

NATURE-BASED CURRICULUM

Mindfulness Teaching Guide
for Schools and Parents

Includes HD Video,
Audio & Photo Galleries



Mindfulness Rainforest Adventure

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Dr. John M. González



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Dedication

**In dedication to the children
and the hidden worlds of the
Andean-Amazonian rainforests.**

TO ALL MY RELATIONS

To the insects, the plants, the animals, the forest itself.

Foreword

In 2011, I had the beautiful opportunity to travel to the Amazon Forest to participate in an important gathering with 13 tribes of the Amazon (Yawanawa, Shanenawa, Katukina, Poyanawa, Nawas, Nukini, Jaminawa Arara, Shawadawa, Araras, Apolima Arara and Kaxinawa) who came together to address ecological and social concerns on their land. For the first time since 1911, the Pajés (the shamans) and spiritual leaders of thirteen ethnic groups gathered to address the environmental problems created by deforestation, the loss of ancient rainforest knowledge, wisdom traditions and culture which greatly affected the Kuntanawa and neighboring indigenous people. It was there, that my heart reached out to these communities as I witnessed thousands of acres of magnificent forests being burned every day, and with it thousands of species, plants, insects, and animals were forever lost. My heart sank further as I understood the live values of these tribes, values that embrace living with nature rather than dominating nature. It was then that I asked myself, “There must be a better way.”

As dwellers of the deepest and most secluded areas of the Amazon, the Kuntanawa had been custodians of the forests for thousands of years. Their relationship with the plants and animals was and is still today like no other. Trees and all wildlife are revered and honored with the same respect as a family member. They understood that there is no separation between nature and their communities.



As part of my awakening, the local shamans would take me into the jungle and teach me about the vast medicine that resided there. There I was in awe at the splendor and magic of the dense vegetation, the majestic trees, and rich wildlife. Over the course of several weeks, my brothers and sisters of the Amazon rainforest helped me understand the importance of preserving this majestic land and its local habitants and culture. Upon return to the United States, my heart and soul understood how “la foresta” was a gift to all worth preserving.

Today, the indigenous people of the rainforest continue soliciting support and looking for solutions to preserve the rainforest. Through exploring new and innovative ways to sustainably harvest the natural resources of the forest rather than clear cutting for farming and bio fuel, the indigenous people of the rainforest invite us to remember and honor the circle of life in which we all belong. In light of this request, this curriculum was created with the intent to help our children to see the beauty and gift of the rainforest.

Anne-Marie Charest, Ph.D. / Sanna

Movie Mindfulness.1 The power and beauty of the Amazon Rainforest.



In the stillness of the moment, we are awakened to the truth of who we are. Each moment is an opportunity to return home to ourselves. The rainforest offer us the gift of reconnecting to this deeper truth and the unique opportunity to remember the delicate balance of life in which we belong.

Allow the sounds of the forest open your heart. Rejoice at the beauty it offers and be in awe at the magic of its diversity. Be moved and allow yourself to open to new worlds. Let nature nurture your soul.

Introduction



Welcome to innerU. Over the course of the next few weeks we will have the unique opportunity to discover a world that is often unexplored, and that is the inner YOU. To do so we will travel through the Colombian Andes and Amazon regions to explore worlds hidden deep in the Colombian jungle and tropical rainforest, a fauna characterized by the highest rate of endemic species. Along the way we will meet incredible creatures and explore how they can help us to better understand ourselves and the world around us through playful discovery of the senses, emotions, the mind, and the heart. Our discovery journey into the rainforests will teach us about mindfulness, how it is best practiced, and why, and when it should be practiced. So come along and let's begin our journey together.

**I love the rainforest and its calling sounds
I love the tree tops and its wet, soft ground
Busy as it is with monkeys and termite mounds
There's not a more peaceful place around.**

~ Tanya Marcou



Let's Explore



Your beauty is found in your
unique spirit. Cherish it!

Sanna

About Dr. Anne-Marie Charest

My name is Sanna, which means in the Kalaallit Eskimo tradition, the goddess of the sea and the one who lives deep at the bottom of our deepest oceans. Originally from Quebec, Canada, my passion as a therapist, educator, and environmentalist is to help children, youth, and adults *dive inward*. As a child, I was not taught to explore nor understand my inner world; a world of emotions, thoughts and sensations. As a result, costly mistakes were made throughout my life that brought great suffering in and around me. This brought me to discover this uncharted for over 20 years. Today, as an embodied-mindfulness student and teacher, I now relish sharing the wisdom of the senses and embodiment, enjoy exploring the nature of the mind and heart, while sharing various contemplative practices as tools to explore one's inner landscape. As a bridge walker between science and spirituality, I incorporate modalities both from ancient Eastern cultures and modern science to offer a holistic educational and therapeutic model where body, mind, and spirit are taken into account. As a doctor in Transpersonal Psychology and Somatic Psychologist who researched mindfulness in schools, my passions for the lived expression of wellbeing, and nature-centric practices, have led me to solicit the reintroduction and revival of ancient practices in Western culture. Through my mindfulness program innerU, individuals are taught to dive within through daily, embodied practices, mindfulness, and positive psychology methods. To find out more information, visit: www.innerUlife.com or www.heartfullyU.com



About Dr. John M. González

My spiritual name is Pantera, the panther for my keen eyesight amidst the darkness and keen awareness. I am a doctor of psychology with an emphasis on transpersonal studies. This background incorporates the science of Western psychology and the wisdom of Eastern traditions to offer a holistic and integrative approach to the human mind, body, and spirit. As an academic, my interests focus on transformation, counter-transformation, East and West approaches to psychology and psychotherapy, ecology, and technology and human evolution. As an educator, my motivation is to raise consciousness and develop ethical world views that foster important connections between feminism, indigenous wisdom, and the environment. As an activist, I co-direct the Humanizar Foundation in Colombia—my birth place—which focuses on children's rights, mindfulness in children, and ecoliteracy; an endeavor inspired by a vision of a generation that is free, integral, and in harmony with nature. I also maintain a private practice in Connecticut and specialize in life transitions, personal growth, and life crisis. To find out more information, visit: www.johnmgonzalez.com



How to use this book

This iBOOK is designed for teachers and parents who are inspired to make a difference in this world through conscious living.



Vision

Our ultimate goal is a world where human beings cherish the life of all sentient beings.

Mission

To inspire, empower, and cultivate inner wisdom for the wellbeing of all our relations.

Definition of Terms

Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to the ability to pay attention to what is occurring in the present moment through the senses, and cognitive awareness without judgment.

Eco-Mindfulness

Eco-Mindfulness refers to the capacity to pay attention to nature and its valuable teachings for learning and practicing mindfulness.

Heartfulness

Heartfulness is the state of being when we feel connected to self and others in an attitude of acceptance, respect, and love.

Educational Approach

innerU was developed with educational, social, emotional, physical, psychological, and ecological considerations. Current educational systems require children to pay attention several

times a day, yet little to no efforts are made to teach children how to do so. *innerU* introduces a curriculum that gently guides students through developing increased attention, cognitive capacity, embodied awareness, and pro-social behavior by using indigenous psychology as a means to cultivate wisdom, thus bridging the mind to the heart. Other psychological foundations include:

- Learning is an integral experience incorporating body, mind, and spirit.
- Movement is the entryway to retention and deeper understanding.
- Learning and development are optimized in stress-free environments.
- Play is the foundation of wellbeing and happiness.
- A connection to the natural world is necessary for a deeper understanding of self.
- Wisdom can only be cultivated through the exploration of one's inner landscape.

Who is this book for?

This book is designed for teachers, educators, and parents who understand the value of incorporating embodied mindfulness-based practices in the classroom, in after-school programs, in camps, or at home. The curriculum was initially developed for children from K to 6th grade, taking into account their developmental needs. That said, the curriculum is easily

adaptable for middle and high school grade levels by adapting language delivery.

Understanding that time is often a luxury in classroom settings as well as in fast-paced home environments, the innerU program is designed to make your experience stress-free and fun. Using the rich, mixed-media capabilities of iBook platforms, innerU offers easily accessible 20-minute lessons filled with engaging audio and eye-catching videos for visual support.

How is this book organized?

innerU encompasses 16 embodied mindfulness lessons, which can be presented twice a week for a total of eight weeks, or once a week for a total of 16 weeks. It is important to note that one of the most important considerations in delivering a mindfulness curriculum is consistency. For this reason, each chapter is accompanied by a five to eight-minute weekly mindfulness audio, which can be used on the days that content is not delivered in person. The lessons should be taught by a parent or teacher in the order they are presented, as each lesson is developed to slowly and incrementally introduce embodied-mindfulness skills to children, while considering their capacity for awareness and attention.

Each chapter corresponds to an individual lesson and introduces the following elements: an opening breathing exercise and recapitulation of the previous teaching; a new embodied mindfulness concept; a mindfulness experience; an embodied experience; an animal or plant that teaches mindfulness in the

way it lives; journal questions; and individual practices that are encouraged to be done outside the classroom or at home.

How to use this book?

This book can be used to explore, develop, and practice mindfulness skills as a way to cultivate and honor the inner voice and experience of each child, while inspiring within them the inner wisdom and intelligence needed for lifelong success. It is highly recommended that the skills or exercises presented in this book are not used as disciplinary measures or as a means to quieten a class, but rather as an educational platform to cultivate well-being, attention, self-regulating skills, compassion, cognitive development, awareness, respect, and resilience. Within school settings, innerU can beautifully complement existing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs.

The program works best when teachers and parents are grounded in their own personal mindfulness practice. For this reason, we highly recommend that teachers and parents fully participate when presenting each segment of the curriculum. Audio meditations found at the end of this iBook are used to supplement the teaching in person. Each lesson and meditation provides a proposed narration that can be read out loud or followed using one's own language.

The supporting audio and video from each chapter can be used to engage children in developing a relationship with the various animals or forest life introduced throughout the program. Colombian fauna is used to present new embodied-mindfulness skills and to cultivate a richer awareness of our tropical, Andean,

and Amazonian environments. Following each lesson, children are invited to draw or journal about their experiences and are encouraged to incorporate newly acquired skills into their lives.

To facilitate the teaching process, additional information is provided throughout the book, which can be identified by the italicized text within brackets. This will provide important cues as to what actions are required from the teacher or parent to properly engage children in this process. Note that you will also

find numerous questions without italicized text for instructions. Please feel free to use these questions as supplemental inquiry or for class discussions. The program also offers a series of questions that are designed to solicit student responses. Each question is an opportunity to invite your child or students to engage in providing personal responses.

