

# Exploring Mindfulness for Kids

In recent years, mindfulness has become increasingly popular as a meditation practice. What is it exactly, you might ask? Mindfulness is a type of meditation that encourages the act of being fully present by becoming aware of your experiences through thoughts, senses, and emotions. It can be focusing on what is going around in the environment around you--can you hear the wall clock ticking? Can you smell your co-worker's lunch as she walks past your desk? How does the seat of your chair feel against your legs?

Mindfulness can also be assessing what is going on inside your body and mind. Are your shoulders tense? Are you hunched over your desk? How does a deep breath feel in your chest and your lungs? Can you imagine metaphorically balling up all of your stress, and expelling it with a long exhale?

Mindfulness comes in many forms, and can be practiced many different ways. Maybe it's a 10-minute breathing exercise every morning after waking up, or a formal mindfulness-based stress reduction program. Regardless, when practiced regularly, it has been shown to help increase the ability to cope with negative emotions and decrease stress and anxiety. Mindfulness also can benefit those suffering from medical conditions such as chronic pain and depression, and help improve cognitive function, such as better concentration and attention skills.

And here's the best part: mindfulness is not just helpful for adults; it can help your kids too. Mindfulness for kids can have all the positive benefits listed previously-- it can help give kids an



**now what? Keep Connecting.**



# Exploring Mindfulness for Kids

understanding of how to regulate their emotions and improve their focus, which in turn, could help them to perform better on tests or be able to resolve conflicts with more control.

However, be aware that mindfulness should not be viewed as an antidote to tantrums. It should be instead viewed as a way to develop skills that will help them cope with their emotions and understand what they are feeling.

So how can you ease your child into mindfulness practices? First, it might be helpful for you, as a caregiver, to try out a mindfulness practice first. That way, you will be able to understand the goal of the exercise and how you should be feeling, before you ask your kid to try. Then, you could do mindfulness exercises together with your child.

We have listed a few, simple ideas that can be used with young children. Ease into it with short time periods, and relatively “simple” exercises. But remember, meditation is an individualized practice--what might work best for someone else may not work best for your child. These are only a couple suggestions, but a plethora of ideas are a simple Google search away.

## Take a "noticing walk"

Go for a walk with your child outside. For a five minute period, tell your child to silently observe their surroundings. Can they hear any birds? What color is your neighbor’s mailbox? Can they smell a fire burning? This exercise will help your child to tune into their environment and be present in the moment. After the five minutes, discuss what you both noticed.

## Describe a snack

This can be a simple way to add some thinking to snack-time. Ask your child to describe what their snack tastes like, how it feels in their hands, and what it looks like.

**now what? Keep Connecting.**

# Exploring Mindfulness for Kids

## Breathing exercises

Have your child lay on their back or stomach and close their eyes. Ask them to relax their bodies, and instruct them to take long, deep breaths, focusing on how their stomach and lungs feel. You can try this for a minute or two.

## Ask them to describe a "happy moment"

Whether they are jumping up and down because they get to watch their favorite movie, or they just were handed an ice cream cone, ask your child to describe how they feel, both emotionally, and physically. This will encourage them to be aware of their emotions and become more in touch with them.

now  
what?

KEEP CONNECTING.

Whether your child is focusing on their environment, or inside their bodies, mindfulness can have many benefits, and can be pretty easy to squeeze into the day!

.....

Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 2.4.21 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

now what? Keep Connecting.

