

MINDFUL PARENTING

Mindfulness means to focus on and be aware of what is happening in the present in a nonjudgmental fashion. Mindful parenting can help reduce stress and help you to be less emotionally reactive, which can allow you to interact more lovingly and enrich your relationship with your child. Mindful parenting encompasses the following five elements:



Listening with Full Attention. Give your complete attention to what your child is saying and doing. Pay attention to your child's words, tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. Doing this can help you identify your child's needs more accurately.

Nonjudgmental Acceptance. Openly accepting your child's attributes, abilities, attitudes and actions can help you achieve a more realistic understanding of your child and abandon preconceptions. Nonjudgmental acceptance, however, does not mean excusing misbehavior. Parents can still provide their child with clear and developmentally appropriate rules and expectations but can do so without judgment and with greater compassion.

Emotional Awareness. This involves deliberately focusing your attention on your child's emotions, both positive and negative. When parents experience strong emotions, there is a tendency to engage in parenting that is reactive. Maintaining awareness of your emotions helps you interact thoughtfully with your child.

Self-regulation. This entails exercising self-control over words and actions when interacting with children. Practicing self-control allows you to remain calm, cool and collected, and to engage in parenting behaviors that bring out the best in your child.

Compassion. This involves displaying empathy and concern for your child. Children can face many challenges as they mature, and parents should be a valuable source of comfort and support for them during trying times. Additionally, parents should not be too critical of their parenting efforts. Parents should set high standards for themselves but should also forgive themselves when certain goals are not attained.

BREATHE TO THRIVE

TIPS FOR MINDFUL PARENTING

Mindful parenting can be helpful during challenging and stressful situations, such as being pressed for time or disciplining. It can help keep your emotions in check and your mind focused on the present. Try the following tips when faced with challenging or stressful parenting situations:

Pause & Breathe. Pause and focus on breathing. Breathing is a very effective way of calming the body and refocusing thoughts and attention.

Remember to Show Love & Support. In the moment when emotions begin to flare, it can be challenging to remember to show love and support. Taking a moment to pause and breathe, however, could provide one with an opportunity to think about how to respond to the demands of the current situation in an appropriately loving and supportive fashion. For example, if you are running late to an appointment and your child has not gotten her shoes on yet, pause what you are doing and breathe. As you are breathing, think about how you can resolve the shoe issue with your child lovingly.

Plan Ahead for Next Time. After the challenging situation has passed, you could devote a bit of time to thinking about how that situation could be avoided or improved in the future. Go back to the shoe example. Perhaps the problem was that the child did not remember where her shoes were. Initiate a new routine that involves everyone putting their shoes in the same spot every night. Sometimes planning ahead makes a big difference.

Give Yourself a Break. No parent is perfect. Everyone is human, and everyone makes mistakes. Mistakes can provide opportunities for parents to learn, improve and help their children understand that no one is perfect. Mistakes also provide opportunities for parents to show their children positive ways to correct them. Acknowledge mistakes, and endeavor to correct them in the future.

