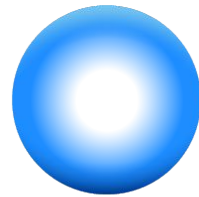


# Mindfulness@school: a toolbox for daily wellbeing

Malle Rajangu  
Minutes of Stillness NGO



VAIKUSE  
MINUTID

# Malle Rajangu



## Mindfulness trainer

- Teacher training of Minutes of Stillness NGO
- ACT for Mental Health Professionals
- Mindful Academy Solterreno, MBSR teacher
- Oxford Mindfulness Center



## Solution focused coach

- Erickson Coaching International (ICF):
- The Art and Science of Coaching
  - High Performance Team Coaching

# Warning statistics

\* Study of Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children  
11, 13, 15 yr. old Estonian students, 2017/18 HBSC

Had a long depressive episode (at least  
2 weeks) during the latest 12 months:

- every 3rd child (33%)
- more than ½ of 15 yr old girls (51%)

Every 5th of 13-15 yr olds' had suicidal  
thoughts within the last one year.



# Pain points according to the school principals\*:

\* focus group interviews with school principals, A. Haller and Minutes of Stillness NGO, 2023.

- Teachers and support specialists face too high workload, affecting their physical and mental health.
- emotionally charged, reactive behavior and chronic stress levels among teachers.
- decline in teachers' motivation, sudden burnouts and resignations.
- tense relationships with colleagues, parents, students.
- principals' own mental well-being and rested state

# School principals\* consider as important skills for teachers:

\* focus group interviews with school principals, A. Haller and Minutes of Stillness NGO, 2023.

- awareness of own condition and ability to influence it
- setting the focus so that stress and conflict do not increase
- switch off from work during free time
- Recognizing personal needs and boundaries, and communicating them proactively

# MISSION

Teaching practical and **evidence-based** skills to

- enhance focusing,
- cope well with stress,
- regulate emotions

through self-directed attention.

# VISION

Practical skills to support **psychological well-being** are widely used in society so that everyone can be more caring towards themselves and others.



# Trainings in schools and kindergartens

1. **125 schools** (~25% of Estonian schools)
2. **over 100 kindergartens**  
(~16% of Estonian kindergartens)

# Trainings in educational institutions





# Long-term projects in schools and kindergartens

## 18 kindergartens and schools

- 2 year program
- shaping practical skills and organisational culture

# Teaching practical and evidence-based skills to

1 **TEACHERS**  
to reach children  
systematically

2 **PARENTS**  
to support mental  
health in families

3 **HEALTHCARE**  
specialists, doctors  
and nurses

4 **ENTREPRENEURS**  
and everyone whose  
stress levels are high

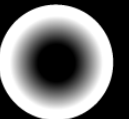
# How do we acquire skills?

- **Knowledge** (what and how to do)
- **Attitude** (declared attitude & inner beliefs)
- Repeated **practice**
- **Environment**, supporting both the learning process as well as application of skills

# Attention as a flashlight



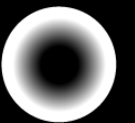
Attention creates the experience



# Attention as a flashlight



Automatic, moving by itself vs.  
conscious, intentional, directed



# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is awareness, arising through paying attention

- on purpose, in the present moment
- non-judgementally, with curiosity and kindness

Mindfulness is a practice and a lifestyle.

**Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.**

University of Massachusetts Medical School  
Professor of Medicine emeritus



# Becoming aware



# 3 Step Breathing Space



## **Becoming aware**

Noticing:  
thoughts, emotions and  
bodily sensations

## **Gathering attention**

To the breath

## **Expanding awareness**

Opening to whole experience  
with kindness

# STOP



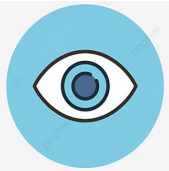
S

Stop to check in with yourself



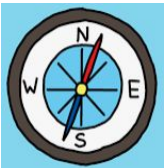
T

Take a deep breath



O

Observe your experience with kindness



P

Proceed with awareness

# Negativity bias

Tendency not only to register negative stimuli more readily, but also to respond more strongly to negative than to positive or neutral stimuli.



“The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positives ones.”

**Rick Hanson, PhD**

Psychologist, neuroscientist

# Taking in the good

Dr. Rick Hanson

1

Notice what is already well

2

Stay with it for a breath or longer

3

Absorb the experience into yourself

# Attitude as a resource

- Beginner's Mind
- Non-Judging
- Acceptance (allowing)
- Letting Go
- Trust
- Patience
- Non-Striving
- Gratitude
- Kindness, compassion

# Becoming aware



Checking-in with  
yourself:

**How am I doing?  
How do I relate  
to my  
experience?**

# Responding instead of reacting



A top-down photograph of a person's bare feet resting on a light-colored wooden floor. The person is wearing blue denim jeans. Surrounding the feet are several stacks of architectural magazines, including 'ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST' and 'ARND DIGEST'. A colorful poster is also visible, featuring a woman and the text 'COLOR YOUR WORLD BRILLIANT ROOMS, VIBRANT LIVING'.

# FOFBOC: Feet on the floor, bottom on the chair

Source: UK .b programm

Focusing on the lower body  
may support inner balancing.

# 3 steps for Grounding

Push your feet  
into the floor

Breathe slowly

Relax. Stretch.



# Self-compassion

**Tender self-compassion:**

**INNER WELL-BEING**

self-acceptance

alleviating suffering



**Fierce self-compassion**

**TAKING ACTION**

Setting boundaries (saying NO)

Providing (saying YES to our needs)

motivating



# Responding instead of reacting



# Research by Tartu University



Kristel Põder, Kenn Konstabel, Teri Talpsep.

- **10 week program with large sample:**  
740 students ( grades 8-9)  
more than 300 teachers from 12 schools
- active control-group + random sampling
- objective measuring instrument (blood tests, analysed in cooperation with the University of Uppsala) + validated questionnaires

# Proven effects of the program of the Minutes of Stillness

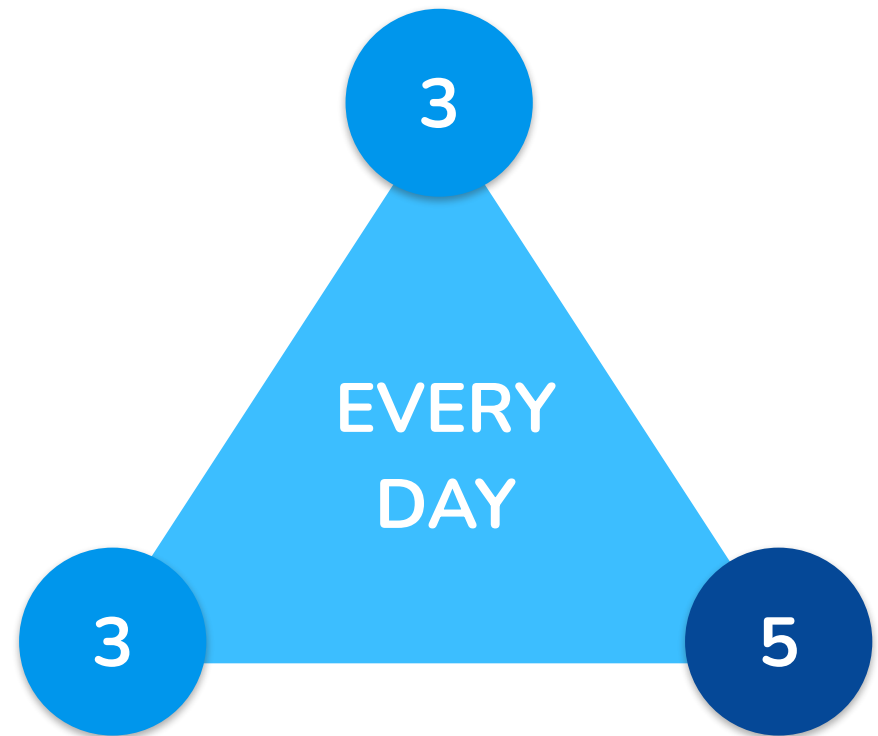
- **stress biomarkers decreased** while they increased in the control group
- **less exhaustion** (asthenia EST-Q), important for the prevention of mental health problems



# A recipe for pauses with proven impact

Daily mindful pauses:

- 3 minutes**
- + 3 minutes**
- + 5 minutes**



# Proven effects of the program of the Minutes of Stillness

- **less symptoms of anxiety and panic attacks** in those schools where exercises were done avg 2 min longer (13 min versus 11 min on every school day)



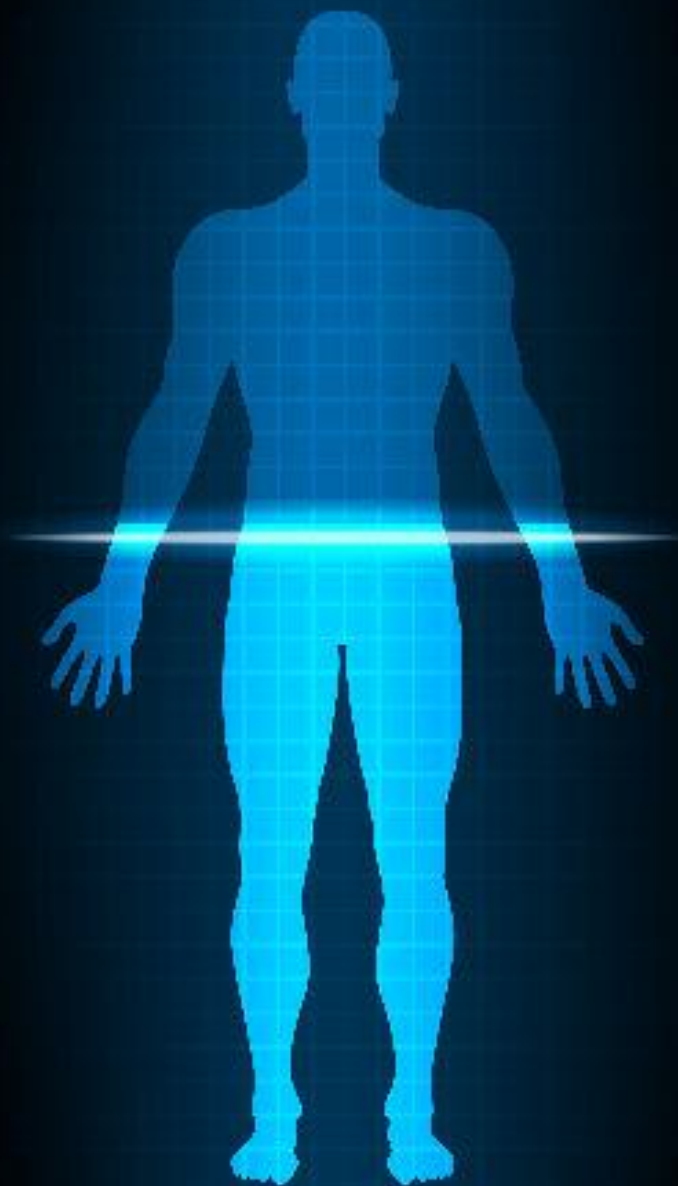
# Teachers results after the courses

1. **higher self-efficacy** (teachers' beliefs in their ability to effectively handle tasks and challenges at work)
2. **better ability to regulate one's emotions**
3. **improved attentiveness** (less absentmindedness etc.)
4. **higher levels of self-kindness**, e.g. constructive attitude towards one's flaws and mistakes

# Renewal



# Body Scan



# Three Breaths

## Micropractice of Focused Attention

1

Awareness of breathing

2

Let the body relax

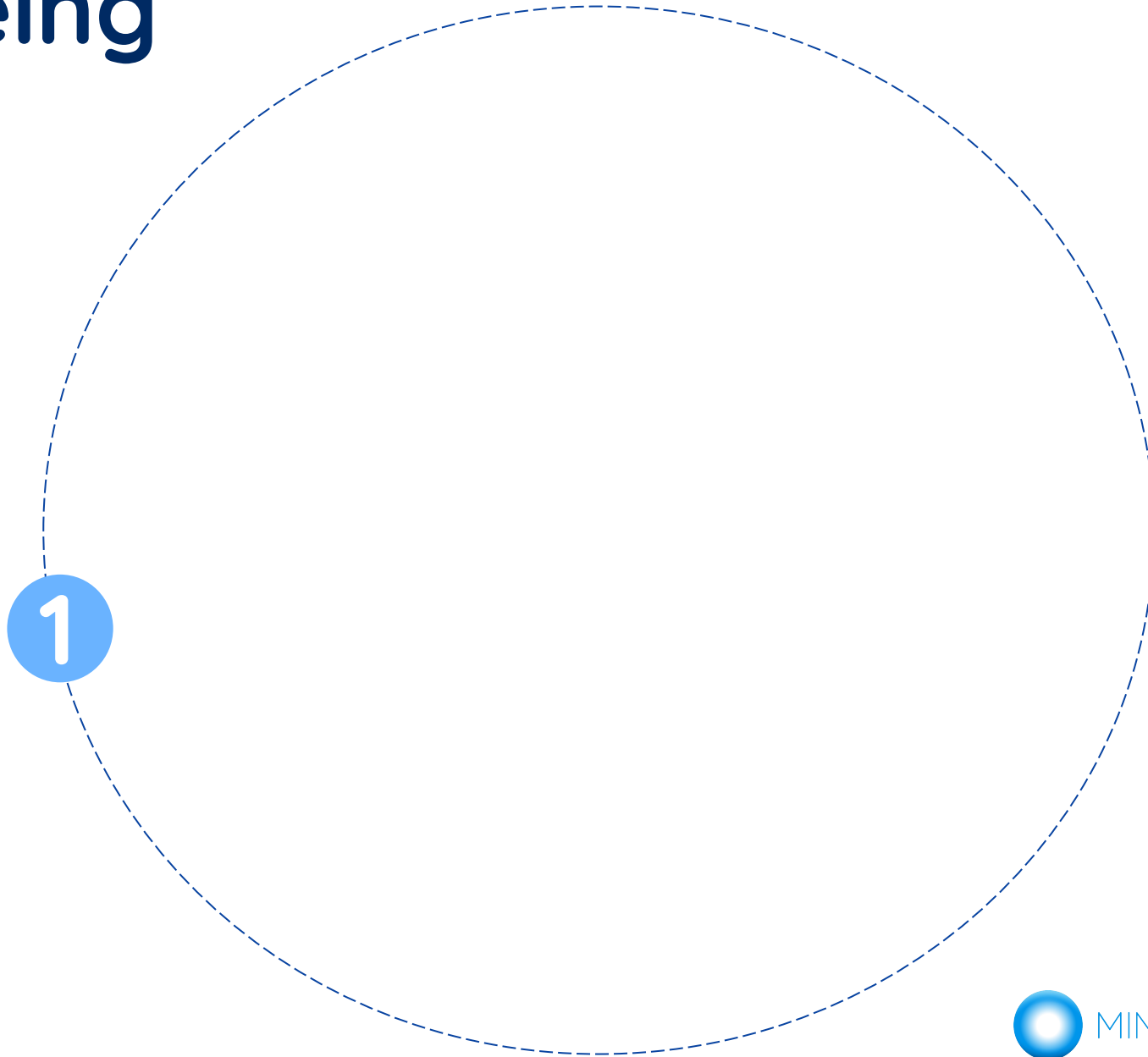
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Ask, “what’s most important now?”

# Renewal



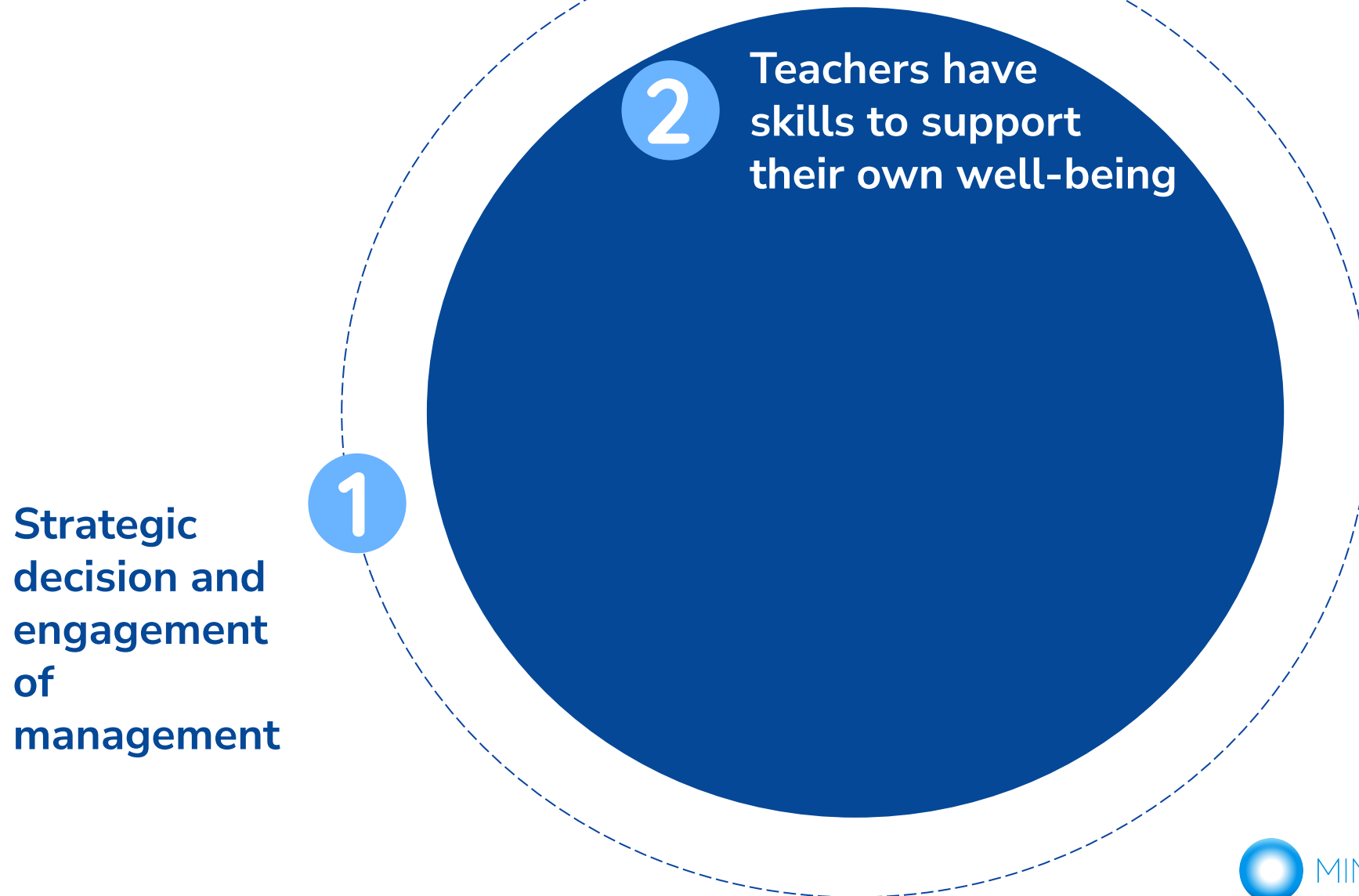
# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing



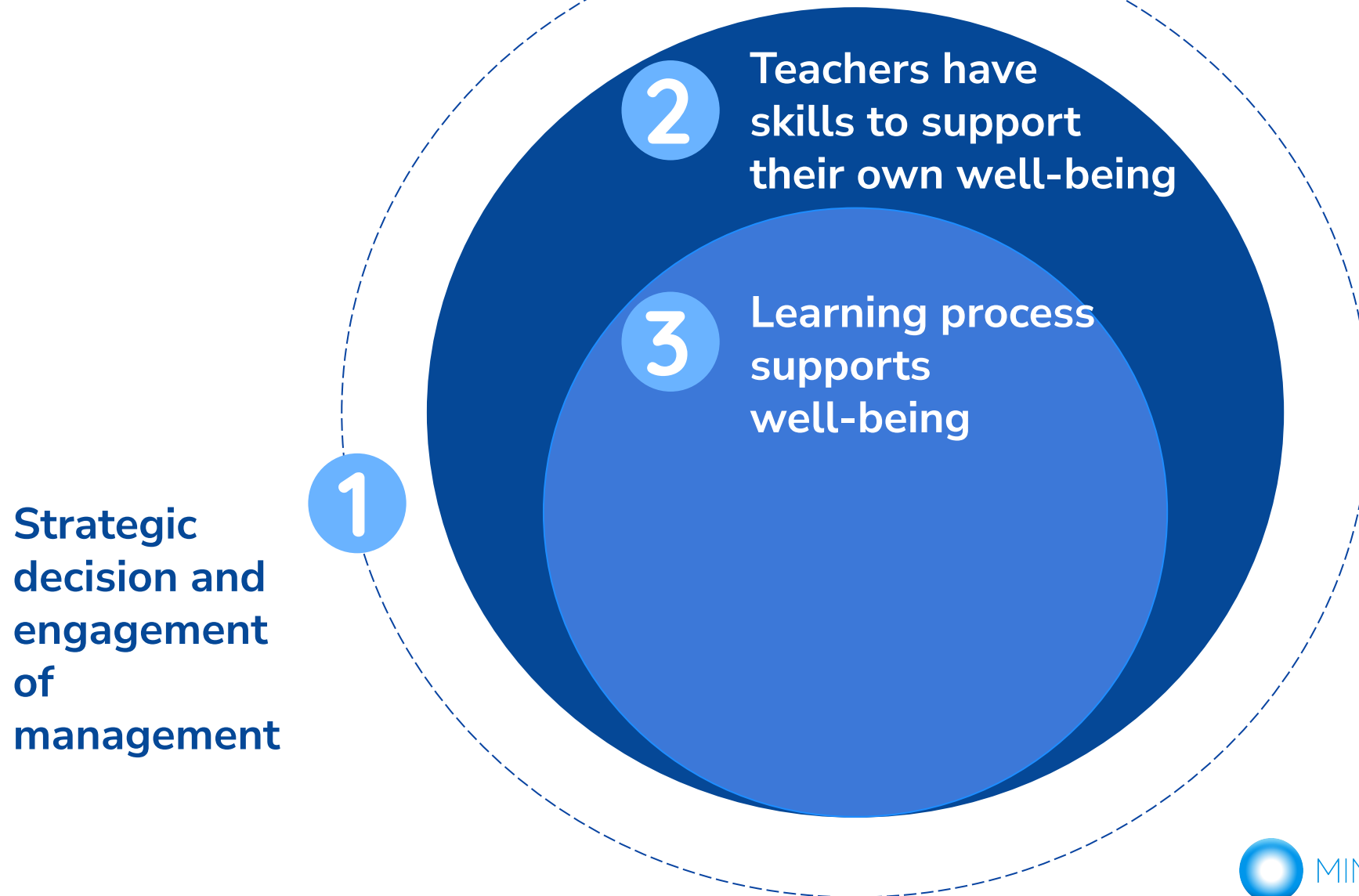
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Strategic  
decision and  
engagement  
of  
management

# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing

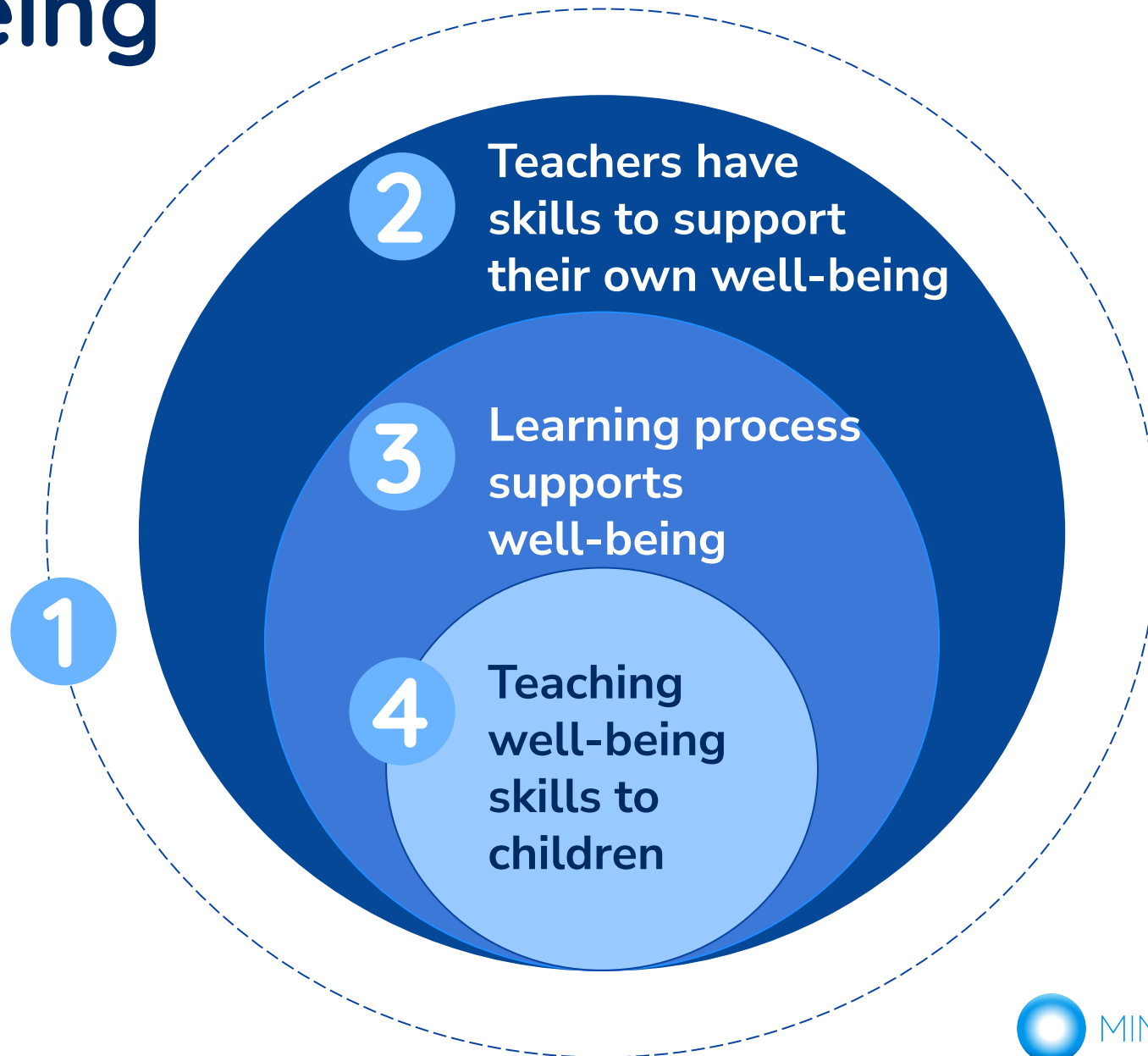


# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing

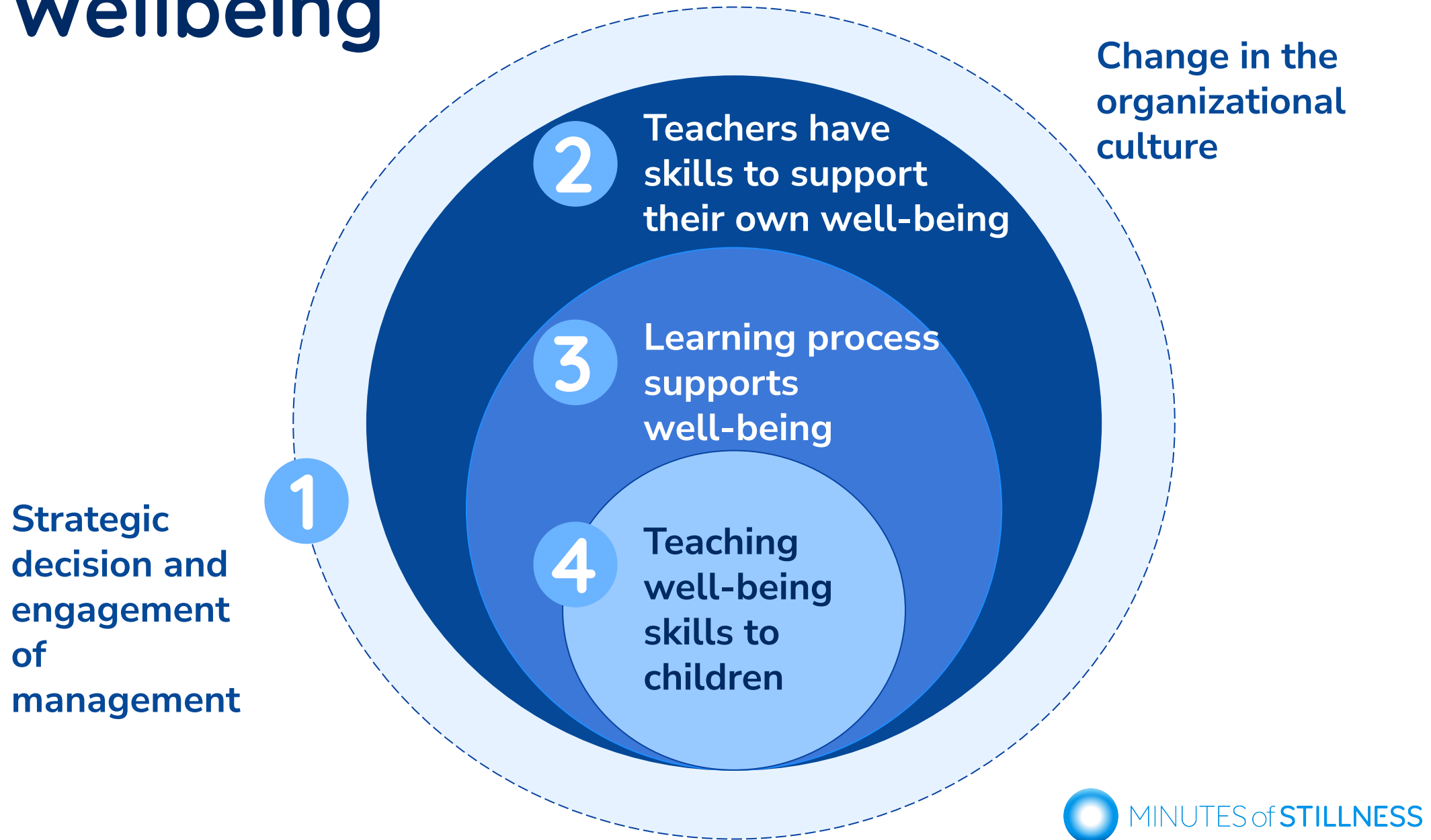


# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing

Strategic  
decision and  
engagement  
of  
management



# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing



# Kindergartens and Schools Creating Wellbeing

## 1st year - skills for teachers

### Trainings:

- coping with stress and social-emotional skills
- mindfulness practices + guiding the practices
- empowering team

## 2nd year - skills for pupils

- Programs for pupils
- Follow-up trainings for teachers

## Throughout the program

- Councelling program leadership group
- networking events

## Becoming aware



Breathing space  
STOP  
Taking in the good

## Responding instead of reacting



FOFBOC  
3 steps for grounding  
Self-compassion

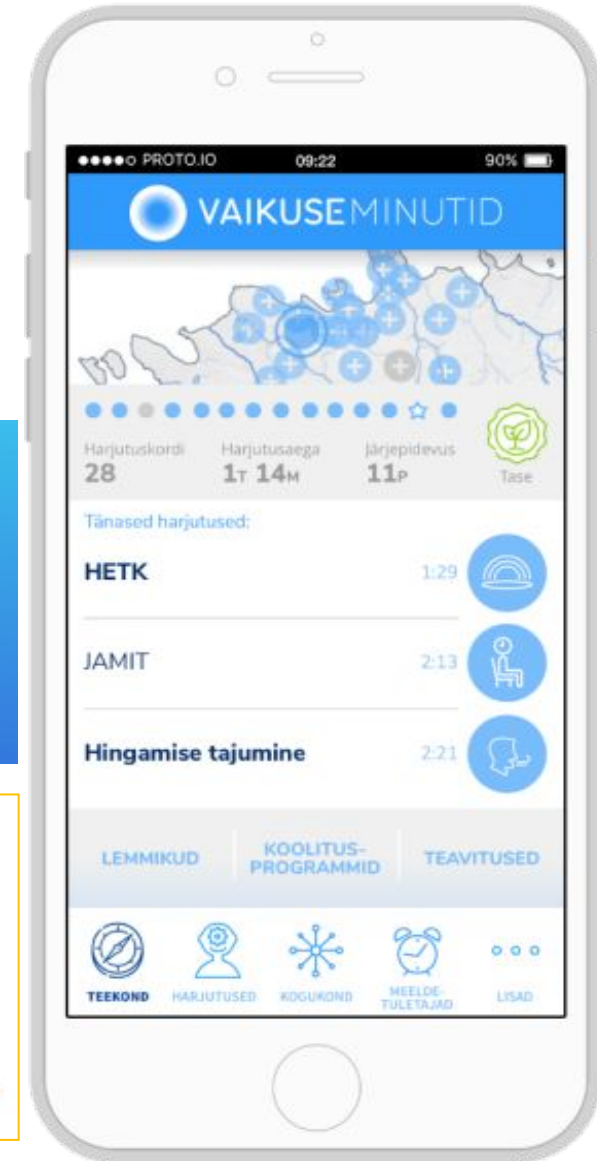
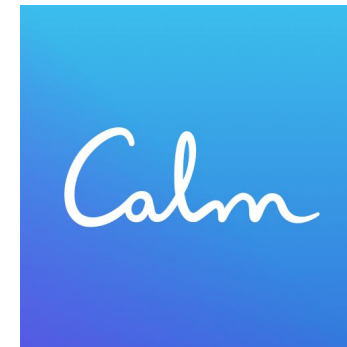
## Renewal



Body scan  
3 breaths

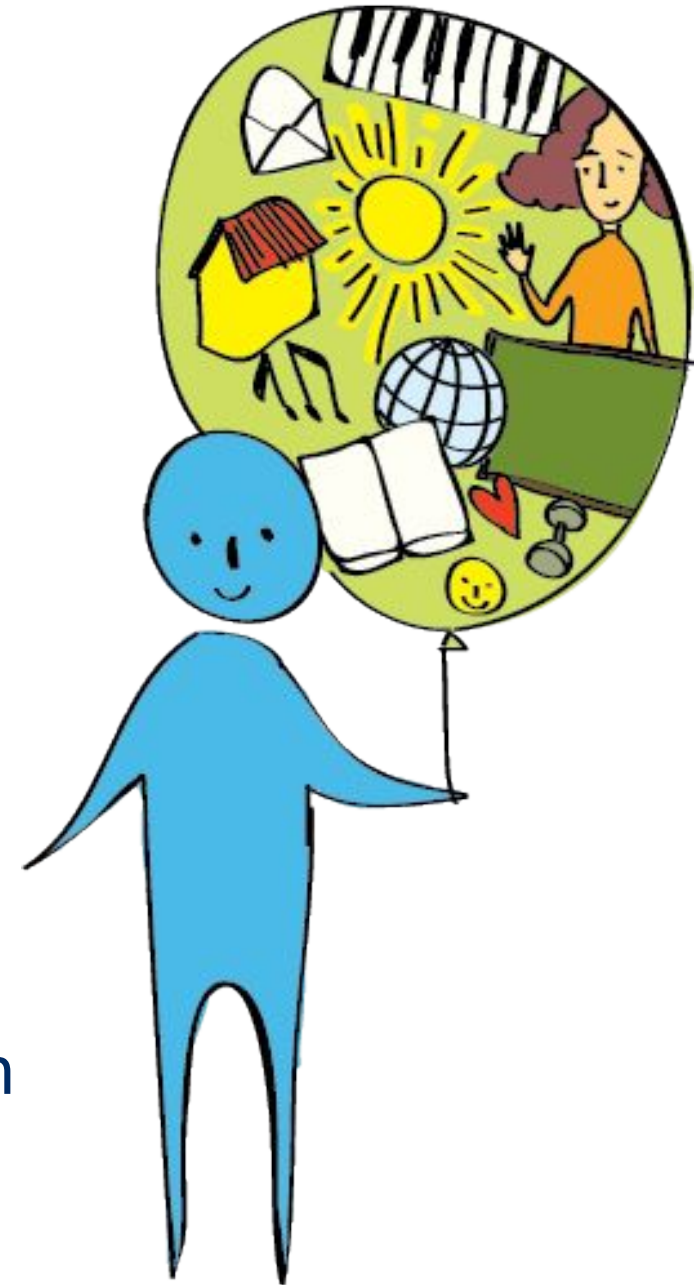
# Resources

- Exercises
  - apps: Calm, Headspace
  - Soundcloud: finding peace in a frantic world
- Resourceful websites:
  - [vaikuseminutid.ee](http://vaikuseminutid.ee)
  - [mindfulnessinschools.org](http://mindfulnessinschools.org)
  - [self-compassion.org](http://self-compassion.org)



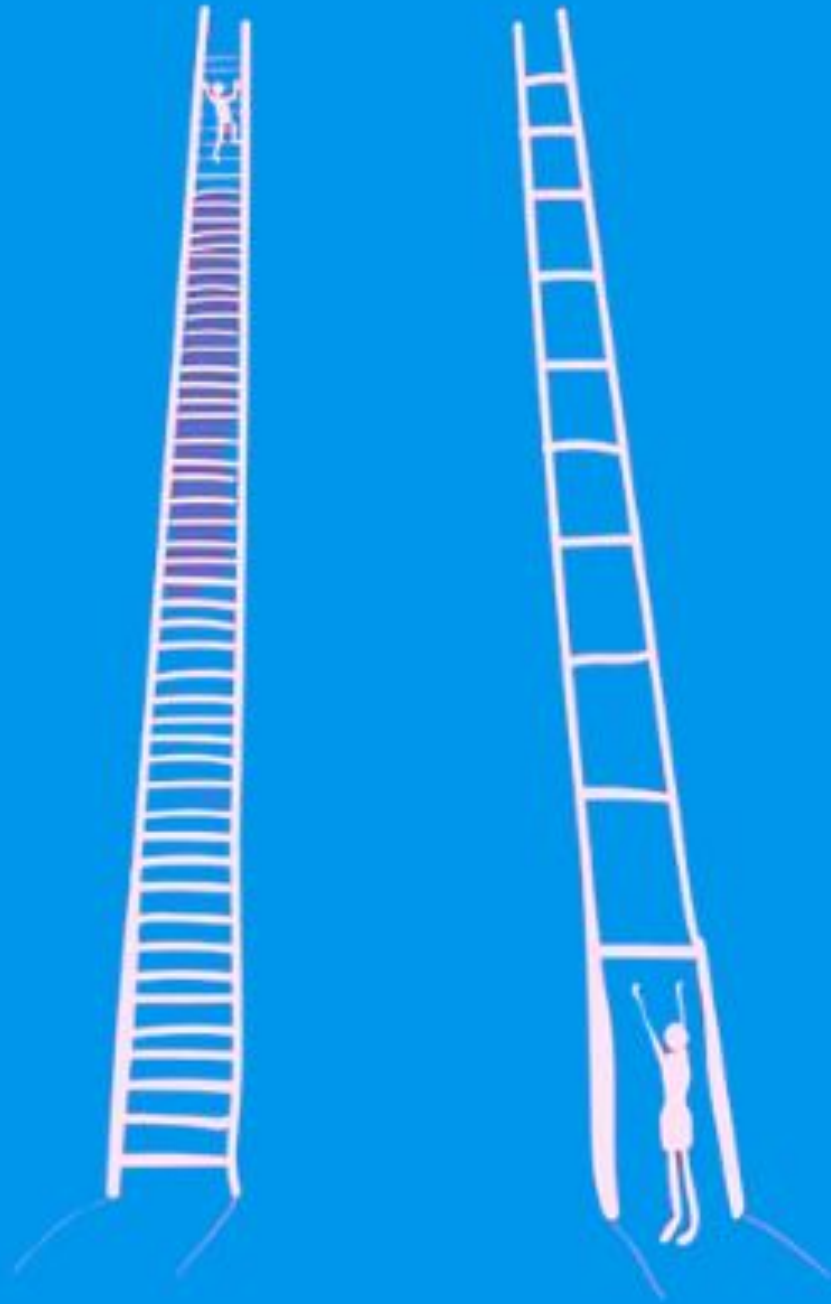
# 2 key learnings

1. Teachers can better support children's well-being, when they know how to take care of their own well-being first.
2. Learning skills takes time and support, it makes a big difference in the long run



Small steps  
are important

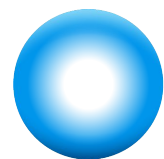
Which could be  
your  
small steps  
for well-being?



**Thank you  
for your attention!**

**Malle Rajangu**

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MINUTES of STILLNESS