teachers regarding *The Present*. I have learned from the students, their voices have been heard, and their creative colouring witnessed. The students were so excited to share this book with their parents and siblings. They asked me to teach mindfulness and share this book, *The Present*, to other students in different grades as they wanted their siblings to have the same opportunity as they did to learn about mindfulness. I felt so gratified when I heard these requests as I realized how much the children had valued these lessons on mindfulness. I quote a boy in Grade Two who said, “I can’t

wait to take my book, *The Present* and wrap it up like a present and give it to my family for a present and read this book to them and teach them about mindfulness.” A Grade Two girl said, “I dedicate this book to my brother as I want to share this book with him as he does not get to do everything that I get to do, and I feel bad for him because he does not know the story. I want him to know this story, and I really love him, so I will read this book to him and show him how I coloured this book.” These are true examples of empathy enhancement, which is one of the key lessons of mindfulness, and outcome of teaching mindfulness to students and of my study.

Students demonstrated an increased level of empathy and compassion for others during these lessons on mindfulness. This certainly shows how students were able to integrate and demonstrate their empathy to one another which was an acknowledgment that my book together with “Mindfulness Matters to Us” lessons were useful and worthwhile to students. The two comments above mean a great deal to me as they indicate how the students can think beyond themselves and wish to share this book with others. This, in itself, is an act of kindness and compassion and makes is evident that this was a valuable program for students learning about mindfulness. The shared reading that will occur in families will facilitate emotional well-being in other family members. This is something that I had not anticipated and is an incredible extension of my research. I celebrate how the students have made sense of *The Present*. I feel grateful that I can help my students develop knowledge and practices of mindfulness through the medium of a creative, unique, interactive picturebook that they can share and read to their parents, and siblings teaching mindfulness within their families - a gift that keeps on giving.

I maintained an acute awareness of my role as a researcher and mindfulness educator for this research study. I acknowledge and understand the limitations of *The Present*. I noted that in a classroom setting, all children work at a different pace and have different abilities. Some

students felt uncomfortable seeing other students moving ahead faster than they were even though they saw that their work was more detailed than the children who took less care and moved ahead with the task at hand. I was aware of the importance of differentiating my instruction to scaffold for individual children with different learning styles and profiles. Not everyone finds colouring easy. For some Grade Two students, it was a challenging and tedious task. These were the few students who generally find paper and pencil tasks challenging and often have teachers write down their answers for them, and if they have to draw a picture, it is with minimal colour and strokes. These students persevered, and the strategy they used was to scribble with one crayon per drawing finishing their drawings before everyone else. In the end all the children were so proud of their work and were happy to be co-authors of the book, *The Present*.

### 3.1.8 Empathy and Compassion

Ann Chinnery discusses how in schools’ “efforts in moral education have focused on mapping and cultivating the capacity for empathy and the other-regarding emotions in children” (2000, 67). Chinnery proposes that for “moral education to effect the deeper kind of transformation it seeks, attention ought to be shifted away from an emphasis on decision-making and moral behaviour toward a reconceptualization of moral agency itself— that is, to a critique of the foundational assumptions regarding subjectivity that underpin even apparently diverse curricula” (2000, 67). Moral education revolves around educating students to look for similarities in people and developing empathy among children in the school community. Chinnery argues that “empathy has been identified as the pivotal moral emotion and a necessary precondition for community where traditional bonds of affiliation (family, nation and religion) no longer hold. A conception of community without identity requires a shift from the focus on positive similarity to

a ‘kinship’ based on recognition of our existential incompleteness and fundamental suffering as subjects constituted in passivity and subjection to the other—the kinship of compassion (from the Latin *com*-(together) and *pati* (to suffer))” (2006, 333). The word *pati* is often translated as ‘experience’ so ‘to experience together’ and ‘suffer’ can be used in the sense of experience as well.

Chinnery further states that “Levinas rejects the appeal to sameness and the ‘idealization subjectivity of ontology, which reduces everything to itself,’ declaring instead that that ‘the other’ cannot be known as the usual categories of perception. Levinas says we have to find ‘another kinship’—one that will enable us to conceive of the difference between oneself and the other in a way which preserves the other’s alterity and resists oppression and submission of any kind” (Levinas qtd. in Chinnery 2000, 69). Empathy is a vital component in socio-emotional functioning. Similarly, Broderick says, “empathy is the ability to resonate with another’s emotional state, like the joy or sadness for another...empathy supports the connection.” (2019, 109).

I wanted to ascertain whether there was a difference in students’ level of empathy before teaching them the eight lessons on mindfulness and after implementing these lessons on mindfulness, “Mindfulness Matters to Us.” Mindfulness can foster heightened awareness for the development of empathy in children. By children focusing on being thankful, grateful, and compassionate towards themselves and others, they practice empathy skills. Children can bring mindful awareness by recognizing the different feelings they experience, and they can identify how other people feel in different situations. Cultivating compassion for the self and others is an essential component of mindfulness as children develop empathy. “Empathy fuels connection,” according to Brené Brown (2012). To connect with someone, you must connect with something

in yourself to know that feeling. Empathy is a feeling you have for people. It is a sacred space. Empathy is about gaining perspective. It is the ability to recognize another person's outlook as their truth, staying out of judgment and identifying emotions in others, and then communicating that to others. To do this, one must be mindful of your feelings and those of others. Compassion arises through developing empathy with the misfortune of others. Cultivating compassion is essential, and picturebooks that fill this void in children's literature are of paramount importance. Orr proposes "mindfulness as a simple but powerful technique to promote *karuna*/ compassion which can be easily integrated into classrooms at all levels to develop natural compassion and bring it to bear on the full range of curricular, social and environmental issues" (2014, 52). I feel that the program "Mindfulness Matters to Us," begins to address compassion and care for the self and for one another.

This chapter outlined the basic tenets of mindfulness and discussed mindfulness research with children. I focused on teaching mindfulness to children through bibliotherapy. Empathy is innate and needs to be strengthened over time. I aimed to foster empathy in children through the bibliotherapy lessons in "Mindfulness Matters to Us." Getting children interested in practicing mindfulness exercises can take some creativity. The picturebook, *The Present* introduced children to the concepts of mindfulness and being present in a creative way. I think it brought mindfulness into everyday life in a relevant and meaningful way to which the students can relate.

The following chapter focuses on an analysis of picturebooks and how picturebooks can help children access their emotional realms by helping them express their feelings in both therapy and the classroom. Picturebooks can be powerful by providing fictional dilemmas, allowing children to develop problem-solving skills to confront and come to terms with difficult life situations.

## Bibliotherapy-Children's Picturebooks

### 4.1.1 Theoretical Background of Picturebooks

Some of the narratives in picturebooks are subtle and woven into an entertaining tapestry incorporating layers of meaning within the text, to which children can relate. Research suggests that the picturebook and its meaning will linger on with the child long after the picturebook has been read and internalized. David Lewis an educational researcher, says that even though “picturebooks are shorter, have fewer words and illustrations, it does not make them easier to read; many are extremely complex multimodal texts that make great intellectual and cognitive demands on the reader. Children respond to picture books in multiliterate ways” (2001, xii).

Lewis refers to the ecology of the picturebook, “that pictures and words in picturebooks interact ecologically, that the book acts as a kind of miniature ecosystem” (2001, 48). Lewis further argues, “A complex ecology of the picturebook experience involves active, meaning-making readers, whereby the story, the living meaning . . . is not something that takes place on the page . . . but somewhere in the intercourse of reader and texts” (2001, 57) Meaning-making for Lewis also involves attending to the relationship between text and illustrations. Children think about and process what is in the picturebook. This internal dialogue and dialogue with other children or adults, allows children to integrate and make sense of the picturebook.

Lewis states, “the possibilities of the picturebook are limitless, precisely because it makes itself out of the limitless pictorial and verbal resources that surround it” (2001, 65). Lewis explains the complexity of the picturebook. He says first-order complexity involves the text being a combination of text and images that tell the same story. Second-order level complexity is when the pictures are not all the same as the meaning of the written text: there are issues of

modality or lifelikeness and whether the images are framed or not. The words can be simple or elaborate, a word on a page or a sentence. The layout and design are specific and need to be considered. The third level of sophistication arises when the pictures and words begin to separate from each other. When children must develop a cognitive stretch to understand the text and illustrations, they must work harder to get where the author and illustrator are guiding them. Children might have to get adult intervention to comprehend the story entirely. The fourth level is the books where children anticipate that something will happen, but the story leads them elsewhere. These books fascinate both adults and children. They are ingenious and sometimes feel like toys as they are playful. This playfulness invites children's broad experiences of play. Lewis says "picturebook makers respond to the child's need for play with playfulness in word and image" (2001, 76). Picturebooks that are therapeutic fall into Lewis's third-and fourth-order levels, as they demand that children make inferences and connections that they might have to extend or suspend or get adult intervention for help with comprehension.

#### 4.1.2 Beyond the Literal

Picturebooks introduce children to narrative sequences and allow them to discover the story that flows between the text and illustrations. Also, they employ narrative processes to depict the plot and develop the characters in the story. The images and text together illustrate these interactions and happenings in the form of a narrative. The visual attraction of picturebooks makes the picturebook seem like fun for children. Once children become involved in the story and its deeper meaning, the therapeutic work begins, often a challenging moment for the children, who need to make meaning of both text and art. In her article *Text, Extra text, Metatext and Paratext in Translation* Vallerie Pellatt, a linguist, says that "a paratext is the text that surrounds and supports the core text, like layers of packaging that initially protect and gradually



reveal the essence of the packaged item. The paratext primes, explains, justifies, and contextualizes the text for the reader” (2013, I). In her article, *The Significance of Texts in Children’s Picture Books*, Yvonne Tsai a literary translator “considers the significance of texts in children’s picturebooks as paratexts of the ‘texts.’” She discusses the educational, psychological, and social value of the picturebook. She explores the extent to which the illustration is paratextual to the written text, or the written text is paratextual to the dominant ‘text’ of the picture” (2013, 92). Kerry Mallan states that “picturebooks, like other texts, induce the reader to take up a position in the drama of the story and to participate in its unfolding ‘scenes.’ Performative responses allow children to create and express meaning in ways that go beyond talk and that engage their creativity and imagination” (2002, 26).

Pictures often parallel the text, interpret the text, or amplify and complicate the primary story until it becomes something entirely new. Nodelman “explores how the interplay of the verbal and visual aspects of picturebooks conveys more narrative information and stimulation than either medium could achieve alone” (1992, 78). It is only with practice children readers benefit from learning how to construct meaning from these images. Frank Serafini quotes Lawrence Sipe in terms of the unique qualities of a picturebook. Sipe describes “this relationship between text and visual images in picturebooks as ‘synergistic,’ suggesting that what is constructed from the combination of the two sign systems is greater than the potential meanings offered by either written text or visual image in isolation” (Sipe qtd. in Evans 2009, 10).

Serafini, in his influential definition of picturebooks, quotes Barbara Bader (2009, 1976). Bader states that a “picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; an art form; a social, cultural and historical document; and foremost, an experience for the child” (Evans 10). According to Bader, the experience of reading a

picturebook “hinges on the interplay of illustration and written text, the simultaneous display of two facing pages and the drama of turning the page” (Serafini qtd. in Evans 10). Serafini states, “reading the picturebook is a unique literary experience, in which meaning is generated simultaneously from written text, visual images, and the overall graphic design” (Evans 10). Children need to attend to both systems of meaning to experience the picturebook as both texts are fully interactive. Serafini says that social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen argue that “picturebooks are complex as the two systems of meaning contained in picturebooks are governed by distinct logics: written language is governed by the logic of time or temporal sequence, whereas the visual image is governed by the logic of spatiality, organized arrangements and simultaneity” (qtd.in Evans 2008, 11). Most researchers believe that the text and visual systems together encourage meaning-making.

Martin Salisbury (2012), Janet Evans (2009), Lawrence Sipe (2008) and David Lewis (2001) all assert that picturebooks comprise two modes of communication where the interaction of the textual and visual coexist. Children reading picturebooks make sense of the interanimation, of the relationship between the words and illustrations, to make meaning of the story. Nina Mikkelsen states that “the reading transaction involves an engagement of child and text in which each is changed in the process. The text changes the child, and the child transforms the text; neither is left unaltered. The child constructs a text rather than simply “receiving it,” and the text is expanded, or destabilized, by the child’s responses. Rosenblatt describes the relationship between reader and text as a transaction: this process is organic” (2005, 53). Lewis comments on Alan Ahlberg’s quote, “that picturebooks are an interweaving of words and text” (2001, 35). Lewis says it is the readers shuttling between one medium and another that weave strands of meaning to make sense of the picturebook. These interrelated strands add up to more

than an accumulation of the parts. Using semiotic terminology helps to understand that the picturebook communicates utilizing two different sign systems, the iconic or images and the conventional or verbal. Lewis states that the varieties of interanimation that occur in picturebooks do so in the intercourse of books and readers and nowhere else. This interanimation is what he describes as the reading event as the picturebook comes to life.

Margaret Meek writes of “words being pulled through the pictures and how pictures and words on a page interanimate each other” (qtd. In Lewis 2001, 35). Lewis explores how transformations occur in picturebooks. He gives the example of a toy that can come to life in the narrative, resulting in the text changing. As a result, the relationship between words and pictures changes. According to Lewis, when the story is cohesive and coherent, and then suddenly when information is withheld from the reader, and the images take over the narrative, and that becomes a pivotal, transformational moment. This transformational moment can only happen when what the reader has not been told in the text occurs in the illustrations or vice versa. Then this involves transformation, that is, a change from one state to another. In Anthony Browne’s book *Gorilla* (1983) for example, the toy’s transformation is an instance of how a story can be passed backward and forwards between the words and the pictures. The text says ‘Hannah threw the gorilla into a corner with her other toys and went back to sleep. In the night something amazing happened’ (Lewis 2001, 49). The text does not mention what transpired however through the drawings the toy gorilla becomes huge and overpowering on the subsequent page. The story resumes with “Hannah was frightened” (2001, 49). This is a transformational moment which is climactic when the pictures take over the story and the words are not mentioned. This change occurs and no words are mentioned, like the gorilla got larger and larger. This transformation is seen in pictures rather than said in text. It is where the pictures take over to tell the story rather

than the text. “The picturebook as an ecosystem, it means that there is a relationship between organism and environment, word and image, and this has momentarily shifted” (Lewis 49).

The reciprocal influences of text and illustrations of the picturebook inform, expand, and magnify the story to the fullest. “As children engage with picturebooks, they gain pleasure as they encounter a story conveyed with skill through words and visuals” (Mallan 2002, 224).

When children can identify with or connect to some aspect of the story, the text becomes richer, relevant, and meaningful to their own lives. Picturebooks that are creative and aesthetically pleasing can be used to stimulate children's imaginations. Stories children read should be rich in optimism, perseverance, triumphing over setbacks, and making the most of life's opportunities for the stories to be therapeutically effective. A picturebook structure, its pacing, dialogue, language, illustrations, moral or meaning all influence the story's success by engaging children on multiple levels.

Lewis discusses how children make meaning or co-create the meaning of picturebooks. He says, “child readers are able to absorb, reinterpret and re-present their world daily when reading picturebooks” (2001, 137). The visual text amplifies the written text for children allowing them to take what is relevant to help them make sense of the picturebooks situation and their own circumstances. When this happens, the picturebook's therapeutic potential is unleashed. This process invites children to identify with the picturebook so that children can relate their life circumstances to the story, fulfilling some of the therapeutic work. In my experience, the effective therapist is one who notices and remembers that many children resist a text as it feels too close to home, too advanced, or too frightening, and the therapist will then try a different approach to work therapeutically. A picturebook can also be a space in which the child creates other new stories. Picturebooks are often places for alternative stories to be created

and can help children to change the ending of their own story, and not only for use in terms of meaning making. Children can use a story to help them change their own personal story that they are living, to seek a different way of being.

#### 4.1.3 Multimodal Texts

Barbara Bader comments on picturebooks and states, “On its own terms its possibilities are limitless” (Lewis 2001, 1). Picturebooks are multimodal as they draw on different forms to tell a story. Writers use narratives in fiction picturebooks in a complex manner to share their stories in an entertaining and meaningful way for children. The text and art transport children from their realities to a different reality, thus creating distance between children and their issues. Some stories are familiar to children, allowing them to explore their problems without feeling that the focus is on them. When adults enter a conversation with children about the picturebook children are often very spontaneous in response to the story. Children enjoy viewing and listening to picturebooks being read to them as they are entertaining and take them somewhere else, away from their immediate situation, and tend to focus on the plot. Bader explains the choice of the term “picturebook,” as she uses it in her book *American Picturebooks from Noah’s Ark to the Beast Within* (1976), as follows: “To represent the picturebook as an entity and a medium, we have elected to write the term as one word; the medium, however, remains a vehicle, capable (McLuhan notwithstanding) of diverse messages in diverse forms” (548). Bader further says “that picturebooks are seen as an art form, its development from a medium of entertainment and instruction to a means of illuminating for the child his innermost feelings —of telling him about himself” (1976, 61). These ideas of Bader’s help contextualize and frame the use of picturebooks in a therapeutic context. The picturebook becomes a medium through which children can access their emotional worlds. The bibliotherapist uses picturebooks with children

for this very purpose. In the previous chapter I discuss my practitioner led action research in which I make use of published picturebooks and an interactive one, *The Present* as bibliotherapy to work with children on concepts of mindfulness. In this chapter I delve more into other picturebooks that I have used in educational and therapeutic ways to help children understand their emotional worlds.

Sipe argues that “contemporary society is still very much constructed around rigid rules regarding racial and ethnic groups, and some picturebooks continue to reflect this rigidity.

Suppose children’s literature is to be a transformative force for society. In that case, publishers should continue to urge for an increasing range of representations of the diversity of the populations that constitute their audience” (2011, 244). There are now many more children’s picturebook’s reflecting children from all diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and stories that depict different cultural and folklore stories from various ethnic and cultural groups.

“Multicultural literature was almost invisible in children’s literature or were represented with negative cultural stereotypes” (Cai,1998, qtd. in Sipe 1999, 122). Literature depicting children with different gender expressions too have been invisible and only recently, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, has there been a surge of picturebooks reflecting gender identity issues and different types of family combinations, reflecting, and representing society at large. This discourse is imperative as all children and their families need to be validated and acknowledged in picturebooks. Children’s experience of “othering” needs to be acknowledged and their voices heard. “As Galda (1998) observes, these types of literary texts may act as mirrors and windows. For children with a similar culture, a book may act as a mirror, allowing them to see themselves in the story. For children from a different culture, a book may act as a window, allowing them a vicarious experience of what another culture is like” (Sipe 1999, 122). Thus, in the classroom, the same

picturebook can act as a mirror for some children and a window for others, which can facilitate a meaningful post-story conversation.

Sipe states that “the picturebook as a format, arose as something new with Caldecott, and it will continue to change and merge with other forms and formats as it evolves. Paradoxically, picturebooks, stand both in the traditional historical evolution of children’s literature, and are poised to be on the cutting edge, promoting all types of new literacies” (2011, 250).

Digital picturebooks add another layer or modality to the picturebook. The picturebook appears on a screen. Often, the ‘turning’ of a page is signaled by a sound made by the device, thus adding to the drama of turning a page. Stories can be read on the digital device with or without the adult present. Some of these digital picturebooks feature an audible soundtrack, a kind of “talking picturebook.” This experience is now being enjoyed, and many children are experiencing this interactive device and storytelling without an adult being present. The digital picturebook involves interactive features, such as buttons to press to bring alive characters in the story or move objects on the page. Children see this digital device delivering a picturebook as if they were watching a movie or television show as it is on a screen and the pictures or illustrations are not static. However, this shift to reading digital picturebooks from the printed version represents some parents’ and children’s loss. The shared reading experience is absent when children read alone with the device. The social interaction is missing. According to psychologist Jean Twenge with the increase of the use of smartphones and social media, children are spending more time on these devices and less time interacting socially. Social media is supposed to link children in, but what has transpired is that it has exaggerated the issue of children and teens feeling left out. The result is alienation and loss of empathic connection (2017).

Grown children who were read to also have the memory of the mother's or the father's or caregiver's voice that children have, connecting children, parents, or caregivers to the specific picturebook that gets stored and treasured forever. The relationship between parents and children develops as a by-product of the shared reading of picturebooks. Reading digital books alone would be like children reading picturebooks on their own too, without the significant other. Sometimes children wish to read alone, which is a meaningful experience in that they feel independent and can entertain themselves. However, suppose digital stories can be used with the parent or adult present, interacting with children and the device. In that case, the story time can still be seen as a meaningful human exchange even if the adult is not traditionally reading the picturebook. If adults and children listen to the story together, this may well constitute a good bonding experience, a shared experience. This process might well be understood as a mutual intimate, meaningful, short, time-bound experience. Short on time and on the go, families may benefit from digital picturebooks since they are easily read any time, any place, even in a car or public transportation. Whilst the parent is driving the car, the story can be read to children in digital format on a screen whilst children are in the back seat of the car. I would argue that reading picturebooks on the iPad or iPhone can allow more families to read picturebooks together than hard copies or library books. More children are exposed to storybooks. This is a valid and valuable family option. Sometimes this can become a reading event, as the picturebook is read repeatedly. The family can act it out, discuss it or perform it out loud from memory or together when it is being played on the electronic device.

#### 4.1.4 Picturebooks, Play, and Interpretation in a Therapeutic Context

The element of play and imagination is central when it comes to reading picturebooks. All picturebooks are multimodal as they depend on text and illustrations to share the story.



Donald Winnicott believed play is the natural medium for creativity and discovery of the self. Playing says Winnicott “is something that happens in the interface between our inner world and external reality. Taking place neither strictly in our imagination, nor in the external world, playing happens in that space where our imagination can shape the external world without the experience of compliance, climax, or too much anxiety” (1971,70).

Lewis says “picturebooks are ingenious, and they frequently resemble games and have a playfulness that invites children’s wide experience of play” (2001, xiii). Postmodern narrative strategies, like irony, excess or boundary breaking are particularly useful in a therapeutic context. They often add humour or light relief to children’s often serious situations, for example, severe anxiety, illness, divorce, or death. For example, when dealing with a child in therapy who has anxiety and emetophobia, I have used the book *Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears* (2007) by Emily Gravett. The boundary breaking occurs when the mouse within the story has nibbled pages in the book and even nibbled a hole through the cover. “Instructions to the reader on the right-hand front endpaper suggest that this is not altogether inappropriate behaviour: readers are supposed to deface the text. For this is a book especially designed to scaffold readers in overcoming their fears by artwork” (Smith qtd.in Evans 2009, 89). This postmodern metafictional quality is bewildering, funny and often unsettling and is useful when helping children to externalize their anxiety. In post story conversations with children, I have explored whether in the story the mouse is inside or really outside the story, so too can children’s anxiety be questioned, as children often experience their anxiety within, it is valuable, using this story to help them shift to see how their anxiety can be externalized.

Sipe argues that children are “invited to be co-authors of the narrative, filling in the indeterminacies between the spreads with interpretative inferences” (2011, 243), and this can be

seen as playing with the text. Sipe and Pantaleo (2008) elucidate five defining characteristics of postmodern picturebooks: “a) playfulness, the text functions as the playground for readers and does not take itself seriously, drawing attention to itself as a work of fiction; b) multiplicity of meanings, allowing for readers’ interpretation because of nonlinear plots, a high degree of indeterminacy, ambiguity and lack of resolution; c) intertextuality, a pastiche of references to many other visual and verbal texts; d) subversion, a tone of sarcasm, parody and irony; e) blurring distinctions between high and popular culture and between author and reader and demarcations among literary genres” (Sipe 2011, 247). The pace of the story is crucial to the success of the story. The picturebook is telling a story. The rate at which that story unfolds, and its elements are revealed to the reader are essential. Stories consist of a dilemma that needs to be to be dealt with, and there is the suspense that holds children’s attention while thinking about how the story might or might not be resolved. This process helps children understand and come to terms with the fact that they have problems they have to move through to find their ways to cope. Picturebooks show children a process even if the story is unreal, which can be seen as fantasy, play or just hard important work.

Sipe argues that postmodern picturebooks “with their subversion of traditional picturebook (and narrative) conventions, their parodic play, their self-referentiality, and their ambiguity and lack of resolution, have a great potential for increasing children’s ability to interpret both words and pictures (and their complex combinations) in new ways” (2008, 247). Postmodern strategies such as boundary-breaking, excess, indeterminacy, parody unsettle the readers as they push boundaries. These strategies used in a picturebook, often make light of a sad topic, which can add relief for children. The playful nature of the picturebook allows children to try different ways of seeing their life situations that they are dealing with, which can be

therapeutic. Asking children questions about what might have happened in the story is a natural way to encourage active meaning-making, which is therapeutic for children to identify with the story on a practical or emotional level. Picturebooks utilized in a therapeutic and educational context can help children identify conflicts and help them incorporate strategies in the story to cope with their issues. Picturebooks can be used to allow children to play in the therapeutic context.

The picturebook where children anticipate that something will happen, but the story leads them elsewhere, fascinates adults and children. Lewis states that “picturebooks are ingenious and frequently resemble games and have a playfulness that invites the child reader’s wide experience of play” (Evans xiii). In therapy, children can playfully use the picturebook to help shape their story too. Virginia Axline said, “play is the natural language of children” (1974). Picturebooks can be incorporated into the child’s realm of play, where they can come to terms with some of their feelings and problems, their fears, loneliness, and feelings of failure or inadequacies.

#### 4.1.5 Narrative World of the Story

Short argues that reading is a vicarious experience which is less threatening than the reality of everyday life (2010). Wolfenburger and Sipe (2007) identify three primary impulses that shape how children respond to picturebooks. “First, there is the hermeneutic impulse, which is the desire to know more and look for meaning in the story. Second, there is the personal impulse, which is the need to connect stories to one’s own life. Third, there is the aesthetic impulse: this ‘pushes readers’ creative potential to shape the story and make it their own” (Evans 2009, 102).

McGilchrist states, “if the left hemisphere is the hemisphere of ‘what,’ the right hemisphere, with its preoccupation with context, the relational aspects of experience, emotion

and the nuances of expression could be said to be the hemisphere of ‘how’” (2019, 93). He says that the left-brain accesses language and comprehension, and the right brain integrates art, empathic responses, and the social-emotional realm. McGilchrist states, “in humans, just as in animals and birds, it turns out that each hemisphere attends to the world in a different way-and the ways are consistent. The right hemisphere underwrites breadth and flexibility of attention, where the left hemisphere brings to bear focused attention. The right hemisphere sees things whole, and in their context, where the left hemisphere sees things abstracted from context, and broken parts from which it then reconstructs a ‘whole’ (2019, 27). The right hemisphere plays an essential role in what is known as ‘theory of mind, a capacity to put oneself in another’s position and see what is going on in that person’s mind” (McGilchrist 2019, 57). Franz De Waal poses the question about whether different species try to solve issues differently in an adaptive way. He explores how emotions and cognition are related. He examines how children and animals think.

McGilchrist believes “that the essential difference between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere is that the right hemisphere pays attention to the Other, whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves with which it sees itself in profound relation. It is deeply attracted to and given life by the relationship, the betweenness, that exists with this Other. By contrast, the left hemisphere pays attention to the virtual world that it has created, which is self-consistent, but self-contained, ultimately disconnected from the Other, making it powerful, but ultimately only able to operate on, and to know, itself” (93). When children read picturebooks the brain must integrate what the left brain hears in terms of language and comprehension and how the right brain integrates the art and the empathic responses in the social realm of the narrative for children to make sense of the picturebook. According to Armstrong the right brain also uses

language metaphorically to inspire rather than to inform. Words can inspire, express hope, and offer empathic responses to others (2019).

Beth Goldberg refers to Abigail Housen, a cognitive psychologist, who concluded from her research “that both children and adults search for stories in art, even when the artist did not intend them” (Goldberg 2005, 1). Goldberg further says “illustrations or artwork also tell a story with the text and illustrations combining to fill children’s imagination long after the reading is done. In the “aesthetic stage,” viewers are considered “accountive” storytellers; they make concrete observations about the artwork that contributes to a narrative” (2005, 28).

Artworks with narrative content offer the possibility of eliciting many different interpretation levels and are especially interesting for young children. They help children see what is taking place in the story. The artwork prompts, initiates, or adds to what is taking place in the story. The artwork gives the child clues and cues to the narrative. Artwork may contain narrative images, which is often an entry point into the story if children can relate to these images. According to Goldberg, “the artist tries less to relate the story than to interpret the world that surrounds the story “(2005, 30). Most children are initially attracted to the artwork or illustrations of a picturebook. “This is what catches their interest at first, and then the text holds them through the story, the story coming to life for children” According to Goldberg in the *Art of the Narrative: Interpreting Visual Stories*, the “reading” of pictures is a crucial stage for the development of good readers as pictures scaffold the reading of texts. Goldberg claims that “reading texts proceeds through four stages: Children first begin to make some preliminary meaning of the illustrations. Following this stage is a deeper exploration of the story, involving interwoven literacies and narrative learning occurs. Children then play with the text, and a more in-depth

engagement of the story develops through a leap of creativity. Finally, an expansion of text post-story explorations takes place” (2005, 32).

Children are perceptive and read the characters’ emotions from the illustrations, and this information helps mirror children’s feelings. In some cases, Nodelman says, “words limit the pictures by telling children what to look for and that pictures limit the words by telling children exactly what visual image to think of when reading a word” (Lewis 35). Some picturebooks could be prescriptive for some children to think of a particular situation by having the pictures tell the story in a certain way. Yet, it might be a concrete way for other children to visualize what they cannot express. Some children need clear concrete messages, and others do not respond in this direction. Picturebooks can inform, educate, build experience, facilitate problem-solving, change, and heal.

Children do not necessarily respond to picturebooks written specifically for representing feelings as they do to books that have been written not for that purpose but just to tell a story that entertains children. Children can sense when a book is contrived. The story must create intrigue for it to impact and capture children’s interest and imagination. The message must be subtle and woven into an entertaining story or tapestry with layers of meaning in the text so children can relate to it, come back to the story, and have the story linger on long after it has been read.

#### 4.1.6 Picturebooks and Fantasy

I will now discuss Maurice Sendak’s picturebook *Where the Wild Things Are* as a text that incorporates fantasy but really addresses children’s fear of abandonment and anger at their parents. According to Richard Gotlieb, “Sendak’s art addresses our deepest, frequently repressed, often unspeakable concerns about ourselves and our loved ones. Often it speaks to children and to the adults who read to them from a place of anguished inner struggle, struggles

that had rarely been directly addressed in children's literature prior to Sendak" (2009, 847). Patricia Dooley says that Sendak's work is expressive, focusing on the inner life of emotions, dreams, and fantasy. Simultaneously, a devotion to the core of this feeling keeps his work grounded in the real world, veering away from the sentimental. As Sendak says, "In the way, a dream comes to us at night, feelings come to me, and then I must rush to put them down. But these fantasies have to be given physical form, so you build a house around them, and the house is what you call a story, and the painting of the house is the bookmaking" (Dooley 1976, 1). Sendak says, "Children do live in fantasy and reality: they move back and forth very easily in a way that we no longer remember how to do . . ." (Dooley 1976, 1). Thus, Sendak's picturebooks are conducive to tapping into children's emotional worlds, eliciting responses about the story, making them eminently suitable for therapeutic purposes. Sendak's stories have such a strong emotional base that these stories can encourage children to access their inner feelings by looking at these powerful picturebooks, which can be very therapeutic for children. It is often in the post-story discussion that children can begin to process and determine how the story relates to their personal situation.

Browne discusses *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) and says, "Sendak stands out as he created the first 'true' picturebook, in which the words and the pictures work both together and separately" (Evans 187). The images are not just a visual representation of the text. There is something in the illustrations that the text does not reveal, and there is something in the text that the illustrations do not disclose, and sometimes there are things left out of both these mediums. These gaps create valuable space for readers, inviting interpretation filled in by the reader's imagination. Therefore, the picturebook's therapeutic potential depends on what the picturebook readers see, interpret, or explain how it applies to them. Leonard Marcus highlights Sendak's

comment that “I only have one subject. The question I am obsessed with is, how do children survive?” (2012, 171). According to Richard Gottlieb, “it is more than mere survival that Sendak aspires to, for children and himself. He asks the question of resilience: How do children survive and transform their words to prosper and create? Gottlieb says that Sendak’s answer must include the power of art (including fantasy, dreams, and daydreams). Children transform traumatic circumstances into their means of survival, growth, and positive maturation. They go to where the wild things are. They conquer them, and then they return” (2009, 848). *Where the Wild Things Are* has a happy ending as the child returns to his room, and his food is still hot in the story. I understand this to demonstrate the possibility of some reconciliation in both the story and emotionally for children in therapy as children identify with the stories’ characters.

*Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak, is a fantastic picturebook with a lyrical story and interesting and controversial illustrations. It appeals to many children, enabling children to speak about scary situations or things. It evokes recollections of dreams, allowing them to share their bad dreams with a caring adult. Initially, *Where the Wild Things Are* was criticized as too frightening, too ugly, and not a children's book. Marcus says “Bruno Bettelheim, in particular, denounced it, saying it would keep children up at night. He also protested the fact that Max was denied food in the story. For Bettelheim, this signified the withdrawal of love by the mother” (2012, 194). However, this picturebook might well offer a cathartic release of pent-up emotions for some children, permitting them to express anger towards a parent, knowing that the parent will still accept the child, thereby rendering the book a useful tool in the therapeutic process.

The story revolves around Max, who is angry. He goes to his room with no supper. Max enters a fantasy world where the wild things are. His bedroom turns into a forest where trees



begin to grow. This is the private forest of fantasy and the unconscious, from which Max, the self-determined subject, journeys to meet and become King of the Wild Things of his anger. When he grows lonely, he returns to his bedroom to find his supper, still hot. This illustrates the angry child's need to escape, be independent, and return home to the home's safety and security and parents' care. There is no mention of a father, even the mother is almost absent—only a voice and a hot supper are mentioned. In this narrative, the child takes the spotlight. The child is pivotal, centre stage heard, and acknowledged.

The illustrations of this book tend to frighten some children, yet others love the monsters. Children who are often angry with their parents often find solace in this book. When they read *Where the Wild Things Are*, they connect instantly with Max. These overwhelming, often unconscious feelings of anger are evoked in children when reading this book, and it has a purpose of containment for children's unconscious feelings. According to Spufford, "*Where the Wild Things Are* is one of the few picturebooks to make use of the psychoanalytic story of anger" (2002, 60). Perhaps Sendak's use of faded colours for his illustrations takes children on a sensory journey somewhere between reality and play, allowing them a medium where they can identify their own conflicting emotions.

Psychologists and educators agree that there is a significant potential for learning by looking. Some parents read the same picturebook repeatedly to their children, and it becomes a performative experience. Eventually, the whole book is memorized, and families act it out nightly before going to bed. It can excite, calm, or entertain children, but whatever it does, it reassures children of their parent's presence, continuity, and engagement. When an adult reads a picturebook to children, the adult often provides an improvised performance of the text, for example, gesturing, making sound effects, or acting out scenes. This additional display or drama

and performance is expected when parents read to children; children may also perform, responding to the words and illustrations by acting, clapping, shaking their head, nodding in approval, or singing.

Mallan states, “as the child encounters the picture book text, he or she participates in a reading practice which, in its broadest sense, is a performance whereby he or she negotiates various roles of reader, spectator, witness, social commentator, art critic, and performer. Each role has its own specific sets of acts and situated identities which mimic and iterate to some extent something heard, seen, or experienced before; hence, the iterative nature of the reading act” (2002, 3). Ellen Handler Spitz says that when children comprehend an author’s or artist’s intention, they respond to picturebooks from their perspective and through the lens they understand (1999).

The picturebook can be seen as something to contemplate or a world of fantasy for children. Fantasy helps children explore places away from home, and children begin to question issues of concern from afar. Mikkelsen argues that transformation in fantasy stories holds a fascination for children. Children are going through their own development and are aware of many changes in themselves and their lives that cannot often be understood. “Magical power gives children strength at shaky points in their lives when they need it most” (Mikkelsen 2005, 179). This powerful picturebook is a story rich in fantasy which has therapeutic purposes that tap into the emotional world of children.

#### 4.1.7 Parent and Children Reading Texts Together

Lewis says, “the story is not something that takes place on the page or in memory, but somewhere in the intercourse of reader and text. The text offers itself up as an object of contemplation, but the attentive reader must contribute something for the story to come to life”

(2001, 57). Children and adults reading the text together are the interpreters and decipher the text and illustrations and the interrelationship to explicate the meaning. Children can read the picturebook to their parents, thus displaying agency in terms of book choice, controlling the situation, and often showing the parent how well they can read.

The reading event occurs when both the reader and listener are engaged in active, mindful attention and meaning-making. Reading picturebooks enables children to be involved in meaning-making, which is when they go back to re-read the text and relook at the pictures to make sense or re-experience what has already been said. When a picturebook becomes too taxing emotionally, children either pause or do not continue to read the rest of the picturebook. Children and adults reading the text together decipher both the words and visuals and their interrelationship to explain the story's meaning. Salisbury says that picturebooks are intended to be read to children by parents or adults. "The child is 'reading' the pictures while listening to the soundtrack, the adult's voice, and learning to fill in the gaps between the two media (this is referred to as closure) to experience the book fully. As picturebooks become increasingly sophisticated, this closure becomes an even more critical part of the reading process and the consequent intellectual and imaginative development of the child" (2004, 74). However, some children read picturebooks to themselves and discover the wonder of reading independently or reading to the adults in their lives. Lewis refers to a "process of fleshing out of the pictures, where the pictures themselves are only enhanced by the words when this occurs, then the picturebook is fully experienced" (2010, 74).

Alida Gercie and Nancy King ask "have you ever wondered why so many children want to hear a story at bedtime and why so often stories are read before going to sleep? Please tell me a story....." (1990, 33). "Apart from wishing to delay the moment of falling asleep by clinging

to the known of consciousness, the story performs the function of reassuring children that the unknown can become known, and about that road between the known and the unknown that can be travelled both ways” (Gercie and King 33). Stories are often told by parents to children in times of transition, like going to bed. As Janet Evans argues, “It isn't enough to just read a book: one must talk about it as well” (2009, 4). A collaborative process is crucial to sharing and responding to picturebooks. When children read the picturebook with the parent, whether the parent reads to their children or the children read to the parents, the communication between them about the story, this encounter, is crucial to the shared and valuable experience. Adults enjoy reading picturebooks, discussing the values portrayed in the story with children. Reading together becomes a meaningful activity that adults and children can engage in together, and if need be, the adults can process and help the children understand the story. Sometimes, the picturebook's written words are difficult for children to understand. Either the concept is too advanced, the storyline's conflict is too challenging to grasp, or there is some cultural dissonance or emotional resistance to the story. The adults then can work collaboratively with children to make sense of the story if children are ready to do so, children often see or understand stories differently and explain what they understand to the adults. Other times the adults need to respect the children's silence and wait until they are prepared to make it personally meaningful.

#### 4.1.8 Transformative Picturebooks

Picturebooks are often transformative as children grow in their empathy with the story characters, resulting in their own emotional growth. Mikkelsen says that when there is a collaboration between adults and children to understand what is important to them, “the cycle of response spirals up into new events, new readings, new ways of seeing” (2005, 112).

Picturebooks introduce children to people they have not met and circumstances they might not

yet have encountered and helps them try out new ways of being that would never have occurred to them. Being enriched by how someone else dealt with a life experience similar to theirs allows children to gain insight into their situation. Children can realize that their experiences are often similar to the picturebook character when they reflect this with a therapist or other caring adults. When fiction triggers a profound recognition of what one is experiencing in reality, it becomes a therapeutic story or a reference point for the reader. The story does not necessarily have to be an identical set of circumstances to the children's own. However, children's feelings are vital instigators in self-understanding. Children connect with narrative components of the story, for example, situations that deal with loss, abandonment, anger, apprehension, or fear precisely because they act as triggers for children's own experiences. Transformation takes place when children focus on their concerns and work through the story to think about their own lives. The world's dimension beyond the page brings children back to their reality and set of circumstances. After the picturebook has been read, children can discuss the story with the help of a therapist. They can make the connection between their circumstances, the storyline, and how to deal with their emotional state in this post-story discussion.

Transformative literature refers to literature that children connect with, personalize, and create relevance and personal meaning from, transforming their thinking about themselves. Children understand the context and reality of the story they read, allowing for an internal dialogue or interiority to take place. Children project onto the story what they think and feel as the story stirs feelings and thoughts within. Picturebooks that are transformative for children can support mental health literacy. The transformative nature of a story becomes personally relevant for children trying to make meaning and find the story's relevance and how the story resonates

with them. The place where children encounter the text and how the text can alter the way children think and feel about themselves is an intersection this dissertation explores.

Short says “when children empathize with believable story characters, they can understand themselves and others better. During and after reading, children make connections to their lives and think about their circumstances in relation to the text, by bringing meaning from a text through the process of inquiry” (2010, 51). Reading is an exercise in empathy; it is an exercise in walking in someone else's shoes. Reading books that teach children about mindfulness helps children transform the ways they function in the world. It transforms the way they think about being. These picturebooks about mindfulness teach children how to be contemplative, how to be in the present moment, how to do one thing at a time. Children learn how to manage their breathing to help them calm down, and they learn to respond by taking a pause before making a choice how to respond instead of being reactive. These picturebooks are transformative as they give children alternate ways of being and focus on helping children to feel grateful, empathetic, and compassionate.

According to Spufford it is only “when the child reads stories privately that the story's full seducing power can be felt” (2002, 62). He argues that children are read to until about five years old, and then when children begin to read picturebooks on their own, they are absorbed in the text and illustrations, which seduce them. Currently, parents and caregivers are continuing to read to children even after age five years old and this is a practice encouraged by educators even beyond the stage that children can read by themselves. The voice that reads the picturebook to children out aloud is always more than a carrier. It is loving parents or caregivers that accompany children through the story's journey, ensuring that the children's feelings are

supported within this dynamic relationship. There are different encounters children experience when engaging with a picturebook, alone or with a caring adult: both are meaningful.

A picturebook story incorporates the construction and composition of text and illustration with its possibilities as an event. It thus celebrates the child as a virtual performer of the text. It often represents a situation similar to their life circumstances and allows them the agency to express how they feel. Children are the ones to acknowledge that the story is meaningful to them and how they see themselves as similar to or different from the character in the story. In “Child and Story,” Tony Manna says, “that children’s roles lie in the transaction between reader and story” (1980, 2).

Stories that incorporate teaching children about mindfulness can also be seen as transformative. These books help transform or shape children’s thinking about their behaviour on a metacognitive level by helping children focus on being in the present moment rather than always doing something. These picturebooks expect children to perform in a certain way by doing or not doing, in the case of mindfulness, but rather having children being present and mindful, and focusing inwards and doing a mindful practice. Children can practice their breathing techniques in a performative way with the aid of the picturebook. They can create their mindfulness jars by following the instructions in the book. Children can perform mindful practice by sitting, walking or colouring just like it is outlined in the text or illustrated in the pictures by cultivating a mindful practice. Children are transforming the way they think and behave and are developing a resourceful toolkit for emotional well-being.

Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott indicate the process of reading picturebooks as represented by a hermeneutic circle. When children read a picturebook repeatedly, they can understand the story more clearly. Children understand this intuitively as they request to read the

same story repeatedly. As a result, the story is new at each reading as they become more engrossed in the picturebook. This process can effectively be transformative as they reread the story, helping them connect to their emotional lives (2006).

#### 4.1.9 Challenging and Controversial Picturebooks

There are picturebooks whose controversial subject matter can be unconventional, often incorporating an unsettling illustration style, challenging the readers, pushing them to question and probe more deeply to understand the story. Some picturebooks deal with topics that are taboo to talk about with children as the issue is controversial. These picturebooks challenge children and their caregivers. At the same time, children question the story to make sense of the story and its meaning. These challenging picturebooks are sometimes incorporated into bibliotherapy to help children deal with circumstances or issues prevalent in their lives. Picturebooks allow children to experience different ideas and emotions to see situations from another perspective.

Controversial picturebooks may be challenging for both children and adults as they deal with significant life events such as bullying, racism, depression, mental illness, domestic violence, loneliness, sadness, sexuality, gender identity, loss, and death. When using these picturebooks, one must consider the audience and the picturebook's purpose. Some adults are cautious about dealing with these challenging and controversial picturebooks for children's use as they deal with such sensitive issues such as abuse, death, racism, or mental illness. Existential picturebooks or controversial picturebooks, such as *Duck, Death and the Tulip* by Wolf Erlbruch, which deals with life, loss, and death is a book parents are hesitant to read to children unless they are dealing with a personal family loss. Parents often feel uncomfortable talking to their children about these topics or wish to shield their children from these issues as they think they are too young to be dealing with such issues. However, Salisbury says, "it is the adults who have



problems coping with these challenging texts, not the children” (2004). Salisbury further states that “perceptions of suitable or appropriate content for children’s picturebooks have changed greatly over the years. They also vary considerably across cultures today” (2012, 113). Children live with real personal challenges every day. These challenges they face daily are ongoing, and they need help to deal with these stressors in their lives. Children can obtain some relief from relevant controversial picturebooks. Adults can work collaboratively with children to explore the meaning of the picturebook. Picturebooks can help readers heal as they promote understanding, provide context, and facilitate conversation.

Spitz argues “that picturebooks live on in the psyche far beyond early childhood” (1999, 72). This cultural experience of parents reading aloud to their children establishes a meaningful shared experience that can be passed onto the next generation. According to Spitz, the conversations parents have with their children about the picturebooks they read together can be termed “conversational reading.” Together with the mediation of an adult and with “conversational reading,” Spitz argues that children make meaning of the narratives in picturebooks and make valuable connections that influence their ability to understand their own experiences.

Spitz believes “that psychologically explicit, self-help books are not as sought after, books, whereas picturebooks that conjure up ‘inner possibilities’ that is that meets the needs of inner drives, desires and deals with fears through fantasy, excitement and change are what children love to read” (1999, 29). Spitz further believes that picturebooks read with adults can strengthen children’s imagination. Spitz questions the psychological implications and consequences for young children today who are bombarded with fast-paced media information in terms of visuals that fly by. Spitz argues that “for instance, the rapid processing of imagery,

particularly imagery that is exciting and frightening, curtail rather than nurture human capacities for reflection, containment and nuanced emotional response? Could it be that the cherished ancient metaphor ‘to see is to know’ might collapse if exposure to visual material is too rapid? Could speed decrease rather than increase the virtues of delay and deliberation, not to mention empathy?” (1999, 30).

Challenging and controversial picturebooks are important as they openly address relevant issue that adults are often afraid to talk about with children. These books often help children to talk with adults about pertinent issues that have often been taboo subjects. “The notion of childhood is socially constructed and varies over time and across cultures. No book is ever socially or politically neutral, and books for the young are especially sensitive to the way a particular culture, at a specific time sees childhood” (Salisbury 2012, 113).

#### 4.1.10 Developmental and Clinical Use of Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy

Schlenther argues that adults can use reading therapy for children who need to resolve their issues and come to terms with their challenges. Schlenther sees reading therapy being used in two ways, developmental and clinical. “The developmental setting is not so formal; it can be used with anyone going through a life crisis, with a facilitator being a social worker, librarian, teacher or parent. The clinical side is more formal, as the facilitator has training in psychology. It is used with children experiencing severe emotional or behavioural problems in a child development centre or psychiatric institution” (1999, 29). Schlenther iterates that the book is only part of the therapy, the catalyst. Therapy ensues after the picturebook has been read much like Spitz refers to the “conversations” of the picturebook. Picturebooks can be transformative as children develop empathy with the story characters, resulting in children’s emotional growth. William Moebius, author, states, “the best picturebooks can and do portray the intangible and

invisible, ideas and concepts such as love, responsibility, a truth beyond the individual, ideas that escape easy definition in pictures or words” (Evans 156).

The feelings children experience when suffering are real and are often overwhelming. Buddhism discusses feelings and mental states in connection with mindfulness. This dissertation makes use of practices and principals of mindfulness through bibliotherapy. The word *dukkha* in *Pali* means suffering. The three *kleshas* (unwholesome mental state) are *avidya* which is delusion or ignorance, *raga* which is clinging to things or attachment and *dvesa* which is aversion or avoidance. The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism explain *dukkha*. Orr says these “Four Noble Truths provide a useful entrance to the next level of mindfulness. It outlines a complete therapeutic approach to human suffering: the diagnosis, etiology, prognosis and treatment” (2012, 241). The first truth is that suffering is real and is present, the second truth is that there is always some cause to suffering, the third truth is that suffering can come to an end, and the fourth truth is that there is a way to deal with the suffering. Mindfulness can begin to address this suffering and is one way to deal with suffering, by allowing the mind to be open and receptive to the suffering in order to understand it. Mindfulness allows the mind to become lighter as there is an openness and space that allows one to see and understand the suffering by not clinging to and holding onto the suffering but rather to let it go. Children’s picturebooks on mindfulness discuss the importance of letting go of feelings that weigh the person down. As such they play a leading role in the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program research that is a central part of this dissertation.

#### 4.1.11 Picturebooks that Promote Emotional Literacy in the Classroom

Picturebooks that teach a positive, optimistic approach to life, focusing on resilience and empathy, can influence children’s thinking. Some examples of these picturebooks are *How Full is Your Bucket for Kids* (2009), written by Tom Rath and Mary Reckmeyer and illustrated by

Maurie J. Manning; and *Who Moved My Cheese for Kids and Teens* (2003), written by Spencer Johnson and illustrated by Steve Pileggi. These books are didactic, teaching children (6-10 years old) how to express kindness and love.

*How Full is Your Bucket for Kids?* This picturebook is a guide to daily happiness for children. Using the image of a bucket filler, children, parents, teachers, and therapists can be in sync with the story's concept of children doing good deeds for others and, at the same time, strengthening their empathy and feeling good about themselves. This picturebook highlights how children can become a vessel for empathy, a container like a bucket for empathizing with others. This book can help build resilience by assisting children to become optimistic in their thinking through a simple story. When I read this story to the children, I place my invisible bucket on my head, and so do the students. They begin to walk around the class, holding their invisible buckets on their heads. When the children offer to fill up someone else's bucket by paying them a compliment, the book becomes a powerful, performative learning tool. This usually begins a series of bucket filling, which becomes very therapeutic for the children and certainly enhances the class climate and often results in the children being mindful, looking for ways to perform random acts of kindness, which fosters empathy for others.

*Who Moved My Cheese for Kids and Teens* shows children how to be flexible in their thinking while adapting to change and learning to adopt an optimistic approach to life. Helping others in the process is also a key strategy suggested in this creative picturebook. When children care about others, they feel empowered to do good deeds for others and, in turn, feel good about themselves. As a result, their self-esteem and self-efficacy improve. When the parent, teacher, librarian, or therapist emphasizes the children's traits and qualities, the story's characters become

examples to emulate. Children begin to process, interpret, and integrate aspects of the story, as they become active participants in the story.

Keith Oatley (2002) “states that reading narrative fiction can be a profoundly emotional experience” (Mar et al. 2011, 818). Mar et al. concur that “these emotions, once evoked, in turn, influence engagement with the text. Once one has finished reading, these emotions don’t simply dissipate but may have an impact that lasts hours or days, long after closing the covers of the book, perhaps reemerging whenever the book is brought to mind” (2011, 818).

Picturebooks on bullying prevention and developing social skills are therapeutically effective when working with children individually or in the classroom. Some of the beautiful picturebooks that I value and use, I have recommended that teachers use are *Don’t Squeal Unless It’s a Big Deal* (2005), written by Jeanie Franz Ransom and illustrated by Jackie Urbanovic; *The Recess Queen* (2002), written by Alexis O’Neill and illustrated by Laura Huliska-Beith; *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon* (2001), written by Patty Lovell and illustrated by David Catrow; and *Hey, Little Ant* (1998), written by Phillip. M. Hoose and Hannah Hoose and illustrated by Debbie Tilley. These picturebooks entertain children through the text and illustrations. They also offer strategies to all participants in the bullying drama to stop the cycle of bullying. Children who have been bullied will often raise their hands and talk about an incident when they were bullied, thereby identifying with the victim in the story. Other children in the class speak up about when they stood up for a friend and what it meant to stand up for others. Some children will identify with the bully, bystander, or bully-victim and then a discussion will ensue in terms of how to make a change and stand up for others. Children can relate to such picturebooks in relation to their life situations, empathize with the victim and learn different coping strategies from the story.

*Don't Squeal Unless It's a Big Deal* (2005), written by Jeanie Franz Ransom and illustrated by Jackie Urbanovic, shows children how there are different ways to solve a problem. This valuable picturebook is adaptable to a classroom situation where children role-play situations from the book and use their problems to find solutions. It is humorous and entertaining at the same time, and children connect intuitively with the problem-solving strategy. The teacher or school counsellor can help the students explore conflict resolution and the related emotions raised as the story progresses. This story enables children to discern the difference between reporting bullying situations and tattling on others. The children can integrate this concept into their daily lives after the story is read to them. Children need to be reminded by mentioning the line in the picturebook, "Don't squeal unless it's a big deal." With repeated use of the story, children are reminded to be mindful and integrate the story's message.

The authors of *The Recess Queen* and *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon*, use repetitive lines after each scenario, which invites children to read or chant them together with the reader. In *Hey, Little Ant*, the author asks the reader the question on the last page, "What would you do?". The personal invitation prompts children to think and respond with their own opinion. These books are excellent classroom use choices because these stories come alive as children become engaged and develop agency. What makes these stories valuable is that they invite children to participate. These picturebooks motivate children to stop and think about their behaviour and make changes to learn to be tolerant of and accept differences in others by becoming mindful and empathic. Teachers and therapists can use picturebooks to trigger a discussion to help children talk or write about their worries. Dialogue journals are creative ways students can write to their teacher, parent, or therapist about their fears: after that, the adult can respond in writing.

#### 4.1.12 The Limitless Use of Picturebooks in the Classroom

Bibliotherapy is a vital way to teach children how to deal with emotionally charged issues affecting children in the classroom. Children often wish to have a conversation with their teacher or school counsellor about their thoughts and feelings in the classroom, therefore using carefully selected picturebooks by the teacher or counsellor is important. The incorporation of preselected children's picturebooks in the classroom is necessary, both before and after traumatic events like the death of a parent of one of the children in the class, or a cancer diagnosis forcing children to leave school for a few months to undergo chemotherapy.

Wei Tu calls children's literature a "tool for problem-solving" that allows elementary school students to "perceive the complexities in the world in which they live" (101). Michael Lovorn references Thomas Miller, a psychologist working with children and trauma, who suggests that "by being exposed to personal accounts of impacts and coping strategies of picturebook characters who have endured traumatic events, whether they are real or fictitious, allows children to develop these described modes of internal and external speech that he describes" (Lovorn 2006, 29). Development of such modes of speech along with a healthy relationship with a parent, according to Linda Monahan, a psychologist working with families, "makes it possible for children to ask questions, form opinions, draw conclusions, and approach degrees of closure in an environment that not only invites such growth but nurtures emotional maturity" (Lovorn 29).

Regardless of their home life, nationality, or socioeconomic status, children are exposed to trauma and disaster worldwide. Currently, whilst we are all living during the COVID 19 pandemic, picturebooks about the virus and about being in indoors during lockdown, and people dying from the illness, are powerful ways to help children and adults navigate this extremely stressful period. School counsellors and teachers can access these picturebooks by utilizing the

resources that exist. Some parents cannot give their children the support they require, so it often falls on the educational system or therapists to support children. Picturebooks are an essential tool in therapists' and teachers' repertoires.

When an author writes for children, it is often their intention to read the picturebook as a private reading experience. However, when teachers, school counsellors or librarians read to groups of children, the reading becomes a performance or a shared reading experience, which is very rich for all participants. Children often request to take turns reading different picturebooks to the class, which further enriches the experience. In the post-story discussion, different interpretations or opinions are expressed by students in the class.

Like every text worth reading, the picturebook text is not transparent. The text invites interpretation through the interaction of reader and text. Children interpret or explain from the story what is meaningful to them. Sometimes, adults can assist children in analyzing or searching for meaning in a text. When a whole class discusses a picturebook, many children express their connections to the story. Some of the comments reveal personal situations; the comments can become cathartic for children and therapeutic in the telling. Some children feel comfortable revealing family or personal issues triggered by the picturebook. They feel supported by the class and school counsellor or teacher during the process of bibliotherapy and post-reading discussion.

*The Dot* (2003), written and illustrated by Peter Reynolds, is an invitation for self-expression. This wonderful picturebook is a delicate fable about the creative spirit in people. The author is committed to honouring the creative spirit in all children and even in grownup children. This book reminds readers that everyone has the potential for success and the ability to achieve. When I read *The Dot* to children, they become inspired to challenge themselves by believing that many things are possible. On an individual basis, when children are resistant to attempt anything



or afraid to take risks in class, I use this book therapeutically. Perseverance and resilience are the core strengths that this picturebook addresses and children usually respond to this book's energy. Vashti, the 7-year-old protagonist, begins by painting one dot. Her teacher makes her sign that piece of art, and she frames it in a "swirly gold frame." This impetus gives Vashti encouragement to make so many more paintings with different coloured dots and different arrangements of dots culminating in an art exhibition. Upon hearing this, children sitting at their desks will begin to draw dots with markers on paper and hold it up to show what they have done, and when that happens, I, too, will say to the child, "Now, sign it!"

This picturebook generates a great deal of energy in the class, as it is so optimistic. Children who feel they are not "good" at anything initially connect with this picturebook. However, after reading this picturebook, most students become inspired to try what they find challenging. The Grade Eight students love listening to this picturebook as much as the Grade One students. This picturebook is a gem that children often request to read more than once. It is inspiring, engaging, and it certainly demonstrates the power of a little encouragement and believing in yourself. The book's simplicity lies in the text and the water colour wash drawings that inspire and compel. The picturebook message is attainable and believable. The illustrations do not intimidate young children; in fact, it gives children permission to accept their artwork, executed at their capability levels. When the picturebook is read to the class, there are always only a few children who can predict the last line of the story, and when asked what the line is, they say it out loud, "Sign it." This indicates that the children understand the picturebook's intention: children should take ownership and be proud of their work. This becomes a performative reading of the story with both adults and children. *The Dot* leaves a subtle message for all who read it, children and adults alike, namely, just make your mark and try to do the best

you can. This little book has an important message and is a wonderful resource for parents, teachers, and therapists to facilitate children's optimistic thinking.

The messages in picturebooks linger with children, as is evident when examining *Beautiful Oops* (2010), written and illustrated by Barney Saltzberg. This interactive picturebook, a real page-turner, it generates great excitement when children discover what is on the next page. Saltzberg keeps children engaged and intrigued so that children wish to rediscover something new in each reading. Children become absorbed and engrossed in this charming picturebook and read it from cover to cover.

The life lesson of this picturebook is that it is all right to make mistakes. A mistake is a possibility for some creative experience and insight. Each page invites children to explore and find meaning in all the errors that are made in the book. Children come daily to my office to reread this book as it speaks to them in illustrations, words, and discoveries, discoveries within the text-giving rise to findings within themselves. The images and the different flaps that need to be opened intrigue them, and the possibilities to make something beautiful from a mistake delights them. Often a child brings a friend to share in the delight of this picturebook in my office. The children who love this picturebook are often the children with behavioural issues who are often 'making mistakes'; therefore, they can relate strongly to the story. I have used this picturebook with perfectionist children regarding their thinking and work habits. This book permits them to make mistakes and instead view errors as an opportunity. Perfectionist children in Grades Two and Three cannot deal with making mistakes, and each time they do so in their writing or drawing, they have a meltdown, often tearing up the page, needing to start all over again as their thinking is so rigid. These children are harsh on themselves and very self-critical. This picturebook is therapeutic, offering these children a different mindset, a flexible growth

mindset, one that celebrates making mistakes. This picturebook reminds children that they can always learn from their mistakes as they discover something new under the flaps of the illustrations they missed previously. Reading the story refreshes and reassures children, definitively underscoring a picturebook's value to distract, soothe and calm children.

Children look for hidden clues and references in the illustrations. They are intrigued by the holes in the pages. The picturebook allows children to move from one page to the next page, which enhances the drama of turning the page as children have some clue from the previous page, and there is always a surprise. Picturebooks are distinctive because they are designed for a dual audience; the children who listen to them being read while studying the illustrations and the adults who read or even perform the picturebooks. Picturebooks are also unique because they combine, not always in harmony, three different artistic expressions: the literary arts, visual arts, and performative arts. Picturebook maker Anthony Browne argues "that children are visually more aware than adults" (Evans 176).

According to Peter Cumming, "some of the best picturebooks are powerful: they do essential work in the world in what they represent. Some picturebooks are powerful politically as they represent things that should be designated for children and adults but are not powerful aesthetically. Some are aesthetically exciting but neither politically interesting nor progressive. Some picturebooks are a combination of both. These books assume that children are intelligent human beings who live in a complex world: stories are a form of power for children to understand such a world" (2010, 1). I concur with Cumming that picturebooks are powerful and subtle in that they can profoundly influence adults' and children's thinking. One example of a powerful picturebook is *Out on the Ice in the Middle of the Bay* (1993), written by Peter Cumming and illustrated by Alice Priestley. Little Leah, a very young girl, walks out onto the ice

in her Arctic community and meets a polar bear cub. Children's innocence and curiosity often set children free from fears. Usually, the less one knows, the less one fears. The author leads children to anticipate a polar bear's shooting through the story's buildup and the drama of turning the pages. However, author Cumming and illustrator Priestley show children that there are alternate ways to deal with conflict, namely, to back off. When I read this book in the class, some boys stand up in their seats, cocking their rifles in anticipation, convinced there will be a shooting as I turn the page: they want the drama. In the post-story discussion, children often remark that they were sure that someone would get harmed. However, there is relief to find out that everyone is safe. The discussion heralds peaceful suggestions for dealing with conflicts ensuing at recess. This picturebook makes children realize how important it can be to back off away instead of getting into a fight.

Children are often affected by divorce, death, or living in blended families or living with same-sex parents and try to deal with these sensitive realities and try to keep their situations private from their friends, as it is often a struggle for them initially. These issues are dealt with in the classroom with powerful picturebooks to elucidate sensitive problems by normalizing them as realities for children. Children need to come to terms with their family circumstances, whether nuclear families, stepfamilies, single-parent families, blended families, or families with same-sex parents. These picturebooks, allow children to learn to accept and understand other children's different family circumstances. Children love to share their own stories in the class discussion related to picturebook readings. These stories often reflect what they are thinking and experiencing. Adults obtain insights into children's worlds and their thinking through the realm of their stories and comments they express in the post-story reading. From my experience, when a teacher, librarian or school counsellor reads picturebooks to children, it is a non-intrusive way

of accessing children's feelings. After hearing a story, children often express their feelings and work on coming to terms with their situation.

*Mom and Mum Are Getting Married!* (2005), written by Ken Setterington and illustrated by Alice Priestley and *A Tale of Two Daddies* (2010), written by Vanita Oelschlager and illustrated by Kristin Blackwood and Mike Blan, are two recent picture books about same-sex marriage, acceptance, tolerance, and love. These picturebooks help children of same-sex marriages and other children understand, accept, and celebrate different family situations. The authors reassure the children that these marriages are good relationships these couples have with each other. These texts are simple and comforting, representing all the usual activities of families. The illustrations are clear and depict newly defined roles for family members. The mere fact that books on this topic exist and can be read shows children living in these families and their classmates that other families live in similar, loving, and acceptable family arrangements. Knowing that there are books about different family situations is comforting to children and helps them feel more accepted in the broader community. At the same time, *A Tale of Two Daddies* is superficial. It glosses over some of the complexities of the relationships in same-sex parent families and others' responses to these families. In particular, the book seems to go out of the way to heterosexualize same-sex parents' children. Gender identity and marital relationships are complex issues. These picturebooks are used with young children in Grade One and Two and are appropriate in discussing same-sex parents and living in this type of family. This picturebook does not address negative stereotypes and comments about being "gay" that young children of the same-sex parent often encounter. After the picturebook is read, the door is open for more in-depth discussions with children regarding these critical issues. These picturebooks are very powerful, and the dialogue is vibrant as children make their connections with the stories and

share related personal experiences. I use picturebooks about all kinds of families educationally as it exposes children to all types of family arrangements. Educating children about different types of family configurations and helping them live in all types of families and to develop a healthy self-worth, is essential.

Picturebooks can transform some children's perceptions as they glean from picturebooks multiple perspectives. In Christine Baldacchino's book *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (2014), the overt message is gender identity. The story provides a story of a boy who likes to wear a dress. This book indirectly and subtly addresses queer children and opens a dialogue to accept children who do not identify as gender normative. Younger students who are exploring their gender identity find these books very helpful, as do those children's parents. It is useful for all concerned to have these picturebooks on the market and in schools so discussions can ensue in the classrooms about celebrating differences and dealing with gender issues.

The picturebook *The Story of Ferdinand* (1936), written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson, is a simple but powerful story. It tells a story about a bull that feels different from the other bulls yet can still perform successfully. This picturebook provides an entry point for children to develop empathy in terms of being different and tolerating others with differences. This picturebook has simple black-and-white drawings where Ferdinand captures the essence of attaining happiness. Children can identify with the notion that there is nothing wrong with being different. Ferdinand, gentle yet firm, emanates the feeling of calm simplicity by just sitting and breathing the smell of the flowers. There is strength in standing alone, being mindful and responding appropriately. In this picturebook, children can empathize with Ferdinand becoming aware of his difference. This sensitivity helps children learn to be mindful, accept and support one another's differences. This example, where the gentle bull stands in sharp contrast to

the stereotypical ‘raging bull’ so often depicted in cartoons and other culture examples, illustrates the many opportunities and possibilities for therapeutic intervention using picturebooks.

The picturebook I would now like to discuss is a recipe for a good life. It is a celebration of life and has a message of gratitude for life and love, family, and friends, which can benefit most children. The pop-up book *Strega Nona* (2008), written by Tomei de Paola and illustrated by Robert and Reinhart Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart, the paper engineers, is an exceptional picturebook with magnificent paper artistry. This book talks about the power of the family and passing down family traditions, developing patience, and feeling gratitude and love from the simple things in life with family and friends, which are powerful messages in the story. This story is about how Strega Nona teaches others her famous pasta recipe, revealing the main ingredients being patience, love and respect of family. This story prompts a discussion of different types of families. Children connect on different levels to this picturebook, and the pop-up nature of the book is so captivating as it verges on being a toy. Children want to touch the book and open and close any movable paper pieces. They become so engaged and mindful and are present, and in the moment, when being read this the three-dimensional picturebook, they stand up and come and touch all the parts of the book while I am reading the story to the class. The three-dimensional element of this picturebook certainly elevates and captivates children as they can touch, pull apart, pull out and change the flat surface of the book to a more interactive and experiential reading of the book. Children are so engaged and display mindful attention when looking and listening to the picturebook being read to them. It is the paper artistry that brings about this heightened awareness and fascination with the picturebook. The school counsellor’s engagement with students and the children's captivation with the text is palpable.

The moving parts of the picturebook, which changes as the book's reader turns the pages, fascinates children. The "drama of the turning page," as Bader describes it in her definition of picturebooks, is emphasized in this instance, and the anticipation of what will be experienced on the following pages captivates children's attention. Children find *Strega Nona* captivating and request it to be reread as the content and format engage and entertain children. They are suspended in space and time and focus on the storyline and artwork. They are present, in the moment and captivated.

When my class heard this story, during the post-story discussion, a little girl in my class told the class that she did not have a father and how alone she felt; this was cathartic, and her friend hugged her, and we spoke of the quality of her relationship with her mother and grandparents. Another child talked about her stepmother and her new siblings and how happy she was with this big, new family, but how she also likes being alone with her mother. A child who has two fathers never spoke up in class as he did not feel emotionally ready to speak up in front of his classmates as most of the children are unaware of his family situation. Still, he came up to me after the class to talk about his two special daddies.

All children in a class hear the same book and all the comments and process and integrate it in their own time. Children listen, but some children do not comment, some prefer to remain silent and go inward, and some do so because it is hard for them to take the risk and let others know what they are thinking and feeling, while others can be open and speak up.

Children view most picturebook readings as an event. When I read picturebooks to children in the classroom, it highlights the intricate interrelationship between children and picturebooks. They sit excited, in front of the reader in an intimate circle, all jostling for a place to view the artwork as the picturebook is read and the story unfolds. If they love the story, which



they so often do, they applaud after the reading. It is a performance, and they are the participatory audience, always engaged, always thinking, and still making connections to their own lives. As the story moves them and affects them, they often leap up, call out in excitement, comment, or wish to share in determining the ending. Usually, I will pause near the end of the picturebook reading and ask the children how they think the story will end. These endings, suggestions, or comments are always valuable for all to hear. Children develop empathy for the characters and engage in post-story discussions to make sense of the story's essence. This sharing is the culmination of the event and the process of reading a powerful picturebook. For children who are reticent to participate or comment, they absorb so much from the post-story conversation.

When reading a story in the classroom some children will interject with intertextual connections to the story and this helps to scaffold their understanding of the story and allows for their creative responses to be heard. Children become more skilled at reading picturebooks and looking for the underlying meaning as they become more experienced reading picturebooks. Children must discern the underlying meaning beyond the text and illustrations, exploring the layers of meaning embedded in the text and illustrations. Lynne Kirkland and Janice Patterson are education scholars, and their area of expertise is resilience in education; they argue “that hearing others’ perspectives encourages the moral development of children and encourages flexible thinking and the development of empathy, which builds children's resilience, both individually and within the classroom context” (2007, 2). Kirkland and Patterson state that classroom lessons incorporating selected picturebook readings related to friendship can further enhance the students’ development of social resilience and empathy.

The great value of a good narrative is that it transports children somewhere else. Browne acknowledges “that reading a picturebook can be a very cerebral process that even academics have admitted as they study the importance of picturebooks” (Evans 2009, 178). In addition, the picturebook invites the reader to gain the benefits of emotional explorations too. Therefore, children should be given plenty of opportunities to read, share, think, ask, and talk about picturebooks.

Picturebooks are valuable resources in the classroom as they can engage children and serve as a quick stimulus to propel the lesson into a post story discussion. Picturebooks are also a valuable resource available to families, often no farther away than the local library, school, or internet. Parents, grandparents, therapists, and educators, who read and talk about children’s picturebooks with their children, grandchildren, clients, and students, take proactive steps to support the physical and emotional security that children need for their personal well-being.

#### 4.1.13 Clinical-Therapeutic Uses of Picturebooks

Given the therapeutic potential of picturebooks, commentary during readings of the stories and the post-story discussions are crucial to the real integration of the story for children. The following questions established by psychologist Roxanne Carlson can be adapted when deciding what children's literature is appropriate for use in therapy: “Is the story simple, clear, brief, non-repetitious, and believable? Is it at an appropriate reading level and developmental level? Does the story fit with relevant feelings, needs, interests, and goals? Does it demonstrate cultural diversity, gender inclusivity, and sensitivity to aggression? Do characters show coping skills and does the problem situation show resolution” (2001, 97). I think this is a good guide when choosing picturebooks that are suitable for individual children, or for use with the whole

class in the classroom. Through picturebooks children can read about other children's situations and develop empathy learning from those situations.

Marita Sturken, who is a scholar and educator in Media and Cultural Studies and an expert in cultural memory, argues, "repetition is a means through which cultures process and make sense of traumatic events. It is evident in the recording of trauma into popular cultural narratives" (Eichler-Levine 2010, 16). Repetition is a phenomenon used in the telling of national trauma, as the story of the trauma is repeated, understood in context, not forgotten and seen in the context of that culture.

The use of picturebooks as a beneficial tool enables the therapist to convey a message relevant to children's emotional states. When children read picturebooks that give a familiar feeling reflecting what they are experiencing, the children will often say, "That is how I am feeling." This confirmation or affirmation makes the children feel heard as it acknowledges their feelings and helps them express their feelings. The visual and textual narrative of picturebooks invites children to read, enjoy, and benefit from these picturebooks.

In the therapeutic relationship, there is a therapeutic space where an encounter occurs between therapists and children, and the dynamic landscape shifts and changes through time. Incorporating picturebooks into the dynamic therapeutic relationship offers a robust, additional force. Children must employ interpretive strategies to understand a book, much like the interpretive strategies, children evoke when playing.

Children are active participants in therapy, as children bring their issues in the form of a narrative and often request a certain picturebook to be read. Stories work once children realize how people's actions cause consequences, resulting in a series of events. Children begin to see how the story flows towards an outcome, with one situation happening after the next. "Children

then begin to see how stories can provide an alternative to real-life experiences rather than just offering a representation of them” (Spufford 50). To enjoy a story, children need to be interested to know about people. “They need to have reached the stage of socialization at which they understand emotional cause and effect between two or more actors on a story's stage” (Spufford 51). Children can sense when one person in the story is angry and when another person is upset. Children often begin to emulate what they see and hear their parents doing. Thus, if there is a great deal of screaming in the home, children often repeat such behaviour in social situations outside the family. Children begin to understand the social drama between people as enacted in their own families. Children begin to see themselves in relation to their family situation. Picturebooks offer children a powerful, rich, and diverse source of insight and discovery. Picturebooks are also quick to read, making picturebooks conducive to a therapy session. They provide a safe space for challenging feelings that they can begin grappling with and come to terms with using the story as a sounding board.

Spitz shows how classic picturebooks have some moral component with some subtle psychological message providing children with information that they can think about, discuss and or connect with on a meaningful level. Adults reading these picturebooks must keep this in mind and discern if this message is productive and relevant to children. Reading picturebooks related to separation, sibling rivalry, loss, death, sadness, bullying, anxiety, identity, gender issues and self-acceptance have a powerful impact on children. Spitz explains the idea of “conversational reading” and emphasizes the benefits of this intimate communication between adults and children. In “conversational reading,” the adult acts as a mediator between children and the text, images, and ideas in a picturebook. Reading aloud paves the way for adults and children to discuss how things are in the world. At the same time, children’s imagination is

stimulated to think about the different possibilities and conjure up what might be in fantasy (1999).

The reading transaction is pivotal. After the therapist reads the story, there are post-story conversations between children and therapists and explorations and insights between reader and listener. The children can relate the story to their personal experiences. This trusting relationship is pivotal in the bibliotherapy process. Short states that “during and after reading people construct understandings in light of their experiences and rethink their experiences in light of the text, bringing meaning to and taking meaning from a text through the process of inquiry” (2010, 51). I would also like to share what I have been privileged to observe in the therapeutic relationship regarding the children’s responses to picturebooks. I have used bibliotherapy and the post-story discussions for therapeutic benefits. I will now examine some of the picturebooks that address various issues that cause emotional distress to children and how some children have responded to these issues with the aid of a picturebook in therapeutic sessions with me, as the school counsellor. I hope to shed light on how picturebooks can be of therapeutic value to children.

#### 4.1.14 Picturebooks that are Therapeutic for Parents and Children

Salisbury says that “many picturebooks are designed for both young children and sophisticated adults, communicating to the dual audience at various levels. Good illustration, whether it is for adults or children, should provide a visual prompt, a visual counterpart to the text; its role is to add to the reader’s understanding, appreciation and enjoyment” (2004, 94).

In his book, *The Child that Books Built*, Spufford distinguishes storytelling and reading a story. In storytelling, children need to access their visual imagination and listening skills together without visual prompts. More audience participation is evident as children can interject, ask

questions, or add comments during the storytelling. Reading a picturebook is more organized and structured where the reliance and focus is on the visual. Children will be looking at the pictures for information and hearing the text being read simultaneously. Any interaction is preempted since children usually want the reader to finish the picturebook and turn the pages to the end. There is an internal dialogue for children that occurs when listening to a story being read. Indeed, I believe that it is both a personal encounter with the adult that children seek and need as well as the shared story. The picturebook is the medium, but the relationship is pivotal to children and caring adults. When picturebooks are read together repeatedly by children and parents, these books often forge a deep-rooted connection between parents and children. Sometimes, they recite the book together. Spufford refers to such a joint reading of parents and children reading a story together as a reading event. I second Spufford's assertion of the intimate attachment's value between adult readers and children who listen when reading picturebooks together.

“To hear a story is a social act. Social rules, social promises, social bonds sustain children during the process” (Spufford 2002, 63). Therefore, the relationship between children and adults is crucial, and children need to feel comfortable with the adult to enter any dialogue or discussion. After reading a story, the follow-up activities or discussion is vital for children's understanding of the material and for the benefits of the shared activity with a caring adult. Spufford argues that “the person who tells the story is more than just a carrier bearing meaning: that person is a companion through the events of a story, ensuring that the feelings it stirs up are contained within the circle of attachment between the adults reading and the children listening to the story” (2002, 62).

I will examine the following picturebooks in detail and how they are simultaneously therapeutic for children and parents: *The Kissing Hand* (1993) and *A Pocket Full of Kisses* (2004), written and illustrated by Audrey Penn; *When My Worries Get Too Big: A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety* (2003), written and illustrated by Kari Dunn Buron; *Wemberly Worried* (2000), written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes. These picturebooks become therapeutic for the adult, usually the parent, when they are involved as part of the problem and solution for children's therapeutic intervention. For example, when children experience separation anxiety, both parents and children can benefit from the insights shared in the powerful picturebook *The Kissing Hand* (1993), written by Audrey Penn and illustrated by Barbara Gibson. The central theme of *The Kissing Hand* deals with separation between parents and children. It is useful for parents and children to read the book together as parents must understand their respective roles in the dynamic of separation anxiety.

Children often pick up their parents' anxiety. Ironically, it is often the parent of children experiencing separation anxiety who cannot separate from their children, as soon as the parent leaves the school, the children usually settle down within minutes. However, there are children with severe anxiety, and even when the parents leave it is difficult to settle these children. Parents are part of the problem and therefore need to be part of the solution, and thus the story is pertinent for the parents too, in terms of becoming aware of their role in the process. Thus, the 'conscious' parent learns to let go by giving the message to their children that they, both the children and parents, will be okay at school or work or home without each other. The parents must transfer their authority onto the teacher for the duration of the day. However, there are many situations where it is a very difficult process for parents to leave their children if they themselves have experienced separation issues in the past or for parents who were in forced

situations of separation, such as a Canadian Residential School. These situations would require further therapeutic intervention.

*The Kissing Hand* and *A Pocket Full of Kisses* (2004), by Audrey Penn and illustrated by Barbara Gibson, are both picturebooks for children with mild separation anxiety who respond to this picturebook so well. Children often come back a few days later to tell me about the relevance and subsequent influence the book has had on their life situation. The children I see in therapy often request that I reread these books with them and ask me if they can take the books home to read with their parents, especially *The Kissing Hand*, which deals with separation anxiety. One sequence of images seems to be particularly useful: a mother raccoon kisses her baby's hand; the baby holds onto that kiss till he sees her again, to savour in return until they are reunited. This wonderful picturebook helps both children and parents as it gives them concrete yet straightforward and helpful strategies to utilize when saying goodbye to each other and focusing on their reconnection later, after school. Applying these strategies is sufficient in most separation anxiety situations unless the children have underlying generalized anxiety or previous trauma.

This example, then, highlights the power of literature as part of therapy or the therapeutic value of children's picturebooks for children and parents that can extend beyond the therapeutic session and move into the home and family. I would argue that children often educate their parents and invite them into their therapeutic world through the avenue of literature. If a picturebook has been meaningful to children or has moved them, they will often request to share the book with their parents. If this suggestion does not come from the children, I may offer to share the picturebook with the parents, as the strategies they contain need to be read by the



parent and the children. If the picturebook is to be useful therapeutically, both parents and children need to be, literally and figuratively, “on the same page.”

*A Pocket Full of Kisses* deals with how a mother explains how her love for all her children is equal but different. This book is useful for parents and children to read together to explore their relationships. It is a book about sibling relationships, sibling rivalry, and a powerful book to read with children to help them feel more accepted. The concept of children sharing their parents’ love and attention is addressed. These issues are very prominent during the early school-going years. These are essentially books that I read in a therapeutic context to many children individually and the whole class in Kindergarten and Grade One and Grade Two. In Kindergarten to Grade Two, jealousy and sibling rivalry are often prevalent and a new experience for children with the birth of new siblings. Through this picturebook, the issue of sibling rivalry can be dealt with in a preventative way so that children can be aware of the way they relate to their siblings and how they can change some of their behaviours and attitudes toward them. This picturebook permits children to express their feelings and fears about their siblings. For example, a Grade One boy told the class how his mother had recently had another baby. He reported that he did not like this new baby as the new baby was always with his mother, preventing him from playing with his mother. Another child spoke about his younger sister, who has special needs and how his parents are always preoccupied with her. Others expressed similar stories about how they either fought with a sibling or felt excluded, as their mother was still busy with the ‘other’ sibling. This picturebook, educates children about sibling rivalry, and illustrates how a mother can love all her children and points out that some children need more time with their parents at various stages in their lives. It teaches children that they need to be patient and tolerant of their siblings, grow in empathy and learn to share in gaining

attention from their parents. These are difficult concepts for young children to comprehend. They get support from one another in class by listening to each other's stories, a process both cathartic and revealing.

The picturebook's suggestions and post-story thoughtful comments related to the story and their situations offer children something to ponder. Thus, the shared reading of these picturebooks in a classroom can be healing and therapeutic. Both picturebooks by Audrey Penn are beneficial for both parents and children and enhance and promote healthy relationships. These picturebooks are written for children and adult audiences. Plush toys are now being sold to accompany many of the picturebook characters so that children can identify even more strongly with the characters in the story by play-acting with these characters. A favourite is a raccoon featured in this picture book series. The plush toy raccoon becomes a significant transitional object for the child in this separation/ individuation process. Donald Winnicott coined the term transitional object in 1951 to describe an object, usually a plush toy or blanket children attach special meaning as they begin to see themselves as separate from their mother and face the external reality, allowing children to make the transition to be more independent and self-reliant emotionally.

Children who have anxieties and or phobias have a difficult time managing their stress in school. They wish they could go home because of their fears and anxieties. Picturebooks are practical tools in engaging such children, as these books are interactive and can be read together with children, a process that can be therapeutic. Picturebooks serve as a constructive distraction as these children tend to be very self-absorbed. For example, *When My Worries Get Too Big: A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety* (2003), written and illustrated by Kari Dunn Burton, helps children with anxiety and behaviour issues to understand that sometimes

their worries get too big and that they are not alone in this challenge. The book allows the children to rate their fears on a 5-point scale, “1,” meaning “no stress” and “5” being “too big, nearing a meltdown.” The picturebook is interactive, allowing children to assess their anxiety level as they complete the book’s anxiety rating scale during the picturebook reading.

In addition, breathing techniques to help regulate children’s breathing when they are feeling anxious, are taught in this picturebook. Children can learn to breathe deeply as one strategy to manage their anxiety. The story empowers children by telling them that they can fight back against the size of their worry by externalizing their fear and taking control by returning to a calm state by doing deep breathing. This picturebook is useful because it allows children to initially identify and examine their strengths and then suggest strategies to calm themselves. Picturebooks enable children to get involved in ‘self’ therapy by monitoring their anxiety level, being mindful, breathing deeply, and counting to ten to calm down. This therapeutic book or interactive workbook helps turn the abstract concept of anxiety, rage, and worries into something concrete, external, and personal. Parents and therapists who read this book with children can help children understand themselves, their being, the way they are in relation to their world and their behaviour by exploring the cause or triggers for their anxiety. Children need to see themselves for who they are, as opposed to just experiencing their anxiety. So, it is crucial for children to be mindful of themselves being present and in the moment and accepting who they are in terms of defining their sense of self and of being. Children need to develop insight into themselves to make some changes in relation to their being. Learning how to cope with their anxiety and externalizing it, can transform children’s thinking and being.

The children I use this book with often want to reread it at each therapy session to see how they are managing and progressing to control their anxieties and emotions, suggesting

therapeutic progress. The book gives children agency as they monitor and learn to control their anxiety by changing their thinking from being “a worrier to a warrior” by being brave. In reading the picturebook, children are encouraged to take ownership of their problems and become part of the healing or therapeutic process. The stress scale at the back of the book and the accompanying calming sequence are useful for children as it provides them with concrete ways of monitoring their levels of stress. Children take a copy of the picturebook home to use, practice and complete the written part as they learn to monitor and manage their anxiety and regulate their behaviour. This picturebook includes intervention strategies for children to share with their parents at home. The parents can read the book with their children and know how to monitor and manage their children’s stress levels by utilizing the picturebook’s strategies. Parents begin to work in tandem with the therapist and their children in this collaborative process, using the picturebook to strengthen the core of their children’s resilience.

Using therapeutic picturebooks in a preventative way is very useful. Still, it requires careful planning and selecting appropriate literature regarding the nature of children’s medical or psychological problems. The picturebook’s objective is for children to control and manage their anxiety and not for the anxieties to take over their lives, which is sometimes the case. When children read *When My Worries Get Too Big: A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety* and complete the book’s interactive sections, they usually enter the therapy’s healing and treatment phase. This book is interactive and involves children rating themselves on their anxiety level and practicing breathing and relaxation. This picturebook, with its concrete suggestions, is central to the parent-child-therapist triangle.

In the picturebook *Wemberly Worried* (2000), written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes, Henkes tells the story about Wemberly, a mouse who worries about her first day of

school. Wemberly tries not to worry, using strategies that build resilience. She acknowledges her feelings by saying she is worried. She also shares her anxiety with her friend and thereby manages to deal with her first day of school using these strategies and manages to come back the following day. Children can connect with this story and develop empathic responses to Wemberly because they have either felt like Wemberly or know someone else who thinks like Wemberly. It calms and reassures children that others have similar worries. Children are reassured that they can get others' support, using simple strategies to cope, and come to school. This picturebook gives children and their parents creative strategies to use that can be implemented to lessen their children's anxiety, generally. These tools help children feel more in control of their anxiety, inducing calm. Parents also gain insight into managing their children and what strategies to implement to reduce and manage their children's anxiety.

The use of stories in therapy is compelling as children often identify with the story that the therapist selects or creates their own story from the story they just heard. Children can express empathy and see how their situation is the same or different from the story. They can see that they have similar or different worries to Wemberly, how they deal with their situation, and what strategies they can adopt and try out from the story. As a therapist, I frequently use this book to help children adjust to school, especially at the beginning of the school year. Children repeat back to me the strategies they can use as Wemberly does in the story and then emulate this in the school situation and transfer these strategies to other areas in their lives. Stories can become tools to elicit change in children's thinking, mood, attitude, and behaviour.

#### 4.1.15 Therapeutic use of Picturebooks for Children Manifesting Selective Mutism

Selective Mutism is a highly impairing childhood anxiety disorder preventing affected children from meaningfully participating in school to the fullest. Their voices are not heard, and

they can't advocate for themselves in school, with peers and in many other social settings.

School children who are highly anxious and who manifest selective mutism if confronted face to face and asked to talk, feel overly stressed. A strategy that I have used successfully in therapy is using bibliotherapy by reading digital picturebooks on the iPad with these children. Stories are often an entry point into the therapeutic relationship. Children with selective mutism often feel more comfortable using the iPad; they do not feel compelled to speak or look directly at anyone other than the screen. An iPad reading experience is less intrusive. They can enter a post-reading nonverbal "discussion" by pressing specific responses to the iPad's questions at the end of the story. This method can be carried out weekly until the children gradually begin to feel more comfortable. Eventually, they begin to relax, laugh out loud if the story is funny. Subsequently, stories are selected where such children can just repeat animal sounds, then syllable sounds. In time, they speak more and more until they can feel comfortable enough to speak and have their voice heard in the therapeutic context. Through the digital stories, the side-by-side presentation on the iPad, and the therapist's unconditional acceptance a therapeutic environment is created.

A digital picturebook, *I Love My Dad* (2009) written by Anna Walker, is a simple story about a father and his son. The animation and interactive elements are part of the story in this dynamic digital picturebook. There are only a few words on each page. However, even this can be anxiety-provoking for some children. Children who have selective mutism are anxious about having their voices heard by others outside their homes. They will eventually whisper words when pointed to the word. Based on the success with one picturebook, I used the digital picture book *Parker Penguin* (2012), written by Barry and Emma Tranter, featuring a story with many words beginning with "p" sound. I create a game with rewards each time these children would utter the sounds so as to begin to hear their voices. At the beginning of the process, no sounds are

made, and then gradually, the children begin to mouth the “p” letter. Eventually, they can sound out the “p” and other sounds in the book, demonstrating the value of the incremental “stepladder” approach to successful therapy using digital picturebooks with children who present with selective mutism.

Another digital picturebook that I have used successfully using bibliotherapy with children with selective mutism is *Who Stole the Moon?* (2010), written by Carisa Kluver and illustrated by Vlad Gerasimov. This excellent book contains ingenious interactive elements that are particularly engaging for nonverbal children. Children can move the moon and the stars around in a game-like scenario. Through these digital picturebooks, enhanced by a great deal of support in the reading process, therapeutic change can occur. Sometimes the computer reads, as it uses text-to-voice software, and sometimes an adult can read. The next intervention is for these children to read a picturebook allowing their voice to be heard, digital or print format, of their choice, to an adult teacher or counsellor, and eventually read the book to one friend outside the classroom. In the following phase of therapy, these children can read a picturebook quietly to a group of children at the back of the classroom. These children take turns to read a page and eventually graduate to reading a short easy picturebook to other children. Both the print and digital picturebooks have a structured format that can be used as a therapeutic tool for these children. Based on empirical evidence, I foresee that digital picturebooks hold therapeutic value for a range of children with different disorders, especially those on the autism spectrum and those children diagnosed with selective mutism. Bibliotherapy is a powerful way to work with children who have selective mutism, eventually the first time the voice of these children is heard is when they read a sentence from the story.

The therapeutic space, in which an encounter occurs between therapist and children, is dynamic: as mentioned this landscape shifts and changes through time. Incorporating picturebooks in the dynamic therapeutic relationship offers a robust, additional force. Children employ an interpretive strategy to understand a picturebook, like the interpretive strategy children apply when playing.

#### 4.1.16 Therapeutic Use of Picturebooks for Children Experiencing Life Challenges

A particular piece of therapeutic literature might not be suitable for all children as there is a possibility that, after reading the picturebook, children might not feel better but can feel worse. Children who are living through their parents' divorce might wish to avoid a similar situation in fiction. These children would instead choose to escape to the fantasy world of Harry Potter. When working with children, stories may not be the most effective therapeutic medium for all children. Each situation must be assessed independently; literature is only one of the tools incorporated in therapy. Stories are an adjunct to therapy, to be used at different points in the therapeutic process.

In my professional practice, I have used children's picturebooks to help children deal with various challenging situations in which they find themselves. I have witnessed the value and potential that picturebooks play in promoting healing in children and families. However, careful selection of picturebooks is necessary for appropriate and beneficial therapeutic use. No one picturebook is suitable for all children in similar situations. Professional experience has taught me that children's responses must be considered. The therapist must be flexible when using picturebooks with children. The therapist must be aware of the children's reactions to the picturebook. Children need to be active participants in the reading process by participating in the therapy process itself.



When children experience difficult, often stressful times in their lives like a parents' divorce, a picturebook read by a caring adult can be comforting. In part, it is the voice that soothes, calms and reassures children that they will be alright.

*Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families* (1986), written and illustrated by Laurene Krasny Brown and Marc Brown, is a fictional picturebook that carefully tackles the challenges of divorce in cartoon format using dinosaur characters which are intended for young children. The picturebook describes many new terms relating to divorce and depicts many possible scenarios concerning the divorce process. However, this can be overwhelming for some children who have just been informed about their parents' divorce. Such children may not even be able to contemplate their parents dating other people, let alone the possibility of stepparents being involved. The issues raised in the book are often not even considered at this initial phase when children learn about their parent's divorce. Even though this picturebook is in cartoon format with dinosaurs as characters, it may strike too close to home for some children. In my opinion, this picturebook should be read section by section at different stages of the divorce process and therapy, not all at once, as it is so overwhelming with too much information being thrust upon children all at once.

By contrast, the picturebook *Was it the Chocolate Pudding? A Story for Little Kids About Divorce* (2006), written by Sandra Levins and illustrated by Bryan Langdo, is suitable for young, school-aged children who have just learned about their parents' divorce. Children can relate to this more as an introduction to talking about their parents' divorce in therapy. While the picturebook is about divorce, it offers a simple story following brothers as they learn to come to terms with why their parents live apart and why they must go to different homes where their parents now live separately. It raises one of the most important concepts for young children, that

of self-blame. Children begin to gain some sense that divorce is an adult issue through this picturebook. Children sometimes inform me that what is represented in the story is what they think and feel somewhat responsible for their parents' divorce. This picturebook thus provides a perfect entry point for discussing such unfounded perceptions. This story gives children permission to remove self-blame for their parents' divorce, which is usually a relief for children.

Further, the story and illustrations are lighthearted, allowing for some light relief to what is often a serious topic. For instance, children may identify with the children's constant shuffle between the mother and father in the two different homes. This picturebook helps children talk about divorce, which is part of the healing process, beginning to accept divorce due to adult issues. The use of picturebooks within the therapeutic relationship and space is often very healing because it is not pointedly personal; instead, it is a story about someone else, which usually reassures children that they are not alone. This picturebook also includes a comprehensive afterword for parents, written by author and psychologist Jane Annunziata, about helping children deal with difficult but common emotions and reactions expressed during separation and divorce. This picturebook helps both the children and parents.

Through authentic encounters with physicians and therapists, children can develop grit and resilience. The physician's or therapist's most important therapeutic tool is themselves. Through connection, care, compassion, and empathy, the physician or therapist can meet children's needs. Narrative therapy is when a therapist or physician first, listens to the children's stories narratives and understands what they are experiencing. Stories of people need to be honoured, and the practitioner needs to be moved by them into action. The practitioner needs to listen to every word, including the silences, acknowledging the stories as valid by connecting with the patients. Things that endure in time give meaning through narrative storytelling. Rita

Charon states, “as the physician or therapist listens to the child, he or she follows the narrative thread as the story unfolds” (2001, 1899).

Children are often afraid of the unknown; thus, it can benefit children to be guided through what they will experience medically or psychologically, by exploring the text and illustrations of a picturebook. The images or photographs help contextualize the child’s procedure or experience, fostering a more realistic expectation of the process. It is beneficial to read picturebooks to children about the medical procedure’s children will encounter to prepare them. Parents, physicians, or therapists are the ones to prepare children for a procedure, for example, a tonsillectomy, chemotherapy, or cardiac surgery. In such instances, the picturebook constitutes an invaluable tool for clarifying some of the question’s children might have for shedding light on some of the anxiety children might experience. “Medicine practiced with narrative competence is called narrative medicine” (Charon 1899). Narrative medicine is a burgeoning new way of helping patients in a therapeutic manner (Charon 2001). “Only when the physician or therapist listens to patient stories can they fully understand narrative questions concerning children’s problems in a genuinely authentic therapeutic relationship” (Charon 1899).

Before embarking on treatment or a therapeutic plan, it is vital to hear children's stories to understand their situation and what they are going through to determine the type of therapy that is required. It is also necessary to prepare children for therapy to understand what to anticipate in therapy. Stories like *David Goes to Play Therapy* (1993), written by Debra Danilewitz and Illustrated by Keith van Winkel, and *Some Bunny to Talk to: A Story about Going to Therapy* (2014) written by C. Sterling, P. Conte, and illustrated by T. Beeke, prepare children and their parents in terms of what to expect from the therapeutic encounter.

*David Goes to Play Therapy*, (1993), is a children's picturebook that I wrote, it allows parents and children to obtain a glimpse as to what to expect in a play therapy session. The child in the story unravels his narrative just as the process of play therapy unfolds in this story. On the first page of the picturebook the illustrations capture part of an animal on the child's T-shirt, and only reveal the full animal on the child's T-shirt on the book's last page, when the child leaves the therapy room. In this way, the book highlights how issues sometimes concealed during therapy often become more apparent to the child as they are revealed during the therapeutic process. At the beginning of the text, the child experiences butterflies in his stomach. On the last page of the book, the illustrator draws butterflies flying outside in the garden, indicating relief for the child after therapy. Thus, the book prepares both children and their parents for play therapy through text and associative illustrations. As author and therapist, I also included a foreword for parents and other professionals explaining the process of play therapy. Children, anxious about what to expect when told by parents that they will go to therapy, need to know what they will encounter.

Picturebooks give children reading the story permission to express their emotions as they read about other children in similar situations. The use of stories to promote emotional wellness development in children is very powerful. Children's picturebooks related to children living through physical trauma (such as cancer, diabetes, physical handicap) or mental anguish (death of a loved one, divorce, or anxiety) can become therapeutic for children as they connect to how others experience similar stressful situations. I would argue that this process can provide valuable catharsis. The method of reading the picturebook fosters a strong identification for children with the characters' plight, like their own. This identification signals the beginning of their healing process.

The reading transaction involves a process whereby children's responses to picturebooks are processed internally by children themselves. Adults who are in the facilitative role can also help children process issues in the picturebook through conversations. Situated between the adult therapist and the book are the children and their experiences and how their emotions relate to the picturebook. This triadic relationship is particularly potent in a therapeutic relationship as the transaction is intensely private between the readers (children), therapist and text. The transaction that emerges from this matching of children to picturebook is crucial. Louise Rosenblatt developed the concept of 'reader response,' emphasizing the crucial relationship between reader and text. She said that "the text is merely an object of paper and ink until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols" (Rosenblatt 1978, 23 qtd.in Evans 2009,102). Children construct texts rather than simply receive them: the text is expanded or altered by the children's response. I have observed this 'reader response' that Rosenblatt mentions as children's thinking shifts after reading certain picturebooks that move them.

After the story is read, the therapist and children conduct post-story conversations and explorations. Insights can occur for children who can relate to their personal experiences. Children realize that their experiences are often similar or different to those of the picturebook character with the help of a therapist or other caring adult. I have provided several examples of stress and anxiety which children encounter in their lives which can be and have been dealt with using specific picturebooks that are relevant and match the problem children are facing. This dissertation highlights picturebooks on mindfulness that also address children's issues from the point of view of children managing their stress or anxiety through the application of mindfulness principles and practices. Children create links between picturebooks and their own lives. "Such

links have the potential to be both informative and transformative for their developing sense of themselves as individuals and members of society” (Sipe 1999, 127).

I will now highlight some salient aspects of the discourse that questions the possibility of children’s literature, the concept of childhood, a tendency by some adults to view children as “other” and children who are sometimes seen as ‘other’ and the concept of alterity.

## Chapter 5

### Otherness and Alterity

This chapter explores the concept of otherness through two different perspectives, one through the theoretical framework of Emmanuel Levinas in relation to pedagogy and the other from the perspective of “the child as other” in the context of children’s literature.

Anne Chinnery discusses otherness or alterity, compassion, and community in terms of how Levinas understands these concepts in relation to education. These are key concepts in Continental philosophy, which is hermeneutic in approach, and seeks to understand the concepts, and it looks at their ramifications.

In addressing how children’s “otherness” is seen in the context of children’s literature, the adult appears to remain in the position of “reader” and the child in the role of “listener.” I will elucidate the dialectical discussion between the various uses and incarnations of the word “otherness” through the lens of different researchers.

I will clarify the current scholarly debate about the imbalance of power between adults and children in children’s literature, and ways in which the imbalance serves to silence children in some cases and to help highlight concerns specific to children in the case of some newer picturebooks. Some authors have “othered” children, and some authors keep children close and convey messages for them to pick up on, emotionally.

#### 5.1.1 Levinasian Ethics

Levinas’s conception of the other as separate from the self is one lens through which I wish to explore the concept of otherness. Chinnery states that Levinas says “one is responsible for the other because one’s existence as an individuated subject derives from one’s ‘pre-

ontological' responsibility for the other: and subjectivity—the ethical relation of one-for-the-other—thus already signifies 'total altruism'" (2000, 70). Pre-ontology is an implicit understanding of being. A pre-ontology is implicit in the way in which we relate to entities. Ontology is explicitly developed, theoretical and conceptually articulated. Chinnery says "Levinas insists on respecting and preserving the otherness of the other, and he characterizes the impulse to reduce difference to the same as a kind of metaphysical violence" (2000, 71). Levinas's understanding of the other would be outlined as: "I am responsible for the other not because he or she is a human being like me, but because of our original ethical relationship, which situates responsibility outside any kinship or communality of kind" (71). Chinnery argues that Levinas's idea of subjectivity and ethical agency is the basis for moral education" (71). Levinas says "we have to find 'another kinship'—one that will enable us to conceive of the difference between oneself and the other in a way which preserves the other's alterity and resists oppression and subsumption of any kind" (Chinnery 2000, 69). Chinnery says Levinas "rejects the tendency within Western thought to reduce all differences to the same and he insists on the ethical priority of the other" (2000, 71). Chinnery further states that "in traditional models of moral education such as character education, even altruism is tainted with a subtle egoism because the focus is ultimately on the cultivation of the students' own virtue" (2000, 72). For Levinas compassion is a response to the request of another because we have a responsibility toward or for the other, we are responsible for the other. Chinnery states the Levinasian idea of compassion that "pre-ontological intersubjectivity, or pre-essential dependence on the other means that the "I" already signifies total altruism or compassion" (2006, 334). To see the difference "I" must therefore see "the other." Teachers should be cautious to say to students, 'put yourself in someone else's shoes.' As, according to Chinnery, it takes away from that person's



authentic personal experience. Chinnery argues that a Levinasian conception of compassion is to look beyond what is different to find a common humanity and compassion for another in their different situation. A dialogue or conversation can begin with an openness for compassion and a sense of community to what other people are enduring in their life experience. Chinnery further argues that we need to encourage students to learn to live with ambiguity, difference, and uncertainty and to accept the other for who they are.

### 5.1.2 Children as Other

The Golden Age of children's illustrated book refers to the time from 1880 to the early twentieth century, during which some wonderful picturebooks were created for children. The Golden Age was a time when texts were made for the first time specifically for children, which has inspired future writers and illustrators in their creative endeavours for children. Nodelman says “that child psychology and children's literature can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with childhood—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, child psychology and children's literature is an adult style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over childhood” (1992, 29). Nodelman adapted this analysis from Edward Said’s work on Orientalism. Nodelman is eloquent in his discussion and interpretations on the understanding of childhood as being the “other.”

Nodelman, in his book *The Hidden Adult*, states, “the characteristic markers of children’s literature are all variants of and manifestations of the basic opposition between adult and child implied by the very circumstance of adults writing for children” (2008, 249). Richard Flynn comments by saying “the very circumstance of writing for children” implies a basic opposition between adult and child. This premise, which underlies the arguments in *The Hidden Adult*,

overemphasizes both the alterity of children and the separation of adult literature from children's literature" (254). In so doing, Nodelman says it serves to perpetuate the idea, expressed by Jacqueline Rose, that children's fiction "sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enters the space in between" (2008, 254). Flynn suggests "that the opposition between adults and children is not so stark and that a once-useful hermeneutic of suspicion has devolved into a series of increasingly rote critical gestures that border on the clichéd" (Nodelman 2008, 254). I agree with Flynn that children need to be given the power to advocate for themselves in what they choose to read and what they wish to reject. Through therapy and bibliotherapy, children can take ownership of their problems and are empowered to find their voice and navigate solutions collaboratively with adults. Children should get to see children's literature in which children have agency. Children should no longer be seen as helpless and victims of their circumstances. More picturebooks are needed in which children and their concerns are at the centre, not adults always the primary authoritative characters. Children need to see themselves represented authentically in picturebooks.

Marah Gubar says that Rose claims that Golden Age children's authors insisted on defining childhood as "something which exists outside the culture in which it is produced to deny their anxieties about class division, the instability of sexual identity and ambiguity of language" (Rose 1984, 4 qtd. in Gubar 2009, 24). However, the pervasive and uncritical valorization of sexist imagery and ideology was pervasive and thus challenged Rose's claims of childhood's impossibility.

In *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* Jacqueline Rose says, "that what is wonderful about the author writing for children is the child's willingness to

enter into the book and live the story” (1984, 2). Rose discusses “the impossibility of children's fiction from the premise that children's literature is a form of colonization. Rose asserts that knowledge of children themselves is ‘impossible,’ and always a projection and that adults should acknowledge the child as an unknown and unknowable other” (Nodelman 2008, 451). Nodelman says there is a hidden child in every adult, as adults were all once children.

Children's narratives set the child reader up as an outsider looking in. The adult often wants the child to know about a specific topic that the adult writes; it is not what the child wants or requests. The adult readers of the picturebook (the parent, grandparent, caregiver teacher, therapist, or librarian) must have an established relationship with children to give children a sense of safety as the adults become acquainted with the issue with which children are grappling. Thus, the encounter between reader and listener is of paramount importance. We were all children at some point, so indeed, the memories of this time inform the writing for children. Nodelman suggests “that our supposed ‘memories’ of childhood may not in fact be actual memories at all” (1992, 35). They are elusive and seldom the authentic memories. These reconstituted memories are what adults hold onto their childhood, which have faded and altered over the years. Nodelman states that “adults’ discourse about childhood often replaces and even prevents their real perception of the realities of childhood. For instance, we produce children's literature that is almost silent about sexuality, presumably to allow adults to believe that children truly are so innocent that their lives are devoid of sexuality. In doing so, however, adults make it difficult for children to speak to them about their sexual concerns: adults’ silence on the subject asserts that they have no wish to hear about it or are not ready to deal with these issues and that they think children with such concerns are abnormal. If adults convince themselves that such concerns are abnormal, then they render themselves unable to hear what children are saying even

if they do attempt to speak about such crucial matters. The final result of the silencing of the other is that we do make it incomprehensible to us” (1992, 30).

A backdrop to this study is the discourse of talking about children as other. On the one hand there are researchers who insist that children are other and childhood unknowable. Gubar says “theories of childhood that adhere to the difference model of childhood stress the radical alterity or otherness of children, representing them as separate species, categorically different from adults. Rose argues that adults should acknowledge the child as an unknowable other and Nodelman claims children’s literature is an adult practice” (2013, 451). Gubar and Rudd say “that the mere act of describing young people as voiceless can in fact render them voiceless. When we talk about children, we are othering them. On the other hand, children’s literature can be used to invite children to voice their questions about everything. Gubar proposes a kinship model as an alternative model where children function not just as recipients of adult-produced texts but also sometimes as coproducers and enactors of child-oriented texts” (Gubar 2013, 452). Gubar’s kinship model of childhood recognizes that children can exercise agency and their voices need to be heard. “This model is premised on the idea that children and adults are akin to one another, which means that they are neither exactly the same nor radically dissimilar. The concept of kinship indicates relatedness, connection and similarity without implying homogeneity, uniformity or equality” (2013, 453). Everyone is a human being with a voice, from infants, children to adults. Everyone existing on a continuum forging a sense of self along the way and becoming who they are in the process. The othering of children may cause children to suffer, and the internalized sense of self that grounds it will be a root cause of the suffering of others’ othering.

Nodelman suggests that we “claim to study childhood to benefit children, but we do it so that we will know how to deal with children; and as Rose suggests, we write books for children to provide them with values and with images of themselves we approve of or feel comfortable with and wish to impose upon children. “We encourage in children those values and behaviours that make children easier for us to handle more passive, more docile, more obedient, and thus, more in need of our guidance and more willing to accept the need for it. The vast majority of stories for children share the message that, despite one's dislike of the constraints one feels there, home is still the best, the safest place to be” (Nodelman 30). Adults were once children themselves, so maybe adults write for and about the children they once were. Nodelman questions whether adults did experience the childhood they claim to have experienced.

What adults remember about their childhood during adulthood may be influenced by the books they have read that have affected their childhood outlook. Nodelman questions, “maybe childhood has always been an imaginative construct of the adult mind, always being moved outward to blind adults to the actual perceptions of contemporary children but also the past, to blind adults’ memories of their past experiences. Perhaps there never was a childhood as innocent, as creative, as spontaneous as adults like to imagine. Maybe children are always more like adults than adults are ever able to see” (1992, 33). Nodelman argues “the simplicity of texts of children’s literature is only half the truth about them. They also possess a shadow, an unconscious – a more complex and more complete understanding of the world and people that remain unspoken beyond the simple surface but provides that simple surface with its comprehensibility. The simple surface sublimates—hides but still manages to imply the presence of —something less simple” (2008, 206).

Good children's picturebooks are identified as the wonder or spontaneity, or creativity of childhood. According to Nodelman, "they are good because they teach children how to be childlike by providing them with images of childhood. Their themes or messages are almost always about becoming less egocentric and more rational. In other words, they teach children how to be adults" (1992, 33). This dichotomy is always present as children need time to be children and yet it is the adult who is imposing on children in picturebooks how to behave in a more adult fashion.

Edward Said stated that "by analyzing and authorizing views about the Orient, we are also dominating and restructuring it, much in the same way as we are dominating and restructuring childhood by allowing adults to write about it" (Nodelman 1992, 30). Nodelman relates Said's Orientalism to children and literature as adults are deemed the colonizer, and children are seen as being colonized. Nodelman touches upon this point by applying common assumptions inherent in Orientalism to children's literature and childhood itself. Gubar states that Nodelman says, "children's literature is an adult practice" (1992, 451). Underlying this statement is the assumption that "children and adults are categorically different from one another: adults are involved in the production of children's literature; children are not" (1992, 451). According to Nodelman "adults use their knowledge of "childhood" to dominate children. By and large, children's literature tends to be a more subtle version of the same kind of wielding of adult power" (1992, 31). Gubar states, "that such discourse is deeply problematic, precisely because of the point about self-fulfilling prophecies that these critics themselves have made. The mere act of describing young people as the voiceless can itself help render them voiceless" (2013, 542). Gubar argues that "children function not just as recipients of adult-produced texts but also, sometimes, as co-producers and enactors of child-oriented texts" (2013, 542).

Nodelman asserts, “Orientalism is primarily for the benefit of Europeans, child psychology and children's literature are primarily for the benefit of adults” (1992, 30).

Nodelman suggests that “no representation can be truly objective; the irony is that those who most claim objectivity must be the least trustworthy” (1992, 30). “As a judge of the Orient, Said asserts, the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from it objectively. His human detachment, whose sign is the absence of sympathy covered by professional knowledge, is weighted heavily with all the orthodox attitudes, perspectives, and moods of Orientalism that I have been describing” (Nodelman 1992, 30).

It has come to my attention that adopting and adapting mindfulness from the East to transport and use in the West, making it palatable for Western consumption, and more specifically now for children, is a form of Orientalism. Mindfulness was meant to address the human condition and many of those bringing it to the West are from areas in the East where it has been for centuries. It is a spiritual practice which does not teach us how to be but allows us to find out how we are. Mindfulness in the West has in fact become a capitalist endeavour where mindfulness is being taught and brought into universities, business, hospitals, prisons, and schools. As Purser and Loy have expressed “McMindfulness” as a corporate endeavour, has become a lucrative commodity in the West.

Karen Coats says, “in studying children's literature, we find clues about the way adults have attempted to situate children and the way children have responded. We also learn to connect our aesthetic heritage, both individual and cultural, to our current values” (2001, 141). Coats further argues that our childhood selves then become a kind of ‘Other.’ She says, “children and childhood become Other as well. Once a self/Other binary has been established, the interplay between desire and identification, wanting to have versus wanting to be the Other, is activated.”

She further says that “we have come to think in triangles: moms, dads, and kids; food, love, and power; bodies, representations, and communities; aesthetics, ethics, and subjectivity; persons, cultures, and gods. It is within the spaces opened by these triangles that children come to be who they are. The study of children’s and young adult literature helps to understand the terms of those triangles through the language, images, and stories of our culture. Fairies, monsters, and talking animals are just some of the children's first companions walking through this world” (2001, 142). These characters often help teach children who they are and how to negotiate their world, and who they might become. Animals are non-threatening as they do not represent any race, religion, gender or social class and children can identify with these animal characters more readily.

I believe children’s voices need to be heard when they respond to texts read to them. Children try to formulate their meaning from the stories to shed light on their own personal, lived story. I shall now illustrate this to support this idea by sharing a few picturebooks I have used therapeutically in the bibliotherapy process.

I have used *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* (2007), written, and illustrated by Emily Gravett, to supplement therapy for children who have fears. This picturebook is challenging to read to children, especially to those who have real anxieties. It educates them about other worries that can often escalate rather than ease their stress. This book has instructions on the front endpaper that invites readers to deface the text, as the mouse did since the book is specially designed to scaffold readers to overcome their fears through artwork. Each page allows children space to write or draw alongside the clinical name for a fear. It is an interactive picturebook in which children are invited to fill in personal responses. This text is complicated as the little mouse breaks through frames and creeps through the pages, nibbling through pages creating holes in the paper, and even damaging the cover itself, frightening himself until he gets to the



“musophobia” page where he discovers that people fear him more than anything else. This post-modern technique of breaking boundaries is both playful and funny. This postmodern technique of no borders and breaking the frame invites children’s participation.

The author illustrates all the different fears in a jocular way culminating in the last page where children realize that the fear they have of mice or anything else needs to be tamed, as the mouse is afraid of people. There are so many things happening on each page that children discover and point at and laugh or do not want to look at, as it makes them afraid. However, there is also an edge to the narrative as it describes many real fears (for example, ablutophobia—fear of bathing—and dystychiphobia—fear of accidents—are addressed). More humour comes from the illustrations, especially on pages with the feathers on the ornithophobia page, where the feathers turn into monsters. Framing is a technique the illustrator incorporates. The images on the page are framed. This poses a question to readers about whether the mouse is in the book or out of it. This, too, poses the question for children whether children’s fears are inside or external. Does the mouse exist in the real adult world where real mice destroy books, or is he only part of the story? Thus, this book teases the reader, even forcing the reader to question the purpose of the book's covers. The narrative states that the little mouse is afraid of the dark. The illustration is depicted with an empty black page, save for a tip of the mouse's tail on the page margin. Phobic children may well feel alone, isolated in the dark, just like the mouse. Through therapy, and with the help of this picturebook, children may not feel so alone anymore.

Children realize that they are not alone is having a fear as other children have different phobias, too. This is vividly depicted in this picturebook. I think this is an excellent feature of this picturebook. The therapist can help children externalize their fear. Asking children questions about what might have happened in the story is a natural way to encourage active meaning-

making, which is very therapeutic for children as they identify with the story either in terms of the situation or on an emotional level.

For children with anxieties, this is not an easy book to read. For one thing, the black-and-white drawings are sinister and do not invite children to read the book independently. Some anxious children with whom I worked resisted reading this picturebook as they found it to be frightening. By contrast, I have used this picturebook in therapy with highly anxious children who became very engaged in the story, finding it very therapeutic to realize that other children have different fears. Bibliotherapy can be a pivotal point in therapy where the picturebook can facilitate a shift in the therapy process. Different children have different responses and reactions to the same picturebook. Children's differences must be accounted for when working therapeutically with children and planning therapeutic interventions. Children are active participants in choosing what they wish to read and rejecting what they do not want to hear when a book is preselected for them. Children can determine when and with whom they want to read a picturebook, or if they choose not to read the book at all. This choice empowers them and is a strong motivator in their healing process. Children need to be seen as having agency and responsibility for their motivation and self-advocacy.

Adults are in a powerful position and children must obey and do what the adult prescribes, even if sometimes it benefits adult and not the children. Children who experience sexual or physical abuse are often forced to be silent and sworn to secrecy, and their voices are drowned and muted by adults. There is often collusion with the adults involved in being quiet and accepting the status quo in these situations. In the picturebook, *The Secret of the Silver Horse* (1997) by the Department of Justice Canada, this picturebook's loud message is for children to use their voices until they are heard. The story informs children that secrets about

sexual abuse should not be kept and that children must tell an adult about what they are experiencing, and if that person does not help, they should tell someone else until the children are believed. I have used this picturebook in a bibliotherapy session where I have educated children preventatively about personal safety and privacy. Children should be taught appropriate touching and what's not appropriate for adults to be doing to children. Children need to be empowered and not silenced. Adults wield inappropriate power over children to silence them when abuse is concerned. This imbalance of power is certainly a form of “othering” by adults.

This text can enable children to begin to stand up for themselves, know what adults are not allowed to do to children, and recognize that it is not the fault of children if something like this happens. This book can also be read with children when a teacher, therapist, counsellor or caring adult knows or suspects that child abuse of some nature is going on and reading such a picturebook can help facilitate a conversation about what those children are encountering. Sometimes a therapist might encounter resistance from children as it is too close to home then that too can guide the therapist in dealing with children. These books should be dealt with in a bibliotherapy context as young children should read this with an adult to process it.

Children benefit from a post-reading discussion or conversation with an adult to help them understand this cycle of violence and how to protect themselves and speak up and out. It is vital to understand the discourses both adults and children have on child physical and sexual abuse. Other picturebooks like *NoNo the Seal* by Judith Feldman (1986) emphasize the fundamental themes which revolve around personal safety, resilience and hope and that children have agency and can speak up and stand up for themselves. Powerful messages are embedded in these poignant stories. *Mia's Secret* by Peter Ledwon (2006) is a reassuring book about children who experience sexual abuse. A post-story discussion is crucial as this book can be preventative

and teaches children language related to sexual abuse. There is silence among authors to write a book for children using mindfulness strategies with children who have experienced trauma like physical or sexual abuse. There is a shortage of picturebooks on this topic and this needs to change.

Children's voices can be heard when asked to choose what to read. They need to be heard. Listening to children's voices is crucial in bibliotherapy and therapy. The story is a springboard for children's interpretation of their own stories. "Children respond to picturebooks in multiliterate ways," says Lewis (2001, xii). Children are active participants in the reading process. Mo Willems (author of the picturebook *Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs*, 2016), in his book says to children, "If you ever find yourself in the wrong story, leave." Children can determine when and with whom they wish to read a picturebook; this empowers them and is a strong motivator in their decision-making and giving them agency. Children do have agency to say to the adult reading the picturebook that they do not wish to hear the story chosen for them as they do not like the story. However, in their own life story it is hard for children to leave, if they are to take this message figuratively.

Nikolajeva and Scott, in their book, *How Picturebooks Work*, asks the profound question, whose book is it? For children, a book is a powerful tool for growth. The degree of inwardness engendered is what ultimately leads to the value of the book for children. Spufford (points out that "reading acts like transformations, as particular books are like seed crystals, dropped into children's minds at the right time. The crystals of perception are formed, the original insight of the story allowing for self-discovery" (2002, 9). Spufford says that "books free children from the limitations of having just one limited life with one point of view. They allow children to see beyond the horizon of their own circumstances" (2002, 10).

According to David Lewis “picturebooks are extraordinarily diverse and incorporate more than one form of discourse” (2001, 25). Some picturebooks use prose; others rely heavily on rhymes. Some tell a story, some don't, and those who tell stories, the kind of stories they tell, are almost as varied as the books themselves. The picturebook Lewis states, “is thus ideally suited to the task of absorbing, reinterpreting, and re-presenting the world to an audience for whom negotiating newness is a daily task. It is not an insignificant fact that the reading of picturebooks commonly takes place at the point where adults, children and the wider culture meet” (2001, 137). Children’s literature can be viewed as powerful tool for children.

Children have many life issues that they must deal with daily. Through mindfulness awareness children learn to have compassion for others and this builds up in them common humanity. Mindfulness can raise awareness for students in terms of their awareness of self and what they are doing and being in the present and their interconnectedness with the world and people around them. Many of the picturebooks that I have used that teach mindfulness to children often reference animals teaching and learning mindfulness; *Moody Cow Meditates* by Kerry Lee MacLean (2009), Kerry Lee MacLean ‘s (2004) *Peaceful Piggy Meditation*, and *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by author Lauren Alderfer, and illustrator Kerry Lee MacLean (2011) Using animals in some picturebooks is a good strategy, this can avoid a lot of social mandates which are found in other picturebooks and these books with animal characters give children room for interpretation and thus creativity and self-expression. Since many of the picturebooks’ characters are animals, most children and any “othered” child can identify with these animal characters. Animal characters do not exclude anyone, and most children can connect with animals and are not intimidated by them. The problem of alterity occurs in society where someone is made to feel different from all the rest and often children who do not fit into a

specific gender, disability, racial, religious, social class binary feel othered. Children who do not experience cisgender, feel like they are othered and are different. Recently there have been many picturebooks written addressing the issue of gender being fluid and on a continuum. These picturebooks are so useful to children in helping them to understand and accept their identity.

Mindfulness teaches one to become less egocentric and more understanding. It does not dismiss rationality (left brain thinking) but seeks to have it informed by the understanding (right brain thinking) that this culture devalues. Nodelman says, “the same contradiction appears in our discourse about children and children’s literature, and there is no way of resolving it either” (1992, 32). Nodelman says “theory teaches us that all discourse stems from a discourse of the other” (34). Nodelman says, “all those that survive childhood become adults, adults who tend to think of children as their other. Viewed from the perspective of its efforts to colonize, children’s literature is essentially and inevitably an attempt to keep children as opposed to ourselves and an attempt to make children more like us” (1992, 33).

Introducing children to mindfulness practices has occurred recently because it was taught to adults in the West first and seen to be relevant, helpful, and therapeutic. Now it has been seen to be beneficial for children to learn too as a way of being. The following chapter highlights this study’s results. It culminates in a discussion and view to expanding this research in the future.

## Chapter 6

### Procedures

#### 6.1.1 Overview of the Study

York University Ethics Committee<sup>4</sup> granted me permission for the study to take place at Bialik Hebrew Day School. See Appendix A.

Bialik Hebrew Day School Administration gave this research project permission to take place at Bialik Hebrew Day School. See Appendix B

Questionnaires were handed out to thirty-four students for parents to sign on October 11, 2019. Students took the forms home in a sealed envelope for their parents to read and provide written consent for their children's participation in this study. The documents were returned to the researcher at school. All the parents signed the Assent form, and all the students in Grade Two at Bialik Hebrew Day School participated in the study. I received all the consent forms by October 30, 2019. I read the Verbal Consent Form to the students and explained the process of the research to them. See Appendix C

- This study began on November 1, 2019. At the outset, the researcher informed the students verbally about their voluntary participation in this study. I explained to the students what the research entailed. I told them that they would be participating in eight lesson program in which they would be learning about mindfulness, 'Mindfulness Matters to Us.' I outlined that they would complete the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) before and after their eight lessons on

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<sup>4</sup> This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of APA guidelines, with informed consent from all subjects. All subjects gave written informed consent. This protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of York University, Toronto.

mindfulness. I explained to them about completing an interactive workbook, *The Present*, that they would get to keep and take home.

- Data collection took place at Bialik Hebrew Day School, where participants were given classical instructions in terms of completing the Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA). The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) was administered before the lessons on mindfulness, “Mindfulness Matters to Us.”

Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher told the students that there were no right or wrong answers. The researcher read each question out loud twice so the children could follow whilst they read each question, and each student completed their answer.

The researcher waited for the children to circle their responses on the questionnaire and only moved onto the next question once all the students had completed their answers. The classroom teacher was also present to assist if a child needed any clarification or an explanation of a word’s meaning. Children could ask questions at any time during the testing session if they needed clarification regarding what a word meant. See Appendix D

- At the start of the lessons on “Mindfulness - Mindfulness Matters to Us,” Eight individual lessons on mindfulness, each fifty minutes in duration, were delivered once a week by the researcher to the students incorporating bibliotherapy. These lessons took place from November 6, 2019 - January 9, 2020. Lesson Plans. See Appendix E
- *The Present*, an interactive workbook, was used weekly through the duration of the mindfulness lessons. See Appendix F
- A ninth lesson was delivered to wrap up the lessons on mindfulness and the book, *The Present*. I read *The Present* together with the students, after the book had been coloured



and creatively designed by the students. *The Present* was read together as a reading event.

The children read parts of the book together with the researcher. This lesson took place on January 15, 2020, and the students completed the reflective sheet concerning the lessons on mindfulness, “Mindfulness Matters to Us,” and the interactive book, *The Present*. See Appendix G

- January 22, 2020. I administered the EmQue a second questionnaire after the mindfulness lessons “Mindfulness Matters to Us.” See Appendix D
- Results of T-Test, Mean, Median and Mode and Graphs. See Appendix H
- Students took their books home to their family 28 February 2020. Included are samples of the students work from *The Present*. See Appendix I
- Parent Reflective Sheet. See Appendix J

#### 6.1.2 The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents

These Grade Two students had never completed a questionnaire before. I administered the questionnaire to the students. As they know me as the school social worker/school counsellor, the children were at ease and were comfortable in this novel test situation. The advantages of being a researcher in the same school where I work, helps me understand the school climate, the students and the school culture. I tailored the research to fit the students’ needs and to be in sync with the children’s religious beliefs and their family beliefs. Thus, I taught mindfulness concepts appropriately, respecting the spiritual nuances of mindfulness taught in a Jewish Day School.

The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) is aimed to assess three components of empathy: Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, and Prosocial Motivation. Mehrabian & Epstein (1972) state that “empathy is defined as the ability to read,

share, and understand the emotional states of others. It entails two separate but intertwined components: affective and cognitive empathy” Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) further indicate “that previous studies have demonstrated that children with higher levels of empathy are generally better able to regulate their emotions, show less aggression, and act in a more prosocial way” (qtd.in Overgaauw 2017, 1). Chakrabarti & Baron-Cohen, (2006) state that “affective empathy refers to sharing an emotional state of others and cognitive empathy (which is, understanding emotional states, of others) predicts higher quality friendships involving mutual reciprocity and stability (qtd. in Overgaauw 2017, 1). “Innate empathy is the immediate and non-cognitive experiencing with the other, for example, when an infant, cries in response to another infant's cries of distress” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 362).

“Feeling compassion for a suffering person is the result of this combined ability to share and understand emotions. These skills are crucial to think of ways to help the suffering person or to act upon these thoughts, often indicated by the term ‘prosocial behaviour’ (Eisenberg 2000; Jolliffe & Farrington 2006; Goudena et al. 2007). Sandy Overgaauw argues that in this sense, the tendency to act upon this empathic sharing and understanding in a prosocial manner forms the third crucial component of empathy, which is ‘Prosocial Motivation.’ Examining this third component of empathy is very important during childhood and adolescence, as prosocial behaviour is crucial for adaptive social-emotional functioning” (Overgaauw 2015, 77).

Children who display empathy tend to have more sophisticated social skills and seem to get along well with others socially. Further “children with higher empathic skills are generally better able to regulate their emotions, show less aggression, and act more pro-socially (Eisenberg, 2000; Pouw, Rieffe, Oosterveld, Huskens, & Stockmann 2013). These skills are important for bonding with primary caregivers, friends, and other eminent people (Knafo, Zahn-

Waxler, Van Hulle, Hyun Rhee, & Robinson 2008). Cognitive empathy predicts high-quality friendships, involving mutual reciprocity and stability” (Soenens, Duriez, Vansteenkiste, & Goossens, 2007). In a similar vein, Pouw et al., 2013 suggest affective empathy without the motivation to emotionally support the suffering person could hamper rather than strengthen the relationship” (Overgaauw 2105, 77).

Overgaauw argues it is useful to have an instrument “that disentangles all three components of empathy (affective- and cognitive empathy, and prosocial motivation), as development might be disharmonic, which could result in symptoms of psychopathology” (2015, 77). Overgaauw says it is important to have “an instrument that can identify the different components of empathy on each of these skills and enables professionals working with children in a clinical setting to focus on specific deficits in empathic behaviour. In this regard the EmQue-CA presents a significant contribution to the literature on empathy” (2015, 78). “Specifically, the scale assessing intention to comfort, which presents as a valuable addition to existing questionnaires measuring empathy. Examining intention to comfort is particularly important during childhood and adolescence, as prosocial behaviour is crucial for adaptive socioemotional functioning. The three scales of the EmQue-CA show differential links with age and gender and contribute uniquely to empathy assessment. Future studies should further employ the EmQue-CA to unravel how empathy and intention to comfort contribute to psychosocial functioning, as these concepts are of great importance in forming and maintaining social relationships across childhood and adolescence” (Overgaauw, Rieffe, Broekhof, Crone, and Gürogiu 2017, 8).

To examine empathy, it is important and relevant to understand the cultural norms and socialization process of children within the society. Children are socialized differently based on gender and especially, but not only, for boys, empathy and compassion are often socialized out

of them. Children's literature often fosters this socialization process. Carol Gilligan found this male/female difference in her book *In a Different Voice*, where an eleven-year-old Jake, described a moral problem as "like a math problem with humans" while Amy looked for a good solution which would meet the needs of all concerned as much as possible. She sees the dilemma not a math problem with people but rather as a narrative of relationships that evolves (1982).

In my research study, the EmQue-CA was used to ascertain the children's empathy level before implementing mindfulness lessons and then again after all the lessons were completed. I wanted to see the effects of teaching mindfulness in the program "Mindfulness Matters to Us" on Grade Two students' levels of empathy. The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA), the same EmQue-CA questionnaire as administered before the "Mindfulness Matters to Us" program seen in Appendix D, was administered after the delivery of all eight lessons and the wrap up ninth lesson where a reflective sheet on the mindfulness lessons was completed.

#### 6.1.3 Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Bibliotherapy in Education

Mindfulness training has received mainstream acceptance, according to Karen Ragoonaden "it is a reflective mind-body practice that is now recognized as a means to enhance academic performance but also to support the various facets of well-being in educational contexts" (2015, 17). Overgaauw refers to their study and concludes that "this comprehensive longitudinal study illustrates how mindfulness training has entered the educational setting and can be taught successfully in an engaging manner to elementary school students, which influences their well-being" (2015, 77). Ragoonaden says, "the concept of mindfulness can be described as the human capacity for observation, participation, and acceptance of life's moments from a loving, compassionate stance. From its traditional emphasis on contemplation and

meditation, the contemporary practice includes paying attention and being aware of one's everyday activities such as seeing, breathing, writing, walking, reading, drinking, eating and sitting" (2015, 17). This contemporary practice of mindfulness is accessible to students in school. Students can be re-minded always to be mindful of themselves, their behaviour, and how they proceed with their daily activities. In addition, students are reminded to be mindful of others and their surrounding environment. In this conscious way, students are made aware of making the correct choice to respond mindfully to others. This study examines the experience of using mindfulness practices for improving the education of students and their wellbeing.

This study uses picturebooks to explore the effectiveness of mindfulness-based bibliotherapy as an educational medium in the classroom as a useful method and practice of teaching mindfulness to children. Incorporating picturebooks in bibliotherapy helps to engage students in a meaningful way and lead them to a "post-story" conversation in the lesson. The students were engaged and looked forward to the lesson each week. Children were ready to engage with the ideas and concepts of mindfulness. However, it is hard for children to sit still for long periods, and it was a process to have them learn to sit and experience mindful minutes. Mindfulness is a skill that requires ongoing practice. Currently, mindfulness is slowly being incorporated in some schools to teach them what it means to be in the present moment, doing one thing at a time and to help regulate children's behaviour, and attention in class and to combat stress levels. Mindfulness is also seen to help educate children to understand what it means to be kind and compassionate to all living things and the earth and to express gratitude and thanks for the world around them. This dissertation uses bibliotherapy, specifically the exploration of education on mindfulness in picturebooks as a medium to bring mindfulness into education.

The interactive workbook, *The Present*, specifically helped students consolidate the mindfulness concepts taught to them during the lessons. This picturebook can be reread repetitively after the program was delivered to remind students and help them in their ongoing pursuit of a mindful practice.

## Chapter 7

### Results and Discussion

#### 7.1.1 Review of Lessons on Mindfulness – “Mindfulness Matters to Us”

School-based preventative programs aim to help students develop social-emotional skills by teaching students about resilience, grit, and empathy. The set of mindfulness lessons incorporating bibliotherapy, “Mindfulness Matters to Us,” that I developed and implemented, encompass, and teach students to focus on learning about their well-being and others’ well-being by being mindful and in the present moment. In addition, exposing children to practices of mindfulness helps students to be kind, grateful, and grow in empathy and compassion towards others, and to appreciate and take care of the environment. This dissertation highlights aesthetic and storytelling strategies using picturebooks as multimodal texts to elucidate and facilitate children’s emotional literacy. I further examine how picturebooks can be used educationally and therapeutically. Reading is so essential as it gives children power and agency in so many ways. The bibliotherapy process is employed in all eight lessons on mindfulness, implemented in the classroom setting. Children learned about mindfulness, the concepts, and mindfulness strategies through picturebooks in the classroom as part of the bibliotherapy process.

Each mindfulness lesson began with a mindfulness practice where students would sit and focus on their breath. I used a rain stick to punctuate the mindfulness minute meditations at the start and end of each lesson. A selected picturebook on mindfulness was read to the students each week, followed by a post-story discussion on the book’s key components. A different mindfulness activity was introduced each week that consolidated an aspect of a feature raised in

the bibliotherapy. The last twenty minutes of the lesson, I read a section of *The Present*, an interactive workbook. This complemented the lesson as the students then coloured mindfully, enjoying the calming effect of drawing, colouring and listening to the story. This interactive picturebook enabled students to both be creative and deconstruct the text to give it their own meaning. Through these bibliotherapy lessons on mindfulness, students could grasp the ideas raised in the picturebooks.

Each set of picturebooks focused on different concepts related to mindfulness and empathy. For example, what does it mean to be present, how can students show kindness and compassion to others, helping students learn to let go of negative feelings, learning to respond instead of reacting and practicing gratitude? In addition, these picturebooks educated students on a mindful practice, breathing techniques, yoga poses, a body scan, muscle relaxation, a visualization experience, and an awareness of an interconnectedness with all living things. The picturebooks that were incorporated in the bibliotherapy lessons helped the students understand and consolidate the concepts of mindfulness.

The outcomes of the program “Mindfulness Matters to Us” have been long term. Students have continued to practice mindfulness minutes, focusing on their breath with their teacher in the classroom. These mindfulness minutes are ongoing and incorporated during the school day at different transition points by the teacher to help students maintain their awareness to be mindful and present. The teachers and teaching assistants who were present during these sessions learned the language and fundamental concepts explored in these lessons and have followed through with these teachings and language to remind students to be mindful. The “calm corner,” “peace corner” or “zen den” became a featured space in the classrooms reminding both teachers and the students of this sacred space where children can recalibrate or just take time to be quiet. I placed



copies of the picturebooks I read in the bibliotherapy lessons in the school library and classrooms for students and teachers to access. Teaching children about mindfulness certainly has its benefits. Students learn to catch themselves noticing and acknowledging their thoughts and feelings and are reminded to be mindful. This is an important skill to learn and develop and incorporate in their lives. However, students need to be taught simultaneously how to be empathic and aware of the suffering of those around them and to see how they are all interconnected to the environment. Therefore, part of each lesson was devoted to talking about how they need to be mindful of others. To express thanks and gratitude to people in their lives, to be kind to others and to be aware of how their actions affects others in their environment.

Nhat Hanh raises important issues about mindfulness being more than just being personally mindful. He says mindful practices encompass so much more (1999). Simpson states “Nhat Hanh says ‘the egg is in the chicken, and the chicken is in the egg’. Each needs the other to exist and neither originates independently. Therefore ‘a cause must, at the same time be an effect, and every effect must also be the cause of something else. Nhat Hanh labels this concept ‘interbeing’ in which ‘the one contains the all’ and ‘we are what we perceive’. But ‘we have to see the nature of interbeing to really understand. It takes some training to look at things this way’, even if ‘you only dwell deeply in the present moment’” (2017, 17). The concept of ‘interbeing’ alludes to the social connection of mindfulness.

Sipe says “making stories our own may be a powerful way—or perhaps the only way—for stories to affect our lives and to transform us. If we believe in the power of literature to change our lives and the lives of our children, or at least to serve as what Bishop (1997) called a catalyst for thinking about the problems and opportunities of life in new and creative ways, we encourage these responses as ways of forging strong links between stories and children’s lives”

(2002, 482). Students learned how they could practice mindfulness from these lessons, they learned different ways of being and seeing their world, and how they can take care of themselves, others and their environment which facilitated their development of healthy ways of being.

#### 7.1.2 Reflective Responses from Students about Lessons on Mindfulness

The responses obtained from all the children's reflective sheets about what they gleaned from the mindfulness lessons were illuminating. Most students felt that they had learned what it means to be mindful by being in the present moment and by doing one thing at a time. They reflected on how vital it is to be calm and respectful and how they need to be grateful for what they have and for the people in their lives. They mentioned how mindfulness helps them to manage their feelings, highlighting the salience of how important it is to be kind to one another. Students discussed the many ways they have begun to show compassion towards others, and many mentioned how they had donated toys, clothes, and even their "tooth fairy" money to worthy charitable causes or given *tzedakah*. Tzedakah is the Hebrew word whose literal meaning is justice; it implies helping through charity and other more immediate ways. Tzedakah is embedded in the school culture and philosophy.

Students shared how the mindfulness lessons taught them different strategies of how to be calm. Students could articulate and practice different breathing techniques, such as Five Finger Breathing, Triangle Breathing, Hand on Heart Breathing and Figure Eight Breathing. Students loved making and using the calming mindfulness jar they made during the lessons to help them in their mindful minutes. They enjoyed the experience of watching the glitter settle in the jar. The students mentioned to me how the colouring of *The Present*, helped them to maintain calmness. Students felt going to a quiet spot to colour was very practical and helped them to be

calm. Students were so proud of their completed books and were so excited to teach their families all about mindfulness through this book, *The Present*. As one boy said, “it has everything inside to teach someone else about mindfulness.” Students’ felt that the mindfulness strategies that were the most practical in their lives were the breathing techniques: Five Finger Breathing, Triangle Breathing, Hand on Heart breathing and Figure Eight Breathing.

Students said they were very mindful when reading a book as they become so focused on the story. The students were more aware of the importance of saying thank you to others more frequently and felt that that was any easy thing to do in order to be mindful of others. Students started to take things slowly by concentrating more on what they were doing, such as tasting their food and savouring the taste whilst they were eating. Students were able to see how essential it is to do one thing at a time. Students said they are aware that it is good just to be quiet sometimes and to be reflective. One of the essential aspects of mindfulness which students felt they could practice more of, and it would be easy to do, is to be kind to others.

The students' engagement throughout these lessons on mindfulness was palpable, and they indeed developed new skills through these lessons. The framework of the lessons created an awareness of what it means to be mindful and accept the ways things are by being grateful for what they have. Students learned so much about being aware and attentive to the world around them, noticing their environment that they had previously taken for granted before, as this was a whole new way of being exposed to what mindfulness meant. They spoke about how they could help keep the playground and their classroom clean, protect the bees and bugs in the playground and how they wanted to plant more plants and trees in their home gardens. Students voiced how important they felt by being a part of my research project, as an educator in their school.

### 7.1.3 Evaluation of the interactive workbook, *The Present*.

This workbook was a creative way for the concepts of mindfulness to be woven into the weekly lessons which continued the process from week to week. This continuity was like a tapestry being completed piece by piece only to view the completed version at the end. Practicing mindfulness with different strategies eventually led the students to develop a meaningful practice and understanding of mindfulness. Most of the students were mindfully engaged during colouring the workbook, listening to the story, and reflecting on the concepts within the interactive picturebook, *The Present*. Some children favoured a specific page in the book, while other students were proud of their whole book. Students were able to set an intention at the start and think about to whom they wished to dedicate their book. The dedication page was undoubtedly the highlight for students. They all liked dedicating this book to significant others and enjoyed stating why they dedicated the book to their significant others.

Some students just coloured in the pictures, while others extended their creativity by drawing in detail, making different drawings with their own adjacent stories on the pages, adding drawings to the beginning and endpapers of the picturebook. Students found colouring to be very calming and a creative process that they looked forward to weekly. Even the few children who found colouring difficult as a paper and pencil exercise enjoyed the process of colouring and did fewer details in their work but completed their workbooks. They felt the colouring helped calm them down. Some students were extremely creative and detailed and thus took longer to complete their workbook. They created their own story within the story and drew additional pictures from the illustrations in the book. These extensions were extraordinary and illustrated how some students could go beyond a picturebook's constraints to express themselves creatively and emotionally and transform the text to become their own.

All the students could not wait to take their book home to show it to their parents, siblings, and grandparents. They were excited to showcase their book, read the book to their family members and have this meaningful shared experience. Each book was sent home with the children's reflection and a letter from the researcher to obtain parent feedback, and it was all put in a see-through cellophane gift bag with a ribbon to look like a present to take home. Wrapping the book up as a present was the idea of one of the students who expressed his wish to wrap this picturebook as a present and take it home and give it to his parents as a present in the present moment. He was the student who had added an extra line at the end of my book, *The Present*, in his book. The book ends with the words.... Be here...Be Present ...and he added... Be Mindful.

It is essential to learn from students and hear their voices. I will certainly incorporate the many insights the students have expressed and shared with me. I intend to make changes to my picturebook in future editions, considering the children's recommendations and suggestions. I explained to the students that they are genuinely co-authors of this book as their colouring and additional designs, words and creativity are evident. They were so proud of their contribution especially when I said they were co-creators of this book.

The shared reading experience between students, parents, siblings, and grandparents extended my project further than I anticipated. Children have been teaching their parents, siblings, and grandparents about mindfulness, a rich bonus to this study. The feedback I have received in terms of parents sending me pictures and video clips of their children reading the book to their significant others have taken this research to another level. Also, parents sent me feedback regarding their having learned so much about mindfulness from their children through this shared story reading where the children read the picturebook, *The Present*, to their parents,

the children's grandparents and explaining to them and teaching them the concepts of mindfulness.

Parents were exhibiting parental presence by just being with their children, showing up, listening to their children reading this interactive picturebook, *The Present*, and seeing how their children could explain the concepts of mindfulness to them, the children's grandparents, and siblings. Children could show off their creativity to their parents, and the parents to whom the children dedicated their book, were so happy. One student told me that her parents told her how she was so creative and enjoyed her own story she created within the story, and the student felt so proud of her parents' comments. Another student told me that her parents thought she wrote and drew so neatly in her book and asked their daughter to read the book to them. This student loved receiving compliments from her parents about her work. This students' parents also felt so grateful that she had dedicated her book to them. This dedication was so meaningful to both parents and children. Different parents commented on this shared reading experience and how they loved the dedication page.

Other parents commented on how the colouring activity was calming for their children and how it made mindfulness more concrete for their children. Another parent said she loved how colouring was internalized as a calming method. Parents commented on how important it is to teach children about mindfulness, and simultaneously it reminded the parents to be in the present moment. After her son read the book to her, one parent wrote an email to me saying, "What a great book to make mindfulness more concrete for children." Another parent wrote, "I liked how now, the present is like a gift within, which we all need to think about every day, students need to understand today, and now, is a gift-the present." Another parent shared how she appreciated that her daughter dedicated the book to her parents. A different parent said,

“while reading together with my daughter, she was able to articulate how she felt, why it was important to learn about mindfulness and explained what she had learned about mindfulness. She loved the process of showing the family her work, and she expressed gratitude for everything she has. This was such a wonderful opportunity to help promote mindfulness and well-being for the students. Thank you.” Yet another parent sent me a picture of her daughter reading the book to her granny, to whom she dedicated the book. This student talked about reading this book to her granny at every lesson, and she could not wait to take it home to share this picturebook with her granny and read it to her and to her parents. Children enriching and teaching their grandparents is a unique outcome of my study.

A student told me that her father asks her to read the book to him every night as he puts her to bed. I found this an interesting dynamic as you have the parent asking and choosing which book the parent wishes his daughter read to him. Another student told me his father videotaped him reading the book and sent it to the child’s grandparents to hear as the child had dedicated the book to his grandparents, who do not live here in Canada. A different father said he posted his son reading the book on YouTube for others to listen to the story being read by his son.

Parents gave me feedback about how meaningful the picturebook, *The Present*, was for them and how the students were able to share their knowledge about mindfulness with them. The feedback was astounding and extremely encouraging. Parents said that their children could describe what mindfulness is and incorporate it into their own lives. I feel grateful that my picturebook was relevant, educational for the children and became a reminder and awareness for parents also to be in the present moment. This opportunity was indeed a teachable moment for children and a great learning experience for parents, grandparents, and siblings. In this situation,

you have the younger generation teaching the older generations about mindfulness as the children were able to teach their parents about mindfulness.

#### 7.1.4 Results of Empathy Questionnaire

Empathy is a critical skill. It's the understanding that someone else's world is just as real as yours in its simplest form. Empathy has the power to create meaningful connections beyond humans to all living beings, to the world we live in, and to the natural world. Once empathy is activated, compassionate action is the most honest response. In this study, I was interested to see how learning about empathy could affect children's range of empathy.

The Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA) is the instrument that I used for Grade Two students to measure their empathy levels. The EmQue-CA (Rieffe et al. 2010) consists of eighteen items (Appendix D), "representing three facets of empathy that should be observable in young children: (a) Emotion Contagion, (b) Attention to Others' Feelings, and (c) Prosocial Actions" (363).

Rieffe et al., outline the different levels of empathy, "the first level is called Emotion Contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993), which manifests itself in the first year of life. At this level, infants attend to others' emotions, albeit inadaptively, because witnessing someone in distress may result in a similar affective response. For example, the crying of one infant may trigger equal reactions in other babies. It is assumed that people are hardwired to automatically imitate and synchronize affective expressions (Decety & Jackson, 2004). Still, infants this young, cannot yet differentiate between self and other, which causes them to act as though what happened to the other person happened to them (Vreeke & Van Der Mark, 2003). Alternatively, infants this young, might still have difficulties controlling their level of arousal. If true, the



ability for self-regulation should be associated negatively with symptoms of emotion contagion” (Rieffe 2010, 362).

“The second level is termed, Attention to Others’ Feelings, is assumed to start at about one year of age. At this level, Hoffman argued, infants become aware that although they feel distressed, it is not oneself but someone else who is in actual danger or pain. In other words, infants become more aware of other people’s emotions. Moreover, infants develop the capacity to attend to others’ emotions with less personal distress. Their own response to the distress of another child may now be transformed into concern for the victim.” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 363)

“The third level is referred to as Prosocial Actions. Hoffman argues that children become more responsive to others’ emotional displays and start to react pro-socially. A longitudinal study by Zahn-Waxler and colleagues (1992) showed that children develop this capacity to intervene on behalf of others during the second year of life, which can take a variety of forms, including helping, sharing, and comforting” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 363). “Empathy is considered to be a keystone in children's social development” (Rieffe et al. 366). Rieffe et al., comment that this EmQue is a valuable instrument, “which can be used for future studies to examine the unique predictive value of the different levels of empathy in children’s emotional and social functioning; and examine how these levels contribute to different aspects of children's development” (Rieffe et al. 2010, 363). More research needs to be done to examine whether there are differences in empathy, expressed by gender as it is an essential issue for individuals' lives and society.

“Children rated the degree to which each item, reflecting a type of behaviour, applied to them on a 3-point scale (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often). Rieffe designed an Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA), (2010), suitable for children from the

age of ten, that specifically focuses on these three aspects of empathy: (1) affective empathy: a scale that measures the extent to which the child/adolescent feels for the emotional state of the suffering person, (2) cognitive empathy: a scale that measures the extent to which the child/adolescent understands why the other person is in distress, and (3) intention to comfort: a scale that measures the extent to which the child/adolescent is inclined to help or support the suffering person”(Overgaauw et al. 2017 ).

I corresponded with Rieffe and colleagues, who designed this questionnaire to see if I could apply it to 7-8-year-old students. The reply was affirmative, as before my study it had been used by younger students. This research study aimed to examine student empathy using the EmQue-CA before and after an eight-lesson program on mindfulness using bibliotherapy was implemented. The EmQue-CA questionnaire of eighteen items was implemented for a sample of 7-8 years-old participants ( $N=34$ ).

The results of my study were as follows:

The results from the empathy questionnaires highlight that the overall scores were high indicating high levels of empathy. There were some differences in the scores between boys and girls. The Affective Empathy scores for boys and girls were high, indicating that these children had good friendship qualities and recognized distress in others. However, these scores were not statistically significant. Scores regarding Affective Empathy or Emotion Contagion were the same for girls before and after the delivery of the mindfulness lessons. The score for the boys dropped slightly after the lessons on mindfulness. This could possibly be due to the ceiling level effect as empathy scores before the lessons on mindfulness were already quite high for the boys.

Both boys and girls scored high on Cognitive Empathy, which indicates that they were concerned with others. The girl's scores were slightly higher than the boy's scores but not

statistically significant in this regard. In this study, the level of Cognitive Empathy remained the same for the boys before and after the mindfulness lessons were similar. The girls scores for Cognitive Empathy were slightly raised after the mindfulness lessons.

The Prosocial Motivation score is higher in girls than boys indicating that girls can show and care for others emotionally by supporting others and showing concern for others' feelings. However, there was no statistical significance in this regard. It can be further seen that there was an increase in the level of Prosocial Motivation in girls after the "Mindfulness Matters to Us" program was delivered to students and a slight decrease in scores for the boys in Prosocial Motivation. Prosocial Motivation involves showing others that you care about them by doing and saying positive things to others to show your support. The students in Grade Two were verbal in terms of their care and concern for others and helpful to one another during the lessons on mindfulness. Among the results in this study for Prosocial Motivation, the girls' scores tended to be higher than those of the boys both before and after mindfulness lessons. This result could be attributed to the possibility that girls tend to take on a more active, prosocial role in comforting, intervening and helping others. It seems that they have been socialized to do this in our culture.

I explored the role gender plays in the different ages of the children regarding empathy in this study. This study confirmed that the three levels of empathy are evident in all children; the literature supports these different levels of empathy. In this study, empathy in the three areas, Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy and Prosocial Motivation, were relatively high. The girls' scores seemed to be slightly higher than the boys' scores in most instances. However, there was no statistically significant difference between these scores between boys and girls.

"The EmQue, as an instrument, could be used to more closely examine the unique predictive value of the different levels of empathy for children's emotional and social functioning in future

studies; and examine how these levels contribute to different aspects of children's development” (Rieffe 366).

#### 7.1.5 Statistical Analysis and Inferences from Data

I used a paired T-test to compute my statistics. The test examined related and continuous variables. The mixed design involves two dichotomous variables. The independent variables are gender and time, pre and post mindfulness lessons, “Mindfulness Matters to Us”. The dependent variable is the outcome or effects the mindfulness lessons program “Mindfulness Matters to Us,” had on children's level of empathy measured by the EmQue-Ca. There are no norms for this EmQue-CA. “A T-test is one type of inferential statistics. It is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two groups. With all inferential statistics, we assume the dependent variable fits a normal distribution. When we assume a normal distribution exists, we can identify the probability of a particular outcome. A T-test is used when we wish to compare two means (the scores must be measured on an interval or ratio measurement scale)” (Del Siegle).

It is noteworthy that there are three scales within this questionnaire (affective empathy, cognitive empathy-attention to others' emotions, and prosocial motivation-the tendency to care for another's welfare as a result of empathy). Empathy is a vital capacity for indicating adaptive and appropriate behaviour in social interactions, emphasizing the importance of this study. I found that these evidence-based results indicate that there was no statistical significance in the results of the different levels of empathy before and after the teaching of lessons on mindfulness for Grade Two students, “Mindfulness Matters to Us.” However, the empathy scores were already high before the lessons indicating an existing awareness and ability to show empathy to others which was present in these students.

However, on examining the data more closely, empathy levels between boys and girls did show some slight differences, however they were not statistically significant. Girls tend to have higher scores in general for empathy than boys, especially in Prosocial Motivation; girls tend to do more in terms of being compassionate and caring towards others. They give the extra hugs or pat on the shoulder and say compassionate, caring words to others in need, and they are aware of this prosocial action. Whereas boys are socialized to be much less empathic than girls. Students were taught to be mindful of themselves and mindful of others and became aware of the effects and impact their words and behaviour had on others.

It was interesting to see how the levels of Affective Empathy dropped down slightly for boys, after the lessons on mindfulness took place. In addition, there was also a drop in the level of Prosocial Empathy for boys but not for girls in the EmQue-CA scores after the mindfulness lessons. The Prosocial Motivation scores increased for girls after the lessons on mindfulness were delivered. The ceiling affect could be applied to these scores as the empathy scores were already high before the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program was delivered to students. This could be since most students were exposed to Social Emotional Learning lessons within the general curriculum. There is also a high emphasis on the Jewish ethics of *Tzedakah* (justice), which involves giving to others in need, which is woven into the school ethos. I think the lessons motivated students to do random acts of kindness rather than to just think about showing empathy, children were displaying empathy and started to react pro-socially to one another. Thus the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program raised student awareness in terms of practicing empathy and compassion towards others in a meaningful and productive, prosocial way.

To further unravel the specific role empathy and intention to comfort in social interactions plays, I found the Grade Two students are generally supportive of one another, but

often needed reminders to use their words carefully as they have the potential to be critical of one another. The program “Mindfulness Matters to Us” taught children about mindfulness and introduced a sense of compassion for others, resulting in them being more careful about their choice of words to one another.

#### 7.1.6 Analysis of Research

A limitation of the current study is the sample size. It was a small sample. A sample of thirty-four students, fifteen boys and nineteen girls were used in this sample. There was a limited diversity, owing to this study being conducted in the Jewish Day School setting; the students were all Jewish children either from Russian, Israeli, South African or Canadian family backgrounds and descent. As Bialik Hebrew Day School is an independent parochial school most of the children are from a homogeneous socio-economic background.

The children were young, aged 7-8 years old and had no previous experience completing a questionnaire, so there could have been some inaccuracies in understanding the questions and answering the items on a 3 - point scale (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 =often). The time difference between the two questionnaires administered was only ten weeks apart, possibly accounting for the lack of a significant difference.

#### 7.1.7 Future Directions

It would be beneficial for me to conduct additional follow-up assessments with the same participants to examine the rates and effects of continued mindfulness practice over time. I could explore the long-term obstacles to practice and compare how mindfulness bibliotherapy outcomes compare to the findings from traditional MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) programs initiated by Kabat-Zinn.

In future studies, I could also examine whether the participants engage in continued or periodic return to the workbook, *The Present*, over time. Findings from the current study are significant as they support MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) programs. Further bibliotherapy to enhance children's emotional literacy and children's well-being proved an excellent means for imparting knowledge to children in an educational, entertaining, and meaningful way. Mindfulness instruction, when delivered in a structured program, can be beneficial and therapeutic for children. This study showed how students could learn and practice mindfulness strategies and incorporate it into their own lives and impart their knowledge onto their family members. However, there was no statistically significant difference in the students' empathy scores before and after lessons delivered on mindfulness. In the discussions after the picturebooks were read, the girl's affective awareness of empathy towards others remained the same however their cognitive empathy scores and prosocial empathy scores were increased due to the lessons, "Mindfulness Matters to Us." The boy's affective empathy scores and cognitive empathy scores remained the same whilst there was a slight drop in their prosocial empathy scores after the lessons, "Mindfulness Matters to Us" were delivered. In general, these three types of empathy scores reveal that the children in this study displayed a positive level of empathy for others.

In summary, this study's findings support the feasibility and effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) through bibliotherapy at improving the quality of life and mindful awareness of students. This study's results can contribute to the existing knowledge of evidence-based bibliotherapy interventions and the larger MBSR literature. They are valid and are generalizable and can contribute to the empirical literature for applied clinical and educational interventions. These findings provide support for the use of MBSR bibliotherapy

as a counsellor/teacher-guided intervention in an educational setting. This study highlights how children's empathy can be identified by examining their responses to the EmQue-CA questionnaire. The three levels of empathy that were reviewed in this study appeared as distinct entities of empathy. This certainly supports the literature.

*The Present*, the interactive picturebook, is a worthwhile adjunct in consolidating mindfulness concepts through an experiential exercise which is educational, calming, creative and entertaining for students. *The Present* is useful as a tool to help children integrate what they have learned about mindfulness and a means to transfer this knowledge to their parents and siblings when they read and share this picturebook with their family in a shared reading event.

I feel strongly that mindfulness programs are worthwhile and beneficial for students to participate within the school day. It is relevant for schools to bring mindfulness into the classroom to transform the school culture. Just as important is it for universities to be teaching mindfulness skills to their students in their professional programs, like medicine, education, psychology, law, business, to name just a few programs. This will benefit the students themselves but also equip them for when they enter their respective fields to facilitate the further teaching of mindfulness skills to others in their care. The impact of mindfulness programs in the school will be felt when it becomes part of the school curriculum and school culture. Integrating mindfulness into a mental health and wellness program within the curriculum is suitable for implementation and beneficial for the school wide community.



## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

It is important to raise questions about the contribution of mindfulness for children's emotional well-being. This study examines the impact of mindfulness on children and how picturebooks can contribute to children's development of empathy and emotional wellness. From the delivery of the mindfulness program, "Mindfulness Matters to Us" in Grade Two, students realized and understood many aspects of mindfulness. They realized that they must practice becoming mindful and develop the capacity to be mindful; it does not just happen. Students had to learn to watch their breath and use their breathing to calm down and realize that it too takes practice. Students saw how hard it was for them to sit still and be quiet for a few minutes. They became aware that they can choose to be grateful and express thanks to others and express gratitude more frequently than they were currently doing. Students were taught that they are responsible for their choices regarding their attitude and actions and how they should respond mindfully to others in different situations and how to treat others. Instead of reacting immediately, students learned that they need to remind themselves to be reflective and mindful of others, stop and think before they respond, and enhance their capacity to be empathic. They understood what it means to use the space to think before they responded and they were aware that when they were reactive and impulsive, that was the moment for them to see it as an opportunity to stop, reflect and become mindful. I modelled for the students how this process needs to be cultivated and nurtured for them to become more mindful of their words and actions.

Students developed an awareness of how to be mindful of themselves and others. They learned a different approach of looking at what it means to be in the present moment, aware and doing one thing at a time. They discovered a new language to understand what it means to be

mindful and how this translates into actions while being in the present moment. Students were able to recognize the importance of noticing with awe the world of nature and all living things with compassion and kindness. Mindfulness practice changed the culture and atmosphere in a classroom. Also, it allowed the researcher an opportunity to model mindful awareness while teaching and responding to students. Mindfulness can undoubtedly translate into students being more aware of navigating and cultivating their relationships with one another.

Reading, discussing, and thinking about picturebooks regarding mindfulness through bibliotherapy enabled students to learn mindfulness strategies. Reading picturebooks invites students to become contemplative. In addition, bibliotherapy allows students to be engaged in a meaning-making process that often requires them to revisit the earlier text and illustrations. Re-reading a section of the picturebook enables children to understand or re-experience what is written until it becomes fully integrated for them. Orr states that “mindfulness is a simple but powerful technique to promote *karuna*/compassion and can be easily integrated into classrooms at all levels to develop natural compassion and bring it to bear on the full range of curricular, social and environmental issues” (2014, 52).

Children are very attentive while listening to a picturebook being read to them. They often go inward and silent, on a journey with the author, as the adult reader is performing or reading the story. Children are drawn into a particular picturebook that invites them to walk around in the text accompanied by the illustrations, sharing and inventing a story with the author. Children try to come to terms with their own world, as they try to understand the story. Kathy Short a scholar of children’s literature, argues “that literature expands children’s life spaces through inquiries that take them outside the boundaries of their lives to other places, times, and ways of living. Similar to the way that hope, and imagination make it possible for children to rise

above their experiences to challenge inequity and envision social change” (2010, 50).

Picturebooks also encourage children’s transformational growth by encouraging them to make sense of their own lived experiences and emotions related to picturebooks’ characters and events. The adult-mediated use of picturebooks is central to bibliotherapy and is pivotal to help children explore the picturebook’s full meaning and relevance. Suppose a picturebook becomes too much to manage emotionally. In that case, it is easy for children to pause, have a break, absorb the issues raised in the story, or stop reading the picturebook.

Children can make meaning of the narratives in picturebooks and their emotions through conversation with adult readers, mediating the process. They make valuable connections that can influence their mental health and emotional well-being, affecting their ability to understand the characters’ experiences and their own lived experiences.

Author and Literature scholar David Metzger says, “stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So, it helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside stories and stories between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is getting lost. If you're lost, you start to look around and listen. Moral: be prepared to take risks” (Metzger 1979 qtd. in Evans 4).

Children often get lost in the world of stories and picturebooks and must connect in their own way to the story and to their life experiences, and that is their journey. Mikkelsen argues “the more absorbed children become, living through the story as one of the characters, the more actively and deeply involved they become in the reading event, the deeper the pleasure they take in the story, the more strongly they will be engaged in aesthetic literacy or what we might describe as being lost in the book” (2005, 174). Rosenblatt says, “the reading event is dynamic, a transaction producing both the active role of reader and text in interpretation” (Mikkelsen 2005,

175). Mikkelsen says that a book is not a “work” until the reader's personal interpretation brings it into existence” (2005, 176). Through encountering the characters and stories in picturebooks, children can begin to be aware that they are not the only ones’ who have personal dilemmas or concerns. “Children shape literature in terms of their worlds and reshape their worlds in new and different ways after reading books that evoke their deep engagement with the book, or their aesthetic literacy, which emerges when many other literacies are arising and interweaving with one another” (2005, 176).

Children’s literature can be therapeutic as it can enable personal growth and support children's individual experiences. Picturebooks contain ideas for children to view different outlooks, ideas, and ways of functioning in the world. Picturebooks, too, offer an inexhaustible resource that is available for adults and children to access.

Children’s picturebooks provide a fantastic way to bridge the gap between confusion and understanding as it can relieve stressful times for children. Lovorn says research indicates that children who do not get early intervention when they have emotional issues and who are not encouraged to express themselves are much more likely to suffer socially and mentally in the long run. Michael DiPaolo, a clinical psychologist whose area of specialty is in mental health, states “that such traumatic experiences may affect children in a variety of ways, some of which we cannot predict” (qtd.in Lovorn 2000, 30). Browne acknowledges that “reading a picturebook can be a very cerebral process that even academics have admitted as they study the importance of picturebooks” (qtd.in Evans 2010, 178). Therefore, children should be given plenty of opportunities to read, share, think, ask, and talk about picturebooks. Children linger over picturebooks creating meaning from what they read. Bibliotherapy is a powerful process and can be used both educationally and therapeutically to aid in the healing process for children.

“Our mental lives are like a glass filled with water and mud. Sometimes the contents are still and settled. We can live adequately with the fact that parts of our lives are clear and other parts are murky and muddy. Muddy and murky is crucial to our personal growth, according to Buddhist teachers.” Lotus flowers grow in the mud and thrive in these conditions. The height is perfect and beautiful on top of the water, even though it grows in the muddy water. It is a beautiful image because people can overcome their inner struggles and muddiness to thrive and be beautiful. When people feel anxious, sad, worried, or overwhelmed, everything appears unclear or muddy. Just like when the water becomes murky, and everything appears to be spoilt or dirty, this is when the mud must settle. I discovered this past summer while canoeing in a beautiful lake near Algonquin Park that had many lily flowers. When I plucked the lily flower from its roots and murky water to bring it back to shore to show off its beauty, it wilted and lost all its potency and attractiveness. The lily flower needed the mud, roots, and water to survive, thrive, flourish, and perpetuate its beauty. What is hidden and under the surface is necessary for our existence and allows us to flourish and express our individuality. We each have a story to share, and sometimes it is murky, but it makes us who we are.

Making a glitter jar with the children is a creative and functional way to teach children to let the mud or glitter settle and to help them to develop clear thinking by responding instead of reacting. I demonstrated how to shake the glitter jar and to watch the glitter settle. They created their own mindfulness jar. They were able to see how important it is to allow their thoughts to settle for things to be clear. Children must pause and have that space before they respond accordingly. The mindfulness jar acts as a reminder for children to stop, slow down, wait and think clearly before responding instead of reacting impulsively.

As an extension of this study, parents have approached me in the school to let me know how much their children have taught them, by sharing with them mindfulness concepts and the book, *The Present*, and how thankful they are about this and how it has opened their eyes up to be more mindful themselves in their lives and especially when they parent. The parents mentioned how important they feel these lessons are for students and how it has taught them to be mindful and fully present with their children. It has been a reminder for parents to be mindful and to have a parental presence. *The Present* has given parents an introduction into contemplative practices. As a result, it is the children teaching their parents, siblings, and grandparents about mindfulness, being present and the concept of contemplation, it is the children who are imparting their knowledge. Nhat Hanh eloquently said, “in a family, if there is one person who practices mindfulness, the entire family will be more mindful. Because of the presence of one member who lives in mindfulness, the entire family is reminded to live in mindfulness. If in one class, one student lives in mindfulness, the entire class is influenced” (1976, 64). Therefore, in this study by teaching Grade Two students about mindfulness the ripple effect was felt both in the children’s classroom, the whole school and in the children’s family homes.

Empathy is the capacity to stand in someone else’s shoes to understand how they think and feel from their perspective. Through lessons on mindfulness, this study introduced children to the concept of being mindful of others, always thinking of themselves in relation to others and being aware of the interconnectedness of all living beings in the world. The EmQue-CA questionnaire was able to assess children’s level of empathy, kindness, and compassion. Both boys and girls attained high ratings on the Prosocial Motivation subtest of the empathy EmQue-CA questionnaire administered after the lessons on mindfulness, “Mindfulness Matters to Us.”

These high scores of prosocial motivation attest to the benefits of using bibliotherapy in a mindfulness course to educate students about mindfulness and how the contemplative practice of mindfulness unfolds and can contribute to the development of empathy in children and the emotional well-being of all concerned.

Victor Frankl made a very profound statement in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, which can be related to mindfulness and how we function in the world and find meaning. "Man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition to be sure, that his suffering has meaning" (1962, 113). Mindfulness does not eradicate the problems or suffering one encounters; instead, it allows us to create that space to find meaning in our lives. We need to be present and mindful of ourselves and respond mindfully to the suffering of others and be connected to our environment. Mindfulness helps children to manage their internal world as they are learning to navigate their external world and what is going on in their lives. On a wider level we can develop what "David Forbes (2016) calls a democratic, civic mindfulness that creates an equitable and shared meaning of the common good. Attention could progressively shift from 'me' to 'we', avoiding narcissistic self-absorption. As in loving-kindness meditations, it is logical to start with oneself and widen out to other people" (Simpson 2017, 22).

I conclude with an important statement made by Orr, "contemplative traditions provide a rich repertoire of practices that can lead students to develop these resources and bring them to bear as they face the future" (2018, 244).

#### 8.1.1 Afterword

Loy says, "a story is an account of something." He further postulates that "if the world is made up of stories, stories are not just stories. They teach us what is real, what is valuable, and

what is possible. Without stories, there is no way to engage with the world because there is no world, and no one to engage with it because there is no self” (2010, 3).

This study revealed the value in educating children about the process of being mindful of themselves and others through bibliotherapy, as stories about mindfulness matter to us.

The impact of the “Mindfulness Matters to Us” program has ramifications not only for the students and teachers in Grade Two in the classrooms, but it has wonderful ripple effects in the extended school community and extended to the student’s family.

It is my hope that university-based researchers will educate, collaborate, and inform administrators in the school systems to integrate mindfulness-based programs in the Grade K-12 curriculum. It is important to recognize that for individuals to work on themselves and their own personal mindfulness practices is a start, in order to learn to work with others. However, we need to create caring, contemplative practices or ‘we spaces’ simultaneously in order to build an integral model for a more mindful equitable society.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval



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RESEARCH  
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Certificate #: STU 2019-064  
Approval Period: 06/20/19-06/20/20

### ETHICS APPROVAL

**To:** Debra Danilewitz  
Department of Humanities  
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies  
Graduate Student

**From:** Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics  
(on behalf of Veronica Jannik, Chair, Human Participants Review Committee)

**Date:** Thursday June 20, 2019

**Title:** Incorporating Children's Mindfulness: Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy

**Risk Level:** ☒ Minimal Risk ☐ More than Minimal Risk

**Level of Review:** ☒ Delegated Review ☐ Full Committee Review

I am writing to inform you that this research project, "**Incorporating Children's Mindfulness: Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy**" has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

Note that approval is granted for one year. Ongoing research – research that extends beyond one year – must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process by submission of an amendment application to the HPRC prior to its implementation.

Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research ethics ([ore@yorku.ca](mailto:ore@yorku.ca)) as soon as possible.

For further information on researcher responsibilities as it pertains to this approved research ethics protocol, please refer to the attached document, "**RESEARCH ETHICS: PROCEDURES to ENSURE ONGOING COMPLIANCE**".

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: [acollins@yorku.ca](mailto:acollins@yorku.ca).

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LL.M.  
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,  
Office of Research Ethics

## Appendix B: Permission for Study

 <b>Bialik</b> Bialik Hebrew Day School <i>וְהָיוּ הַיְּהוּדִים עַם נָאֻם</i>	<b>York University</b> <b>Humanities Graduate Program</b> 239 Vanier College, 4700 Keele Street Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
<b>Minimex Branch and Administrative Office</b> 1700 Midland Ave. Toronto, ON M8B 3A1	<b>To Whom It May Concern</b>
<b>The Hon and Edith Himel Education Centre on the Jewish &amp; World Education Jewish Community Centre</b> 300 Danforth Rd. Vaughan, ON L6A 4P6	<b>I acknowledge receipt of Debra Danilewitz's proposal to conduct research on "Children's Mindfulness: Incorporating Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy". I hereby give Debra Danilewitz permission to carry out her research with Grade Two students at Bialik Hebrew Day School.</b>
<b>Head of School</b> Beverley Young	<b>Thank you</b>
<b>President of the Board of Directors</b> Anna Sene	<b>Beverley Young</b>
<b>Affiliated with The Julia and Henry Kochinsky Centre for Jewish Education and the Hebrew Jewish Movement of Canada</b>	<b>Principal - Himel Branch</b> <b>Bialik Hebrew Day School</b> <b>180 Dan Ramon Boulevard</b> <b>Vaughan,</b> <b>ON L6A 4P6</b>
<b>Not for Profit Organization Registration No. 962230914000000</b>	
<b>Place the seal of the people is forged</b> <i>וְהָיוּ הַיְּהוּדִים עַם נָאֻם</i>	
 <b>JFS Federation</b> <i>ישיבה פדרציה</i>	

## Appendix C: Consent Forms



**Bialik**  
Bialik Hebrew Day School  
אלה עם, יהודה עם, ישראל עם

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**Viewmont Branch and Administrative Office**  
2040 Kithur St.  
Toronto, ON M3J 2A7

**The Ben and Edith Himel Education Centre on the Joseph A. Wolf Campus**  
Jewish Community Campus  
165 Danforth Blvd.  
Vaughan, ON L6A 4N6

[www.bialik.ca](http://www.bialik.ca)

**Head of School**  
Benjamin Cohen

**President of the Board of Directors**  
Rachelle Waxman

*Affiliated with The Federation of Jewish Communities of Canada, the Jewish Education and the Labour Zionist Movement of Canada*

*Not for Profit Organization*  
Registration No. 863335814/000000

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*From the soul of the people is forged*  
*ממנו אנוגף' עמונו יצרנו*

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**JCA FEDERATION**  
of Jewish Communities  
The JCA & JARI FEDERATIONS  
COOPER FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

October 10, 2019

Dear Parents of Students in Grade 2AH and 2BH,

Welcome back to our returning families and to those new families who have joined Bialik. It has been my pleasure to serve as the school counsellor at Bialik for 26 years, with the last three being at Himel.

I am currently completing my doctorate degree through the Department of Humanities at York University. My research is looking at the introduction of mindfulness instruction into elementary classrooms using picturebooks. The main goal of these lessons is to teach students strategies to be mindful as a way to promote the growth of self awareness, empathy and resilience. As you may be aware, Bialik's character education program focuses on the fundamental traits encompassed by the acronym SAGE, which stands for Self and Social Awareness, Grit and Empathy. Through my lessons, students will learn ways to self-regulate, to focus on the present, to respond instead of react, and will also learn the value of being grateful, kind, compassionate and generally mindful of themselves and others.

Mindfulness practice has become mainstream, making its way into schools. At Bialik this practice has been integrated into the curriculum over the past three years. The Bialik Administration, with teacher support, has granted permission for me to present eight lessons, each fifteen minutes in duration, to Grade Two students beginning in October 2019. As part of my research, I will then evaluate these lessons in terms of the goals of instruction, and how effectively students respond to and are able to independently implement the strategies they learn about mindfulness during these lessons. Current research points to enhanced emotional literacy as a powerful and productive way for students to learn about themselves and others.

It is planned that all students will participate in the lessons in class. Confidentiality will be upheld and no children's names will be used in the report. If you choose for your child not to be part of this study report, I will respect your decision and they will not be included in either the data collection or write up for the study, however, they will still participate in the lessons.

I would appreciate your reading the attached Assent Form to your child. Please sign and return this form to school in the enclosed envelope for my attention by October 18, 2019.

Thank you for cooperation.  
Shana Tova to you and your family.

Yours sincerely,

Debra Danilewitz  
School Counsellor

# Assent Form

Parental consent form for research with students under 18 years old.

**Incorporating Children's Mindfulness: Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy**

**Date :** October 10, 2019

**Researcher name:**

- Debra Danilewitz
- Department of Humanities York University, Doctorate Degree
- Principal Investigator

**Purpose of the Research:**

I, Debra Danilewitz, am doing this research for the purposes of my Doctorate Degree. I plan to write papers and do presentations on this topic. I have written and published a children's picturebook, *The Present*, which was created to help children understand the concepts of mindfulness. Students will be given a copy of this book to work in during the lessons.

The aim of this study is to examine the use of picturebooks as a tool to facilitate learning about mindfulness.

**What Will Students Be Asked to Do in the Research?**

- Students will participate in the lessons using picturebooks that address different aspects of mindfulness. These lessons will be designed and implemented by me, Debra Danilewitz, for Grade Two students.
- Students will complete an interactive picturebook, *The Present*, and will be asked to complete a one page survey in class at the beginning and end of the unit of study.

**Risks and Discomforts:**

- I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from participation in the research. In the case that feelings may be aroused by the picturebooks I will address those feelings with the individual or group, as necessary.

**Benefits of the Research and Benefits to Students:**

- The benefits of the research will be to learn about the concepts of mindfulness and begin to practise being mindful.
- Mindfulness techniques can be beneficial as students will learn new ways of implementing emotional regulation, which can translate into better emotional wellness.

**Confidentiality:**

- I have developed lessons on mindfulness and will evaluate the impact of mindfulness training on students.
- I will collect data on the computer. This data will be gathered without names and will be securely stored. I will keep the data for five years until July 2024, after which time it will be deleted.
- I will evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive book, *The Present*, which each student will receive to work through. Students will keep their copy of the book.
- All information supplied during the research will be held in confidence. No names will appear in any report or publication of the research at any time.
- Data will be collected via handwritten notes and digital device. The data will be safely stored in a locked facility (electronic and hard copy), and only I, the researcher will have access to this information.
- Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent of the law.
- If you choose for your child not to participate in the study, I accept your decision. However, your child will still participate in the mindfulness lessons in class.

**Questions About the Research**

This research is approved by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is a delegated authority that reviews research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board. This

## Verbal Consent Form

### Verbal consent form for research of student under 18 years old

#### Incorporating Children's Mindfulness: Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy

Date: May 12 2019

#### Researcher name:

- Debra Danilewitz
- Department of Humanities York University, Doctorate Degree
- I am the Principal Investigator

#### Purpose of the Research:

- The aim of this study is to examine picturebooks as a means to help you learn to be mindful and develop the capacity to be empathic.
- This study will explore how mindfulness can be incorporated in picturebooks to help you develop the capacity to be personally mindful and mindful of others, and will examine what role the practice of mindfulness has on the development of empathy in children.
- *The Present* is a colouring picturebook, and you will have the opportunity to complete it.
- This is a new unit of study that I will teach the students through picturebooks on mindfulness.
- An eight-session program will be designed and implemented by me for Grade Two students using picturebooks on mindfulness that you will participate in.
- I will administer a questionnaire of empathy after the eight-week session.
- I am doing this research for the purposes of my Doctorate Degree, I plan to write papers and do presentations on this topic I hope to be able to publish the children's picturebook *The Present* that I wrote to help children understand the concepts of mindfulness.



### **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship with me either now or in the future.

You may still participate in the eight session lessons if you wish to withdraw from the study. In the event of you withdrawing from the study; all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed.

### **What Will Students Be Asked to Do in the Research?**

- You will participate in an eight-session program using picturebooks on mindfulness, which will be designed and implemented by me, Debra Danilewitz for Grade Two students.
- You will listen to picturebooks being read to you on mindfulness and each of the eight lessons will focus on a different aspect of mindfulness.
- You will complete an interactive picturebook, *The Present*, my original work, on mindfulness.

Each of the eight sessions will be twenty minutes in duration. Where you will learn about mindfulness in their classroom.

### **Benefits of the Research and Benefits to Students:**

- The benefits of the research will be that you will learn about the concepts of mindfulness and begin to practice to be mindful.
- Mindfulness techniques can only benefit you, as you will learn new ways of emotional regulation.

### **Confidentiality:**

- I will develop lesson plans for each session and evaluate the lesson and how you understand the concepts; I will collect my data on the computer, which will be securely stored. I will keep my data for five years July 2024.
- I will use my data to make recommendations for introducing mindfulness to the other grades in the elementary division. I will evaluate the interactive book *The Present*, my original work, which you will obtain to work through.
- Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.

- The data will be collected, e.g., handwritten notes, video/audio tapes, and digital device. My data will be safely stored in a locked facility (electronic and hard copy) data will be securely stored] and only I will have access to this information.
- If you choose not to participate in the study I understand and it will not affect my relationship with you, however you will still need to participate in the lessons I teach in class on mindfulness.
- Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.
- **Questions About the Research**
- If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to ask me.
- This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines
- I <<fill in your name here>>, give verbal consent to participate in the study conducted by Debra Danilewitz.

**Incorporating Children's Mindfulness: Picturebooks in Bibliotherapy**

- Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Participant (Student)
- Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date June 2019
- Principal Investigator

## Appendix D: EmQue-CA

Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents – EmQue-CA English

### EmQue-CA

Below you will find 18 short sentences. Every sentence is a statement about how you can react to other people's feelings. You can mark each sentence if this is often true, sometimes true or not true for you. Choose the answer that best fits you. You can only mark one answer. Please remember that there are no wrong or right answers.

	Not True	Sometimes True	Often True
1. If my mother is happy, I also feel happy.	0	1	2
2. I understand that a friend is ashamed when he/she has done something wrong.	0	1	2
3. If a friend is sad, I like to comfort him.	0	1	2
4. I feel awful when two people quarrel.	0	1	2
5. When a friend is angry, I tend to know why.	0	1	2
6. I would like to help when a friend gets angry.	0	1	2
7. If a friend is sad, I also feel sad.	0	1	2
8. I understand that a friend is proud when he/she has done something good.	0	1	2
9. If a friend has an argument, I try to help.	0	1	2
10. If a friend is laughing, I also laugh.	0	1	2
11. If a friend is sad, I understand mostly why.	0	1	2
12. I want everyone to feel good.	0	1	2
13. When a friend cries, I cry myself.	0	1	2
14. If a friend cries, I often understand what has happened.	0	1	2
15. If a friend is sad, I want to do something to make it better.	0	1	2
16. If someone in my family is sad, I feel really bad.	0	1	2
17. I enjoy giving a friend a gift.	0	1	2
18. When a friend is upset, I feel upset too.	0	1	2

*EmQue-CA Scales & syntax*

**Answering options:** Not True (0) – Sometimes True (1) – Often True(2)

**Affective Empathy (Contagion)**

1. If my mother is happy, I also feel happy
4. I feel awful when two people quarrel
7. If a friend is sad, I also feel sad
10. If a friend is laughing, I also laugh
13. When a friend cries, I cry myself
16. If someone in my family is sad, I feel really bad
18. When a friend is upset, I feel upset too

**Cognitive Empathy (Understanding)**

2. I understand that a friend is ashamed when he/she has done something wrong
5. When a friend is angry, I tend to know why
8. I understand that a friend is proud when he/she has done something good
11. If a friend is sad, I understand mostly why
14. If a friend cries, I often understand what has happened

**Prosocial Motivation (Support)**

3. If a friend is sad, I like to comfort him
6. I would like to help when a friend gets angry
9. If a friend has an argument, I try to help
12. I want everyone to feel good
15. If a friend is sad, I want to do something to make it better
17. I enjoy giving a friend a gift

**Syntax**

Scoring:

Not True = 0

Sometimes True = 1

Often True = 2

Compute EmAff = MEAN (emp1, emp4, emp7, emp10, emp13, emp16, emp18).

Compute EmCog = MEAN (emp2, emp5, emp8, emp11, emp14).

Compute EmPro = MEAN (emp3, emp6, emp9, emp12, emp15, emp17).

## Appendix E: “Mindfulness Matters to Us”

### MINDFULNESS MATTERS TO US PROGRAM

<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>	
<b>Mindfulness Lesson One:</b>	
<b>Date: October 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Everybody Present.</b> <b>What does it mean to be present?</b> <b>What is Mindfulness?</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Learn about the concept of being present and in the moment.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Being Present Listening to others Listening to the story Listening to your breath	
<b>Books:</b> Read the book, <i>What Does it Mean to be Present?</i> by Rana Diorio.	
<b>Lesson:</b> Mindfulness Practice. After reading the book, we will sit in a circle. After that, we will discuss the book’s main ideas. Then we will do one minute of mindful practice.  <b>Everybody Present.</b> We will discuss what it means to be present. Students will each get a raisin to chew and taste, to notice what they are doing in the present moment. Students are to savour the taste and experience what it is to be mindful by doing a single task. Allow students to find a partner and ask students what their favourite thing to do is with their	

mom, dad, sister, or brother. Let them listen to each other, really listen, and then have them repeat back to the bigger plenary what their partner had said to them.

This allows students to experience what it means to be in the present moment and what it is to be there for someone else and listen to them.

We will then learn about Five Finger Breathing and Triangle Breathing and how it can help children calm down and help with their self-regulation.

Then students will be introduced to the concept of a breathing buddy.

Students will focus on breathing, inhaling, smelling the flowers, exhaling, and blowing out the candles. They will do this with their breathing buddy.

Also, they will practice different breathing techniques: Five Finger Breathing, Triangle Breathing, Hand on Heart Breathing and Figure Eight Breathing.

Questions to ask students:

How did you feel when you were listening to your breathing buddy?

Did you like that your breathing buddy was listening to you?

Remind the students that they should always listen to people to make them feel heard.

Which breathing technique did you feel comfortable practicing?

**Extension/Wrap-Up:**

Work through the interactive book, *The Present. pp. 1-4.*

The focus is on getting students to be in the present moment, to dedicate this book to someone in their lives, to capture the moment.

End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.

**Materials/Resources:**

Crayons

Pencil Crayons

<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>	
<b>Mindfulness Lesson Two</b>	
<b>Date: October 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
Focusing on doing one activity at a time.	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Learn to do one thing at a time.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Students should be aware of their movements and actions. Students should be aware of other people and the environment.	
<b>Books:</b> Read the book <i>Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda</i> , by Lauren Alderfer.	
<b>Lesson:</b> After reading the book, students will sit in a circle. Students will discuss the picturebook's main ideas, which is doing one thing at a time with intention and focus. Then the students will do one minute of mindful practice.  <b>Walking Mindfully:</b> The students participate in mindful walking in the classroom and in the hallways outside the classroom noticing with awe, what they see. It is important to explain to students that mindfulness is not just sitting in one spot, closing your eyes and being silent. Mindfulness is when you know what you are doing when you are doing what you are doing. You need to be mindful when you are eating, walking, doing your work or playing—not thinking about playing when you are working. Have the students start to walk “normally” but silently. Ask the students to pay attention to things in the classroom or outside, a bird, tree etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the students to notice their body movements and feel grateful that they can walk freely.</li> <li>• Tell the students to bring awareness to their legs. To notice</li> </ul>	

<p>how their legs and feet feel while they are moving. Tell students to carefully put their feet on the ground. Have students notice their heel touching the ground first, then the base of the foot, then the toes, then ask them to lift the feet one at a time. Ask students to say to themselves, “heel, foot, toes, lift.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruct students to walk slower, change their pace. Tell students to start to pay attention to the smells in the air. What does the temperature in the room feel like?</li> <li>• Are they warm, cold, or just, right?</li> <li>• What do they notice while walking?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b>  Work through the interactive book <i>The Present</i>. pp. 5-7.  The focus of this lesson is on ‘being in the moment,’ doing one thing at a time, and focusing on the task at hand.  End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources:</b>  Crayons  Pencil crayons</p>



<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>  <b>Mindfulness Lesson Three</b>	
Date: October 2019	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Strengthening Mindful Awareness</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Noticing and observing your thoughts.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> The objective is for students to become aware of their feelings and emotions. Teaching students to be calm and experience an inner stillness.	
<b>Books:</b> Read the book “ <i>Just Me and My Mind</i> ,” by Kerry Lee MacLean.	
<b>Lesson:</b> After reading the book they will sit in a circle. Students will discuss the book's main ideas. Then do one minute of mindful practice.  <b>Visualization exercise.</b> Request students to shut their eyes and envision a place where they are happy. What are they doing? Is it a sunny day? What is going on? Is it in your bed, your garden, cottage, at the beach? Close your eyes and visualize this special place. After the visualization, ask students how they feel when they remember their happy place? Remind them that whenever they feel sad, frustrated, or stressed they can go back to this calm, happy place to help bring them back to a calm state of mind. Students need to learn and practice noticing and observing their thoughts. Remind students to notice their thoughts but not to dwell on them.	
<b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>

Work through the interactive book, <i>The Present</i> . pp 8-11. End session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the session with the rain stick.	Crayons Pencil Crayons
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<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>	
<b>Mindfulness Lesson Four</b>	
<b>Date: October 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Stretching and Breathing Exercises</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Students can learn to manage their emotions by pausing to think and respond by making good choices.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Express emotions through speech. Find balance in some yoga poses. Find empathy in imagination. Help students understand the basic tenets of mindfulness by encouraging them to be aware and notice their breathing and be present in the here and now.	
<b>Books:</b> <i>I am Peace, A Book of Mindfulness</i> , by Susan Verde.	
<b>Lesson:</b> Do a mindfulness practice. After reading the book, students will sit in a circle. To begin, students will sit with their legs crossed and practice breathing in and out using Five-finger Breathing and Triangle Breathing. They will also learn how to breathe by smelling the flowers (inhaling) and blowing out the candles (exhaling). Students will then be taught how to do ten yoga poses.  <b>Yoga Poses.</b> Students will stand up. 1 <sup>st</sup> pose: Tadasana pose: feet together, palms facing forward, close	

<p>their eyes and take three deep breaths.</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> pose: Mountain pose: students will raise their hands over their heads, interlace their fingers and then reach over to one side and hold this pose for a few seconds.</p> <p>Students will then do the same on the other side. Students will then drop their hands and stand tall and strong like a mountain.</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> pose: Tree pose: students will place the sole of their left foot above or below their right knee and place their hands on their waist.</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> pose: The Warrior pose: be strong like a warrior. Students lunge forward with the back foot straight and their front leg that is forward bent. Arms raised on either side of their head held up to the sky.</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> pose: Downward Facing Dog pose: students will place their feet together folding their arms down in front of them placing them on the floor, stretched out, as a dog does with their back in an inverted 'v' position.</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> pose: Triangle pose: students to place their legs apart. One arm reaching for the ground, the other arm reaching up in the air.</p> <p>7<sup>th</sup> pose: Star pose: this is a stretching pose. Students will stand with both legs out wide and reach down with their arms through their legs reaching through with their hands.</p> <p>8<sup>th</sup> pose: Butterfly pose: students' soles of their feet are touching together when they sit in a seated pose.</p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> pose: Frog pose: students crouching down with their knees out wide and hands touching the floor between their legs.</p> <p>10<sup>th</sup> pose: Savasana pose: is a relaxation pose, students lie down on their backs and have their eyes closed. They listen to a progressive relaxation mindfulness exercise where the body will absorb all the energy expended in the previous poses and the students can relax mindfully.</p>	
<p><b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b></p> <p>Work through the interactive book, <i>The Present</i>. pp 11-14.</p> <p>To help students savour the moment. To help them understand how they can be mindful of their body through yoga poses and see how important it is to relax and do <i>savasana</i>, corpse pose. Students have to learn to see the importance of controlling their breath and their thoughts.</p> <p>End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources:</b></p> <p>Crayons</p> <p>Pencil Crayons</p>

<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>	
<b>Mindfulness Lesson Five</b>	
<b>Date: November 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotion Wellness</b>	
<b>Being Kind to Yourself and Others</b> <b>Showing Empathy</b> <b>Being Nonjudgmental</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> To understand the concept of kindness and how accepting others for who they are is a basic tenant of mindfulness. Understand the concepts of compassion and loving kindness.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Learning to be kind to yourself and others and being non- judgmental. Understanding empathy and compassion. “Look for kindness and you will always find wonder.” (Palacio 2018)	
<b>Books</b> <i>We Are All Wonders</i> , by R.J. Palacio Verde, Susan and Reynolds, Peter. <i>I am Human. A Book of Empathy</i> . New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2018. Print.	
<b>Lesson:</b> Mindfulness Practice After reading the books students will sit in a circle. Students will discuss the book’s main ideas; being unique and enjoying your own life and being empathic to others. Kindness and compassion for others will be highlighted. Then students will do one minute of mindful practice. <b>Body Scan</b> Teach the students to do a body scan by tensing and releasing their muscles in their body while sitting in their chairs or lying on the carpet. Allowing students to tense and release their muscles and experience letting go of tension. Reminds the students to be mindful when they are colouring their	

<p>book, <i>The Present</i>, and not to be critical of others' work. Do not pass judgment on your work or others' work. Accept what you have drawn and accept other student's work.</p>	
<p><b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b> Work through the interactive book <i>The Present</i>. pp. 15-16 Focus on exploring your life and the life of others as if it were a gift. Noticing how students' attitudes are pivotal in terms of themselves and how they perceive others. Help them to be aware of how this shapes their thinking and actions. Discuss the concept of being non-judgmental towards others and how important it is to accept yourself for who you are and to accept differences in others. End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources:</b> Paper Crayons Pencil crayons</p>

<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>  <b>Mindfulness Lesson Six</b>	
<b>Date: October 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Gratitude Journaling Drawing</b>	:
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Gratitude  <b>Learning Expectations:</b> Students learn to be thankful and grateful for what they have been given.	
<b>Books:</b> Read: <i>The Thankful Book</i> by Todd Parr <i>The Thank You Book</i> by Mo Williams	
<b>Lesson:</b> After reading the book the students will sit in a circle for a post story discussion Students will engage in a discussion of the book's main ideas. Then do a one minute of mindfulness practice. Students to share what they are thankful for and what gratitude means to them. Students will write a note for what they are thankful for and will add a thankful statement like in the book, <i>The Thankful Book</i> . Students to write a note of gratitude to give to someone in their life and take it home to share with their parents	
<b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b> Work through the interactive book <i>The Present</i> . pp.17-18 Being mindful of what they are doing in this lesson. Feeling grateful and letting others know how grateful they are, which is linked to this section of the book, <i>The Present</i> .	<b>Materials/ Resources:</b> White Paper Markers Crayons

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<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>  <b>Mindfulness Lesson Seven</b>	
<b>Date: November 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Laughter, Letting Go, Looking Inward</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Students are learning to let things be and move on.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Help students to let go of their anger and their worries. Accept and manage their present situation by being in the moment.	
<b>Books:</b> Read the book, <i>Whimsy's Heavy Things</i> , by Julie Kralis. <i>Take the Time... Mindfulness for Kids</i> , by Maud Roegiers. <i>My Magic Breath. Finding Calm Through Mindful Breathing</i> , by Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor Pictures by Michelle Polizzi.	
<b>Lesson:</b> Mindfulness Practice. After reading these books, students will sit in a circle. Students will discuss the main ideas of letting go of our feelings and breaking down our worries into smaller portions. Taking the time just to value the healing nature of our breath. Then do a minute of mindful practice.  <b>A Cup of Mindfulness.</b> This is an active Mindfulness exercise where students can experience what it means to be mindful.	

<p>Students will pass a full cup of water around to each other while they are sitting in a circle. They will be mindful not to spill the water. The concept of giving and receiving is also outlined, holding onto something, and then letting it go purposefully.</p> <p>I discussed this concept of letting things go and breaking up heavy things into small manageable parts.</p> <p>Kabat-Zinn (2012) says, “letting go is an essential part of being mindful; it is the opposite of clinging or grasping. Letting go reminds us that it is possible not to get involved in grasping or clinging to what we want and trying to push away what we don’t like because it’s inevitable that things arise that are unpleasant that you want to push away. So, letting go or letting things be as they are, is the doorway to freedom and letting go is something that you don’t do once, it is something that you practice repeatedly. Letting go is as important as releasing one’s breath, to allow room for the next breath.”</p> <p>Every time we breathe in, we must let go of the previous breath. Allow students to do magic breathing with a breathing buddy to experience the inhalation and exhalation of their breath.</p>	
<p><b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b></p> <p>Work through the interactive book, <i>The Present</i>. pp. 21-26.</p> <p>Focus on the section of letting go of negative feelings related to self and others and when to hold on to feelings - working on the area in the book of holding and letting go of the balloons.</p> <p>End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources:</b></p> <p>Pencil Crayons</p> <p>Crayons</p>



<b>Mindfulness Matters to Us</b>  <b>Mindfulness Lesson Eight</b>	
<b>Date: November 2019</b>	
<b>Unit of Study: Mindfulness and Emotional Wellness</b>	
<b>Toolbox for Mindfulness Practice</b>	
<b>Curriculum Expectations:</b> Students need to recognize when they need to calm themselves down and practice self-talk. Students need to think about how they can be mindful and show kindness, compassion, empathy, and gratitude to others.	
<b>Learning Expectations:</b> Learning about self-regulation and showing kindness and compassion to others.	
<b>Books:</b> Read <i>Peaceful Piggy Meditation</i> , by Kerry Lee Maclean.	
<b>Lesson:</b> Mindfulness practice After reading the book, we will sit in a circle. Students will engage in a discussion of the book's main ideas. Then students will do one minute of mindfulness practice.  <b>Mindfulness Glitter Jar</b> Students can make their own glitter mindfulness jar. Various items are given to students to be placed in the jar, and the concept of the mindfulness glitter jar explained to students. A glitter jar is one of the most powerful visual metaphors, as it shows children how mindfulness operates. To build the capacity to be still and calm in a busy life, one must slow down, and just like the glitter settles in the jar, so too, should our thoughts that are swirling in our mind. These thoughts should settle down before we respond. Observing the glitter jars can be contemplative, as just watching the glitter settle can be linked with children taking deep breaths to help calm them down while watching the glitter settle in the jar. For ex-	

<p>ample, you can shake the jar and say: “Let’s do some mindful breaths until the glitter settles.”</p> <p>Explain to students their thoughts and feelings are real; they can be aware of them and put them aside. The students need to pause and use the space to think things through carefully before responding skillfully, as they are developing a mindful approach.</p>	
<p><b>Extension/Wrap-Up:</b></p> <p>Complete the book <i>The Present</i> pp. 27-34. The focus being on a person’s attitude and being grateful and showing gratitude, kindness, compassion, and empathy to others in your life.</p> <p>End the session with a mindful meditation beginning and ending the mindful minute meditation with the sound of the rain stick.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources:</b></p> <p>Glitter A jar Beads Charms Crayons Pencil Crayons</p>

# **The Present**

## **Mindfulness Colouring Book**



**Debra Danilewitz**

## Appendix G: Student Reflection Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reflection Sheet

1. What did you learn from our mindfulness lessons?

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2. What was your favourite part of the book "The Present"?

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3. What mindfulness strategy do you want to try and use?

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## Appendix H: Statistical Analysis

### Results of EmQue Before and After Lessons on ‘Mindfulness Matters to Us’

One group of Grade Two students -34 students

#### **Paired sample T-test, using T distribution (DF=32) (right-tailed) (validation)**

##### **1. H. hypothesis**

Since  $p\text{-value} > \alpha$ ,  $H_0$  is accepted.

The average of **After minus Before's** population is considered to be **less than or equal to** the  $\mu_0$ .

##### **2. P-value**

p-value equals **0.832948**, ( $p(x \leq t) = 0.167052$ ). This means that if we reject  $H_0$ , the chance of type I error (rejecting a correct  $H_0$ ) would be too high: 0.8329 (83.29%).

The larger the p-value, the more it supports  $H_0$ .

##### **3. The statistics**

The test statistic  $t$  equals **-0.980688**, is in the 95% critical value accepted range:  $[-\infty : 1.6939]$ .  $x = -1.00$ , is in the 95% accepted range:  $[-\infty : 1.7300]$ .

##### **4. Effect size**

The observed standardized effect size is small (0.17). That indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average and  $\mu_0$  is small.

#### **Affective Empathy**

#### **Paired sample T-test, using T distribution (DF=33) (right-tailed) (validation)**

##### **1. H. hypothesis**

Since  $p\text{-value} > \alpha$ ,  $H_0$  is accepted.

The average of **After minus Before's** population is considered to be **less than or equal to** the  $\mu_0$ .

##### **2. P-value**

p-value equals **0.928226**, ( $p(x \leq t) = 0.0717741$ ). This means that if we reject  $H_0$ , the chance of type I error (rejecting a correct  $H_0$ ) would be too high: 0.9282 (92.82%).

The larger the p-value, the more it supports  $H_0$ .

##### **3. The statistics**

The test statistic  $t$  equals **-1.498350**, is in the 95% critical value accepted range:  $[-\infty : 1.6924]$ .  $x = -0.82$ , is in the 95% accepted range:  $[-\infty : 0.9300]$ .

##### **4. Effect size**

The observed standardized effect size is small (0.26). That indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average and  $\mu_0$  is small.

## Cognitive Empathy

### Paired sample T-test, using T distribution (DF=31) (right-tailed) (validation)

#### 1. H hypothesis

Since  $p\text{-value} > \alpha$ ,  $H_0$  is accepted.

The average of **After minus Before's** population is considered to be **less than or equal to** the  $\mu_0$ .

#### 2. P-value

p-value equals **0.273075**, ( $p(x \leq t) = 0.726925$ ). This means that if we reject  $H_0$ , the chance of type I error (rejecting a correct  $H_0$ ) would be too high: 0.2731 (27.31%).

The larger the p-value, the more it supports  $H_0$ .

#### 3. The statistics

The test statistic  $t$  equals **0.610242**, is in the 95% critical value accepted range:  $[-\infty : 1.6955]$ .  $x=0.22$ , is in the 95% accepted range:  $[-\infty : 0.6100]$ .

#### 4. Effect size

The observed standardized effect size is small (0.11). That indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average and  $\mu_0$  is small.

## Prosocial Motivation

### Paired sample T-test, using T distribution (DF=33) (right-tailed) (validation)

#### 1. H hypothesis

Since  $p\text{-value} > \alpha$ ,  $H_0$  is accepted.

The average of **After minus Before's** population is considered to be **less than or equal to** the  $\mu_0$ .

#### 2. P-value

p-value equals **0.500000**, ( $p(x \leq t) = 0.500000$ ). This means that if we reject  $H_0$ , the chance of type I error (rejecting a correct  $H_0$ ) would be too high: 0.5000 (50.00%).

The larger the p-value, the more it supports  $H_0$ .

#### 3. The statistics

The test statistic  $t$  equals **0.000000**, is in the 95% critical value accepted range:  $[-\infty : 1.6924]$ .  $x=0.0$ , is in the 95% accepted range:  $[-\infty : 0.8100]$ .

#### 4. Effect size

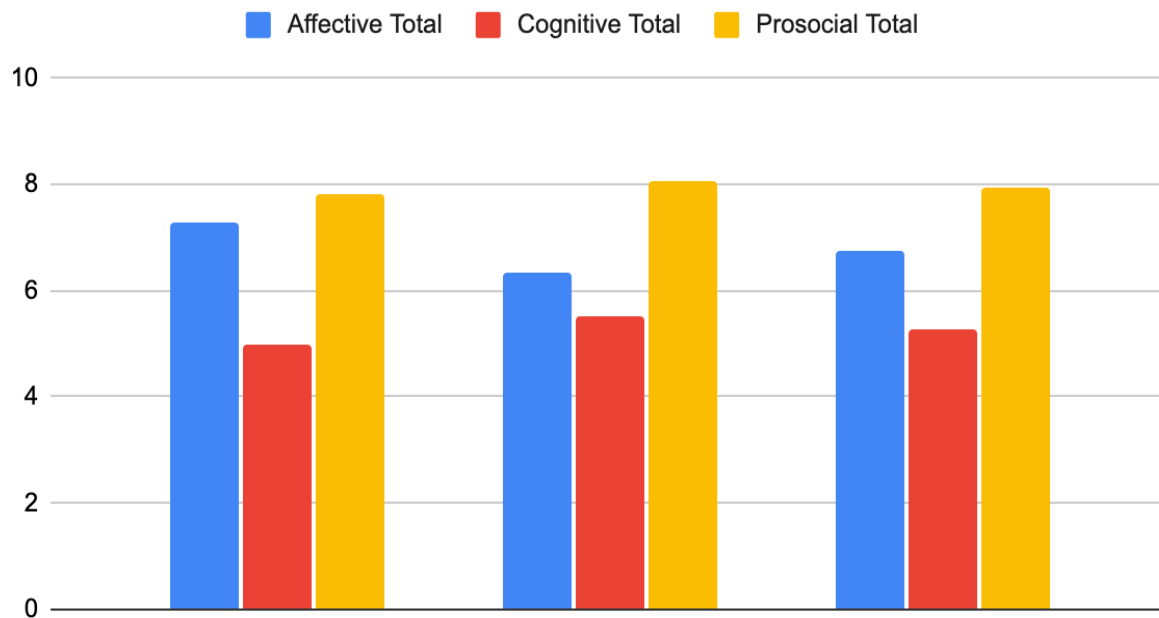
The observed standardized effect size is small (0.0). That indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average and  $\mu_0$  is small.

### Mean and Median of the total group before and after lessons on Mindfulness

<i><b>BEFORE Mean Value (Totals divided by the number of students)</b></i>		
<u><b>Affective Total</b></u>	<u><b>Cognitive Total</b></u>	<u><b>Prosocial Total</b></u>
7.27	5.00	7.80
6.32	5.53	8.05
6.74	5.29	7.94
<i><b>AFTER Mean Value (Totals divided by the number of students)</b></i>		
<u><b>Affective Total</b></u>	<u><b>Cognitive Total</b></u>	<u><b>Prosocial Total</b></u>
5.47	4.93	7.33
6.26	6.05	8.42
6.28	5.91	8.44
<i><b>BEFORE - Median Values</b></i>		
<u><b>Affective Total</b></u>	<u><b>Cognitive Total</b></u>	<u><b>Prosocial Total</b></u>
7.00	5.00	8.00
6.00	6.00	8.00
7.00	5.00	8.00
<i><b>AFTER - Median Values</b></i>		
<u><b>Affective Total</b></u>	<u><b>Cognitive Total</b></u>	<u><b>Prosocial Total</b></u>
5.00	5.00	8.00
7.00	6.00	9.00
6.00	5.50	8.00

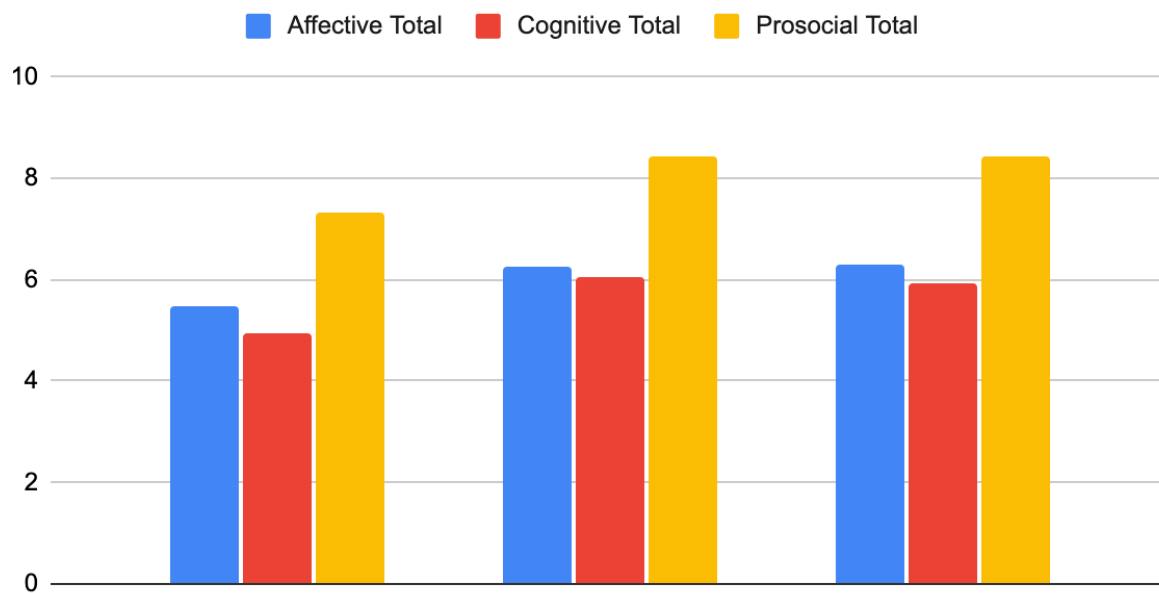
## BEFORE Mean Values

Totals divided by the number of students



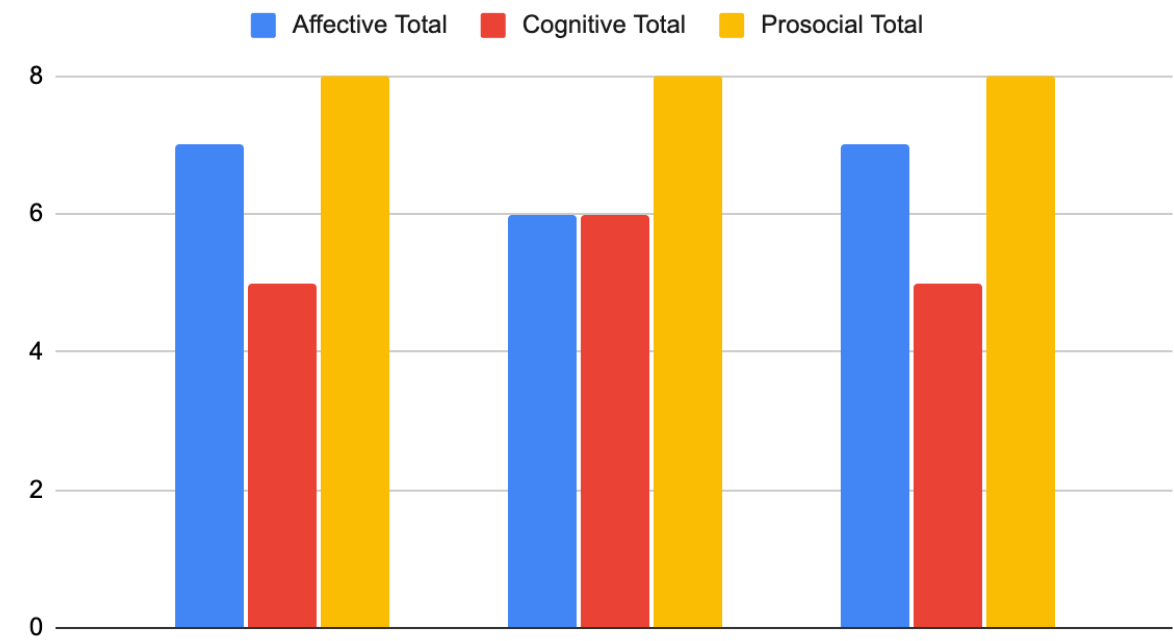
## AFTER Mean Values

Totals divided by the number of students

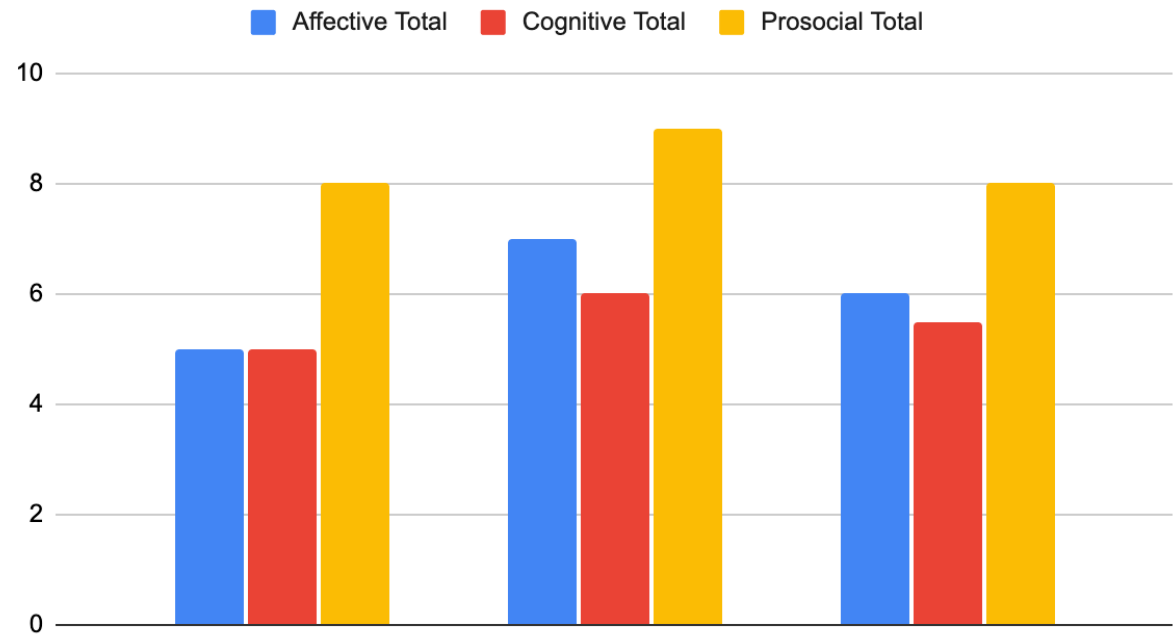




BEFORE Median Values



AFTER Median Values

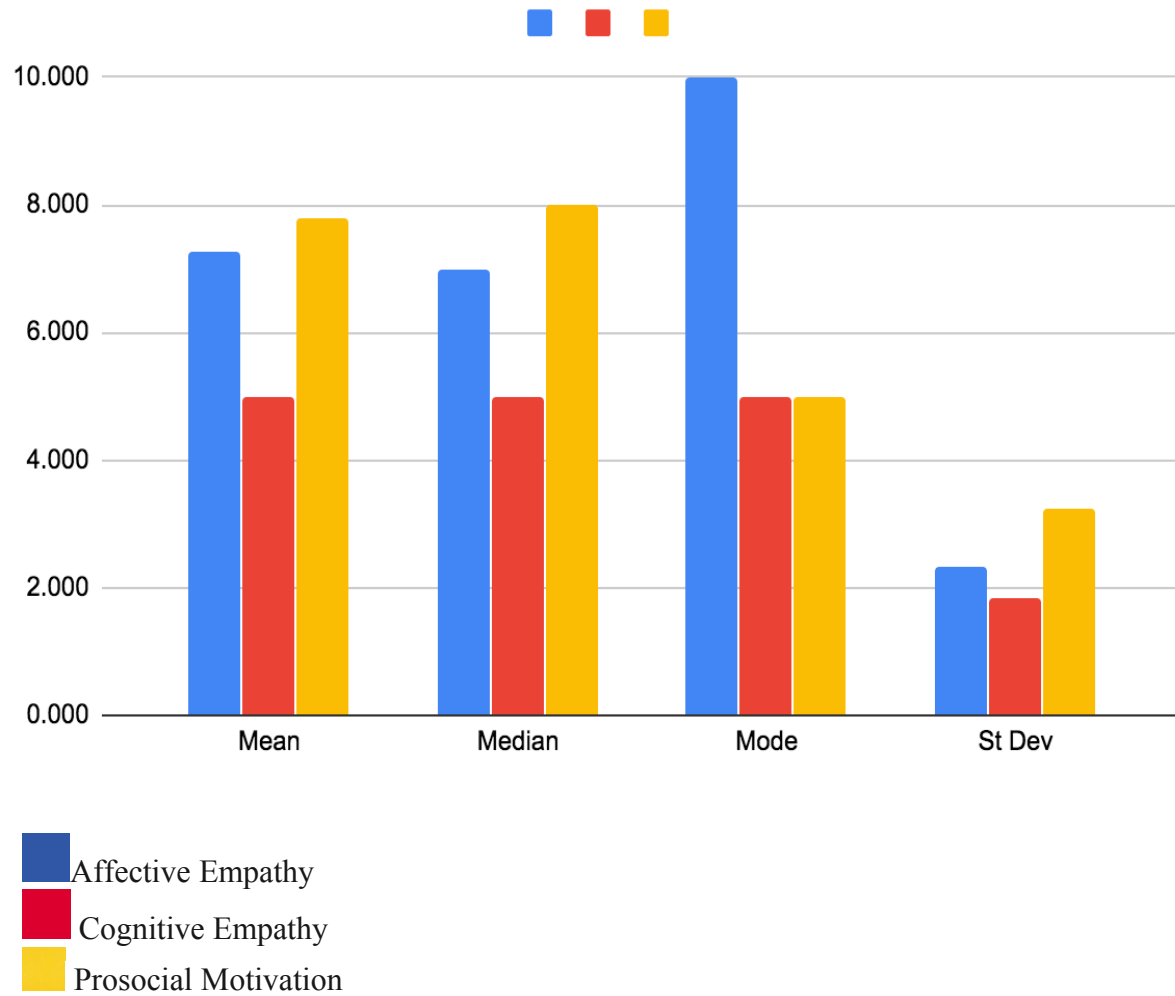


**Differences between the boys and girls in terms of the mean and median and distribution of scores.**

<b>BEFORE Mindfulness Lessons</b>	<b>Gende r</b>	<b>Num- ber</b>	<b><u>Affective Empathy Total</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Em- pathy Total</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation Total</u></b>
	Boy	15	109	75	117
	Girl	19	120	105	153
<b>AFTER Mindfulness Lessons</b>	<b>Gende r</b>	<b>Num- ber</b>	<b><u>Affective Empathy Total</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Empathy Total</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation Total</u></b>
	Boy	15	82	74	110
	Girl	19	119	115	160

<b><i>BOYS Empathy Scores Before Mindfulness Lessons</i></b>						
<b><u>Affective Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>	<b><u>A. Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>C. Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Freq</u></b>
10	7	10	1	0	1	0
5	1	2	2	0	1	1
7	2	5	3	0	0	1
6	5	9	4	3	3	0
6	4	7	5	1	4	3
10	6	10	6	2	3	0
8	5	5	7	2	2	1
10	7	12	8	1	1	2
10	6	12	9	2	0	2
7	5	8	10	4	0	2
9	8	12	11	0	0	0
9	6	9	12	0	0	3
4	5	3				
4	4	5				
4	4	8				
			<i>Mean</i>	<i>7.267</i>	<i>5.000</i>	<i>7.800</i>
			<i>Me- dian</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>
			<i>Mode</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>
			<i>St Dev</i>	<i>2.344</i>	<i>1.852</i>	<i>3.234</i>

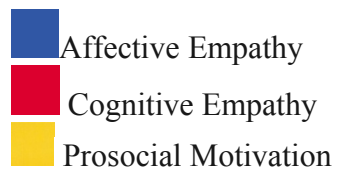
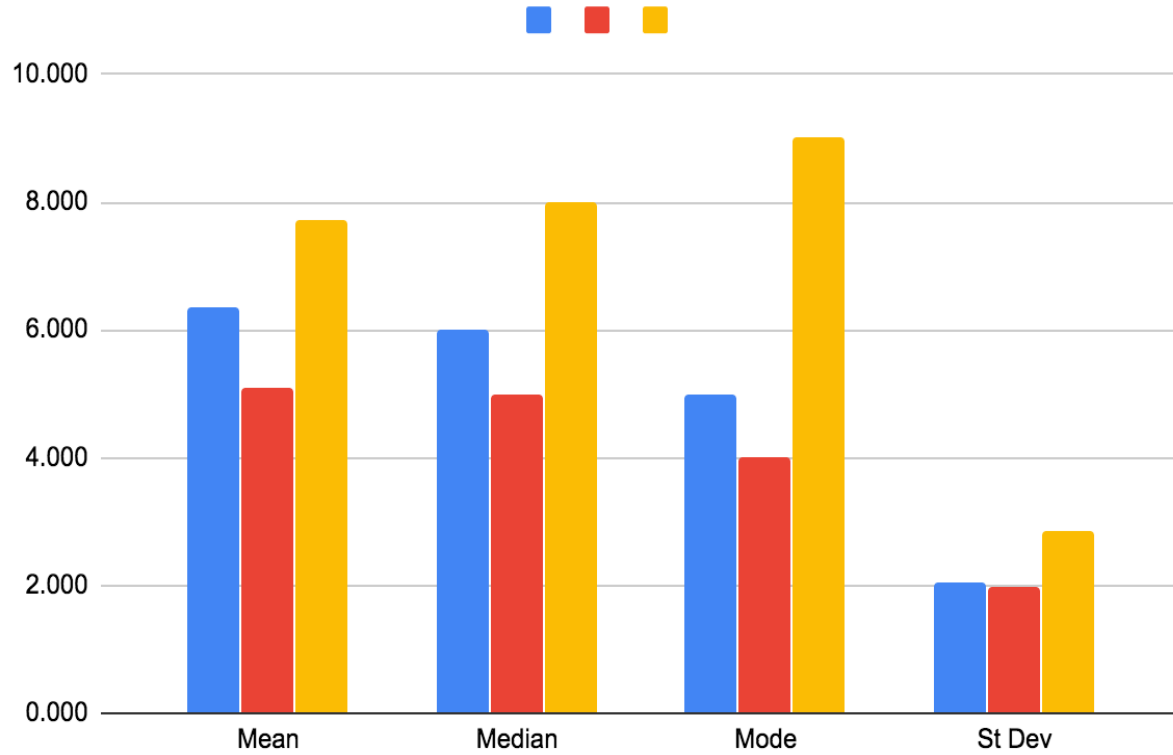
## BOYS EMPATHY SCORES BEFORE LESSONS ON MINDFULNESS



**BOYS Empathy Scores After Mindfulness Lessons**

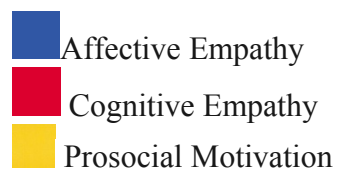
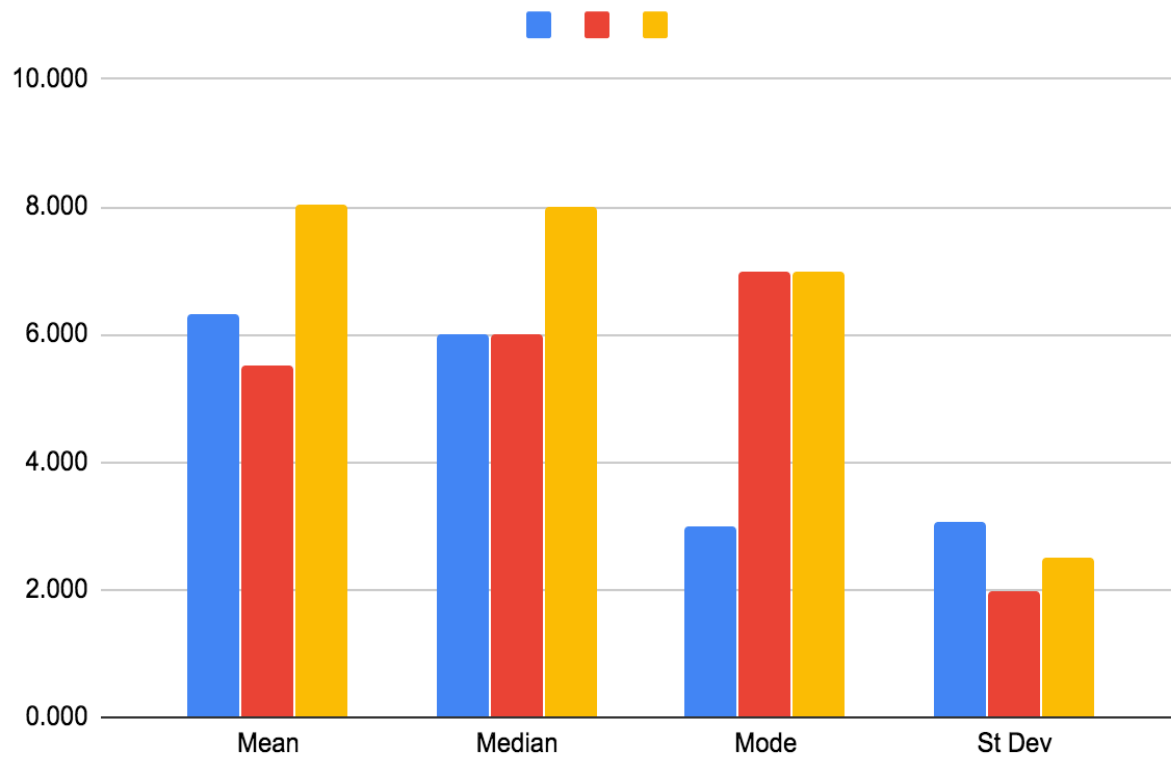
<b><u>Affective Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>	<b><u>A .Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>C. Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Freq</u></b>
5	4	9	1	0	0	0
9	8	10	2	0	1	1
5	2	4	3	1	1	0
10	7	12	4	0	3	1
6	5	6	5	4	2	0
5	5	8	6	1	1	1
7	4	7	7	2	1	1
8	8	10	8	1	2	2
7	6	8	9	1	0	2
3	3	2	10	1	0	2
5	4	9	11	0	0	0
			12	0	0	1
			<i>Mean</i>	<i>6.364</i>	<i>5.091</i>	<i>7.727</i>
			<i>Me- dian</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>
			<i>Mode</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>9</i>
			<i>St Dev</i>	<i>2.063</i>	<i>1.973</i>	<i>2.867</i>

## BOYS EMPATHY SCORES AFTER LESSONS ON MINDFULNESS



<b><i>GIRLS Empathy Scores Before Mindfulness Lessons</i></b>						
<b><u>Affective Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>	<b><u>A.Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>C.Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Freq</u></b>
3	5	7	1	0	0	0
8	7	9	2	1	1	0
3	7	7	3	4	3	0
4	5	5	4	2	2	1
9	6	12	5	2	3	2
10	8	11	6	1	3	3
7	4	6	7	2	4	3
2	5	6	8	1	2	3
3	3	7	9	2	1	1
7	6	8	10	3	0	1
9	9	6	11	0	0	3
4	3	4	12	1	0	2
10	8	12				
12	4	11				
6	7	8				
5	3	8	<i>Mean</i>	<i>6.316</i>	<i>5.526</i>	<i>8.053</i>
10	7	10	<i>Me- dian</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
5	6	11	<i>Mode</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>
3	2	5	<i>St Dev</i>	<i>3.056</i>	<i>1.982</i>	<i>2.505</i>

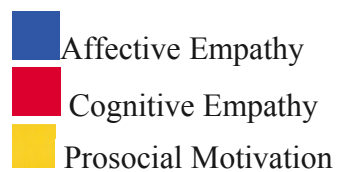
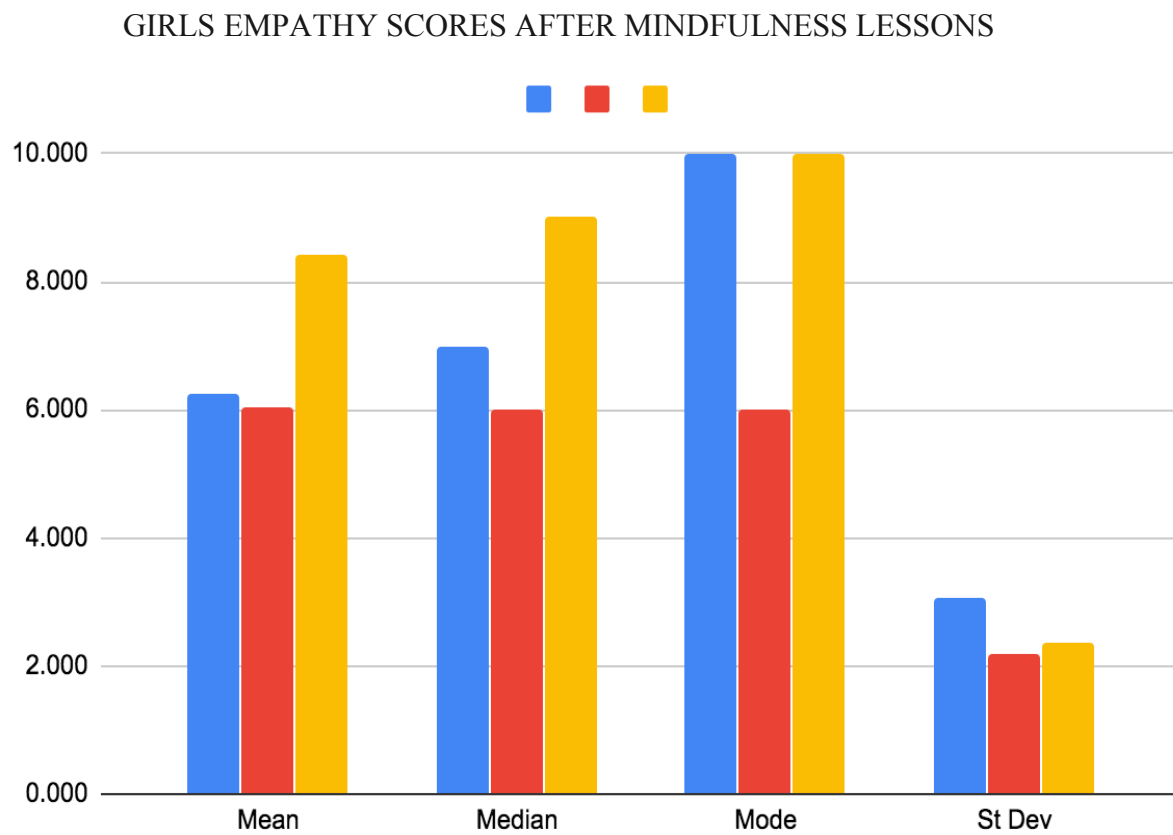
# GIRLS EMPATHY SCORES BEFORE MINDFULNESS LESSONS





***GIRLS Empathy Scores After Mindfulness Lessons***

<b><u>Affective Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Cognitive Empathy</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Motivation</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>	<b><u>A.Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>C.Empathy Freq</u></b>	<b><u>Prosocial Freq</u></b>
10	5	10	1	0	0	0
4	6	10	2	1	1	0
5	1	11	3	4	3	0
10	8	10	4	2	2	1
7	8	11	5	2	3	2
7	4	6	6	1	3	3
9	7	10	7	2	4	3
1	5	5	8	1	2	3
4	7	10	9	2	1	1
6	6	8	10	3	0	1
5	7	8	11	0	0	3
2	3	4	12	1	0	2
9	8	11				
6	6	9				
9	6	8				
7	4	9	<i>Mean</i>	<i>6.263</i>	<i>6.053</i>	<i>8.421</i>
8	9	8	<i>Me- dian</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>9</i>
10	5	9	<i>Mode</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>
0	10	3	<i>St Dev</i>	<i>3.052</i>	<i>2.172</i>	<i>2.364</i>

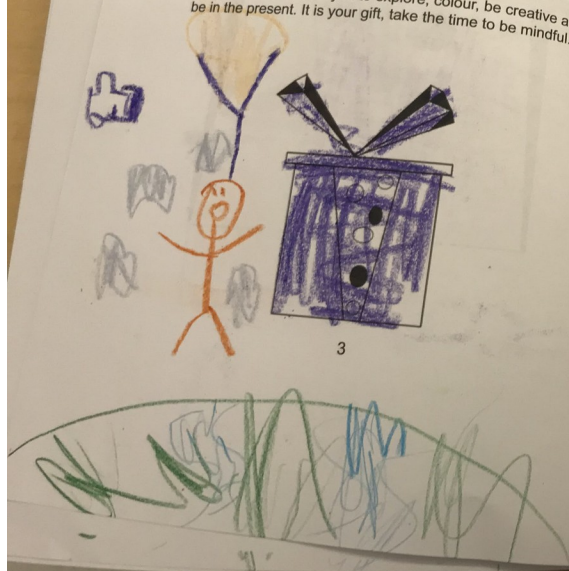


## Appendix I: Students Work

Being mindful is about paying attention to the present moment, clearing your mind and focusing on simply being. Any activity, done right, with full attention is an exercise in mindfulness, walking in a forest, praying, eating cherries, listening to music, or simply breathing.

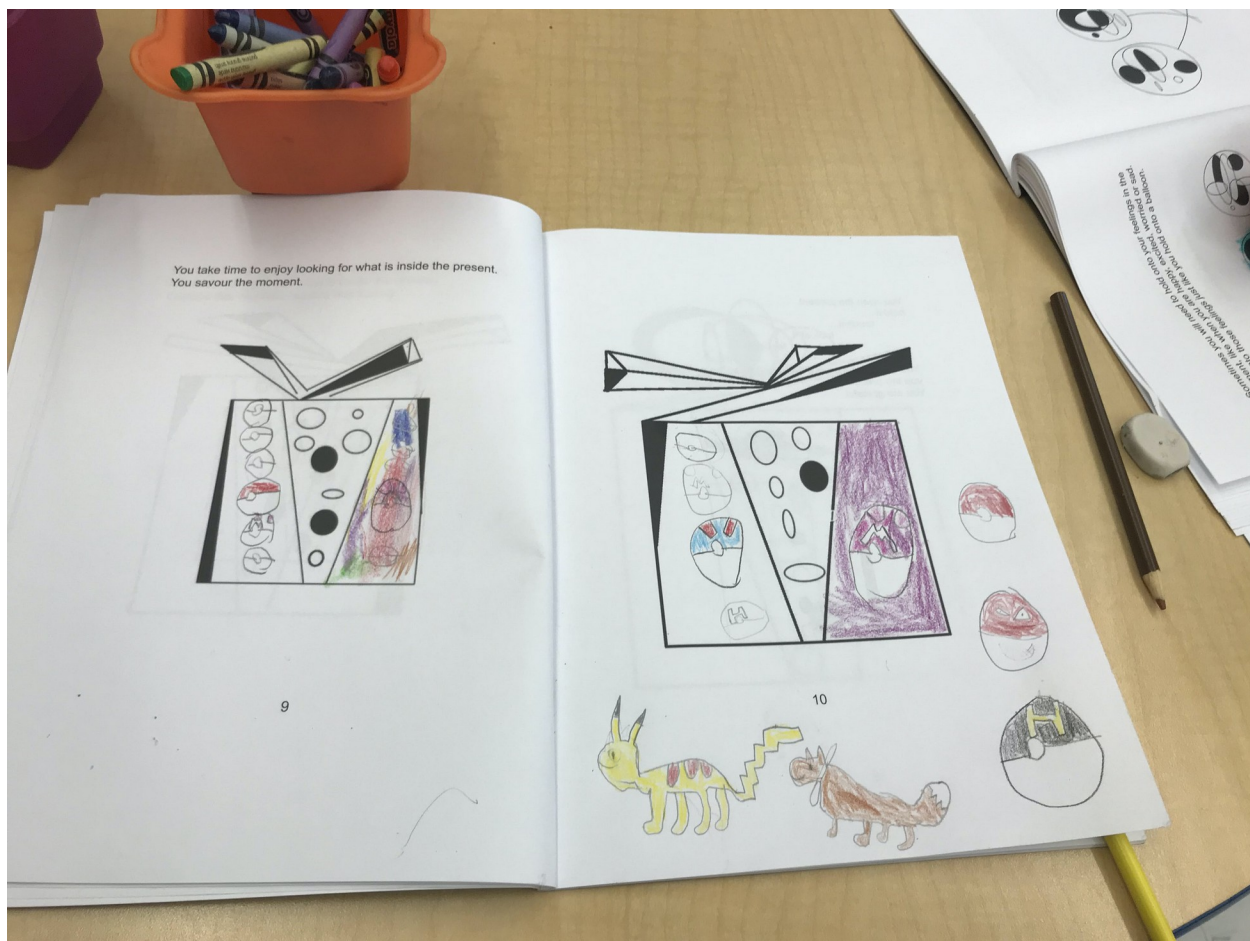
The act of colouring a book, carefully and attentively, helps you to really focus on the book, being present and in the moment. This process in itself is an experience of mindfulness. This colouring book offers a perfect calming exercise in mindfulness and creativity. There are pictures to colour and lots of space for you to add your own drawings.

This is a book for you to explore, colour, be creative and be in the present. It is your gift, take the time to be mindful.

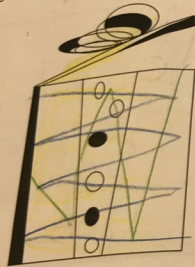


It is with grateful thanks that I dedicate this book to gabe

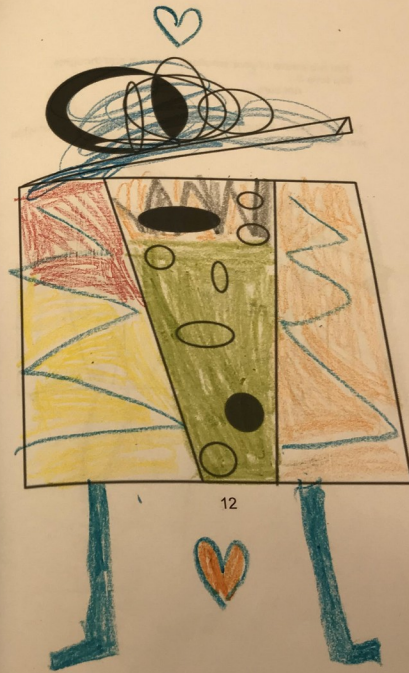




You open the present  
hold it ...  
touch it...  
look at it...  
feel it...  
smell it...  
You enjoy the moment and appreciate the person who gave  
you the present.  
You are grateful.



11



12



Being mindful is about paying attention to the present moment, clearing your mind and focusing on simply being. Any activity done right, with full attention is an exercise in mindfulness, walking in a forest, praying, eating cherries, listening to music, or simply breathing.

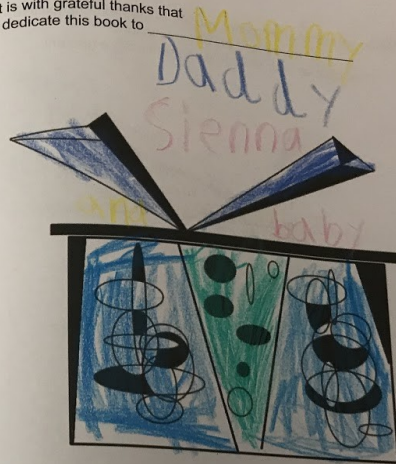
The act of colouring a book, carefully and attentively, helps you to really focus on the book, being present and in the moment. This process in itself is an experience of mindfulness. This colouring book offers a perfect calming exercise in mindfulness and creativity. There are pictures to colour and lots of space for you to add your own drawings.

This is a book for you to explore, colour, be creative and be in the present. It is your gift, take the time to be mindful.



3

It is with grateful thanks that I dedicate this book to

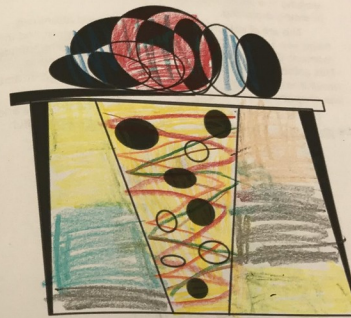


4

To my husband Larry and my children Marlon, Jessica and Zachary, I am so grateful to have you all share in my life. Thank you!





1



2

## Appendix J: Parent Feedback Form

 <p><b>Bialik</b> Bialik Hebrew Day School בית היום העברי בביאליק</p> <hr/> <p><b>Financial Services and Administration Office</b> 2000 Finch Ave. E. Toronto, ON M2N 3K1</p> <p><b>The Ben and Edith Hirsch Education Centre on the Joseph H. White Estate</b> Joseph Greenfield Centre 380 Oak Avenue East Rexdale, ON M9L 1P5</p> <p><b>www.bialik.ca</b> Head of School Debra Danilewitz</p> <p><b>President: Miriam Board of Directors Miriam Perelman</b></p> <p><b>Affiliated with The Alliance for Jewish Community Center for Jewish Education and the Jewish Family Movement of Canada</b></p> <p><b>Mitzvah Project Association Registered No. 8022006460001</b></p> <hr/> <p>How the rest of the page is filled עמוד הנקודה ימין ימין ימין</p> <hr/> <p> <b>CC BY-NC-SA</b> This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License</p>	<p>February 25, 2020</p> <p>Dear Parents of Grade 2 Students,</p> <p>I hope you enjoyed reading the book 'The Present' with your child. I invite you to comment on your child's reading of 'The Present' and their understanding of what it means to be mindful.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Debra Danilewitz</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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