

Mindfulness for Parents

By Cliff Crain

What is MINDFULNESS ?

The term mindfulness is used to describe the practice of paying attention, focusing the mind, to the present moment in a non-judgmental way. It is about being with the current reality without the typical overlay of concepts. The person practicing mindful awareness becomes aware of the full range of experience, including: sensory awareness, thoughts, imagery, emotions, urges, and impulses. At the same time, they become aware of the quality of mindfulness itself – whether the mind is calm, clear, agitated, dull, or foggy.

Because the person is aware without judging either the content or the processes of the mind, they become freer to observe without identifying with the contents of the thoughts. It is as if they were watching the stream of consciousness rather than swimming in it and being buffeted by its eddies and currents.

Why practice mindfulness?

The practice of mindfulness goes back thousands of years in the Eastern religious traditions. More recently, scientist have discovered a myriad of benefits to practicing being more mindful, including the following: increased joy of life, lower blood pressure, feeling more alert with more energy, better sleep, healthier auto-immune system, and alleviation of obsessive-compulsive behaviors and such negative mental states as depression, anxiety, anger.*

What does this have to do with parenting?

As parents, we are modeling for our children how to live life fully and effectively. It is often the case that parents get swept up in the business of life and find themselves too stressed to be the loving parents they wish to be. This happens to bright people who have good intentions and knowledge of appropriate parenting techniques. Becoming more mindful, more appreciative of the moment, is a gift to your children, your spouse, and all who interact with you.

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How does a person get started practicing mindfulness?

Perhaps the easiest way to start a mindfulness practice is to learn to stay present. This can be done by purposely pausing briefly, frequently throughout the day. For just a few seconds we can practice being right here, with no agenda other than non-judgmentally noticing what is happening. It can be helpful to focus on your breath as you pause, as the breath is always an anchor to the present moment.



You might try this right now? Just pause, look out at this particular moment, and slowly take three deep breaths. Stay still and listen for all the sounds you can hear... first those close to you, and then the sounds that are further away. For one moment just listen attentively. The sounds are not good or bad, It is just sound.

Go ahead; try a moment of mindfulness . . .

Pausing regularly during each day to become more mindful is a wonderful practice. Of course, doing yoga, tai-chi, and/or meditation can also help a person become more mindful.

What are some good times to practice mindful breathing?

- #1 Practice slow, mindful breathing while waiting on the phone.
- #2 Practice while waiting for a red light to change.
- #3 Practice while walking slowing.
- #4 Practice while listening to music.
- #5 Practice while getting dressed.



What are some other mindfulness techniques?

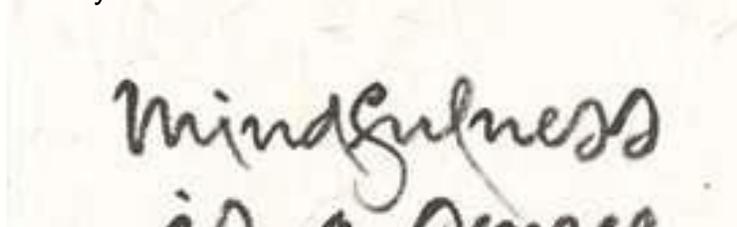
- #1 Notice how tightly you hold the steering wheel while driving.
- #2 Notice how your breathing changes when you are angry.
- #3 Notice the tone and volume of your voice when arguing.
- #4 Notice the unique flavor and texture of each bite of food when you are eating.



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How can I teach my children about being mindful?

Children learn best from example. It is fine to discuss mindfulness with your children, but the real key will be modeling a person who practices being mindful, non-judgmental, attentive and appreciative of life each day.**





What books might help me explore mindfulness?

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|  The Mindfulness Revolution *** | by Barry Boyce, |
|  Wherever You Go, There You Are | by Jon Kabat-Zinn |
|  Taking the Leap | by Pema Chodren |
|  Mindful Eating | by Jan Bays, MD |
|  Making a Change for Good | by Cheri Huber |
|  Miracle of Mindfulness | by Thich Nhat Hanh |
|  Quiet Mind | by Susan Piver |



* Information about recent findings is published in the NETWORKER magazine.

** See “A GOOD DAY” at <http://www.gratefulness.org/brotherdavid/a-good-day.htm>

*** This is an excellent book to start your mindfulness journey.

Give us a call at the Center to explore this topic further. 925 – 855 - 1745

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