



An Introduction to Mindfulness for Parents

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What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is “Paying attention on purpose, without judgement to our experience as it unfolds moment by moment” Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990

Mindfulness involves paying attention to the stream of consciousness of your mind, without judging it or changing it. This naturally quiets the mind and offers insights into the automatic habit driven behaviours we develop in our lives.

Left to itself the mind wanders through all kinds of thoughts, and mostly these thoughts are about the past or future. The past however no longer exists and the future has not yet arrived. The one moment we can actually experience – the present moment- is the one we often seem to avoid most. So in mindfulness we’re concerned with noticing what’s going on right now, and helps us to be fully awake in our own lives. It’s noticing the little things on an ordinary day, and allowing ourselves just to be.

The present moment becomes our psychological anchor in life and helps us not to be consumed by worry and anxiety. A focus on the breath can be an effective way to anchor us to the present and to be focused. Being mindful enables us to create a “mind space” so that we can stay on track with our goals and to make good decisions. There are significant health benefits to practising Mindfulness, as well as improving life satisfaction.

Mindfulness and How the Brain Works

Mindfulness regulates the stress response by strengthening the “noticing” or “thinking” part of the brain in the frontal lobes. It engages the parts of the brain that helps to regulate emotions and create a sense of safety. Mindfulness helps all of the brain to work together as an integrated whole. The more you practise mindfulness, the more your brain will remember to engage all parts of the brain, even under stressful events. Mindfulness calms the Amygdala, which is the “smoke alarm “ of the brain.

Mindfulness has been scientifically proven to:

- Decrease stress, anxiety and depression
- Allow connection with the self and values
- Bring a sense of peacefulness and clarity
- Increase self-awareness
- Develop self-acceptance and confidence
- Bring emotional balance and stability
- Decrease worrying thoughts
- Allow compassion and empathy to grow
- Help to view experiences positively
- Improve sleep
- Strengthen the immune system and improve health
- Dramatically improve concentration and memory

Mindfulness in the Home

Mindfulness is a powerful life skill which can build psychological resilience. It is best taught to children from an early age, and the implementation of simple Mindfulness practices and routines can be of great value to children. Being Mindful in everyday life can be encouraged through simple activities such as cooking, eating, helping in the garden. Children will benefit through increased focus and attention, as well as learning to calm and lessen anxiety and stress.

Activities to promote Mindfulness

- Jigsaws
- Concentration games
- Mazes / Colouring in / Grids
- Periods of stillness
- Art and craft activities
- Nature walks
- Listening to Music
- Mindful Eating
- Promoting Flow- finding a leisure activity which they thoroughly enjoy
- Mindfulness Meditation/breath/movement/sound/eating

3 Step Mindfulness

1. Notice your surroundings. Check in to where you are.
2. Awareness of breath and body. Just relax
3. Ground with the earth

Video Clips

Mindfulness Bell <http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/bell/>

Mindfulness:Being Fully Awake in Our Own Lives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLbiVpU59JkVaWH5kKrkSCikg0vKlr1p9f&v=mBSO41ZimNs>

Mind the Bump <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNCB1MZDgOA>

Breathing Relaxes Kids. Sea Otter Cove <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiBGE>

Mindful Movement clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWerJwf3-3I>

