

MindUP Corner: Mindfulness at School & at Home

GENERAL MINDFULNESS TIPS FOR PARENTS

Mindfulness for Parents:

One of the best ways to teach our children to be mindful is to embody mindfulness ourselves.

- Incorporate your own brain breaks three times a day to improve your focus and memory and help you stay calm under stress.
- Think affirmations to yourself like “May I be happy” and “May I be strong.”
- If you need some guidance in mindful breathing, search for various mindfulness apps to follow along with on your phone.
- If you find yourself getting caught up in your emotions or that of others, practice the **R.A.I.N.** exercise. **R**ecognize what is happening in a calm, accepting manner. **A**cept life as it is. **I**investigate how it is making you feel. **N**on-identification; realize these feelings are fleeting and doesn’t define who you are.

Being Mindful vs. Being a Mindful Parent:

Mindful parenting can improve parent-child relationships and reduce stress for both you and your child.

- Limit your phone use when you’re with your child.
- Spend time reading, creating art and talking with your child, rather than watching TV.
- If you’re upset, before engaging with your child, **S.T.O.P.** **S**top. **T**ake a breath. **O**bserve. **P**roceed.
- Teach and practice forgiveness. It’s important to note and address a problem, but it is also important to realize it is temporary and will pass.

Sesame Street Toolkits:

Parenting doesn’t come with a manual, but there are great resources available to help you. Sesame Street Tool Kits provide you with strategies, tips and videos that help you talk to your child in a mindful and age appropriate manner for various topics like:

- Setting healthy habits
- Getting ready for the first day of school
- Grief
- Divorce

Visit <https://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits> for more details.

South Bay Families Connected Resources:

Mindfulness is just one of many strategies to improve the social-emotional well-being of our children. For more tips and resources on stress, bullying, social media and technology, visit South Bay Families Connected at <http://www.southbayfamiliesconnected.org/>. Here you’ll find videos, parenting articles, podcasts and blogs that provide relevant information for our Beach Cities community.

NEUROSCIENCE

How Our Brains Work:

In the MindUP program, students learn about neuroscience and how their brain influences their emotions. The amygdala is the guard dog that barks at both friend and foe, while the pre-frontal cortex is a wise old owl that identifies friend from foe.

Family Activities:

- Practice acting out faces and guessing each other's emotions to make them seem more familiar. Try emotions like frustrated, embarrassed, surprised and joyful.
- Fill a jar with water, 1 tablespoon of glitter glue and another of glitter. Close the jar and shake! The jar is like your child's brain. When the glitter is spinning, it's hard to see clearly, just like it's hard to think clearly when their amygdala is in charge. After the glitter settles and their amygdala calms, they can use their pre-frontal cortex to make better decisions.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- How do you know when you're happy, angry or sad?
- Who's in charge, you or your brain?

Books to Read:

- "Think, Think, Think" by Pamela Nettleton and Becky Shipe
- "When Sophie Gets Angry-Really, Really Angry" by Molly Bang

Focusing Attention with Your Breath:

In the MindUP program, students learn to take a brain break and focus their attention on their breath, calming their amygdala. The amygdala controls emotions and initiates the fight or flight response. When the amygdala is calm, we can access our pre-frontal cortex to make reasonable decisions.

Family Activities:

- Have your child lie down on the floor, place a stuffed animal on their stomach, and watch it rise and fall with their breath.
- Blow bubbles and watch them float to the ground.
- Use your breath to make pinwheels go fast and slow.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- How do you feel after a brain break?
- When should you focus on your breath?

Books to Read:

- "A Quiet Place" by Douglas Wood
- "Peaceful Piggy Meditation" by Kerry Lee and Kerry MacLean

MINDFUL AWARENESS

Mindful Senses:

In the MindUP program, students learn how to tune into their senses and immerse themselves in the present by practicing mindful listening, seeing, smelling and tasting.

Family Activities:

- Listening: Sit quietly inside or outside and take turns naming the sounds you hear.
- Seeing: Go on a treasure hunt around your neighborhood and look for treasures like specific leaves, rocks, trees, insects and birds.
- Smelling: Before eating breakfast or lunch, take a moment to smell your food.
- Tasting: Have your child do a blind taste test of each food at dinner.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- What new things did you hear, see, smell or taste?
- Does the experience remind you of a special memory?

Mindful Movement:

In the MindUP program, students learn how moving throughout the day gets their heart rate up and body warm.

Family Activities:

- Put on upbeat, happy music and do a “Dopamine Dance” together.
- Go outside and play classic games like freeze tag, hide and seek, capture the flag or red light green light.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- Before you play, how does your heart beat feel?
- What does it feel like after you play?

Books to Read:

- “Senses in the City” by Shelly Rotner
- “‘Slowly, Slowly, Slowly’ said the Sloth” by Eric Carle

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Perspective Taking and Choosing Optimism:

In the MindUP program, students learn how understanding the perspective of others and choosing to be optimistic helps them connect with others and view the world as hopeful.

Family Activities:

- Have your child imagine themselves as the family pet “Rocky” and ask them: What do you think makes “Rocky” happy? How do you know he’s happy?
- Choose your child’s favorite picture book, play “Optimistic I Spy” and find things that make your child happy or things they are good at.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- What does it mean to understand the perspective of a friend?
- How can you be optimistic?

Books to Read:

- “I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato” by Lauren Child
- “If You’re Happy and You Know It” by James Warhola

Appreciating Happy Experiences:

In the MindUP program, students learn that when we remember happy moments, our brain releases dopamine in the same way as if we were experiencing the moment.

Family Activities:

- Create a Memory Book and fill it with photos, magazine clippings and drawings that remind you of fun or positive experiences.

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- What made you happy today?
- How do you know you are happy?
- How can you make others happy?

Books to Read:

- “Pablo’s Tree” by Nancy Carlson
- “A Good Day” by Kevin Henkes

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Expressing Gratitude:

In the MindUP program, students learn that by reflecting on what they’re grateful for shifts their thinking to a calmer, more content view. Share gratitude as a family to forge stronger bonds and greater trust.

Family Activities:

- Form a gratitude circle and take turns naming one thing you are grateful for and why.
- Create a Gratitude Chain and write down something you are grateful for on a strip of colorful paper. Loop the strips and watch your family chain grow.

Books to Read:

- “Feeling Thankful” by Shelley Rotner and Sheila Kelly
- “Thank You, Brother Bear” by Hans Baumann

Acts of Kindness:

In the MindUP program, students learn that kindness is a choice that makes others and themselves happy.

Family Activities:

- Create a Magic Kindness Wand from a stick or straw. When your child touches a family member with the wand, the family member must say something kind or give a suggestion on how to extend kindness to someone else.
- Groove along with Sesame Street in their song “Try a Little Kindness”!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHm_EgWYSpl

Dinner Table Conversation Starters:

- How can you show kindness to others?
- How do you feel when someone is kind to you?

Books to Read:

- “Crazy Hair Day” by Barney Saltzberg
- “Do Unto Otters” by Laurie Keller