

PARENT TIPS MINDFULNESS

DEFINITION

A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations

Emotional Control VS Emotions in Control

Many people are going about our lives so focused on other things that they are not paying attention to what is happening in the present

How often are you thinking about all the things you have to do, or worrying about what happened in the past?

With time we are able to gain control over our emotions and behavior, rather than them dictating how we feel

As an example, you may get so caught up in your thoughts that you don't even remember your drive home

This is like a workout for your brain- the more you practice centering yourself and controlling your thoughts the more you are able to control your emotions throughout the rest of the day

When we are not processing what is currently happening, the emotional part of our brain (the amygdala) can take control and tell us to just react

WHY MINDFULNESS WORKS

There are many ways to be mindful, but the basic premise is just taking a couple minutes a day to practice focusing on how you're feeling & controlling your thoughts

When this happens in stressful situations it makes it difficult for our brain to think and make good decisions

For example, when your student does something & you instinctively yell at them

But with mindfulness training, you're better able to control your emotional reaction and problem solve to find the best solution

BENEFITS



Reduces stress



Improves working memory



Improves focus



Increases emotional control



Boosts immune functioning

HOW TO TEACH MINDFULNESS

SOURCE: blissfulkids.com

The essential part of mindfulness is that you set aside a time each day to focus on the present & how you're feeling. There are a lot of different ways to do this, but the most basic is to sit for five minutes in a comfortable position and try to count to ten. If you feel yourself thinking about something else, just start counting again. It's okay if you're not able to make it to ten in your five minutes, just trying is what helps!

UNPLUG & GO FOR A WALK

Pay attention to things you may not have noticed before, and have your child point out what they see. Experiencing the details together is a great way to bring your attention to the present.



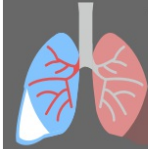
PLAY SENSORY GAMES

Put together a mystery bag of objects with unique textures. Then have your child guess what things are just by touch. Afterwards, ask them what was their favorite & why.



TEACH THEM HOW TO BELLY BREATHE

Begin by placing your hands on your belly. Then inhale through the nose & exhale through the mouth. The breath should be quiet & not gasping. The belly should move up and down, while the shoulders stay in place



ACTIVITIES BY AGE



0-5 years: Have them blow bubbles when they have a strong emotion. As the bubbles float away, say something like "goodbye anger" or "fly away tears."



5-8 years: At this stage kids are very sensory dependent. Create a calming jar (an easy recipe includes glitter and water) & then once a day have them practice sitting in a quiet place, shaking the jar, & watching the glitter float to the bottom.



9-12 years: Have them try out a short guided meditation, including a story or relaxing visuals.



13+ years: As kids grow into teenagers, let them begin to direct their mindfulness practice. At this stage they can try incorporating music, or maybe tailor their sessions using an app.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS YOURSELF

This is one of the best ways to teach your child any skill! Plus it can help you be calmer when dealing with all the ups and downs of parenting.



IMPORTANT TIP

Since mindfulness is all about emotional control, it could seem natural to want to force kids to practice when they are upset. However this can turn mindfulness into a punishment and a battle. If you make it a fun part of your daily routine and teach mindfulness when they are calm, they'll be more likely to use the skills when they are upset.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Peaceful Piggy Meditation by Kerry Lee Maclean

What Does It Mean To Be Present? By Rana DiOrio

The Lemonade Hurricane: A Story of Mindfulness and Meditation by Ilicia Morelli

WEBSITES

blissfulkids.com

gonoodle.com/calm

marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations

Stop, Breathe, Think

Breathe 2 Relax

APPS

GUIDED MEDITATION SAMPLE

First have your child get into a relaxed and comfortable position. Have them take a couple of deep belly breaths to calm themselves down. Then say:

"Now that you are relaxed, I want you to take a deep breath and notice how it feels. Now take another, but this time think about how you are feeling in your heart and in your head. As you blow out this breath, I want you to blow out the color that you see. Pretend that as you breathe out you are creating a bubble of color that has all of your feelings in it. It is a safe place to put your fear and anger, or anything else. Only you know what is inside the bubble, it is your secret. Your bubble can contain what you don't want in your body anymore or it can contain thoughts that you want to send out into the universe.

With each breath, grow it bigger and bigger, until it is so full that you cannot fit anymore in it. Now that your bubble is full, take one more really deep breath, feel the breath all the way down in your tummy. Now breathe it out and blow your bubble far, far away.

Now that your bubble is gone, think of a color that brings you happiness. Picture a beautiful, fluffy cloud of that color that comes down and surrounds you like your favorite blanket, keeping you safe and protected."