



CHILD MIND[®]
INSTITUTE

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.*



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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**



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What is Mindfulness?

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

- Jon Kabat-Zinn



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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**.



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Mindfulness Practice: Foundation for Resilience

“The ability to handle stressful situations and bounce *forward* following difficult times.”



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Myths About Mindfulness



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)



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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



Corthorn C. (2018). Benefits of Mindfulness for Parenting in Mothers of Preschoolers in Chile. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1443. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01443.

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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)



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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



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

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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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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



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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?



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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.



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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**.



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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



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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



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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



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Mindfulness 6

Make Your Own Mindfulness Jar

Make your own Mindfulness Jar
 for a full toolkit for mindfulness teaching session go to:
<https://childmind.org/wellness-toolkit/>

Practicing mindfulness is like daily physical exercise—a little bit each day over time will help build our mental muscles to have better focus, attention, self-awareness, and self-control. It helps you notice how you feel to help you decide what to do with that feeling. Finding a quiet place in our minds—like watching glitter float in a mindfulness jar—is one way to do just that. It is a calming way to remind ourselves to stop and notice what's going on inside of us to feel better.

Here is how you can make your own mindfulness jar at home, at school, or with friends:

Materials Needed:

- Plastic mason jar (or any wide or tall plastic jar with screw-fastened lid, like a plastic water bottle)
- Glitter (multicolored)
- Hot water
- Bowl
- Glycerin (found in the pharmacy section or amazon)
- Glitter glue
- Dish soap

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup glycerin
- 3/4 cup hot water
- 2-3 teaspoons of multicolored glitter
- 3-4 drops liquid dish soap

Step 1: Combine the hot water and glycerin. Whisk until the mixture is uniform—usually the glitter glue takes a little bit of work to get the clumps all out. Pour the mixture into the jar you are using.

Step 2: Add the multicolored glitter — Put the top on tightly and shake the jar (carefully), to test it out.

Step 3: You will notice that some of the glitter remains floating on the top due to the surface tension of the water. Carefully add 3-4 drops of liquid dish soap to the top of the jar (I recommend an adult do this part) and shake the jar again. You should see the glitter distribute much more evenly.

Tips:

- If you find your mixture is settling too slow, add more hot water.
- If you find that it is settling too fast, you can add more glycerin or more salt.
- Once you are satisfied with your glitter jar, glue the lid on to be sure no water sneaks out. A rubber socker can also be placed in the jar lid, if it did not come with one.





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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)





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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



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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-its 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?



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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.”



Online Resources on Mindfulness

- American Mindfulness Research Association
- Center for Mindfulness at UMass Medical School
- Garrison Institute
- [Mindfulnessforteens.com](https://www.mindfulnessforteens.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/>

Book Resources on Mindfulness

- [Wherever You Go, There You Are](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005)
- [The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time](#) by Dzung Vo (2015)
- [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)
- [The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate](#) by Susan Kaiser Greenland (2010)
- [Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids \(and Their Parents\)](#) by Eline Snel (2013)
- [Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh (2007)



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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**.”



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Upcoming CMI Parent Workshops:

Day/Time:	CMI Registration Link:
Wed. 5/12 4pm-5pm	https://redcap.healthbrainnetwork.org/redcap/surveys/?s=AE8DPJCDPN
Mon. 5/17 6pm-7pm	Fostering Resilience Within Your Family
Wed. 5/19 5pm-6pm	Will My Child Be Okay?
Th. 5/20 5:30-6:30	Managing Caregiver Stress and Anxiety
	Managing Intense Emotions
Day/Time:	CMI Registration Link:
Tues. 5/18 11am-12pm	https://redcap.healthbrainnetwork.org/redcap/surveys/?s=K9CPWLM4RW
Tues. 5/25 4pm-5pm	Building a Foundation for Reading at Home
	Building and Supporting Executive Functioning Skills



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Thank you!

Q & A



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