

Mindfulness is a research-based tool that brings focus to thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and environment. Learning mindfulness can help kids pay attention better, be less distracted, learn more, stay calm under stress, increase patience, feel happier and become more empathetic.



Grow healthy minds at home

- 1. Take a listening walk.** Go someplace – even your backyard – and walk together in silence, listening for sounds you might typically overlook: leaves rustling, a pine cone falling from a tree or your own steady breath.
- 2. Do a daily body scan.** Have your kids lie down on their back on a comfortable surface and close their eyes. Then, tell them to squeeze every single muscle in their body as tight as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, squeeze their hands into fists, and make their legs and arms as hard as stone. After a few seconds, have them release all their muscles and relax for a few minutes. This simple exercise gets kids to be more aware of their bodies and helps them learn to be present in the moment.
- 3. Practice mindful breathing with a Hoberman Sphere.** a Hoberman sphere, or breathing ball, can help teach kids mindful breathing. It can be used to demonstrate how the lungs fill with air and expand on the in-breath, then contract with the out-breath. It also serves as a point of focus for mindful breathing.
- 4. Make a mindful jar.** This activity teaches children about how strong emotions can take hold, and how to find peace when these emotions come up. When kids shake the glitter-filled jar, they imagine that the whirling glitter is their thoughts when they are stressed, mad or upset. Once the glitter settles, it demonstrates how it's easier to think and see clearly. (Instructions are on missionhealthykids.org)
- 5. Reduce screen time.** Screen time includes watching TV, using a cell phone or tablet, working on a computer, or playing video games. Because screen time is a sedentary activity, it can have a negative impact on kids' overall health. It also can raise your child's risk for attention problems, aggression, anxiety and depression. Screen time, especially in the hours before bedtime, is associated with poor sleep quality.

More detail about these mindfulness ideas and resources are on missionhealthykids.org – For Families – Healthy Minds.



Start kids on the road to a healthy lifestyle with Mission: Healthy Kids to learn how to eat right, stay fit and feel good about their bodies, because healthy kids learn more.

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