Mindful Parenting:
Remaining Calm While Improving Family Dynamics

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Agenda

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Stop. Observe What Happens…

Visual Mindfulness Exercise
Mindfulness is noticing your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations in the present moment without judgment.
What Is “Mindful Parenting?”

**Mindfulness:** “noun [mahynd-fuh l-nis]”

→ “The state of being mindful or aware of something.

→ Psychology- A technique in which one focuses one's full attention only on the present, experiencing thoughts, feelings, and sensations but not judging them.” [mindfulness. (n.d.)]

**Parenting:** “noun par·ent·ing \'per-ən-tiŋ\”

→ “Performing the role of a parent by care-giving, nurturance, and protection of the child by a natural or substitute parent. The parent supports the child by exercising authority and through consistent, empathic, appropriate behavior in response to the child's needs. PARENTING differs from CHILD REARING in that in child rearing the emphasis is on the act of training or bringing up the children and the interaction between the parent and child, while parenting emphasizes the responsibility and qualities of exemplary behavior of the parent.” [parenting. (n.d.)]
Mindfulness Skills


Observe

- What do you see, smell, feel, taste, feel (tactile), hear?
- Notice without judgment
- Avoid doing things out of habit, instead notice all aspects.

Engage your kids. Notice everything your child does as it occurs.

Be Present

- What’s the temperature of the air? What is your body touching? What thoughts come to your mind? Are you experiencing any bodily sensations?

Accept with Compassion, without Judgment

- Think neutral thoughts. Even subtle, quiet thoughts impact our interactions/relationship. For example… “She’s driving me crazy!” or “Here we go again. Some things will never change.” It feels better to say “She’s struggling with making good choices.” or “We have more work to do to help change this pattern.”
Mindfulness Skills Cont’d


❖ Power of Intention
❖ Identify your parenting values. What do you hope to accomplish when parenting in this moment?

❖ Connect Positively
❖ Differentiate from your child’s emotions
❖ Stay present within yourself, notice the positive aspects of the interactions
❖ Notice a possible positive intention of your child vs. assuming mal-intentions

❖ Emotions Change
❖ Allow the emotions to fade away on their own- like an ocean’s wave.
Mindful Breathing
Identify Parenting Values

What kind of parent/co-parent do you want to be?

Parenting values: I want to be considered patient, kind, loving, fun, understanding, respectful, trustworthy, even keeled, etc.

Co-Parenting Value Examples:
I value being communicative, respectful towards my co-parent, understanding and accepting of differences. I want to work with my co-parent in a way that shows we are united to our child(ren) even if not agreeing behind the scenes.

(Record on Handout)
On a scale 1-10, How important is it for you to stay true to your parenting values when parenting?

On a scale 1-10, how much effort do you put into this value on an everyday basis?

Is there a discrepancy in these two numbers?

What are you willing to do to make these numbers equal?

(Rate on Handout)
**Mindfulness and Our Brain**

**Prefrontal Cortex:** [Burdick, D. E. (n.d.).]
- Decision making
- Regulates behaviors
- Integrates cognitions and behaviors
- Planning/Organizing
- Regulates focus
- Mood
- Energy levels

**Hippocampus:** [Bailey, R. (2016, July 11).]
- Creates, arranges, and preserves memories
- Involved in emotional control and learning
- Links emotions and the 5 senses to memories. Implicit memory-past memories that guide you in current feelings and actions, etc. (Burdick, 2013, 24).

**Amygdala: AKA the “Security Guard”**
*Vital in processing emotions, survival, arousal, and autonomic responses
- Associated with emotional (implicit) memory
- Fight, Flight, Freeze Response.

(Image from Fenner, 2013)
MINDFULNESS HELPS RE-WIRE OUR BRAIN

**Insula:** - “located deep within the cerebral cortex” [Bailey, R. (2016, ).]

-“Body movement
-Self-recognition
-Emotional awareness
-Time perception
-Decision making
-Cognitive control and performance monitoring”

**Effects on the BRAIN:** […As cited from various studies in Burdick, D. E. (n.d.). ]

- Activates the PFC and increases focus (ADHD), as well as the Insula which increases awareness of self and feelings/mood
- Heightened activity in the hippocampus (learning/memories) and parts of the brain responsible for self-awareness/insight, compassion toward self
- Decreased activity in the amygdala (protector from stress/anxiety)
- Mindful people are more relaxed, happy & appreciative.
One study using the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training

- Included participants and non-participants (control group) engaged in a 8-week long study. Participants engaged in 45-min structured mindfulness exercises every day (breathing, body scan, yoga, etc.) and incorporated mindfulness skills in normal daily activities. (ie. hygiene practices, doing chores, etc.)

This study suggest that MBSR increases the gray matter or activity level of the areas of the brain that are responsible for looking at our own thoughts and feelings and the motivations of others. (PFC, Insula, etc.)

Brain = Sponge
MINDFULNESS IMPROVES...

[Flook, L., Ph.D., & Flaxman, G. (n.d.).]

- connectedness among couples as well as between parents and their children
- chronic pain concerns
- academics among youth with anxiety
- social skills
- focus for those with ADHD
- sleep patterns
- overall improvement in mental health symptoms

Studies varied from 5 days for 20 mins./day to 8-10 wks. for 45 mins./day involving awareness of one’s breath to, non-judgmental thoughts to more specific training. [Flook, L., Ph.D., & Flaxman, G. (n.d.).]
Mindfulness of Relationships Exercise
5 Tips to Build a Mindful Relationship with your Teen

Communication: Talk less and listen more! Truly pay attention not only to WHAT s/he says, but also the cadence of his/her words, the tone, whether or not s/he is breathing while speaking, etc. Identify his/her emotion. If you think it’s anger, what’s the feeling behind that (fear, nervousness, etc.)?

*Notice, observe, and have compassion… without thinking of a response.*

Reflect back to them what you heard. Seek to understand, not judge.

Support and Encouragement: Show compassion for his/her viewpoint, without judgment. Allow your values to guide you, not your emotions.

Awareness: Be aware of your internal world (thoughts, feelings), your body (heart beat, aches), and your environment (your teen and his/her body language, others around you, air temperature, etc.)…all while listening.

Love: Interact with love and respect (your values) during all moments, even the most difficult ones. Anything else may contradict the parent you want to be.

Presence: Be PRESENT in his/her life. Spend quality time with him/her, not by multitasking on your phone.
Video “Release” [Wavecrest Films]
Encouraging your Teen to be Mindful

Feeling Stuck in the Past or the Future?
The Power of Mindfulness
Non-Judgmental Awareness of the Present Moment

Without Mindfulness

Stimulus

Reaction

With Mindfulness

Stimulus

Mindfulness

Response

Mindfulness creates space
Replacing Impulsive Reactions with thoughtful response

We help to grow this space, enabling new, wiser responses that improve:

Attention          Emotional regulation         Empathy
Learning                    Conflict resolution
"I-Message"

I-Messages Have Three Parts:
1. Tell your teen what is happening (the behavior).
2. Tell your teen what you feel (the feeling).
3. Explain to your teen why you feel that way (the reason).

Formula:
When __________ I feel __________ because __________.
(behavior) (feeling) (reason)

Examples of I-Messages:
1. "When the kitchen’s not cleaned up, I feel let down. It seems like people expect me to do all the work."
2. "When you don’t call, I feel worried because I don’t know where you are."

Examples of You-Messages
1. "Why can’t you clean up the kitchen like you’re supposed to? I’m not your maid!"
2. "You should know better!" “You stop that!” “You cut it out.”
Doing schoolwork mindfully

- You can bring mindful awareness to anything you do, including your schoolwork.

Follow these steps to help you center yourself before you begin your homework or start to take a test.

- If you find yourself getting tense or stressed while in the middle of your work, you can repeat this process at any time.

- Get into a comfortable sitting position. Place your hands in your lap or on your desk.

- Open your ears to the sounds you notice and allow yourself to be in the room right here, right now.

- Place one or both of your hands on your stomach.

- Without changing your breath, notice how your stomach gently rises on the in-breath and falls on the out-breath.

- Take five breaths, just as they already are, not trying to change your breaths in any way.

- Notice how your body feels.

- If you feel anxious (or have any other negative feelings), take one deep breath.

- As you release this breath, imagine that you are gently breathing out these feelings.

- Take your next breath and picture ease and peace coming in.

- See yourself taking your entire test or doing all of your homework assignment with ease.

- Imagine yourself gently putting down your pen or pencil when you are done and congratulating yourself on putting forth the effort.
A Mindful Shower

Notice the water. Feel the water on your skin and your hair. Smell and taste the water. Smell and feel the shampoo and conditioner in your hand. How do they feel on your head? How does your hair feel when you are rinsing it?

If you shave in the shower, notice the shaving cream and the razor; notice how it feels on different parts of your body. Notice when your thoughts move away from the task at hand, the shower, and into the rest of your day, or yesterday or tomorrow.

Gently bring yourself back into this moment, to the shower. When you turn off the water, how does it feel? Notice the texture of the towel. How does drying off feel?
bringing mindfulness into my day is easy. all i have to do is watch myself breathe in & breathe out to be present in what i do – to taste & savour when i eat, to see what i look at & to hear the noises that surround me. all i need to do is let go. to release everything that is not me so i am @1 with the moment
Q & A
Resources

- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-kring/the-5-main-tenets-of-mindful-


- Mindfulness Apps: Headspace, Calm, Mindfulness Bell, Relax and Sleep, Take a Chill, Insight

- MLB Therapy, PLLC
  - Feeling Stuck? Anxiety and Depression Support Group
  - Perceptive Parenting of Challenging Children (Group)
References


https://www.studyblue.com/notes/note/n/neuro-anatomy/deck/135382 (Image used only)

References Cont’d


