



MINDFUL BREATHING: LET'S PLAY TOGETHER



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
AND GUARDIANS

FunConnectFam Project

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IN THIS NOTEBOOK YOU WILL FIND THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- What is mindful breathing?
- Tips for practicing mindful breathing
- Benefits of games and tips to get started
- Mindful attitudinal qualities
- How to use the "Here for my child" box
- But... what about time?
- Play... safely!
- Tool box overview



WHAT IS MINDFUL BREATHING?

Mindful breathing is intentionally bringing your attention to your breathing by paying attention to the present moment without judgement and paying particular attention to the sensations and experiences lived during these moments.



MINDFUL BREATHING IS ALSO...


Doing activities while being in the present moment

A relaxation technique during difficult times

Taking a break from our busy lives

Cultivate wonder, stimulate curiosity and keep hope

Find moments to calm down and relax



We often tend to **think about several things at the same time**. Instead of living in the present moment, we think about the past or future events. This can bring stress that harms our physical and mental health and our relationships with our loved ones. Stress affects both parents and children and affects their relationships.

WHY?

By practicing mindful breathing techniques as a family game, you will help your children easily learn little tricks that they can use in their daily lives. For example, they may use them to prevent or calm overexcitement, invading emotions or stress. These exercises will also be useful for you to cope with stress and better manage your emotions and stress at home, at work and in your daily life. Try it and you'll see if these exercises are right for you and your child.

TIPS FOR PRACTICING MINDFUL BREATHING

DID YOU KNOW?

Breathing is most effective when your belly moves in and out with each breath: This is abdominal breathing ! It helps with relaxation and brings you positive emotions.



TIPS FOR ABDOMINAL BREATHING

- 1 Sit back and close your eyes.
- 2 Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- 3 Take a deep breath through your nose as your belly gets bigger. Your belly expands and your chest remains still as much as possible.
- 4 Exhale gently through your mouth, deflating your belly. Get as much air out of your lungs as possible.

AND VOILA!

These steps may seem simple, but in reality doing so can be difficult. Don't worry, with practice it will become easier.

Be patient with yourself!



The most important thing is to try to live in the present moment by focusing on your breathing.
Just relax!

BENEFITS OF GAMES

FOR YOU :

- Reduce your stress
- Be more aware of your emotions and your thoughts
- Improve your automatic reactions to your child's opposition behavior

FOR YOUR CHILD:

- Improve the child's control of emotions
- Improve the child's concentration and attention span at school, during sports, at home...
- Reduce the child's stress
- Improve the child's behaviors

FOR YOU FAMILY:

- Quieter family life
- Improve your family relationships and bonds

TIPS TO GET STARTED

1 Mindful breathing requires some concentration in order to stay grounded in the present moment. If you notice that your mind wanders and you start thinking about various things in your daily life, don't worry; it's normal! When this happens, simply bring your attention back to your breathing. This is like an anchor point.



2 Mindful breathing can also allow you to explore your emotions and sensations. On the other hand, it is also ok if nothing happens; you do not need to force yourself, just let it go and have fun!

DON'T GIVE UP!

Like any activity, whether sports, arts, cooking and many others, mindful breathing is an exercise that can be practiced. The more you practice, the more things you will notice and the more you will enjoy them. It's important to have patience and be kind to yourself and your child.

MINDFUL ATTITUDINAL QUALITIES



The games will also allow you to explore, develop and increase the mindful attitudinal qualities that are explained below. Each game aims one or a few of these qualities.

Non-judgment

To be able to observe your environment, others and yourself with neutrality

Patience

Endure during the wait with calm and perseverance, accept the rhythm of things

Acceptance

Welcoming reality as it is, whether it is others, oneself or situations

Self-confidence

Know yourself, believe in our potential and abilities, be aware of our strengths and assert ourselves

Beginner's mind

Try to do everything as if it is the first time and marvel

Don't force yourself

Try to do everything without thinking about any pressure of execution and results

Let go

Detach oneself from the desire to control things, let oneself be invaded by a feeling of freedom and lightness

Anchoring

Pay conscious attention to the present moment, the lived sensations and the inner peace

Emotional intelligence

Manage your emotions, perceive and understand your own and those of others

Loving kindness

Wish happiness and the good of all, including oneself

Compassion

Recognize, accept and remain benevolent with our own difficulties as well as those of others

Gratitude

Be grateful for the people, things, and situations that bring you joy

Forgiveness

Free yourself from feelings of resentment towards others and yourself

Positive self-talk

Be kind and encouraging in the way you see yourself and how you talk to yourself

Resilience

Recover from ordeals or difficult experiences and continue with hope

How to use the "HERE FOR MY CHILD" box



Why?

The "HERE FOR MY CHILD" box is a tool that aims to validate children's emotions and thoughts. Listening to what the child shares with us allows the recognition, acceptance and normalization of what the child feels in order to establish with her/him an action plan (resolution, management or adjustment). The box also aims to create an attentive and reassuring communication and listening space that will strengthen your relationship with your child. This kind of discussion improves communication and builds trust between you and your child.

This tool will also be useful to help you start conversations about sensitive topics or topics that you do not know how to approach with your child.

When?

You can use the "HERE FOR MY CHILD" box at the end of each activity and encourage your child to share his/her emotions and thoughts with you. It's just as important to discuss challenging emotions (and thoughts) as the ones that seem to be more pleasant to you or to your child.

You can also use this approach in everyday life to talk about the emotions and thoughts your child is feeling.

It is important to use it only if the child agrees to open up about her/his emotions and thoughts. If he/she is not comfortable to do so, reassure him/her by saying "It's OK, I understand, I'm available to listen to you and we can talk when you're ready".

How?

It is important to be patient (do not interrupt your child while he/she speaks, respect moments of silence, let him/her take all his/her time). Kindness, empathy and compassion are important to demonstrate so that the child does not feel judged. Using non-judgmental conversations may consist such not saying what is right or wrong, positive or negative, or saying comments or comparisons with other situations or people. You can show openness, acceptance and confirm your support to your child.

BUT... WHAT ABOUT TIME?



Sometimes you might feel overwhelmed by everyday events. It is sometimes difficult to maintain a balance between work, family and other responsibilities. When this is the case, find a time to take a break, make sure you are kind and patient to yourself and your child and do your best.



Tips and tricks for a better balance between the different spheres of your life

- **Family activities:** Try to reserve specific time periods during the week for family activities. The duration of activities can be shorter (5-15 minutes) or longer (1-2 hours). Also, remember to do these activities when you wake up in the morning or at anytime during the day, when you feel like it.
- **Workspace at home:** If you often work from home, try to reserve a place in the house that is only for work. This will allow you to have clearer boundaries between work and family life.
- **Enjoy family meals:** Try to eat family meals at the table, without distractions (turn off cell phones and TV). Find topics of conversation to discuss together or make plans as a family. Everyone can propose a topic to discuss.
- **Involve your children:** Try to include children when doing household chores or when cooking. This will allow you to spend time with your family while being productive and have a little help with the household tasks! Take advantage of these moments to laugh and talk to each other. This is neither a chore nor a punishment.
- **Manage your time:** When possible, try to do your work-related tasks when the children are busy. For example: replying to emails when children are in bed or out to play with friends. This will allow you to have more family time when the child is at home.

AND HOW ABOUT YOU...?

- Even though work and family life at home is a big part of your life, it's also very important that you take time for yourself. You deserve it!

Take some time for relaxing activities that you like (ex: take a good hot bath, go for a walk, pamper yourself) in order to **recharge your batteries**. You will then be much more confident and ready to go forward despite everyday life challenges!



PLAY...SAFELY!



Games are fun, but we always need to make sure we keep ourselves and others safe while activities are going on. It happens to everyone to be distracted from time to time, so here are some tips to ensure the security and safety of the whole family while having fun!

1 SECURE A SAFE PLAY AREA :



Before you start playing, it's important to make sure the play area is safe. To do so, you can **check the following**:

- Check that there are no dangerous objects around you (sharp or pointed objects, objects that produce heat or toxic products).
- Check that there are no objects on which you can stumble.
- Check that there is enough space to play.

If you notice any hazards during the verification, eliminate them safely, if this is not possible, choose another place to do the activity.



2

Be aware of...

*If you think a game or an object is dangerous for you or your child, follow your instincts. **Never** take risks!*

Examples of safety measures :

- Replace solid objects with softer objects as needed (ex. use small pillows).
- Ask the child if they feel comfortable doing the activity before starting.
- Answer the child's questions and concerns if they have any.

Moment of discussion...

3



Take the time to discuss safety with the children and encourage them to recognize the hazards when they are present. You can even ask them to help you identify the hazards before you start the games! The more you will involve them in the preparation of the game, the more they will be ready to play.

TOOL BOX OVERVIEW




The tool box contains:

- Instructions for exploration games
- Instructions for routine games
- Mindful cards for kids
- Calendar for organizing the activities.
- Material required for certain games.

The program "Mindful breathing: let's play together", presents different ways to breathe mindfully with 2 kinds of games:

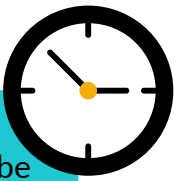
Exploration games



You can start with these games to try the activities of mindful breathing and see if you and your child enjoy them.

It will help you, and your child, decide if you would like to engage in a more regular practice of mindful breathing.

Routine games



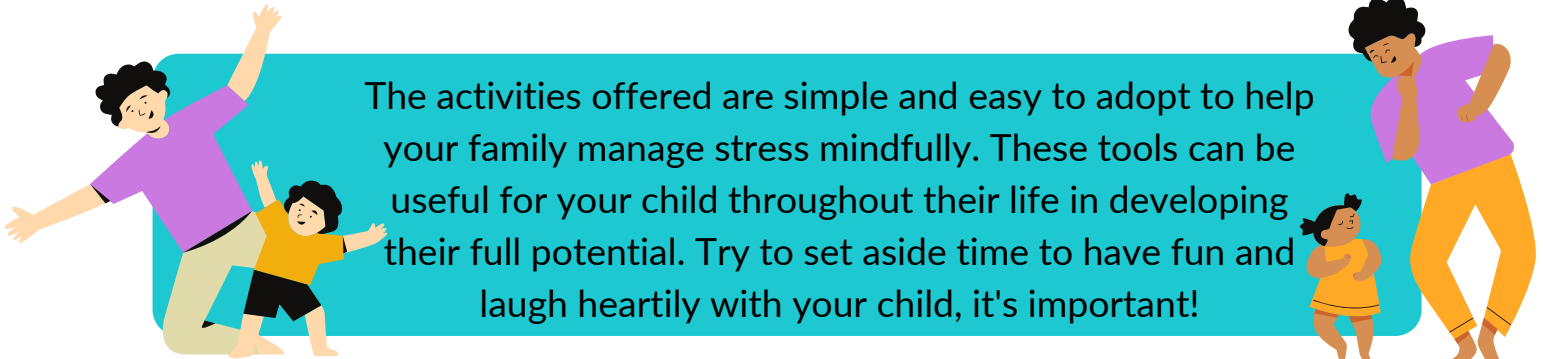
These games are quite short and can be easily integrated into your everyday life. Moreover, some games can take place any time of your day, for example, in the car, in bed, at school, at work, during a walk and at any time you, or your child, are experiencing a stressful situation.

Tip! Mindful cards for kids can help the child choose their game of the day and use it when he/she is feeling stressed while at school, during sports activities or elsewhere.

SCHEDULING PLAY TIMES

- **Exploration games:** It is recommended to play at least once a week. Choose the game at the beginning of the week with your child.
- **Routine games:** It is recommended to play once a day so that mindful breathing becomes a habit and is fully integrated into the daily life.

We recommend that you schedule the play times with your child and adapt the scheduling to your family preferences. You can use the calendar to mindfully organize your week!



The activities offered are simple and easy to adopt to help your family manage stress mindfully. These tools can be useful for your child throughout their life in developing their full potential. Try to set aside time to have fun and laugh heartily with your child, it's important!