

Mindfulness for Families

Mindfulness practices can become a part of any family routine! Mindfulness refers to being fully aware of the present moment without judgement. Research has shown that the use of consistent mindfulness practices, even for just a few minutes a day, can have major benefits on adults and children, including stress reduction, decreased anxiety and depression, improved working memory, improved focus and increased immune functioning.

To help create mindfulness routines at home for yourself or with your children, consider the following practices:

- **Schedule the time-** When mindfulness practice occurs at the same time each day it quickly becomes part of the daily routine. You may want to start the day with this practice, try it during family time (before or after a meal) or use it to settle before homework or bed.
- **Create the environment.** Make it clear that mindfulness is a special time: clear your space or designate a special area for mindfulness. You can play the same instrumental music or nature sounds each day, or simply get quiet.
- **Find a Practice for You:** With our increasingly busy schedules it can feel difficult to carve time into the day for self-care or mindfulness practices. Luckily we know that even short intermittent mindfulness practice is beneficial. Below are a few ways you can begin to intentionally practice mindfulness with your children:
 - **Mindful Breathing:** Use the guided breathing video in the Ready Breaks section, or simply find a comfortable seat, set a timer, and spend few minutes focusing on the breath. Let children know it is normal for the mind to wander, but the goal is to let those thoughts float by and return to the sensation of the breath.
 - **Mindful Body Scan:** You can use a guided body scan like this one <https://www.mindful.org/a-3-minute-body-scan-meditation-to-cultivate-mindfulness/> or you can simply guide the family through noticing the sensations throughout the body, from the toes, feet and legs all the way up to the top of the head.
 - **Mindful Chores:** Tasks in our daily routine provide a wonderful opportunity to practice mindfulness. Invite children to chose one task or chore to complete mindfully- brushing teeth, making the bed, setting or clearing the table etc. and encourage them to focus on that task alone- to really notice the sensations that accompany the task and to let any distracting thoughts float away as soon as they are noticed. You might even want to schedule 5-15 minutes of mindful chores every day for the whole family!

Sources: mindful.org

Davis, Daphne M. and Jeffrey A. Hayes “What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness,”
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner>