



A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN

Meditation & Mindfulness for Children

Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience



The Many Benefits of Mindfulness

- Strengthens self-control
- Improves executive functions
- Improves attention/focus
- Improves self-regulation
- Improves decision making
- Increases positive mood
- Improves self-esteem and confidence
- Decreases stress and anxiety
- Improves sleep
- Boosts immune function
- Develops life skills
 - Communication skills
 - Empathy and compassion
 - Conflict-resolution
- Fosters resilience
- Promotes healing:
 - Burnout
 - Chronic pain
 - Enhances mental health treatment
 - Decreases addiction cravings
 - Reduces bias/harassment
 - Improves team dynamics



What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is simply an awareness of one's internal states and external surroundings.
- It is a conscious choice to be present and aware of moment-to-moment experiences.
- Human beings have practiced mindfulness in different ways for thousands of years.
- Mindfulness is not based in any particular religion or belief system.
- There are many ways to practice mindfulness; meditation (the most widely-known mindfulness activity) is just one of them.



Brain & Body Responses to Mindfulness

Evidence suggests that certain regions of the brain may either shrink or thicken (grow) in response to regular mindfulness practice:

- Amygdala (stress and anxiety) : Shrinks
- Prefrontal cortex (executive functioning): Thickens
- Hippocampus (memory and learning): Thickens
- Limbic system (emotion and memory): Reduced activity when experiencing pain

Putting Mindfulness into Practice

- Mindful awareness doesn't take away from the impulsivity, fun, or free-spiritedness of childhood
- It's not about 'controlling' one's mind or emotions
- It's about providing tools:
 - To choose options when facing thoughts/emotions
 - To be able to self-regulate
 - To reach one's full potential



Mindfulness at School

Integrating mindfulness into the classroom is easy:

- **Use Simple Grounding Exercises**
Ask children to place both feet flat on the floor. Tell them to close their eyes and focus on the way their feet feel, their connection to the earth, and the solidity of being aware of the placement of their feet and body in the space. Do this for several minutes.
- **Practice Slow Breathing**
Take time to do slow, focused breathing: in through the nose to the count of ten and out through the mouth to the count of ten. Do this 3 to 5 times to induce a sense of calm and quiet.
- **Introduce Sensory Experiences**
Do creative exercises with individual children or in groups. Ask children to identify to themselves 5 things they can see, 4 things they can feel, 3 things they can hear, two things they can smell and 1 thing they can taste (or want to taste). This "Countdown to Calm" exercise does not include called out answers but is rather a time for children to reflect on their senses and their environment.

You can also do guided imagery sessions and incorporate movement to bring a child's conscious awareness to their body and mind.



The earlier mindfulness is introduced, the greater the opportunity for learning these life-skills and cultivating resilience.



Mindful Families

Being mindful as a family changes the atmosphere and relationship dynamics within the home.

Mindful families:

- Embrace imperfections
- Listen without judgement
- Communicate boldly
- Express gratitude and appreciation
- Forgive themselves and others
- Are supportive and generous
- Remember to have fun and joy in the moment

Get more resources at: www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing