

What to take away from the Education Conference on Wellbeing & Mindfulness in Schools Conference, Cheltenham College, 28.01.2016

Discussion Points

- Chris Cullen dispelled the typical myths about mindfulness; similarly, Claire Kelly made clear what mindfulness is *not*
- Exam stress seems to be at the heart or core of what our students struggle with, and hence the need to embed wellbeing and mindfulness / support systems in schools
- Growth in the number of cases of youth depression and recurrent mental illnesses
- The number of distractions that our students face today (many prompted by the growth in social media) means that they are continually multi-tasking and not solely focusing on one or two key tasks with their full attention. This hampers optimum performance, inevitably
- Mindfulness and wellbeing are for 'supporting' not solving problems/difficulties

Advice to take away

- As educational and pastoral practitioners, we must practise what we preach – mindfulness and wellbeing should be for staff also
- Encourage pupils to focus on the 'here and now' as opposed to dwelling on what they should have done or have to do in the future
- Avoid processing mental 'to do' lists which clutter the mind and take one off-task
- Staff should **respond** not **react** to situations which arise in our schools
- Try not to dwell on what **might** go wrong! *"Most of the worst events of my life never actually happened"* (Mark Twain) – we are good at adding 'optional suffering'
- Mindfulness is centered upon 'present moment awareness'
- Over-thinking in young people can often be synonymous with depression and anxiety, so wellbeing and mindfulness can train individuals to guard against over-rumination
- Our awareness as staff conducting busy lives, is affected by perennially rushing

Practical Steps

- Claire Kelly provided practical steps for schools, including taster courses and age / year group specific curricula, including 'Paws B' for the 7-11 years curriculum
- Encouraging CPD in schools, via Inset training sessions
- Chapel, PSHCE, assemblies, boarding house break-out groups can all provide forums for introducing W & M in schools
- Claire shared a number of pilot schemes, working practices and existing school programmes in wellbeing and mindfulness