mindful

Seven Day Challenge
Mindful Seven Day Challenge

If you are at a loss to know how to start teaching your children about mindfulness then we invite you to dive right in and do some mindful experiences with them. Our belief has always been that children don’t need to fully understand the concept, especially very young ones but they do need mindful adults in their lives who will provide opportunities for them to practice it! We hope we inspire you to be one of those mindful adults!

Instead of choosing the myriad of ‘stuff’ out there to do, entertainment places to go or the TV and computer to use, we invite you to use a little time over the next week to engage in some mindful experiences and join us in our ‘Mindful Seven Day Challenge’. This will be time well spent as it will encourage both adults and children in the family to gather your thoughts, to tread more slowly, carefully and calmly. These simple, mindful experiences will help keep the family more grounded and connected with yourselves, each other and especially one of our favourite mindful places, the beautiful world of nature.

If you’ve already bought our book, Making Mindful Magic (available on our shop here) you’ll be familiar with one of the experiences already! The others are experiences you’re sure to know about but perhaps haven’t looked at as being mindful and sometimes it’s so easy to forget about the simple things, pre-occupied as we can be with the complicated. It’s also an opportunity to remember that mindfulness isn’t hard – it’s about paying attention to the present moment and developing our calm, quiet, considered side.

You’ll notice some of the challenges have an accompanying verse which you may like to use as an introduction to the experiences but mostly – have fun as being mindful isn’t meant to be hard work!
Day 1 Challenge - Gather Leaves

This is full of real-life connection with nature and promotes using the senses very strongly as the leaves can be examined by sight, touch and smell and it is amazing when you start really looking, how very different leaves can be! The creative language that can be used in their descriptions always proves to be beautiful and inspiring. It promotes a sense of wonder in nature and if you choose to keep them, kids will love the way they can follow their appearance as they age. You could also use them to make a beautiful nature-full collage – you just need paper and glue and a little time! A lovely way to engage with purpose and really notice the surroundings – a mindful experience that's so simple, cheap and fun! Kids are real bower birds by nature!
Day 2 Challenge – Play a Board Game

Let’s find just 30 minutes when there is no media and instead, play a board game! If you don’t have one – even better – make one! Board games are perfect for paying attention and focusing, for practicing patience as we wait for our turn and of course for purposeful interaction with our fellow humans rather than screens!

Here’s a link for a simple version of Snakes and Ladders http://artsycraftsymom.com/diy-snakes-and-ladders/
Day 3 Challenge – Walk Barefoot on Grass

You’ll be familiar with this experience if you have our book, Making Mindful Magic but if it’s new to you the key is really to put purpose on what you are doing and for this all you’ll need are your bare feet and a patch of grass! In itself, walking barefoot on grass is not something amazing but when added with the purpose to feel a connection with the earth, then it becomes very meaningful.

I recently read an article by Dr Lawrence Wilson about grounding and this practice was very well explained. He believes all of us, children included need to be very centred and grounded which really means we are very present and attentive to ourselves and what is around us – a good explanation of mindfulness really. If you can develop this skill you will be less easily distracted, less emotionally reactive and more able to focus on life – skills we all want for ourselves and our children. He suggests we think about our feet as being very heavy and full of energy that we send down to the earth with every slow purposeful step that we take. You can also imagine your foot is a large suction cup that spreads out as it attaches to the earth below.

∞
Heavy Green grass connects
With soft shoeless feet
Mother Earth meets you here
Go walking together
No need for a place to go
∞
Cooking with children does not need to be an elaborate exercise but it completes the cycle to know and experience how that food gets to the table. It can be as simple as making a fruit salad – buy the fruit, wash the fruit, cut the fruit, choose the bowl and where it will be eaten and clean up the mess and mindfully savour the result from your efforts! It’s all about making purposeful choices as we move towards a more mindful way of living. If you want to put together a whole meal or bake a cake that is a brilliant way of connecting deeply, with focusing by following a recipe and seeing a project through to conclusion.
Day 5 Challenge – Use a Magnifying Glass

Magnifying glasses are magnificent for opening up a whole new way of really noticing and examining the world we live in. Part of the experience can be choosing objects to examine so why not start by going on a short walk outside to find a few interesting looking rocks, tree bark, flowers perhaps or anything you like if it’s more of an indoor day! We would however suggest using an object of beauty as there seems little point in losing an opportunity to celebrate beauty in our lives! The goal is to become engaged with the process of really looking rather than giving an object a fleeting glance as we so often do in our busy lives and to discover particulars that we have never considered before.
Mindful Challenge Day 6 – Go on a Treasure Hunt

This idea can be used over and over with different themes but today let’s go somewhere in nature. It can be your backyard, the park, or somewhere more ambitious and remote and try to find as many things as you can that feel rough to the touch! For future hunts you can make it indoors or outdoors, look for objects of a certain colour or for a particular purpose or a treasure hunt that records all the sounds you hear! Use your senses as your guide so look for particular objects around that theme – sight, sound, touch, smell, taste even! The list is endless when you put your mind to it! This will help promote focusing and being purposeful rather than being distracted and ungrounded.
Mindful Challenge Day 7 – Breathe Deeply

As the verse suggests anxious feelings visit all of us from time to time, children too. Calm breathing is an excellent way of gathering ourselves inward and calming racing minds. You might want to find a quiet space to practice this initially but overtime, it can be done anywhere, anytime and whenever you sense anxiety approaching. Like meditation, it will physically calm and slow down the whole body. Put your hand on your lower belly and slowly breathe deeply into that space rather than your chest, watching it rise on the inhale and fall on the exhale! I like to think this is a life skill well worth learning! I think it’s good to give it a name so you can use it over and over whenever it’s needed! I like Calm breathing but you or your child might find a creative name that you prefer!
We hope you’ve found inspiration to make mindful experiences a part of everyday life by engaging with our Mindful Seven Day Challenge!

Warmest Regards to you and your family,

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For more mindfulness visit www.makingmindfulmagic.com

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