Guiding Children Through Mindfulness

As with all techniques used to best guide and promote health and positive development in our children, “Mindfulness” works for most but every child is unique. These focused breathing methods have been used for centuries and has been gaining worldwide use.

Strategies for Teaching Mindfulness to Children

1. Validate their emotions.
   How many times have we said, “You’re okay,” “Stop crying,” “It’s not that big of a deal...”? Well, it IS a big deal to children. In fact, children are probably better than all of us at mindfulness ~ they live almost completely in the present moment! {They don’t have the past regrets and future worries us grown-ups carry around}. The frustration, anger, or fear they feel is very real. Let them know it’s okay to be angry, or sad. What we can focus on is what we do with that emotion. Demonstrated exposures to emotions can be seen in the movie Inside Out.

2. Help Them Understand What Emotions Feel Like
   If your child is angry, ask “How does your body feel when you are angry?” My daughter once told me it makes her want to hurt someone or kick someone; she feels “one thousand fifty hundred” mad. My son once said anger feels like “poop.” {Ah, the insight of a potty-training preschooler!} Teaching them to recognize how their emotions feel in their body will help them become more aware of their emotions even if they can’t yet label them.
3. Teach them mindful breathing.
I distinctly remember a moment when my then-six-year-old was throwing a fit, and I told her to BREATHE. “I can’t!” she yelled. “I don’t know how!” How can she not know how to breathe? I asked myself. I tried to demonstrate deep breathing. It didn’t work.

In the book Planting Seeds by Thich Nhat Hanh, he describes dozens of ways to demonstrate mindful breathing techniques for children. It gives them more concrete direction than just “Breathe!”
The following are my (and my kids’) favorites:

~ Noticing the Breath: Encourage kids to really notice their breath by putting their fingers under their noses to feel the warmth and moisture of the breath. Have them put their hands on their bellies to feel the rise and fall of their bellies as they breathe. Let them know that when they are angry, it can be calming to focus on what our breathing actually feels like.

~ Five-Finger Starfish Meditation: Make a starfish with one hand (fingers spread out wide). Using their pointer finger from their other hand, gently trace the outline of the starfish hand, slowly going up and down each finger. The focused concentration on the hand, combined with the soothing touch, often has an immediately calming effect. Later that day during snack time, I noticed my son gently tracing his fingers.

~ Counting the Breath: You can start with the basics — count the in-breath and out-breath. One breath in and out is “1”, then “2”, and so on, up to ten.

4. Lead them in a guided relaxation.
Planting Seeds contains a script for a guided relaxation (as well as a soothing narration for it on the accompanying CD), which focuses first on the breath, and then working through the various parts of the body to release tension. We can remind children that they can do this type of relaxation when they need to, either lying down or while seated.

Body Scan Script

5. Practice what you preach.
This advice probably applies to everything in parenting, but it’s worth noting here. When we react with anger based on our emotions, without a pause to encourage a more skillful response, our children see that and imitate it. They need to see us practicing mindfulness as well. If you do these exercises with your children,
breathe with them, make starfish hands with them, and lay down on the floor with them.

I scan the cute faces of my Pre-K students and can clearly see that their energy is all over the place.

We do a few “Spiderman Breaths”, “Breathe in, bring your fists to your chest. Breathe out, slowly, extending your arms, shooting out your webs whoosh! In, out. In, out.” Now we are smiling, breathing, moving together at a similar speed.

Settled in a bit, the kids know what’s coming next. It’s June, we’ve come a long way since I first started teaching mindfulness and yoga to this bright, energetic group. Most of them have turned five by now, but I remind myself that some are still only four. I check in with my own nervous system, notice anxiety, nervousness, excitement and concern. I bring my attention to my feet and then my breath. Someone will be chosen to lead the class in a short mindful breathing activity. I have a system in place, but it doesn’t matter. They can’t hold in their desire to lead. “It’s my turn!” yells a child to the right of me. “Hey! I want to ring the bell!” screams another voice. Self-doubt creeps back in along with the voices of adults who have said, “Pre-K kids can’t practice mindfulness!” I check in with myself again; ankles crossed underneath me, breath moving in and out of my belly. “You can do this,” I gently remind myself. “They’ve got this.”

We pass the bell to the assigned leader. “Please put on your mindful bodies.” There’s shuffling and a flutter of small adjustments to spines, necks, heads and knees. “Please let your eyes close.” The bell rings. For a brief moment, the bustle of energy settles again. It’s quiet and still in the room. Eighteen bodies have found a way to ground themselves. Listening, noticing, breathing.

When the sound of the bell fades, hands quickly fly up in the air to prove that they’ve been listening, the whole time. The leader holds the mallet in his tiny hands and is asked to check in. “Notice how you feel right now.” I prompt. Inquiring eyes glance up into the air as if to find the answer in a thought. “Happy,” says the leader, in a quiet voice. Each student takes the mallet to report their noticing into “the micro-

phone.” We’ve been working on noticing feelings all year and it’s clear to me that their vocabulary is growing. Responses range from excited to sad, angry to happy. Then the next child takes the mallet. She looks to her left and to her right. She smiles. “Proud of my friend,” she reports. I check in with myself again. I’m welling up with emotion — awe, gratitude and pride.

NOTES OF IMPORTANCE:
Please sign your child up for their respective Class Halloween parties.
Children may come in costume and change after. Make sure they have a change of clothes.

Sign In: ALL parents “MUST” be signing their child in and out every day! (It is a state law and must be done)

9 am Arrival:
Please remember to have your child here prior to 9 am. Arriving past that arrival deadline may hinder your child’s ability to be cared for. Beyond 9:15 am. If you have not called, your child will not be able to attend or stay without a doctor’s note!

Change of Clothes: All children need a weather appropriate change of clothing, with their names on them.

Blankets: You may provide only one blanket. No pillows are allowed.

We Do NOT serve breakfast. We provide a simple snack at 8:30 am. Please do not drop off your children with a Sippy Cup, fast food breakfast or home meals. We are not geared to coordinating breakfast needs. Please make sure your children are nourished before they arrive at school.

Lunch Containers: All such containers, boxes, etc. must have an Ice Pack and the child’s name on it.

Footwear: No flip flops or open toed shoes are allowed.

Toys, Gum & Small Items: Please do not allow your children to bring toys, Gum or small items as they tend to cause a disruption with student behavior and some items pose a safety hazard to your child or others.

Tuition Payment: Must be paid in full weekly. Please help us assure there is no lapse in our services to provide care and program services to your children.

Sea of Learning RESOURCES:
Valuable Resources may be found on our website. If you would like to share additional resource information, please contact us.

www.seaoflearningpreschool.com

If you have a specific request for information not presented, please don’t hesitate to ask and we will try out best to find or secure the information for you.
IT TAKES A VILLAGE
Services & Functions That Hit Close to Home

Note: If any of our parents out there would like to have their businesses presented in our newsletter, please share your interest with our office and we will make every effort to have them listed.

DONATE: We encourage our parents and the community to donate supplies and materials to the Sea of Learning as these help provide us with the tools to spark the interests of our children in how they express themselves. Empty paper rolls, scratch paper, etc…….

DeCubellis Wellness Center
7337 Little Road
New Port Richey, FL 34654 727-84-CHIRO

COMMUNITY NEEDS
As needs don’t go away, we don’t abandon bringing them to light. We continue our request to ask your support and involvement in aiding a dear parent with her fight to live.

Leslie’s Fight to Live
Please go to Leslie’s Gofundme link and contribute if you are able or contribute in other ways listed on the site.

https://www.gofundme.com/leslies-fight-to-live

Follow her most recent up-dates

SABRINA:
Our continued Prayers for the health of our student Sabrina. When one child is in crisis, it is felt through us all. Prayers for this sweet child. We hope prayers are answered and that love and support are present in the lives of all those impacted by hardships.

Sea of LearningNovember 2018

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NOTE: Please SIGN UP. If your child will require care on the 19th and 20th, also, please sign your child up for their class Halloween event.