



Meditation and Mindfulness

for Children and Families

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Why?

People report numerous benefits from meditation and mindfulness practices.

Some benefits of meditation include*:

- Slower pulse rate, increased calmness
- Better sleep
- Lowered blood pressure
- Decrease in the secretion of stress hormones
- Increased acceptance of self and others
- Decrease in destructive behaviors
- Improved ability to focus and concentration
- Improved positive outlook
- Decrease of phobias, fears, or destructive habits
- Ability to let go of limiting beliefs.

*Nancy Wile, Yoga Education Institute

Think about which benefit is most important to you and let this guide your practice.

Meditation

Meditation means to think deeply or focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes or as a method of relaxation.

Note: Relaxation and Meditation have each have a different emphasis. Meditation takes a person deeply into a focused state of mind.

Mindfulness

A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

Types of Meditation

The task of the teacher/caregiver is to help the student/child bring their mind out of conditioned thought patterns and give them a new focus.

Examples: from anxiety to peace, from over stimulated to balanced, from dwelling to moving forward, etc..

Guided Meditations

Mantra Meditations

Mindfulness Meditation

Qi Gong

Tai Chi

Transcendental Meditation®

Yoga

.... and more!


Examples of Meditations to Increase Mindfulness

Counting Breaths:

Sit comfortably and take a few long breaths. As your breathing rate becomes more natural, count to 3 or 4 with the inhale, and again with the exhale. Try to be only aware of the counting so that your whole body is involved and thoughts can be let go.

Mantra Meditation:

Choose 1 or 2 positive words (peace, joy, calm, let go, hope, love, etc...). On the inhale mentally say your first word, on the exhale mentally say your second word. Practice for 5 minutes every day for a week. At the end of the week make a note of how you feel and if you want to keep those words or try new words.



Examples Continued

Guided meditations can be fun for children. All they need to do is relax and “pretend” When children create positive visualizations using guided meditations, they can create positive emotions which make life happier and easier. Guided meditations can be found online, in books, and invented on your own.

Yoga Club students enjoy many of the meditations from Yoga Pretzels (linked below and on resources slide).

Let's Practice “Special Place” Together!



Common Hurdles

“I can’t stop thinking!”

Meditation isn’t about stopping thoughts. It’s about allowing the thoughts to be there and learning to notice them and let them go without paying too much attention to them.

“I can’t sit still!”

Some days are easier than others. The more you practice, the easier this will get. This is a good opportunity to see if there are certain patterns in life make sitting still harder than other days.

“Sometimes I get scared of my feelings and thoughts!”

Remember, you don’t have to believe your thoughts. You can practice noticing them and letting them go. Remembering that ***you don’t have to believe everything you think*** is incredibly powerful to learn at a young age.

“I think this is boring!”

A lot can happen while you meditate, but it happens in a different way than you’re used to. It’s ok to get curious!

Of Note:

When starting a regular meditation practice, consistency is key. Many people find it helpful to meditate in the same place and at the same time every day. Make sure you’re in a comfortable position (sitting on the floor, chair, lying down).

“I’m practicing and _____ is still happening.”

A completely normal phenomenon is when you’ve been practicing meditation and mindfulness and yet you “still” find yourself:

- Lashing out
- Feeling defeated
- Reacting rather than responding
- Having the same sorts of thoughts that aren’t helpful
- etc...

I have found this to be a universal occurrence. In other words, you’re in good company,



Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

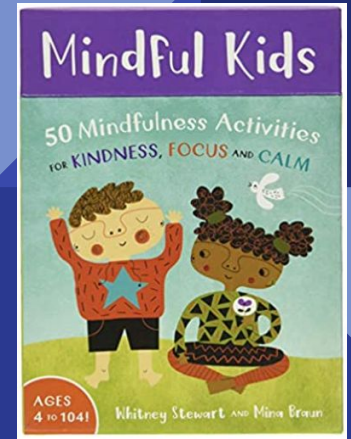
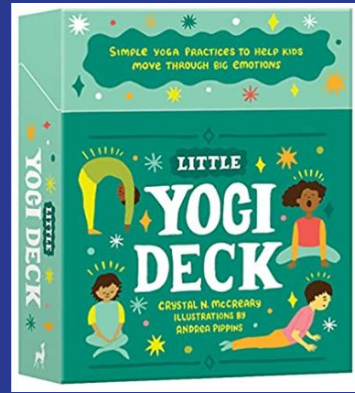
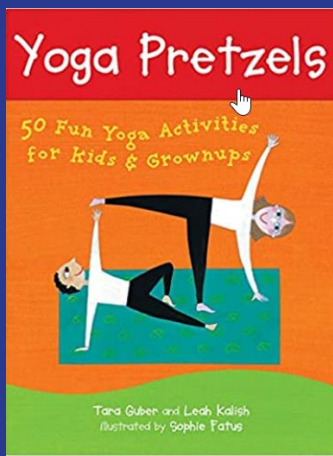
Viktor E. Frankl

The beauty in this is the fact that you are noticing the thoughts, patterns, or behaviors. Being aware is the first step. Once you’re aware of this, then you can approach this from the kind helpful “inner friend” as opposed to beating yourself up with the “inner critic.”

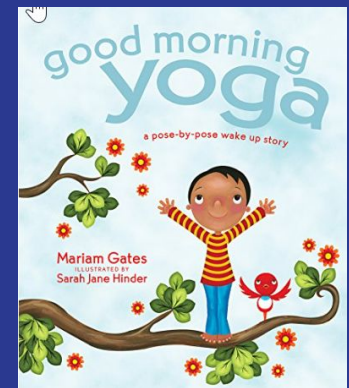
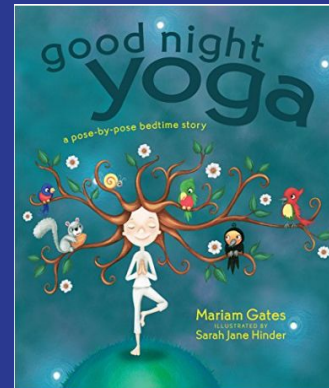
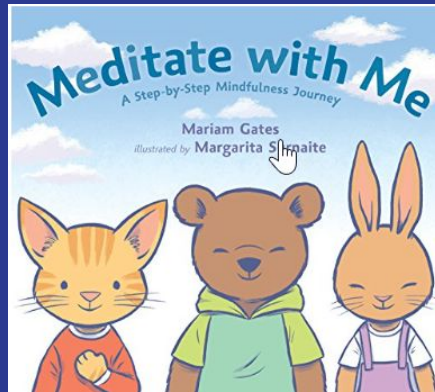
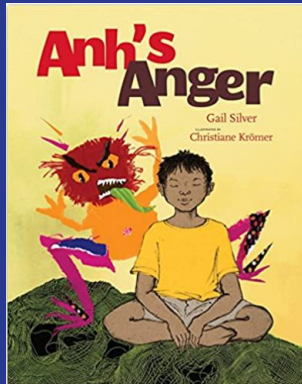
Flip the script and give your “inner friend” a turn to talk.

A Few Daily Mindful Practices to Start With

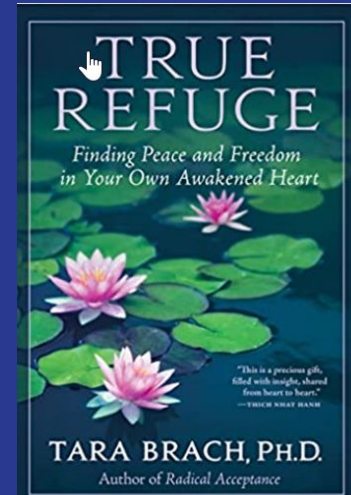
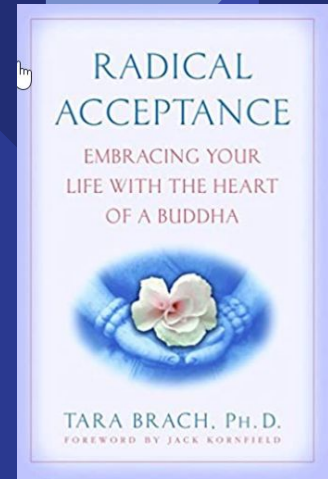
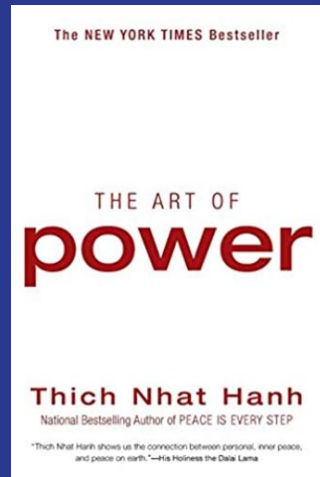
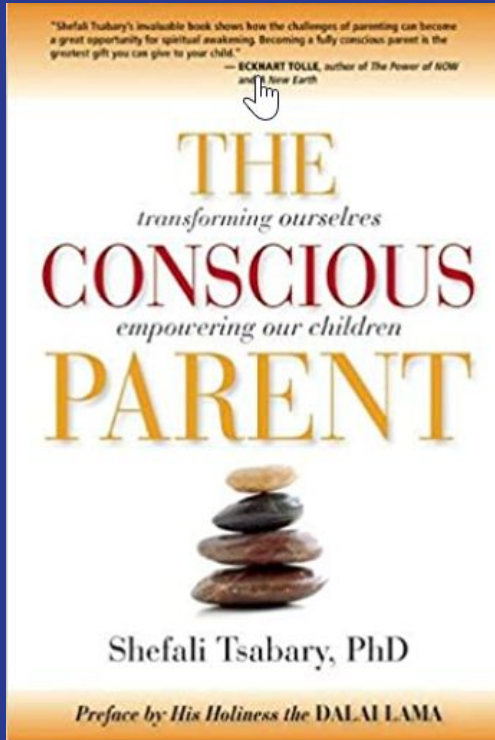
- Sit outside with your child and set a timer to take a “mental picture” of the scene. After the timer goes off, list things you heard, smelled, felt, and saw.
- As you’re eating together, have your child notice how some bites taste differently than others. For instance, some blueberries are more sour, while others are more sweet. Try this with a variety of foods.
- When you or your child are feeling dysregulated, say “I notice we’re feeling off right now, why don’t we sit for a minute and take a few breaths before moving on with the list of things we need to do. *shockingly, this usually results in tasks being performed faster anyway. Win-win!
- While watching a show with your child, pay attention to how characters may feel in a situation. After the show have your child tell you how they might have responded in a similar situation.



Books and Card Decks



Books for Adults



Podcasts and Websites

Podcasts:

- [Tara Brach](#)
- [10 Percent Happier, Dan Harris](#)
- [Raising Good Humans](#) (parenting specific). Season 2, Episode 53 has a mindfulness Meditation for Easier Interactions with Your Kids.

Websites:

- [Greater Good Magazine, Science-Based Insights for a Meaningful Life](#)
- [Mindful Schools](#)
- [The Plum Village Tradition of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh](#)
- [Green Child Magazine, Guided Meditations for Kids](#)
- [Tara Brach](#)

Community Resources



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