**Heartfulness Institute Press Release**

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**Heartfulness Program for Schools has a significant impact on reducing stress and improving mental wellbeing in a Michigan Middle School**

An estimated 3.1 million adolescents, aged 12 to 17, in the United States (US) had at least one major depressive episode, and an estimated 31.9% of adolescents had anxiety disorder based on the statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The Heartfulness Program for Schools (HPS), offered by the Heartfulness Institute, is a program designed to manage stress and build social-emotional skills to cope with real-life challenges. The results of the study on the impact of HPS were reported in the July 1, 2019 issue of *Am J Health Behav*.

Teens and young adults are showing a sharp increase in anxiety and depression. The evidence base for school-based programs that aim to promote well-being supports emotional and social learning. and prevent mental health problems in adulthood is growing. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of HPS on middle school students and to explore whether this program helps young teens to feel relaxed, manage stress, and improve mental well-being.

Participants were invited from 6 middle school classes (grade 7 and 8) during the academic year 2017-18 in a Y5-8 charter school in Michigan where the class size ranged from 24-28 students. For this study, the Heartfulness-based curriculum was offered to middle school students as one of the 13-week electives to help them feel relaxed and develop coping skills to face real-world problems. The control group participated in other electives offered by the school. All electives were taught at the same time of the day and over an equivalent timeframe of 13 weeks for 5 days a week, Monday through Friday, with each class being 45 minutes in duration.

When the researchers looked at the stress levels using Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) among study participants, they found a statistically significant decrease in the stress levels in the HPS group showing improvement in coping skills and stress management. After 13 weeks of the program, the post-score of the HPS group was significantly lower than the control group showing the decrease in the stress levels in the HPS group.

The researchers looked at the mental well-being of the students using Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS). The post-score of the HPS group was significantly higher than the control group showing an increase in overall-wellbeing in the HPS group. improve well-being in children by cultivating positivity and fostering social and self-awareness.

 “Mental health is a critical component of children’s learning and general health. Fostering social and emotional health in children as a part of healthy child development must, therefore, be a national priority,” a quote by Dr. David Satcher in the Report of the Surgeon General’s Conference on Children’s Mental Health in 2000. Results from this non-randomized study of the HPS curriculum provide encouraging evidence of its effectiveness in reducing stress and enhancing well-being in students.