



Center for Mindful Development, PLLC

Psychological Services and Mindfulness Education

Mindful Parenting In Brief

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Ways of incorporating mindfulness in parenting:

- Practice pausing and being still before responding in a situation (with the exception of when the situation is harmful, hurtful or dangerous). Sense if responding is what is even needed as sometimes, recognizing that “this too, shall pass” is all you need to do.
- Watch, notice and describe what is happening, rather than what *could* happen
- Let your child take the lead

The nights are long but the years go by fast.

Does this sound familiar? Exhausted, we soothe our newborn or worry about our teenager out with friends, thinking the night will never end and we yearn to go back to sleep. The nights can seem vast and interminable. Yet, when we are soaking in the laughter — giggles that seem to spill over like bubbles — we find ourselves wanting to squeeze the moment into a bottle and save it forever. Often in parenting, we judge ourselves harshly when there is struggle, tightness and conflict and think something is wrong either with us or our children. And during the pleasant, joyful, easy moments, we judge the moment to be the pinnacle of parenting, the way parenting *should* be. We may compare ourselves to other parents who appear to have more of those moments. We may feel disappointment when our “goals” are not being reached, thus making us feel inadequate or “not good enough” as a parent. Also, during the peace and joy, we may analyze what is happening in order to recreate the same sequence of events and circumstances so that there *is* a next time. (If you have ever parented an infant

Ways of incorporating mindfulness in parenting (cont'd)

- Come to an understanding of your own story of how you were parented - often a simple recognition and awareness of the meaning it has for you can create meaningful changes in how you parent your child or children.
- Soak in the pleasant times, also noticing and truly enjoying the ease of the relationship

For Further Reading:

- *Everyday Blessings* by Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn
- *Parenting From The Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell
- *Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids* by Laura Markham, Ph.D.

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who suddenly slept more than 4-5 hours straight after a stretch of 2-3-hour nights, you may be familiar with this thinking).

Importantly, there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these thought patterns and they are likely very familiar to most parents. They are very human and sometimes quite effective. Where we can get into trouble, however, is in judging our children or ourselves *too harshly*. Such continuous practice can lead to increased anxiety, hopelessness, decreased joy and decreased peace; parenting may become more chore-filled and task-oriented rather than relationship-building and connection-making.

Mindful parenting offers an invitation to be present in each moment, whether that moment is one filled with exhaustion and frustration or one filled with contentment and joy. Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn (1997) explain mindful parenting as “paying attention to your child and your parenting in a particular way: intentionally, here and now, and non-judgmentally.” When parenting mindfully, we do little to change the situation (unless of course it is harmful, dangerous or hurtful in any way to you or your child) but rather notice, recognize what is happening, acknowledge the feelings that may be associated with the situation (frustration, happiness, jealousy, sadness, joy, hope, etc.) and let the moment be. Importantly, these steps are done in a non-judgmental manner and from a stance of “this is what *is* happening.” Moreover, mindful parenting neither prevents one from being authentic and true to who he or she is, nor does it offset the need for strategies for dealing with common issues in parenting (e.g., sibling rivalry, setting limits, parenting strong-willed children). Rather, it tends to decrease the feelings of judgment and increases compassion, resourcefulness and creativity for parenting solutions.

Not surprisingly, mindful parenting also includes being mindful that the work of parenting includes yelling on occasion, saying or doing things we regret and inadvertently widening gaps because we are human. We acknowledge our foibles, show our children our vulnerabilities and ultimately demonstrate compassion for ourselves. We communicate to ourselves and our children that we are not perfect, but we are aware of our imperfections and accept and love ourselves anyway. Amazingly, this mindful approach often repairs gaps, decreases yelling and minimizes regret, lengthening the joyful moments.