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"The Mindful Language class helps because it taught us things that everyone needs to know such as how to rest, breath, relax, imagine, be still and search for our peaceful places within". Sonia, 5th grade.



Opening the New School Year - with MINDFULNESS

By Noa Limone, Haaretz, 26.8.2011

Translated to English by Nimrod Sheinman

Until a decade ago, the "Tel-Hai" school in south Tel Aviv was an under-developed institute, with a great deal of violence within its grounds. This year, it scored higher than the national average in the "GEMS" (Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools) tests, and the violence that prevailed in it practically disappeared. What factor brought about this change? A weekly one hour long class based on the principles of mindfulness meditation, yoga and guided imagery. And - silence!

It's eight in the morning. Fourth graders, some still sleepy, approach the school gates. Music is being played through the school's loud-speakers, as the children make their way to their classes. The beginning of their day in the classroom is devoted to breath awareness and mindfulness practice. Later, the children may write or draw in a special notebook anything that crosses their minds – morning experiences, last night's dreams, thoughts they may be contemplating.

Today, in-between the Math and English classes, they'll experience their weekly "Mindful Language" class. The instructor greets them at the entrance to the meditation room

as they take off their shoes, stand in line and enter the room one by one. Each kid receives a personal attention, a reassuring contact and a good morning greeting from the instructor. Mattresses are on the floor, and each child chooses his or her "safe space". Their primary teacher lies down on her mattress too, and closes her eyes.

Einat Berger, Tel Hai Principal: "Learning follow naturally once we are calm and peaceful, and when the children experience more peace of mind and positive emotions."

The class begins with the sound of a gong and with a mindfulness meditation based on attention to breathing. Afterwards, through mind-body skills integrating mindfulness, imagery and mindful yoga, the children will practice moment to moment awareness, and inwardly observe and accept their body sensations. Amazingly, there is hardly any violence in the class or in the school yard, the atmosphere between teachers and pupils is warm, and scholastic achievement is high.

This is not a fanciful description, nor a description of a Buddhist school in Tibet. This is a typical morning at the "Tel-Hai" primary school in south Tel Aviv.

It was not always that way. "Tel-Hai" pupils, just like many South Tel Aviv inhabitants, belong to a low socio-economic background, some from families with very difficult problems. When Einat Berger, the current principal of the school, arrived at the school 14 years ago, the classes were utterly crowded, the corridors were full of violence and anger, and the grades were low in comparison to the national average.

At the time Berger was a young principal at the beginning of her professional career. She was a sensitive woman whose instincts had not yet been dulled by the system. Her first year at the school caused her such a great distress, that she almost gave up her profession. At some stage, she decided to take a one year Sabbatical.

During her leave, she participated in various programs of self awareness and self leadership, and was exposed to a

variety of mind-body techniques. When she returned to her school, it was clear to her that the insights she gained must find expression within the school.

"I was searching for something that could help the children to touch their souls", she says. Instead of struggling to improve their grades, or punishing them for discipline problems, Berger chose a different approach. "I understood that their achievements must be put aside. It was clear to

"I understood that I can contribute through my peacefulness, because I am part of the whole". Mor, 12 years old.

me that this goal could be attained later. Achievements follow naturally once we are calm and peaceful, and when the children experience more peace of mind, success and positive emotions".

According to Berger, the most significant change was the reduction of violence. "We clearly see the differences between the first and second graders - who haven't yet internalized the skills - and the higher classes, where there is no violence at all", says Berger. "There was also a huge improvement in the level of achievements", she adds. In last year's "GEMS" exams, we scored way beyond the national average".



"The more the children practiced inner listening, the more they developed a caring, open and compassionate attitude towards others".

"In the class, I feel as if all my tensions pass away, like clouds in the sky. I love the classes because after each class I feel calmness and goodness in myself". Shefi, 6th grade

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Operating on automatic mode

In recent years, there is a growing awareness in Israel's educational system of the problem of violence. In the search for solutions, committees were established and new reforms are constantly being formulated. In 1999, the recommendations of the Vilna'i Committee for Educational Reforms were published, in 2004 it was the "Dovrat Report",

in 2008 it was "New Horizons", and these days "Courage for Change" is being promoted. However, alongside all these efforts, constant criticism is being heard. In a paper submitted in 2006 to a government education committee, discussing the issue of violence in the educational system, Dr. Yossi Har'el, Head of the International Research Program for the Health and Welfare of Youngsters, and a senior staff member in the School of Education at Bar-Ilan University, claimed with regard to the decisions published by the Ministry of Education in 2005, that "The treatment of these issues is superficial, responding to symptoms without treating the cause. The core approach should be based on the enhancement of the positive, the home, the school and the community, as key factors that influence children's lives". In an article published in 2006 in "Hebrew Psychology", the professional journal of the psychological community, Prof. Rami Benbenisti, from the School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University, together with Dr. Mona Huri-Kasabri, from the School of Social Work and Social Welfare at Hebrew University (Jerusalem) and Dr. Ron Avi Astor, from the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California (USC), claimed that the readiness to deal with the problem of violence in the educational system is still limited, and that "The current preference invests too much in the domain of police and law enforcement, instead of supporting a preventative and educational approach".

The "Mindful Language" is a good example of a long term preventative program which is both positive and creative. It was developed in 2002 by Dr. Nimrod Sheinman

and Simi Levy, from the Center for Mind-Body Studies, an institute co-founded by Dr. Nimrod Sheinman and his American colleague Dr. Paul Epstein. The program has been implemented at the "Tel-Hai" School on pupils ranging from first grade (age 6) to sixth grade (age 12), and is now a 10 years old project. The program is based on mindfulness meditation and mind-body health principles, and employs techniques that were adapted from East Asian traditions, mainly Buddhist. The program, which the kids experience on a once a week basis, aims to develop mindful learning – directing kids to the inner world, cultivating mindfulness to the mind-body processes, and developing emotional awareness and self regulation. As a consequence, there is an enhancement of self control, self confidence and emotional regulation, and improved social skills and learning abilities. The program is probably one of the first of its kind in the western world that has been integrated

into a public educational system on a whole school basis.

In general, we can describe meditation as an objective observation of one's inner world, an unconditional noticing and acceptance of one's own processes. Mindfulness Meditation is characterized by directing our attention to our mind-body processes, and observing them

moment by moment without judgment, interpretation or interruption. "The purpose of mindfulness is also to create a gap between our stimulus and our reactions", explains Maya Shalem, a main instructor of the "Mindful Language" program. Dr. Nava Levit Ben-noon, from the Unit of Applied Brain Sciences Research, School of Psychology, at the Herzeliya Interdisciplinary Center adds: "In our ordinary state, our attention capacities are very unstable - we operate on an automatic mode and pay attention to our sensations or feelings after they appear. In the mindfulness practice, we develop a more precise and stable attention and awareness skills to everything that happens in us "on the spot". Naturally, this allows us to be more aware, awake, focused and efficient, and to experience more control. As a result, our sense of balance, vitality and serenity is enhanced, whereas tensions and the tendency towards impulsiveness decrease".



The "Mindful Language" program managed to integrate these principles and to adapt them to kids and to the school framework. When the children are lying down relaxed, or as Shalem defines it "When the body is soft like a well cooked spaghetti", Shalem guides them to count their breaths, to pay attention to their inner sensations and to notice the position of their body in space. "Imagine the throat is like an elevator, from which we can go down to the heart", says Shalem, and asks them: "What is happening down there now? What is happening in your throat? What is it like in the area of your shoulders? And what's happening around your heart?" The children are instructed to notice what part of their body asks for touch, and to reach it with their warm palms. Afterwards, they place their warm hands on their eyes, "Invite your eyes to rest, and feel confident in the class". Then, they place their hands on their ears, "Listen to the inner sea". They are invited to position their hands on their heart region, and to explore how they feel right now. "What kind of expression does the face of your heart have today?" Shalem asks them.

Continuing with the mindfulness practice, the children stretch out on their mattresses, "Take as much space as you can, without touching your neighbor", and then "Shrink like snails, and become the smallest you can be". Afterwards, the children slowly shift their posture and move from lying down towards a sitting position. They move in a step by step manner, each movement initiated by the sound of a gong, until they reach a sitting meditation position. "Imagine you are holding a flower in one hand and a cake with candles in the other hand... Deeply inhale the scent of the flower... completely exhale and put out the candles", thus breathing in and out fully and with awareness. In the course of the lesson, they will also be instructed to stand up "like a mountain", to feel tall and grounded "like a tree", and to move with awareness according to various visual images. The class ends with a body scan and guided imagery accompanied by music. The children are asked to keep a "Mindful Diary", in which to express their personal images, feelings and thoughts, through either words or drawings.

Dr. Sheinman explains: "Through the mindfulness and imagery practices, the kids develop attention and awareness skills. They learn to notice their inner world, including the pleasant and unpleasant sensations and feelings. Consciously and unconsciously, they learn to take a "Mindful Pause" and to contain their discomforts rather than automatically react to them. Many times, during the class, they notice how unpleasant emotions become transformed into something pleasant. At the first stage, a child becomes aware that he or she is emotionally negatively charged, perceives where he or she actually experiences the tension, and inquires as to what exactly is the nature of their feeling. At the next stage, we may guide them to tune into the sensations, or to give the



“The Best work we can do is to create a science of human strength Whose mission will be to foster mental well-being in young individuals”.

feeling an image. The sensations usually receive a new perspective, mostly more creative and intriguing. We may guide them to stay with it, to breath into it and to explore and release part of it. That in itself is a transformation. The children report that they enter the class feeling charged, but leave it calm and tranquil".

The children are grateful

I was present at the end of a class of fourth and fifth graders. The children assembled in a circle and described their experiences from the "Mindful Language" class. I was surprised by the intricate and subtle perception in their descriptions. Moti, a short and skinny child, said that he especially liked the "mouse position" where the body is curled up in a fetus position, "Because I am very small, and it feels good when everyone is small". Shira said that she liked to find the point of concentration, because "It drives all my thoughts away". Another child, with a lively and mischievous look, declared: "Sometimes, when someone annoys me, I imagine that I want to do all sorts of things to him, and then through "Mindful Language" I can control myself and calm down".

Maya Shalem's assessment is that "The most basic ability that the children acquire from the program is the ability to concentrate and calm down". Anat Roash, a teacher at "Tel Hai", states in more detail: "This year we've had the "GEMS" exams in the fifth grade classes, and before the test began, the children asked for ten minutes of "Mindful Language". We guided them through breathing exercises and meditation. It not only calmed them down, but also helped them to concentrate and do better in the test". Roash recalls how a child who experienced great difficulties at home described to her the calming effect of the class. "He told me

that before the class he feels his heart is like a stormy sea with a black warning flag. At the end of the class he feels that he is like a "white flag", the sea is calm and the waves are quiet".

Shalem showed me some letters and drawings that she received from the children she taught. They all express deep gratitude, high self awareness and a very impressive ability to express themselves. Julia, a sixth grade girl, writes: "Last year I was withdrawn, but now I am very sociable and many kids want to be with me. I understood that I can contribute through my peacefulness, because I am part of the whole". Dan, a fifth grader, writes: "I was very shy and couldn't speak in class. Now, thanks to the "Mindful Language", I feel safe to talk".

The adults involved in the program testify that the change that occurred is significant, mostly because it not only affected each and every child but the school as a whole. Shalem explains: "The program has changed the climate of the whole school, and we can observe that via the culture of speech and the modes of behavior of both pupils and staff. It's a major factor that explains the actual decrease of violence. The gap created between stimulus and reaction, and the self-regulation skills resulting from it, have a positive influence on the social relationships within the class".

The fact that the lesson creates a safe and peaceful space is very important. Dr. Sheinman explains: "The 'mindful lesson' is a non-threatening and non-judgmental dimension, in which everyone is equal, including the teacher. From the perspective of the nervous system, this environment is secure. When this expands to a collective experience, the whole school becomes a safer place. Violence decreases, moreover without threats and punishments".

Sarit Salomon, herself a graduate of the school, whose two sons studied at "Tel Hai", witnessed firsthand the change that transpired in the school. "Thirteen years ago", she remembers, "we had a case of a boy who came to the school and threatened another boy with a pair of scissors". After the program began,

and thanks to the impact of the classes, her middle son, who was diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), didn't need to use his Ritalin throughout his whole Tel Hai years. "Some kids are more sensitive, and frequently this becomes expressed through hyperactivity", says Simi Levy. "Actually they may have some special needs. Instead of catering to their needs, schools tends to repress them or to get angry with them. It might be preferable to guide them through their restlessness, to ask them to notice the sensations caused by it, and to help them cope with it in a different way. For these children, the "Mindful Language" is not a privilege, but the air they must breathe in order to live".

Acceleration from zero to hundred

Anyone who has worked with children knows that it is not a simple matter. So how did the engineers of the "Mindful Language" manage to teach children in First grade to meditate? A major contribution of this success was the input of Simi Levi, one of Israel's leading Insight Meditation teachers, who brought her reach experience with children into the design of the program. Two years ago, the school was visited by Prof. Richard

Davidson from the US, one of the leading brain researchers in the world, who has worked a lot investigating the effects of meditation on the brain. In a telephone interview with "Haaretz" he spoke admiringly of his impressions of the Israeli program, which he described as much more developed than many he has seen in the United States. "Compared to other programs, careful thought has been invested to adjust the practice to the children", explains Davidson. "In the United States, many children's programs are versions of models applied with adults. What we have seen in Israel is completely different. When I was present in the class I saw that they were able to capture the attention of each



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and every child in the classroom, and we are talking about six years old kids, with six visiting foreign adults checking up on them!"

In some aspects, it seems that children are even more capable than adults in cultivating a mindfulness practice. "Children are smart and sensitive, they are connected to their feelings, and it's very easy for them to work with imagery based mindfulness", testifies Shalem. "The same process may

take much longer time with an adult", agrees Simi Levi. "Children are like a clay pot, their habits and patterns are still malleable, and it's more possible to change them".

A good reason to start teaching mindfulness practices to young kids is the overwhelming tendency of the Israeli education system to focus on the cognitive and rational aspects of the child, while neglecting experiential learning and emotional domains. "Children learn today by focusing externally. They hear what the teacher says, read what the book contains and try to memorize", claims Dr. Sheinman, "Through the mind-body skills, the child learns first of all to pay attention to his or her inner world: to sensations, feelings, impulses and thoughts. These four components are responsible for many contemporary problems. Many children today suffer from unhealthy eating habits, unrestrained violence impulses, various behavioral problems and concentration difficulties. At the same time, something in the learning process is not working. The mindfulness dimension teaches us that children are able to turn their attention inwards and to learn from it - a completely different kind of learning".

And that learning process works. According to recent worldwide researches, children and teenagers practicing mindfulness, report that they are happier to attend school, are more satisfied with their teachers and school, and feel less stressed out from homework, tests and grades. The cumulative experience from working with kids testifies to the improvement in concentration skills, self-awareness, emotional regulation, emotional intelligence and coping abilities with challenges and difficulties.

In accordance with the Buddhist theories underlying the mindfulness principles, the inner focus helps children and adults to develop compassion. Richard Davidson, in a 2007 research, found that people who have practiced meditation on a daily basis for several months, had become more sensitive to human voices, especially to distressed

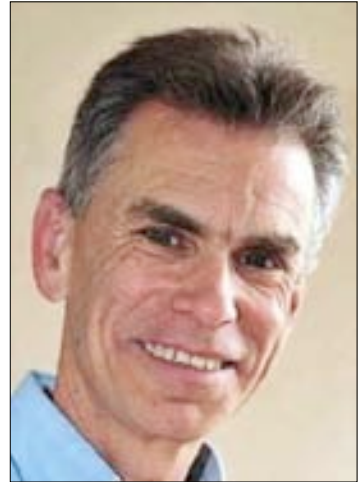
voices, and that during the meditation there was an increased brain activity in brain regions which are associated with empathy. "Turning attention inwards may sound on the surface as selfish", says Dr. Sheinman, "but at the Tel-Hai School, the Buddhist theories were confirmed: the more the children practiced inner listening, the more they developed a caring, open and compassionate attitude towards others. It comes as a kind of positive side effect - we didn't tell them to behave nicely. They cultivated it by themselves".

In the last few years the scientific interest in mindfulness has increased rapidly. The number of publications on the effect of mindfulness on psychological and brain aspects has increased a 100 times over the last decade, and the amount of research funded by the World Health Organization increased from 0 to 100. What prompted the burst of research was the growing accumulation of evidence that came from populations of healthy adults who suffer from stress, as well as from cancer, fibromyalgia and psoriasis patients, and from people suffering from chronic pain, anxiety and depression. They all benefited significantly from the mindfulness training.

Brain research shows that mindfulness practice influences the volume of the gray matter (amount of neurons), affects the white matter (connections between brain regions), activity levels (function of neurons), and the activity of brain networks (when several brain regions can work together in a team). Dr. Richard Davidson tells about a number of studies which have shown strong evidence that functional changes in the brain appear after only two weeks of mindfulness practice, on a two hours a day basis. One of his studies showed that after eight weeks of practice, there were induced changes in the brain structure itself. "We have good reasons to believe that these changes are stronger and clearer in children", says Davidson, "Because the brain is more flexible at these young age".



"I was searching for something that could help children to touch their souls."
Einat Berger, Tel-Hai principal



Nimrod Sheinman: "Through the mindfulness and imagery practice, the kids develop attention and awareness skills".



"For some children, the "Mindful Language" is not a privilege, but the air they must breathe in order to live". **Simi Levi**



"Mindfulness creates a gap between our stimulus and our reactions". **Maya Shalem**



The Mindful Language class taught us about health, breath and the body, their movements and moments. It taught us about peaceful concentration, serenity in the mind, and the stillness to explore other worlds. It helped us find our peaceful places.

Almog, 5th grade.



According to Dr. Nava Levit Ben-Nun, the positive change towards mindfulness seen in the scientific community isn't surprising. "Despite the stigma, we are not talking about a spiritual or metaphysical subject, but about developing a skill related to attention and consciousness, a topic investigated by neuroscience for years. It's a matter of a time before more stigmas are dismissed, and a mental training such as mindfulness is adopted by more people as a practice in their daily agendas, in addition to their physical activities"

Listening in the class

What helped in breaking the boundaries of the stigma in Tel-Hai was the unique personality of the principal, Einat Berger. The developers and instructors of the "Mindful Language", as well as parents and teachers, all testify that the positive approach of Berger and her ability to think outside the box are highly responsible for the success of the school and the incorporation of the mindful program. "Einat is able to enter a "Mindful Language" class and to participate as one of the kids", says Maya Shalem. "As soon as a student and teacher know that the principal believes in the program, they receive a lot of confidence and motivation to invest in it. The fact that she devoted a special room for the classes, says it all".

Even though each class receives only a single one hour a week of "Mindful Language" class, many teachers gained mindfulness skills during their workshops and supervisions, and incorporated them – each teacher according to his or her style and will – in their standard classes.

Incorporating the teachers into the "Mindful Language" project was consciously planned. "When the program was first implemented in the Golomb School, a Tel-Hai's neighbor, we organized a two-day workshop for the teachers", tells Dr. Sheinman. "We knew that we would need a common language with them, otherwise the program will be detached from them, or will arouse resistance from them. We also decided that the teachers need to attend the classes with the kids, on the floor. We

wanted the teachers to experience the instructions, to observe and learn from us, as well as to watch the kids' response".

This approach received the full support from the principal. "I always knew that we must invest more energies on the teachers", says Berger. "It started from workshops held at my own house. We didn't put pressure on anyone to participate, but the intellectual debate that was generated as a consequence in the teacher's room, gradually attracted those who weren't interested in the first place. Afterwards, we started the mindfulness project, with the teachers attending the classes, and then we ran workshops for the staff. I think that the investment and tremendous development of the staff has a magnetic effect and that the children's growth is stimulated and supported by that".

One of the tools developed in Tel-Hai, thanks to the internalization of the "Mindful Language" project by the teachers, is the "Mindful Circle". Once a week the class meets with the head teacher and together they choose topics to discuss about. Many times the conversation tends to be about the fears and anxieties of the children. Other times, they talk about their dreams, or share their past week's experiences and thoughts. The circle has some rules. First, it is forbidden to talk outside the room about things said in the circle. Second, there is no judgment or expression of criticism. According to Anat Roash "The circle created a real support group, and developed a great closeness between the children and between them and me". As an example, she recalls a case where one of the kids shared that he is being bullied by some classmates, and that he is being mocked about his life. "After he expressed it in the circle, the bullying stopped, and at the next meeting he shared with the class how good he feels at school", she said.

"As a teacher, I feel that I'm much more relaxed and attentive to the children", adds Roash. "In the mornings, I start with fifteen minutes of guided imagery, after which the kids express themselves in a notebook called "Journey to the Heart". It allows them to express themselves and shed their anxieties before they begin their day". Berger adds that the "emotional

writing", on which there's no judgment, has significantly raised the writing capacity levels, especially for children with learning problems.

The Rosetto Effect.

Another important step in completing the working model of the "Mindful Language" project was the establishment, four years ago, of a Tel-Hai Center for Parents, where a variety of workshops are held every year for the parents. Orna Avitan, a marketing manager of a hotel chain and Chairman PTA in Tel-Hai, is a parent to a son who graduated from that school, and to a daughter who attends the Sixth grade. Orna participated in the Center for Parent's workshops from its inception. "Thanks to the mindfulness project and the workshops, we have all been re-educated", she says. "Not only the children, but the entire family. I'm much more attentive to myself and the environment, I can listen better to my kids and I'm more sensitive to their body language. I know them better, and I became a better mother and a better community member".

Sarit Salomon has also participated in many workshops, including parental authority, child psychology, interpretation of children's drawings, and of course "Mindful Language". She tells: "In the workshop, Simi succeeded to peel away from each of us the heavy burdens that we've carried and to expose our tenderness". Salomon adds that the mindfulness tools and skills helped her in times of personal crisis and harsh health problems. "I went through four surgeries in four days, and I was not afraid", she says. "I've used tools from the "Mindful Language" in order to deal with the pain and the fear, and that simply saved me".

At a time when the emphasis in schools is placed almost exclusively on academic achievements, the educational approach of Berger is especially significant. In addition to the "Mindful Language" classes, she has chosen to re-enforce the arts education, an area which is disappearing from most of Israel's public educational institutes. Children in the Tel-Hai school are being offered dance lessons, ballroom dancing, painting, film, music and more. "The idea is for the children to find something they are good at, and not experience only difficulty", explains Berger. The rationale that prompted her decision is based on the view that "If everyone experiences success and connects to his or her strengths, it will be easier for

them afterwards to deal with graded subjects like mathematics and English".

As predicted by Berger, the investment in the arts and the spiritual domains has contributed in only a positive way to achievements in the core academic subjects. According to her, the average grade of the Tel-Hai school's Meitzav rose in the last decade from 6.5 to 8.5. In addition, the school encouraged kids to volunteer in the community, and has "adopted" Beit Hahayal (A community center for soldiers) and a local Assisted Living center. "I envision the school as an institution that manifests social strength", she says, "One that can initiate a dialogue with the community, and become a nucleus from which the community evolves and learns. We can expand beyond the narrow look at our own lives, and look at the entire society".

The story of Tel-Hai reminds doctor Sheinman of the "Rosetto Effect". In the 60's, the town doctor of Rosetto, a small town in Pennsylvania, USA, noticed that peculiarly, none of the citizens suffered from heart diseases. Although the residents belonged to a low socio-economic status, ate saturated fat in the morning, midday and evening, smoked cigarettes and worked in factories filled with pollution, they did not develop cardiovascular diseases. A special researcher team tried to investigate and decipher the riddle. Eventually, they discovered that the Rosetto's experienced a strong sense of connectedness, sense of belonging, and that this served as a major protecting factor against heart disease. With time, and with the changes undergone by the town, the tradition faded away, and with it the sense of belonging disappeared. Today, Rosetto has caught up with the usual rate of heart disease prevalent in the United States.

"In a study on adolescents health, published in JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association) in 1997, it was found that the leading factor protecting adolescents from adopting risk behaviors and harm is a sense of connectedness, their sense of belonging", says Sheinman. "It's not easy to produce it, with today's busy parents, divorced couples and hectic schools. But our program cultivates that sense of connectedness. In the Tel-Hai community, we succeeded in re-creating the Rosetto effect".



Nimrod Sheinman: "The mindfulness dimension teaches us that children are able to turn their attention inwards and to learn from it - a completely different kind of learning".

WHY IS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM NOT ADOPTING THE "MINDFUL LANGUAGE"?

The success of the "Mindful Language" in the Tel-Hai school and its contribution to the school's positive climate raises the question as to why is the program not more prevalent in the education system. Between the years 2002-2009, it actually spread to more schools, and evolved from a one year project to a two to six years project. The program earned the funding and the support of the Municipality of Tel- Aviv and the Department of Education. It was applied to 3-5 years old kids through dozens of kindergarten teachers, and was taught to many child psychologists, elementary and high school teachers and parents.

Yet of all this abundance, at the present time only the Tel-Hai school remains. This stems from a combination of several factors, some of them concerning the management of the program, and other concerning the discrepancies between, on the one hand, the long-term commitment and perseverance required by the program, and on the other hand, the attitude of members in schools boards, which often demote the status of the program to that of an extra curricular activity. Among the factors that may interfere inside a school, Maya Shalem refers to overcrowding of classrooms, loudness of school bells, and teachers who oppose the program and experience it as a waste of time.

In addition, there are the difficulties which are faced by any educational program that strives to be integrated into the education system in the Israel. A former senior in the psychological services of the Ministry of Education, who is familiar with the "Mindful Language" and supported the system's integration, explained that even when it comes to programs which were written inside the Ministry of Education, their process of integration to the system is complicated and cumbersome. Committees must approve the plan, and there are always limiting factors relating to class time, teachers and budget. "Very little time is left for non-core subjects, and there are serious debates concerning what will fill that time", argued the senior. "The education system today is in a search", explains Dr.Sheinman, who has gained extensive experience with the Ministry of education." It is going through changes and "push-pull" from various directions. Many important issues are on the agenda, Ministers change, guidelines and principles change, and with them priorities and budget distributions".

It seems that the only way today to incorporate the "Mindful Language" program into the education system is through grassroots involvement, especially through school principles that believe in the program and are willing to invest in it. Another option is to provide the method to teachers, and support them in providing it to the children. From this logic, Simi Levi joined Dr. Nava Ben-Nun, and since 2009 they've taught "Mindful Language" based workshops to students of education in the Tel-Aviv Levinsky College. "The future", says Levi, "might be in providing more tools to new teachers, and hoping that the perspectives and tools, in addition to supporting themselves, will reach the children".