

CYS Health & Wellness

Mindfulness with Kids: Amazing Benefits for Brain and Behavior

There is nothing as powerful as mindfulness to help calm, regulate and re-focus a human brain, big or small. Child care professionals and parents can encourage kids to take a “brain break” to help quiet their mind and relax when they are experiencing anxiety with amazing results. One easy way to practice mindfulness with children and youth is the use of guided meditations.

Strengthens self-control

The goal of mindfulness is to intentionally focus your attention on your body and breath, but because of the way we’re wired, we naturally get distracted. The ‘magic moment’ in mindfulness is when we intentionally bring our focus back to our body.

When kids practice consciously shifting their attention, it is the equivalent of their brains self-control muscles lifting weights. They are literally reinforcing and strengthening the neuropathways that underlie focus and self-control.

Lowers anxiety and stress

Sadly, in today’s world, rates of anxiety in kids are skyrocketing. Children and youth are more stressed than they’ve ever been, due to fast-paced schedules, academic pressures and less time spent in play and outdoors. When kids experience anxiety, it activates the bodies protective stress response kicking the ‘fight or flight’ response into motion.

Mindfulness exercises are an extremely effective way to stop anxiety symptoms and re-regulate blood pressure, breathing and heart rate. Consistently practicing mindfulness is one of the best ways to lower children and youth’s anxiety by keeping their baseline stress level down.

Increases positive moods

Inherent to the practice of mindfulness is an acceptance of the present moment, just as it is. Mindfulness activities teach kids to accept their emotions and experiences in the moment, without critical or negative judgment.

Improves Emotional Regulation Skills

Want to increase the odds kids can keep their cool when they miss that soccer goal? Research shows that mindfulness changes the brain regions (in both structure and in function) in the areas responsible for emotional regulation skills. The ability to regulate emotions means we can effectively manage our moods and upsets in healthy and productive ways.

Increases self-esteem

Many kids struggle with a negative self-image and are overly hard on themselves. Mindfulness-based interventions significantly raise self-esteem due to the emphasis of self-acceptance and self-compassion.

Mindfulness exercises will help kids get in better touch with their thoughts and feelings. With increased awareness of how they’re feeling in the moment, comes less emotional reactivity and a greater ability to listen and communicate more thoughtfully and effectively.

Do not underestimate the positive effects of practicing mindfulness with kids. There are many ways children and youth can practice mindfulness-based interventions depending on their age and personality. There is no question that exploring what works for each child or youth will benefit them enormously.

Source: Parents with Confidence
<https://parentswithconfidence.com/mindfulness-with-kids/>

