Resources for Parents: Mindfulness Activities

Mindfulness is a state of mind achieved by increasing awareness on the present moment and striving to accept one’s thoughts, feelings, and sensations without judgment.

Practicing mindfulness can improve emotional and physical wellbeing. Mindfulness can:

- Help relieve stress
- Improve sleep
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce chronic pain

Following are some activities you can do with your child to increase mindfulness.

What’s in the Smoothie? (Mindful eating)

This fun activity helps introduce mindfulness to children and is an opportunity to talk about good nutrition. (Best for children 5 years and older.)

1) Use a blender to prepare a fruit and vegetable smoothie. For example, blend banana, berries, fresh spinach, yogurt and ice cubes.

2) Ask your child to join you, after you’ve put the ingredients away. Tell her that you have made a yummy smoothie and that you’d like her to use her senses to describe the taste, texture and feeling.

3) Ask your child to take three deep breaths to focus and prepare for the challenge.

4) Then have your child close her eyes, if she feels comfortable – and then take the first sip.

5) Between sips, ask her to describe what she tastes. What she smells. Have her guess what is in the smoothie (let her know if she’s right and/or on the right track). Ask her to describe the temperature and texture of the smoothie. Ask her to describe what it feels like in her mouth, and what it feels like as she swallows.

6) Afterward, ask her what the experience was like. How did she feel before the experience? During the experience? How about afterward? Did she notice a change? How might she bring this focused-attention to other activities in her life?

7) Praise the child for her participation and highlight the value for bringing moments of focused-attention into daily life.
**Body Scan (Body awareness)**

This activity will help your child focus on the present and increase her awareness of her body. It’s a great activity to do together. (Best for children 5 years and older.)

1) Get comfortable. Sit in a straight-backed chair or lie down comfortably on the floor.

2) Breathe in through your nose, allowing the air into your lower belly. Let your belly expand fully with the breath.

3) Now bring your attention to the sensations in your body. Notice subtle body sensations such an itch or tingling – and then let them pass.

4) Now focus on sensations in each section of your body in succession. Start at the top of your head and slowly work your way down to your toes. As you scan each area of your body, notice the sensations – and then, once again -- let them pass.

5) After you have scanned your body from head to toes, take three deep belly breaths to end the practice.

**Single-Tasking (Staying in the moment)**

This activity is wonderful for everyone.

1) Choose any task – eating, showering, brushing your teeth, getting dressed, cooking, walking, playing with your child.

2) Bring your attention to your body. What do you feel? Notice the sensations – and then let them pass.

3) Breathe in through your nose. Breathe deeply to expand your belly.

4) Now exhale through your mouth.

5) Notice the sensations of each breath – each inhalation and exhalation.

6) Now focus on what you are doing -- back to the task at hand (e.g., brushing your teeth, getting dressed, etc.).

7) Notice each sound, touch and smell.

8) If your mind wanders away from the present moment, gently bring your attention back to the task without judgment.

Adapted from techniques shared by Edgewood Center for Children and Families - Therapeutic Behavioral Services