

Practicing Mindfulness together as a Family

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What is mindfulness and why should we practice it as a family?

Mindfulness is about “training the muscles” of the heart and mind to be present in the here and now. Practicing mindfulness helps us to better manage stress, worries, strong feelings, etc. – to feel more calm and peaceful, and to be kinder to ourselves, others and the planet.

More and more studies are showing that, in order to be “successful”, more than achievement, kids need to learn skills to cope with challenges, have flexibility in thinking and problem-solving, and work effectively with others – mindfulness helps with all of these and more.

Practicing mindfulness together as a family is not about doing more things as a family, but about **cherishing the little things and the little moments together** – and sometimes doing nothing at all, but just being together as a family. This is very important in the busyness of today’s world to help kids manage the stress of today and grow into healthy, happy and confident teens and adults.

Children and adults need daily quiet, “slowing down” time in their fast-paced, over-stimulated days, in order to connect with themselves, allow their brains to reset, and to feel calm inside. When kids get this, they feel more connected to others. When families practice mindfulness together, it shows that this is important to everyone – **when kids see their parents practice, they are more likely to practice themselves**. Practicing mindfulness as a family helps kids to have stronger self-esteem and learn to be more conscious and kind in their day-to-day actions.

5 easy ways to start practicing mindfulness as a family NOW!

1. Schedule at least 15 minutes each day (at the start or end of day) to come together and “*just be*” – to sit and unwind, with no specific agenda and no distractions (TV, phone, computer, etc).
2. Go out into nature once a week if possible together as a family. Nature connection is an important way of strengthening the “mindfulness muscle,” and kids and adults need this now more than ever to support their health and well-being.
3. Have an evening meal together without technology. Send wishes of kindness to people you care about before eating.
4. Take time each day to reflect together on three things from the day (no matter how small) that made you feel good.
5. Laugh and be silly together as often as possible! 😊

Where can I learn more?

Mindfulness Everyday: <http://www.mindfulnesseveryday.org/resourcesforparents.html>

Mindful Families (Sara Marlowe): <http://mindfulfamilies.ca/index.php>