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Investigating the Relationship Between Mindfulness and Learning

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Abstract: Mindfulness is a type of active awareness that is purposeful, in the present moment, and non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Mindfulness interventions have been shown to benefit attentional engagement (e.g., Mrazek, Smallwood, & Schooler, 2012) and, increasingly, have been implemented in educational settings. However, prior work has rarely explored the impact of such interventions on learning and transfer. To investigate whether mindfulness could improve students' learning and transfer of novel concepts, we conducted a study in which we assessed dispositional mindfulness and gave a brief mindful breathing intervention. We analyzed students' learning behaviors to test the hypothesis that students who were more mindful during the learning task would be more attentive and non-judgmental about their learning, making them more likely to learn from mistakes and fill in the gaps in their understanding. We also tested whether this learning would aid solving conceptually related transfer problems with different surface features.