



Mindful Parenting Tool Kit

MINDFUL PARENTING TOOL KIT

“To bring mindful attention and awareness into your interactions with your child really seems to set the stage for you to be a good parent,”

There are three key factors to mindful parenting:

1. Noticing your own feelings when you're in conflict with your child.
2. Learning to pause before responding in anger.
3. Listening carefully to a child's viewpoint even when disagreeing with it.

These skills potentially help preserve the parent-child relationship, while also maintaining a positive role model persona whilst handling difficult situations.

CREATE A GLITTER JAR

The glitter jar represents the mind settling. It's a great afternoon activity that your kids can keep coming back to as a mindfulness practice. Ask the children what kinds of things will make the glitter in the jar swirl. Encourage answers that reflect distressing events (fights with siblings, losing in sports) and positive ones (getting a good grade, making a new friend), events in the foreground (sick siblings) and events in the background (scary stories on the news). With each event they name, swirl and turn the jar, demonstrating how it becomes difficult to keep track and see clearly what our thoughts, feelings, and urges are.

Kids can also try to focus on just one colour, or one piece of glitter until it settles, or all of them. Your script can go something like this:

The jar is like our mind, and each colour of glitter represents something different in our mind.

Let's put in red for thoughts, gold for feelings, and silver for urges to do things. (Pour in a little bit of glitter with each comment. Now we seal up the jar. (Put the lid on the jar and seal it.) Then we start our day. We wake up, and things are pretty settled. We can see that clearly. (Show how all the glitter has settled on the bottom of the jar.) But pretty soon, things start swirling around. Maybe we are running late (swirl the jar). Our big sister eats the last pancake for breakfast, and it leads to a fight (shake the jar). We hear scary things on the news in the car ride to school (swirl the jar). We get to school and find out we aced the test (shake the jar). Now it's only a few minutes into the school day, and we can't see clearly because all of our thoughts and feelings and urges are getting in the way.

So what is the one thing we can do to get the glitter to settle and see clearly again? Be still! And what happens when we are still? We can see clearly again. There is also no way to rush being still. We can't push all the glitter down to the bottom. We just have to watch and wait. No amount of effort will make it settle sooner.

When things become clear, we'll know the wise next thing to do. In fact, that's one definition of wisdom: seeing things as they are and choosing how to act. While we wait, does the glitter go away? No, it stays at the bottom. Our thoughts and feelings and urges are still in our minds, but they are no longer in our way, clouding our vision.

A finished glitter jar can serve as a visual timer for other practices, such as breathing practices. For example, you can shake the jar and say: let's try doing some mindful breaths until the glitter settles.

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DAILY TIPS S FOR MINDFUL PARENTING

It can be challenging to remain mindful and in the present moment when our daily routine can set us into a chaotic autopilot. Use the following 11 tips that you might find helpful in reducing stress and being a more mindful parent.

1. Practice being present with your children.

Science consistently shows that relationships with family is an important source of happiness. Try reserving just 30 minutes every day in which you give them your undivided attention by taking part of an activity of their choice. Set the intention to be fully present, but be patient with yourself if that is difficult to achieve at first.

2. Unplug from time to time.

It's important to make clear but realistic rules about TV, video-games and smartphone usage in your home. Enforce these rules consistently and model tech breaks for your children. Try to lead by example as much as possible by taking breaks from technology yourself.

3. Have a dedicated space for meditation.

Find a place that is quiet, beautiful, and uncluttered – even if it's a small corner of an otherwise busy room. To the extent possible, reserve that space for meditation and nothing else.

4. Take breaks.

Things can get chaotic with a house full of kids and taking a few mindful breaths to re-centre yourself can make a huge difference. This will not only benefit you, but teach your kids how to respond to a conflict vs. reacting impulsively. You don't need to go the Himalayas to find bliss; even a minute in the bathroom or could have an impact

5. Practice gratitude.

Expressing gratitude is one of the quickest and most powerful ways to feel calm and joyful. Modelling that for your children is a gift that they will benefit from for a lifetime. One simple and accessible way to do this is to establish a routine at dinnertime when everyone gives one example of something that went well that day.

6. Teach resilience.

Life can be full of challenges for our little ones. You can teach them to learn from setbacks and bounce back – instead of focusing on failure. So really pay attention when they are facing adversity and help them make meaning from the experience through open and nonjudgmental dialogue.

7. Meditate

Meditating together is a great way to connect with your kids and help them experience the benefits of meditation from an early age. If you have really little ones, you can invite them to watch their teddy bear go up and down on their chests while they breathe. As they get older you can have them sit in a circle and listen to a guided meditation for 5 or 10 minutes.

8. Don't judge.

It is in our nature to make judgments and generalizations about everything in life, including how our children will react to situations. When you catch yourself having a predetermined idea of how your kids will respond try to take a step back appreciate each moment as it comes.

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9. See the world through your child's eyes.

Children naturally have a beginner's mind, and often find beauty in simple things. If your child runs up to you with a ladybug they found in the backyard, for example, try to match his or her excitement and enjoy the experience through his or her eyes. . Not only will this enhance the connection between you, but you will surely feel energized and invigorated by taking in these simple pleasures.

10. Don't be afraid to break routines.

We all know routines are good for children and help promote security. But breaking the routine every once and awhile is ok too. Some of the best memories your kids will have come from unplanned adventures with their parents.

11. Self care.

As parents we sometimes get too busy and overwhelmed to take care of ourselves. Most of us feel guilty when try to take some time off to do the things we enjoyed before we were parents. Try to let go of that feeling and recognize that a healthier, happier you will make you a healthier, happier parent.

