

# Mindful Mechanics

## An Adult and Teen Guide to Mindfulness



### Introduction

*The University of California 4-H Healthy Living Initiative is focused on providing learning opportunities that address health in the holistic sense: physical, social and emotional. Mindful practices connect each of these domains of health. This curriculum introduces teens, ages 13-18, and adult leaders to some basic concepts in mindfulness that include mindful eating, affirmations (emotional support or encouragement), identification and management of emotions, being present in the current moment, and yoga.*

*Current research has demonstrated the importance of mindfulness training in promoting these healthy behaviors for youth (Broderick & Frank, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). The 4-H Mindful Mechanics curriculum was developed using the experiential learning cycle (Jones & Pfeiffer, 1973; Kolb, 1984), providing teens with hands-on learning experiences, reflection opportunities, and connecting lessons to real-life applications to address social-emotional health challenges.*

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### Volunteer & Youth Leaders Involvement

4-H Volunteers and Teen Leaders are trained in mindfulness practices through the *4-H Mindful Mechanics* curriculum. Beyond learning mindfulness practices for use in their own lives, through this curriculum, the adult and teen leaders learn how mindfulness is defined and applied in the 4-H Mindfulness Project; the benefits of mindfulness, including benefits for primary age youth; ages and stages for primary youth; roles and expectations of teen leaders; and facilitation tips. After completion of the *4-H Mindful Mechanics* curriculum, adult and teen leaders are encouraged and supported in offering a 4-H Mindful Me project for primary youth. 4-H Project leaders who completed training on leading *Mindful Mechanics* curriculum reported "improvements in their confidence and abilities to teach mindfulness and stress-reductions skills to adolescents" (Horowitz, et al. 2021). Volunteers and teen leaders who taught mindfulness reported that beyond supporting their students' development, leading the lessons also helped them learn about mindfulness practices, which they incorporated into their own lives.

### Results

The measured outcomes of these activities demonstrated knowledge and skills learned, which support the adoption of healthy behaviors. Data analyzed from the adult and teen participants showed that participants learned new information, gained skills, increased confidence, and reported positive intended behavior changes, as well as the intention to "create positive change in my community" as a result of participating (Lewis, Iaccopucci, & Soule, 2020).

Beyond skill development outcomes from youth participation in the 4-H Mindfulness Projects, anticipated outcomes include midterm behavior changes (i.e. improved stress management, mindful eating practices), and long term (improved physical, emotional, and social health) outcomes that support youth wellbeing. As decision-makers and educators also gain new knowledge and skills through program participation, additional environmental changes in schools, organizations, and families as a result of participation create more opportunities to support youth health.

### Aim

The 4-H Mindfulness program aims to promote healthy families and communities through fostering mindfulness that lead to improvements in managing one's own goals, developing a sense of self, time management, stress management, emotional regulation, and mindful eating practices. Specific outcomes from participation in the curriculum include short-term (skill development), mid-term (increased stress management, mindful eating, etc.), and long-term (improved physical, emotional, and social health) benefits.

