What is Mindfulness?

Perhaps you've heard about "staying mindful," "practicing mindfulness" or "being more present." But what does it all actually mean and how can mindfulness help both us and our children or students?

Mindfulness is really just about noticing.

Noticing what we are thinking and what we may be feeling, possibly as a result of the thoughts we are having.

It's about noticing how our bodies feel (tense, high energy, low energy, warm, cold, etc.); noticing any emotions or feelings we're experiencing at the moment (sadness, anger, fear, happiness, frustration, pride, etc); noticing the thoughts we are having with these feelings; and, noticing how we might be reacting to all of these thoughts and feelings.

Mindfulness teaches us to take a pause in order to simply become more aware of everything that may be affecting us in the moment.

This helps children and adults to then make the mental choice to respond in the healthiest, most self-aware way possible versus reacting impulsively from a highly emotional place where they may not be able to make the best decisions in the moment.
In a mindfulness study conducted on 99 fourth- and fifth-graders, the results indicated those who had been taught mindfulness intervention had 15% better math scores, showed 24% more social behaviors, were 24% less aggressive and perceived themselves as 20% more social. They positive outperformed their peers in cognitive control, stress levels, emotional control, optimism, empathy, mindfulness and aggression (source: https://time.com/3682311/mindfulness-math/).

Mindfulness activity: "favorite place"

(Approximately 10 minutes; uses guided imagery and visualization skills)

While sitting or lying down comfortably, have your child/student close their eyes if it is comfortable for them to do so. If not, offer the option of looking down at the ground or focusing the eyes on an item in front of them.

Assure them there are no "right" or "wrong" answers when going through the following script:

Imagine that you are in your favorite place. It may be a real place or an imaginary place. It may be somewhere you like to go or somewhere you've never been but want to go.

- Now, notice what you see in your favorite place? What things do you see around you there?
- What sounds do you hear in your favorite place?
- What scents do you smell in your favorite place?
- If there is food there, what do you taste in your favorite place?

Now it is time to leave our favorite places and come back to the room. Remember, that you can go to this place anytime you want to again, just by using your mind to imagine it!

Mindfulness activities offer fun and educational games and activities that help children learn important social-emotional learning skills, self-regulation tools and mindfulness activities.
Mindfulness Benefits:

- Less stress and anxiety
- Greater self-awareness
- Increased self-control (self-regulation of behaviors, thoughts and actions)
- Improved ability to focus and concentrate
- Improved problem-solving ability
- The ability to respond versus react to something when upset
- Better emotional balance
- A calmer, quieter mind
- Closer relationships and social connections with others
- Improved mental, emotional and physical health

Taking a "Time-In" vs. "Time-Out" Break.

Mindfulness doesn't have to be a huge time commitment. Just taking some short breaks throughout the day to practice mindfulness exercises such as slow breathing, guided imagery, listening to music, performing mindful movements such as yoga or Qigong, or practicing mindful stillness can be easily incorporated throughout your day and performed in a matter of minutes while still providing amazing results!
Content for this newsletter was provided by Certified Mindfulness Instructor Amy Starkey. For more information, visit https://www.missamysyoga2go.com


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