

# MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION:

## PRACTICAL TOOLS TO REDUCE STRESS DURING COVID-19

Mindfulness and meditation have been scientifically proven to reduce stress, anxiety, impulsivity and other emotional challenges. Research also shows that mindfulness and meditation can improve attention, learning, cognitive and academic performance. Many people have heard of mindfulness and meditation for stress reduction, but may not be sure what it means, where to start, or how to adapt it for children.



### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION?

**Mindfulness** means intentionally bringing our awareness into the *present* moment, without judgements.

**Meditation** is the *practice of using a technique* to train our use of attention and awareness, intentionally.

Bringing our awareness to the present moment takes practice. Here are a few ways to build mindfulness into your family's everyday routine:

#### MINDFUL GROUNDING

Focusing on our senses can help us remain in the present and think less about the past or the future. Below is an exercise that can help with mental grounding:

- Name 3 things you see
- Name 3 things you hear
- Name 3 things you feel on your body or skin

#### MINDFUL NOTICING

We can also use our senses to focus on a single object and notice all the little details we have never noticed before. For this activity, you will need a penny or coin:

**First, bring your attention to what your penny looks like.**

- What markings does it have on the front or back?
- What words or numbers are there?
- Are there smudges or other identifying features on your penny? Is your penny shiny or dull?
- How does the light reflect off your penny?
- Does it change if you tilt it around?

**Now, bring your attention to what your penny feels like.**

- How heavy is your penny?
- Is it warm or cold?
- Does its temperature change depending where you hold it?
- Are the edges smooth or grooved?
- What does your penny feel like between your finger and your thumb?

You can try this activity with any common object (a pencil, a watch, a stone, a leaf). You can also practice mindful noticing of other senses like taste (mindful eating) or hearing (mindfully listening to music).

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### **LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION**

The loving-kindness meditation seeks to grow warmth, kindness and authenticity in how we feel about ourselves and others.

First, repeat these four sentences, either out loud or to yourself:

- May I be safe.
- May I be healthy and strong.
- May I be happy.
- May I be peaceful and at ease.

Next, direct these wishes to someone you value, love, respect or feel positively toward.

Then, direct these wishes to someone you find challenging, or whose behavior you don't like.

Finally, direct these wishes to the world and all beings.

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### **MINDFUL MANTRA MEDITATION**

A mantra is a sound or phrase that is meaningful to a person. Mantra meditation includes repeating a sound or phrase and allowing your awareness to explore what that means for you in the present moment.

Helpful mantras for kids include:

- I can handle this.
- I am safe.
- Let it go.
- I am thankful.

You can set aside times of the day to practice mindfulness and meditation or find ways to build these skills and thought practices into your everyday activities. We all need practice to become experts, so be sure to practice mindfulness and meditation regularly — in times of peace as well as times of stress. Soon, you will be able to harness the ability to move your awareness to the present and cultivate compassion at will.

#### Recommended Resources

To explore mindfulness and meditation further, check out the following resources:

<https://www.headspace.com/> — A mindfulness app for everyday life.

<https://www.calm.com/> — A sleep, meditation and relaxation app.

<https://leftbrainbuddha.com/> — A website for modern mindfulness.

<https://www.cosmickids.com/> — Guided meditation and yoga for kids.

*"The Mindful Teen"* by Dzung X. Vo, a mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook for teens.

*"The Mindful Dragon"* by Steve Herman, a children's book that teaches mindfulness, for ages 4-8.

*"The Ultimate Mindfulness Activity Book"* by Christian Bergstrom, featuring 150 playful mindful activities for kids, teens and grown-ups.