

The Kindness Institute Mindfulness Program NPH Dominican Republic

In August 2017 Kristina Cavit visited the NPH Dominican Republic home for orphaned and abandoned children for 10 days and ran The Kindness Institute mindfulness & stress management program with the pequeños (children). Kristina also did workshops with the tias (aunts), staff and volunteers. The results exceeded all expectations!

Daily classes with pequeños (children): pequeños: 7 - 20 years old participated in class (8-15 students per day, a core group of 6 who participated everyday)

The energy was always very high and chaotic at the start of class – the kids were not keen to participate, prefer to sleep or watch TV. However, by the end of class they didn't want to leave!

100% of pequeños said they felt more calm and relaxed after class. The pequeños especially resonated with the take 5 mindfulness tool when they're angry or sad (a simple process where you breathe in and out using your hand stretched out like a star). They also learnt about the power of breathing as well as how to find love on the inside through loving kindness mindfulness meditation. They learnt that no one can take those feelings of love away from them, no matter where they are and they're the only ones who create those feelings.

Workshop with Tias

When Kristina asked the tias (aunts) what they'd like to learn about in terms of managing stress, they all talked about work stress, trouble with sleeping and anxiety. The concepts discussed in the workshop that they were then able to take away included how to be present, how to be kind to ourselves and less judgmental when we make a mistake, how to support and take care of ourselves so we can take care of others, how to calm anxiety and sleep better, how to be grateful every day even when things have gone really wrong, how to calm yourself in highly stressful situations and how to make positive decisions. We had great feedback from the tias, for example:

“Thank you so much. I came into this workshop feeling really tense and stressed to be honest and I feel so much better now. I don't sleep much at all but now I feel really relaxed and I've learnt so much.”

Workshop with the school teachers and volunteers

At the beginning of the workshop all the teachers and volunteers said they have a lot of stress and there was a tension in the air with the new term starting in a few days. However, the energy completely changed by the end of the workshop with a strong sense of connection, calm and peace.

The teachers and volunteers were able to take away the same concepts as the tias as well as some practical techniques like the mindful jar, how calming your thoughts before making a decision can be very powerful for kids in a classroom and how 60 seconds of breathing at the beginning and end of class can change everything - focus, motivation, calm, engagement and cognitive performance. We had great feedback from the teachers as well for example:

“Thank you so much for taking your time to come from so far and teach us about mindfulness and managing stress. I've learnt so much and have really loved this I can't wait to start applying these things to my life and to my classroom. This workshop way exceeded my expectations.”

- Written by Jennifer Braithwaite