



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Mindfulness Courses Offered for Educators in Grand Forks on Nov. 18**

BISMARCK, N.D. – A recent survey commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers has some troubling news about the mental health of our education professionals in America.

More than half of the educators in a survey of nearly 5,000 respondents say that their mental health is an issue: 58 percent said their mental health was “not good” for seven or more of the previous 30 days. A survey from 2015 had found just 34 percent of educators felt that way.

The survey also found that 61 percent of teachers and education support professionals say that their work is “always” or “often” stressful. This is affecting their sleep patterns, with only 18 percent of respondents reporting that they get eight or more hours of sleep per night. Most (78 percent) say they only manage five to seven hours per night.

Members of North Dakota United, the union of 11,500 public educators and employees statewide, are talking about the increased anxiety they are feeling, and we are looking for assistance. Some level of relief is available to our members across the state, we are happy to report. NDU has partnered with Heidi Demars of Mindful You, Mindful Me, to present seminars on mindfulness in cities across North Dakota.

“Every day, North Dakota United members are instilling in our children a lifelong love of learning while preparing our students to be ‘choice ready’ for their lives after school,” said NDU President Nick Archuleta. “Teachers and education support professionals in our public schools have witnessed an increase in workplace pressures and stagnant wages. It is not surprising, then, that we have seen an increase in job-related stress and anxiety. ND United knows that for education professionals to do their best, they must feel their best. To that end, ND United has chosen Heidi Demars of Mindful You, Mindful Me, to assist and inspire our members as they work to overcome the stress and lead healthier lives.”

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Demars and NDU will be presenting a mindfulness seminar for teachers in Grand Forks at the Staybridge Inn on Nov. 18, to teach participants about attaining mindfulness in themselves and transmitting that sense of serenity onto students. All educators are welcome. North Dakota United members can attend for free, and can receive one credit for \$50. Non-members will be charged \$200 for one credit. Registration is available online at <http://pd.ndunited.org/classes/78/>.

“I think teaching is an emotional career,” Demars said, “and so when you look at the (AFT) study, and how that connects to mindfulness, teachers are given some concrete tools and skills they can use during the day to be able to recognize what they’re feeling with present-moment awareness. A lot of what I provide is breathing tools that can be used throughout the day, ways to check in with yourself. And they’re very practical. I know teachers have limited time the way it is, so it’s not just one more thing to add to their to-do list.”

Demars has her Bachelor of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a minor in Nonprofit Leadership, as well as an Associate of Applied Science degree in Occupational Therapy. She first started practicing mindfulness and mediation in 2014, and found in its practice “a place of inner resourcefulness and true healing.” She is certified through Mindful Schools, and now shares what she has learned about mindfulness to “create more resilient, inclusive, empathetic and compassionate people and places.”

“I feel like once they can embody mindfulness and begin to practice that in little ways throughout their day, subtle changes start to show up over time,” Demars said. “I worked as an occupational therapist in the schools for years, and I recognized that kids needed some coping skills. I realized that if teachers can have some of these coping skills and practices to share with their students, that it’d be a win-win.”

Demars said her goal is “to help teachers cultivate the skills needed to promote calm, kind and cooperative learning spaces.” She does this by teaching mindful awareness and providing tools and resources that will:

- Improve their quality of attention
- Reduce burnout by cultivating their inner resources for resiliency
- Cope with the modern-day stressors of being a teacher
- Create greater peace and productivity.

For Bismarck educator Christine Job, who is a member of North Dakota United, the mindfulness seminar was the perfect opportunity for her to gather with colleagues and learn what they can do for their own mental health and to benefit the students they teach. “There was a group of teachers from my school who attended the mindfulness training courses offered by NDU,” Job said. “We signed up together to learn how mindful practices could help our students. This training helped us to build positive learning communities within our classrooms where students are calm and focused on their learning. Our students are using mindful practices to build self-awareness and self-management, as well as better relationships with other students.”

Each course is divided into two sections, with the first part devoted to being a mindful teacher, and the second part offering suggestions for creating a mindful classroom. After the in-person course is completed, attendees will take part in a book study, which can be completed online, with a one- or two-credit option. Go to [pd.ndunited.org/classes](http://pd.ndunited.org/classes) for information on upcoming trainings on mindfulness and ethics from NDU, and visit [www.mindfullyoumindfulme.org](http://www.mindfullyoumindfulme.org) for more information about Heidi Demars and Mindful You, Mindful Me.

*North Dakota United is the largest professional organization of public educators and employees in the state, representing more than 11,500 public school teachers, school staff, university faculty and staff, and city, county and state employees. Our association represents members in the state Capitol, the Legislature, in schools, on college campuses and at worksites across the state, and in our communities, promoting the great public education and great public services that the citizens of North Dakota deserve.*

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