

# WILLIAM CRAMP FIT FLYER

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## Mindfulness can help reduce stress

Helping students to “notice where they feel feelings in their body” is how Ashley Tomlinson, STEP clinical coordinator, guides students to be mindful.

*Fit Flyer* reporters interviewed Ms. Tomlinson and Ms. Chiefitz, school counselor at William Cramp, on mindfulness. “Mindfulness is a way to focus on what is happening in the present using all of your senses,” according to Dr. Ethan Benore, a child psychologist at Cleveland Children’s Center for Behavioral Health. It’s also when you pay attention to the signals your body and brain are sending to you.

Ms. Chiefitz said she practiced mindfulness as a child, not intentionally, but it was something

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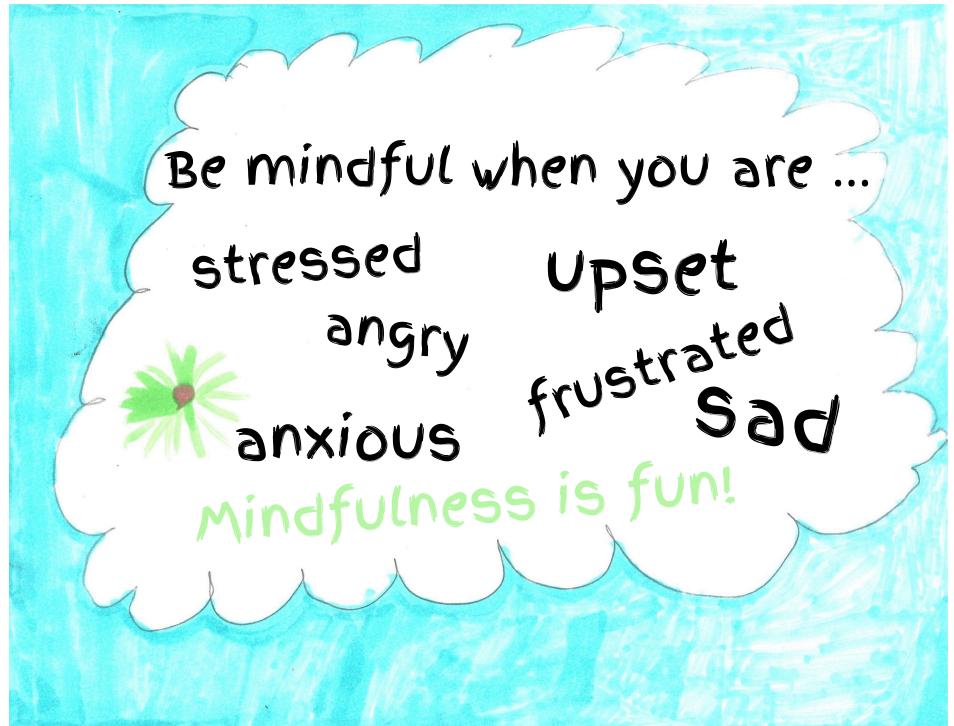


Illustration by a *Fit Flyer* reporter

## Author uses mindfulness to help writing

Author Andrea Beatriz Arango recently inspired William Cramp fifth-graders when she visited the class and read an excerpt of her book, “It’s All or Nothing, Vale.” The book is about a girl who participates in the sport of fencing and faces challenges from a new competitor.

Ms. Arango captivated the students by explaining how she creates the main characters of her story. She takes something that is a little bit real, she finds a topic, and then adds made-up details and ideas she’s always wanted to write about. Then she will ask

herself a lot of questions about the character to get to know the character’s behaviors and motivations before she starts writing.

*Fit Flyer* reporters recently researched and wrote about mindfulness. During Ms. Arango’s visit, reporters asked her how she practices mindfulness while writing. Their interview has been edited.

**Q: Do you have any mindfulness techniques or practices in your life?**

A: I usually go outdoors to swim. The sunshine really helps me to clear my

mind. I also will go to talk therapy.

**Q: How do you get focused when it is time to write?**

A: Sometimes it’s hard. Sometimes I’ve had writer’s block. When that happens, I will get some coffee or tea, then find a nice quiet place. I will think about how much the readers will like my writing.

I tell myself to always write. Just get it on the page. You can always fix what you wrote later. You can’t fix

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# Be mindful to work through emotion

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she would do to help her calm down. As the school counselor, she explained, she works with students who have “big emotions that they don’t understand how to work through them. I help them work through it.” She sees students who have peer conflicts, bullying concerns, anxiety, and/or issues at home.

Any time someone visits her office, Ms. Chiefitz said she has them practice mindfulness without them even realizing it. In her office, a “calm down corner” has fidget toys, beanbag chairs, dim lights, coloring pages, and Magna-Tiles building blocks that students can use to calm down.

Before students speak with Ms. Chiefitz, she has them wait so they can breathe and relax. Then she’ll talk and listen to the students about what is bothering them. She’ll also ask permission if she can call their house to talk about what is going on at home. After students visit her, she suggests they take the long way back to the classroom to give them some time to cool off.

When students practice mind-



Illustration by Aubrey Stevens

**Taking a walk is one way to practice mindfulness.** After students visit Ms. Chiefitz, she often suggests they take the long way back to the classroom to give them some time to cool off.

fulness, they reduce stress and have better performance, increased confidence, and fewer behavior problems, according to experts at Harvard University. Practicing mindfulness can make us calmer, more focused and ready to learn, according to Ms. Chiefitz. “It can also lead to a positive school community,” she said.

Another technique students use to calm down and practice mindfulness is meditation, according to Ms. Tomlinson. She uses breathing techniques herself to practice mindful meditation every morning using the Calm app, which helps guide you through mindful meditations. When

students come to see her, she’ll have them breathe and bring them back to center and feeling calm. Bringing back to center means helping calm the student’s emotional state. Students are also able to ask if they can see Ms. Tomlinson to take a break if they are feeling anxious or upset.

Like Ms. Chiefitz, Ms. Tomlinson has a safe space where there are calming fidgets like kinetic sand, Pop Its, squishies, and puzzles. If you’re feeling upset, anxious, or frustrated, you can try these mindfulness techniques yourself. You can also speak with the counselors, the social workers at STEP, or any teacher and staff. —By Fit Flyer reporters

## Author uses mindfulness to help her with writing

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what you don’t write.

**Q: What advice do you have for students to help them make good choices to reach their goals?**

A: Think about what people are going through. They have things going on that we can’t see. That helps me to become kinder and make better choices on how I treat people.

**Q: What pushed you into writing?**

A: My family is a family of storytellers. Never feel like your story doesn’t matter. Someone will relate to what you have to write.

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The *Fit Flyer* offers special thanks to Principal Rodriguez, who purchased a copy of the book “It’s All or Nothing, Vale” for the fifth-grade class. They are excited to start reading the book.

William Cramp Fit Flyer

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