

# PSI PARADIGM®

A PSI Communique for the Educational Community

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## Editor's Note:

Most of us in education are familiar with the term, "Special Needs." Merriam-Webster defines it as: **The individual requirements (as for education) of a person with a disadvantaged background or a mental, emotional, or physical disability or a high risk of developing one.** The majority of PSI services provide direct or related services to the Special Needs students in our partner schools. This issue will focus on some of the services provided by PSI and how PSI provides continuing professional development in Special Needs areas. In addition, this issue will include articles that expand the definition of special needs, focusing on the concept that all humans have similar needs and all schools face the special challenges of today's world.

**"We have no special needs children. Just children...with special needs."**

**- Uwe Maurer**

# Special Needs Matter

## PSI's Special Needs Nursing Services

PSI has expanded its School Health Department to include one-to-one nursing services for students in need of individualized and special care. PSI's new school health Special Needs division is coordinated by Paula Harris, RN. Paula has a wealth of expert experience in pediatric and critical care, an invaluable resource to today's schools. Paula works in coordination with PSI's Health Management Team.



**To find out more,**

Please contact Paula Harris, RN at 330.425.8474 ext. 234 or email her at [paulaharris@psi-solutions.org](mailto:paulaharris@psi-solutions.org).

We know families have children with individualized and special health needs that require management throughout the day to facilitate their success in a school setting. PSI Health Staff provide personalized nursing care for children with specialized health needs. We serve as team members implementing prescribed interventions to foster the health and educational success of students with special health needs.

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## PSI LPN Saves Student's Life

**Paula Harris**  
Manager PSI Special Needs Services

The early morning of October 26, 2015 is a day that PSI Licensed Practical Nurse Jackie Hamlin Davidson will never forget. In fact she can tell you the exact time of the event: 8:25 am. Jackie, because of her training and assessment skills, saved a student's life. Not many of us have been given this experience.

Jackie has worked in the Independence School District as a Special Needs LPN working with a 1:1 student (meaning she cares only for this student during the school day) for 2 years. Arriving at the student's home that morning, Jackie found everyone running behind schedule. Mom was even thinking about bringing her in later. Jackie took over the chaos and got the student out of the door and on the bus to school.

Arriving at the school, the student was her usual funny self. This special student has a gift of making everyone smile. Nothing was out of the norm and it was time for the student's breakfast. As Jackie was getting her cup out of her bag, the student color became pale and she had a grand mal seizure. This was startling to everyone present because she had not ever had this type of seizure before and there was no indication that she was not feeling well.

Jackie immediately took the student out of her wheelchair and placed her on the floor. She then noticed that the student had stopped breathing and was without a pulse. Being described by Jackie as an "out of body experience," she immediately directed the staff that was in the classroom on what to do. She started the CPR on the student that saved her life. The paramedics arrived and transported the student to the hospital. Even at that point, Jackie, knowing how scared the student would have been in the ambulance surrounded by people she did not know, rode with her to the Emergency Room and stayed to support the family.

The student has recovered and is back at school, returning to her duties of making others smile and laugh! The School District has presented PSI was an outstanding letter commending Jackie for her compassion, professionalism and positive attitude. All of us at PSI are so honored to have Jackie on our team!!

## Practicing Mindfulness In Your School

PSI is proud to announce that training is available to teach staff in Mindfulness Practices that can be used in the classroom setting.

Mindfulness in a classroom can:

- Reduce test anxiety
- Reduce behavior referrals
- Enhance a social emotional working environment
- Increase awareness of attention
- Increase happiness
- Puts space between emotional reactions and behavioral reactions

To receive additional information on this new PSI program, contact Karen Heichel at 330.425.8474 ext. 253 or at:

[karenheichel@psi-solutions.org](mailto:karenheichel@psi-solutions.org).

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# The Power of Mindfulness

## How a meditation practice can help kids become less anxious, more focused

Juliann Garey

By now there's a good chance you've heard the term "mindfulness." It seems to be everywhere—touted as the new yoga, the answer to stress, the alternative to Xanax. But beyond the buzz, what is it? Jon Kabat-Zinn, the scientist and widely recognized father of contemporary, medically based mindfulness—over 30 years ago he developed a therapeutic meditation practice known as Mindful Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)—defines mindfulness simply as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally."

That's the short version. To expand on that just a little, mindfulness is a meditation practice that begins with paying attention to breathing in order to focus on the here and now—not what might have been or what you're worried could be. The ultimate goal is to give you enough distance from disturbing thoughts and emotions to be able to observe them without immediately reacting to them.

In the last few years mindfulness has emerged as a way of treating children and adolescents with conditions ranging from ADHD to anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, depression and stress. And the benefits are proving to be tremendous.

But how do you explain mindfulness to a five year-old? When she's teaching mindfulness to children, Dr. Amy Saltzman, a holistic physician and mindfulness coach in Menlo Park, California, prefers not to define the word but rather to invite the child to feel the experience first—to find their "still, quiet place."

### *Choosing behaviors*

*We begin by paying attention to breath.*

"We begin by paying attention to breath," she says. "The feeling of the expansion of the in-breath, the stillness between the in-breath and the out-breath. I invite them to rest in the space between the breaths. Then I explain that this still quiet place is always with us—when we're sad, when we're angry, excited, happy, frustrated. They can feel it in their bodies. And it becomes a felt experience of awareness. They can learn to observe their thoughts and feelings, and the biggest thing for me is they can begin to choose their behaviors."



Saltzman also conducted a study in conjunction with researchers at Stanford University showing that after 8 weeks of mindfulness training, the fourth through sixth graders in the study had documented decreases in anxiety, and improvements in attention. They were less emotionally reactive and more able to handle daily challenges and choose their behavior.

**For more on this article, please click here:**

<http://childmind.org/article/the-power-of-mindfulness/>



## Not Quite Burnt, But Crispy Around the Edges

PSI staff was recently educated on a **special needs area** that affects us all: dealing with stress in our daily and work lives...

Without doubt, it seems the five-letter word everyone dreads most every day is stress. How it affects us and what we can do about it was the topic given by Dr. William DeMeo ("Dr. Bill") at PSI's Fall 2016 Conference at the Crowne Plaza in Independence, Ohio. Using slides, video, numerous skits and literally working the room, Dr. Bill made the three-hour presentation consistently interesting, fun and a sharing group experience that united the large audience. Learning is easy when you laugh along the way!

Dr. DeMeo, a neuropsychologist, said that about a fourth of all employees view their jobs as the number one stressor. It heads the list that includes fear of sickness, paying bills and keeping the car running. With the current national focus on obesity he added, "there's a strong connection between weight gain and stress." Each day we face 50-70 stressors with little or no idea how to handle them effectively. A chemical in the brain called cortisol gets released which increases blood pressure and can adversely affect the immune system.

Throughout the presentation, Dr. Bill had the audience form groups of two and three to interact with each another. In one, they would exchange how they handle stress. In another, a partner would tell two truths and one lie and ask the others which was which. With a third, each would show three things done over the weekend without speaking. There were seven skits in all, furnishing great fun, relaxation and acuity. This presentation had no dull moments!

Motivation is a key to avoiding stress. To wit, if you can wake up to go to work most mornings without the alarm clock, things may well look good. Involvement can translate into commitment. On the flipside, Dr. DeMeo's view is that "we in education are burning ourselves out." Anxiety can lead to procrastination, which in turn can lead to a sense of hopelessness and depression. Stress morphs into distress.

As a neuropsychologist, Dr. DeMeo discussed the impact of stress on the brain and cardiovascular system. Neurons can cease to fire, with the heart rate speeding up. Smoking gets seen as a stress reducer. Research is showing many aging-related diseases are linked, even the yellow bands of DNA (telomeres). "We can create our own stress just by thinking!"

What to do? Start with getting enough sleep at night, eight to ten hours. Exercise at least three times a week, each thirty minutes minimum. Maintain solid social support with those you trust. Avoid negative people who typically have glib solutions to everything. Finally, a positive mindset can be your driving force, for human resilience is a bellwether.

Celebrate what you do right rather than be critical of what might be wrong. Everyone has a unique combination of strengths that can be built upon as a foundation to protect against the storms.

A growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset is what's needed. List five strengths as your building blocks, along with the strengths you most admire in others. Pose the question: "Is what I'm about to do a reflection of who I am and who I want to be?" The answer can be the ultimate game changer.

Dr. Bill said that talking about yourself is a great way to reduce stress. In parallel, thinking positively about yourself can be just as good, perhaps even better.



Dr. Bill DeMeo

# Friendship Circle

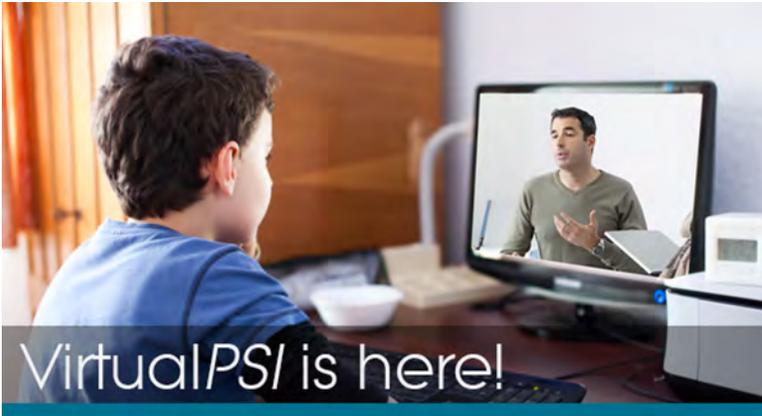
One of PSI's "Special Needs Friends" is The Friendship Circle. For the one in 12 children with special needs, a particular challenge can be making and keeping friends. Because their differences from peers may require particular kinds of social interactions, children with special needs often long for safe and emotionally fulfilling companionship that neither they nor their parents know how to achieve.

The overused word "unique" can truly be applied to Friendship Circle. Friendship Circle pairs teen volunteers with children with special needs who desperately need a friend and role model.

Since its beginning in 2003 with five children and 10 teens, Friendship Circle has made a remarkable impact on the Cleveland East Side community. Children with a range of challenges including autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and attention deficit disorder are gaining social skills, forming bonds of friendship, and finding themselves part of a peer group for the first time. High school volunteers are describing their experiences as life-changing as they discover the meaning of compassion, loyalty, and community. Parents are uplifted by watching their children interact and enjoy themselves as never before. Meanwhile, the army of enthusiastic teen volunteers has surpassed 250 annually, and the number of families served is now 210.

Visit their web site at: <http://www.friendscleveland.com>





Give your Students  
a technological edge!

## PSI's Virtual Approach to Special Needs

For several years, PSI has had multiple requests to develop a program in teletherapy. For the past year, PSI has worked with a software engineering company to develop a platform that is versatile yet simple! After an exhaustive process, a platform was decided upon in early May. PSI is proud and thrilled to be able to bring a new "virtual" program to your school as our platform was launched on October 1, 2016!

While working with the experts in this field it became clear that our vision for a teletherapy program was needed! First we developed a virtual program for Speech and a virtual program for TESOL. Future programs will include school psychology, health, and occupational therapy programs.

We understand a virtual program may not be for everyone but many have already benefited! Having an option for your school, for rural schools, for extended staff leaves, for e-schools, and for a more cost effective approach was PSI's vision. PSI has programs in over 400 schools already. VirtualPSI will be able to reach countless additional students and allow a true blended approach for our therapy program and for our TESOL program.

While we journey into this new world of education, we are excited about the unlimited potential VirtualPSI will have to offer. PSI welcomes you to join us in launching VirtualPSI this year! Please contact Mike Tornow [miketornow@psi-solutions.org](mailto:miketornow@psi-solutions.org) or 330-425-8474, Coordinator of School Partnerships for further information or to set-up a demo!

**For more details,  
please click here:**

[http://psi-solutions.org/  
teletherapy-at-psi/](http://psi-solutions.org/teletherapy-at-psi/)