

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention on purpose to the present moment, without judging or trying to change your experience. The practice of mindfulness can help children to increase their self-awareness, self-control, and attention. It can also reduce their emotional suffering and increase their compassion for themselves and others. Practicing mindfulness allows middle schoolers to see reality more accurately and without judgment. Regular practice will help to foster an increased sense of well-being.

Below is a summary of key points from the video:

- Mindfulness is an ongoing practice, just like daily physical exercise.
- There are three mindfulness skills for kids to focus on.
Observe: Notice, without words, what is going on in the environment or in their body
Describe: Name what they notice using descriptive and nonjudgmental language
Participate: Throw themselves fully into an activity or experience

Practice Skills:

- Model for your middle schooler and schedule daily mindfulness activities for yourself. Invite them to participate with you when possible. Activities can include:
 - Take a mindful walk together. Encourage your child to use all five of their senses to observe their environment and then describe what they experience using nonjudgmental language.
 - Practice paced belly breathing together. Every time the mind starts to wander to a thought, consider it an opportunity to practice mindfulness and bring your attention back to the breath.
 - Practice mindful eating at family meals. Rather than eating without thinking about it, encourage your child to slow down and notice the colors, smells, taste and textures of their food.
 - Put on some music and dance like no one is watching (or like you don't care if they are).
- Engage in mindful parenting. When you notice yourself feeling stressed when you are interacting with your child, slow down and be. Be mindful of thoughts, urges, and sensations that arise. Take a deep breath and bring awareness to your breathing body. Observe how the breath naturally brings balance to your body and then offer a more mindful response.
- Keep a gratitude journal, and encourage your middle schooler to do the same. The mindfulness practice of bringing your attention to gratitude helps to increase compassion for yourself and others.
- It can be helpful to utilize mindfulness-based apps to provide different guided activities. You can encourage your middle schooler to utilize these tools for their ongoing practice.

Start with this →

- When it comes to mindfulness practice, everything that is taught has to be lived. Encouraging your middle schooler to be mindful starts with you creating your own mindfulness practice.
- Start by creating and holding space for your mindfulness practice, and protect five minutes each day to engage in a mindfulness exercise. Talk about your intention with your middle schooler, and share with them your mindfulness practice.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share or even place somewhere in your house as a reminder to engage in mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness Skills & Activities

The more you practice mindfulness the more it will help your mental muscles to have better focus, attention, and awareness. Below are the skills of mindfulness to practice:

Observe

Describe

Participate Fully

You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness.

Counting
breaths

Paced belly
breathing

Listening to
music and paying
attention to one
instrument

Going for a walk
and naming what
you see

Mindfully
eating your
favorite food

Playing an
instrument

Journaling

Dancing