



 **UTHealth Houston**
Cizik School of Nursing



Mindfulness Intervention for Homeless Youth with the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth and Covenant House

SCOPE

Youth experiencing homelessness face disproportionately high levels of trauma, stress, and mental health challenges, often without consistent access to supportive services. These circumstances contribute to higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, and suicide compared to housed peers.

To address this need, the Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth joined a national study on mindfulness-based interventions. In Houston, the study was carried out in partnership with Covenant House, which provides shelter and support for young people experiencing homelessness.

The goal of the Houston project was to deliver consistent, trauma-informed mindfulness instruction to youth residents.

ROLE

As part of the national study, the Houston site required a dedicated interventionist to deliver mindfulness instruction to youth residents at Covenant House. For three years, Dr. Ann Friedman, Founder and Certified Instructor of Mindful Being, served in this role, meeting regularly with youth residents to teach mindfulness.

The role focused on introducing practical techniques to help youth manage stress, improve focus, and develop healthier coping strategies. Beyond delivering the curriculum, Mindful Being created a safe and welcoming environment where participants felt respected, supported, and empowered to share openly.

The interventionist connected the study's goals to the youth's daily experiences, translating research into practical, real-world learning.

RESULTS

The Houston site of the national mindfulness study achieved the highest outcomes nationally, demonstrating the effectiveness of consistent, trauma-informed mindfulness instruction for youth experiencing homelessness.

Feedback from youth underscores the impact of the intervention. One participant shared, *"Oh, Ms. Ann was awesome. She explained it really well... she felt a lot like your grandma that has known you for a while, but also like a really cool art teacher."*

Another noted, *"She inspired me... I gave it a try, and I was like, yes, I know I can do it. I kept on doing it, and then she was proud of me because she knew I had so many good answers."* Participants consistently described the sessions as engaging, supportive, and empowering.

Shelter staff also recognized the value of the program, requesting additional mindfulness sessions in response to its positive reception. These outcomes show how dedicated facilitation translates research into practical skills that help youth manage stress and build resilience.

