Mindful Parenting
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Transforming Children’s Lives

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most.
Agenda

- **Definition** of Mindfulness
- Benefits of **Mindful Parenting**
- Mindfulness Benefits for **Children**
- Mindfulness “**How To**” Skills
- Specific Age-Appropriate **Skills for Children and Teens**
- Tips for Implementing **Mindfulness in Your Home**
- Helpful **Resources & Upcoming Parent Workshops**
- **Q & A**

What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

- **Jon Kabat-Zinn**
What is Mindfulness?

- Living life with awareness of exactly what is happening in the present moment.

- Increasing your attentional control by staying focused on one thing at a time.

- Being aware of your present moment (thoughts, feelings, body sensations) without judgment and without trying to change it.

Mindfulness Practice: Foundation for Resilience

“The ability to handle stressful situations and bounce forward following difficult times.”
Myths About Mindfulness

- Just a Relaxation Technique
- Just About Emptying Your Mind
- Easy to Do
- Too Intimidating
- Psychotherapy
- Counter to My Religious Practice
- You Have to Be Good At Sitting Still
- Boring
- Wastes Time
- Just a Passing Trend

Mindfulness vs. Meditation

**Mindfulness** – paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally
- Mindfulness can include any and all activities

**Meditation** – the act or process of spending time in quiet thought to promote relaxation, build energy, and develop compassion
- *Transcendental Meditation* – use of a Mantra or sound, 15-20 min/day, twice a day
- *Guided Meditation* – Using a narrated story to elicit mental imagery of a calming place while engaging your 5 senses
**Benefits of Mindfulness**

- **Allows you to be in control of your mind** rather than letting your mind be in control of you
- **Helps you choose a behavior more thoughtfully**, rather than reacting impulsively
- **Helps focus your attention**
- **Allows you to see reality more accurately**, non-judgmentally
- **Can reduce emotional suffering & increase sense of well-being**
- **Can increase compassion for self and others**

*From DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents, Rathus & Miller (2015)*

**Mindfulness for Parents**

Practicing mindfulness with your child has important positive outcomes for parents:

- Reduction in **general stress** and **parenting-specific stress**
- Improvements in **self-regulation in difficult parenting moments**
- Increased **nonjudgmental acceptance of self**
- Increased empathy and acceptance of child
- **More control** over reactions toward child

Benefits of Mindfulness for Children & Teens

- Improved attention, social skills, mental flexibility
- Improved self-concept & self-efficacy
- Reduced impulsivity and reactivity to emotions
- Reduced test anxiety
- Improved ability to manage emotions
- Reduced emotional distress and suicidal ideation

(Kuyken et. Al, 2013; Barnes et al., 2008; Flook et al., 2010; Napoli et al., 2005; Britton et al., 2014; Metz et. Al., 2013; (Black & Fernando, 2014)
### Mindfulness “How To” Skills

**OBSERVE**
- “Wordless watching”
- Don’t cling too tightly or push away
- Just notice
- Notice 5 senses (internal/external)

**DESCRIBE**
- Label what you observe with words
- “I feel...” or “I’m having an urge to...”
- No interpretations allowed!

**PARTICIPATE**
- Throw yourself into the present moment fully
- Get “in the zone”
- Skills vs. emotions/situation

**DON’T JUDGE ~ NONJUDGMENTALLY**
- Stick to the facts using what you observe with your senses
- Catch and replace your judgments
- If you do judge, don’t judge yourself back

**STAY FOCUSED ~ ONE-MINDFULLY**
- Focus your attention on only one thing
- Slow down, concentrate your mind
- Continually re-focus your attention when it drifts

**DO WHAT WORKS ~ EFFECTIVELY**
- Stay focused on your goal and be as skillful as possible to achieve it
- Don’t let emotions control your behavior

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### Mindfulness “How-To” Cheat Sheet

- Be **fully** in this present moment
- Remain in the **present** moment
- Acknowledge non-related thoughts and **let them go**
- **Observe** and **describe** instead of judging
- Use **five senses** within the experience
  - Touch, sound, sight, smell, taste

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*From DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents, Rathus & Miller (2015)*
Practical Strategies

- **Formal Practices** – body scan, sitting, walking, breathing

- **Informal Practices** – bringing mindful awareness to everyday activities, e.g., showering, eating, commuting, talking

- Use the **physical sensations** of breathing as the **anchor** for attention

- An **objective, non-judgmental stance** allows one to **witness** thoughts and emotions as transient

- This allows one to **recognize and disengage** from habitual patterns of mind, and begin to respond **reflectively**, rather than reactively

Breathing: The Heart of Mindfulness

The foundation of all mindfulness practice is to center yourself by turning your awareness inward to your breath.

- You breathe in and out about twenty thousand times a day.
- How many of those breaths are you consciously aware of?
- How many of those breaths do you really enjoy?
Mindfulness: How to Practice Mindful Breathing

1) **Create time and space** - regular time, quiet place
2) **Set a timer** - start with 3-5 minutes and build
3) **Comfortable sitting position** - chair, floor
4) **Check your body position** – posture, hand placement
5) **Take deep breaths** – can count to pace yourself
6) **Direct attention to the breath** – where you notice breath in your body
7) **Maintain attention to the breath** – return focus if attention wanders
8) **Repeat 6 and 7**
9) **Be kind to yourself** – your mind will wander, gently bring it back
10) **Prepare for a soft landing** – give yourself time to transition

From Infographic: 10 Steps to Mindfulness Meditation. Retrieved from https://www.garrisoninstitute.org/blog/10-steps-to-mindfulness-meditation/

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Mindful Parenting

- Find **time for yourself** and pause to practice mindfulness once a day, even if only for 3 minutes.
- Find opportunities to practice mindfulness (in **formal practice** such as breath practice or body scan and **informal practice** in everyday activities such as showering, getting children dressed, eating).
- Schedule time to **just be** with your children with no agenda in mind.
- Practice seeing the world **through your child’s eyes** and step into their experience.
- See **everyday moments** with your children as opportunities to connect, instead of waiting for the perfect moment. (e.g. walking to school, the going-to-bed routine, teeth brushing - instead of waiting for weekends, summer vacations, etc.).
- Learn to **pause** and become an **observer** of thoughts, emotions and body sensations and the messages they may be offering you.
Sustaining Mindful Parenting

• Notice when you’re not feeling centered. Give yourself permission to take time to pause and reset.

• Practice compassion when you’re just not sure how to handle a situation.

• Check in with your body throughout the day. Are you holding any stress or tension? Practice relaxation.

• Practice gratitude - spend a few moments everyday reflecting on a pleasant moment you had with your children and/or something you appreciate about them. Keep a log or journal over time.

• Remember to breathe.

Engaging Teens in Mindfulness Practice

• What’s in it for them?
  • Describe & connect benefits directly to their specific needs, nonjudgmentally
  • Talk about expecting stress vs. stressed out
  • Something they can do on their own, or with others
  • Easy access, free

• Use Metaphors to explain concept:
  • “keeping your head in the game”; “In the zone”
  • Emotion Mind vs. Reasonable Mind → Goal: Wise Mind

• Explaining the benefits for their developing brain
  • Physical training strengthens the body, keeps it healthy
  • Mindfulness training strengthens the mind

• Give them freedom to choose
Sample Mindfulness Exercises for Teens

- Mindful walking (handout)
- Mindful listening
  - Any sounds—outside traffic, home
  - Music—one- mindfully
- High focus/memory games
  - Last letter, first letter game
  - Games (e.g., Jenga)
- Mindful writing (non-dominant hand)
- Mindful eating (handout)
- Gratitude practice, loving kindness
- Body scan exercise

Sample Mindfulness Exercises for Children Ages 3 - 7

*General Rule of Thumb: Children can usually practice mindfulness for one minute per their age in years*

- Create & use a Mindfulness jar
- Mindful play (i.e., finger painting, water/sand table)
  - Guide them to focus on their senses
- “Spidey” senses (tuning into the 5 senses)
- Mindful blowing bubbles
- Hand tracing
- Stretching, yoga
- Mindful walk (“Safari”)
- Mindful poses
  - Superman, Wonder Woman
Make your own Mindfulness Jar

for a full toolkit for mindfulness teaching session go to:

https://childmind.org/wellness-toolkit/

Sample Mindfulness Exercises for Children Ages 8 - 12

• Belly breaths
• Paced breathing
• Mindful eating
• Listening to music, sounds
• Mindful drawing, coloring
• Stretching, yoga
• Mindful games, such as Zip-zap-zop or Going on a picnic (for groups)
Tips for Implementing Mindfulness with Children

- **Establish your own practice** – if your kids recognize that mindfulness matters to you, they will be more likely to engage in this practice
- **Let go of expectations** – notice small shifts
- **Don’t force it** – practice non-attachment to outcomes
- **Don’t make mindfulness a punishment** – if possible, find consistent times to practice

Tips for Implementing Mindfulness at Home

Prioritize Compassionate Self-Care

- **Manage expectations**
- **Be patient with yourself and your children**
- **Lean on family and other external supports when needed**
- **Set boundaries for yourself when needed - it’s okay to say No**
- **Create time for yourself**

Self-compassion & Kindness

**Reflection Question:** If you already practice mindfulness, what benefits have you noticed in your life? In parenting?
Airplane Analogy

**Oxygen Mask Rule:**

“Should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Please place the mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting others.”

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**Online Resources on Mindfulness**

- American Mindfulness Research Association
- Center for Mindfulness at UMass Medical School
- Garrison Institute
- MindfulnessforTeen.com
- www.mindful.org
- Leftbrainbuddha.com
- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center
- Room to Breathe (2012) – first professional documentary on mindfulness in education*
- Online videos – Class DOJO, GoNoodle, etc.
- Transforming Education – Mindfulness Toolkit [https://www.transformingeducation.org/mindfulness-toolkit/](https://www.transformingeducation.org/mindfulness-toolkit/)
Book Resources on Mindfulness

- *A Still Quiet Place for Teens: A Mindfulness Workbook to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions* by Amy Saltzman (2016)
- *Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment and Your Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2012)
- *Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids* (and Their Parents) by Eline Snel (2013)

Mindfulness Based Apps

- Headspace
- Stop Breathe Think
- Take a Break
- Smiling Mind
- Mindfulness for Children
- Thrive for Alexa: Amazon
- Take a Chill
- OMG I Can Meditate
- Insight Timer
- Breathe2Relax
- Positive Penguins
- Settle Your Glitter

“You can’t stop the waves, But you can learn to surf.”
Upcoming CMI Parent Workshops:

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<th>CMI Registration Link:</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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Thank you!

Q & A