

# EPIC Parenting Foundations of Mindfulness

Most parenting advice tells us what to do or not do, but doesn't teach us how to do it. Mainly, we haven't been taught how to regulate ourselves in the moment when we are feeling overwhelmed or stressed. We also don't learn what to do when we inevitably respond to our loved ones in a way we regret. This can add to the parent guilt and shame cycle. We want to do better, we lose our cool in the moment, then we feel shame, guilt, frustration, and annoyance. We think we are bad parents, but truly, we aren't giving ourselves the time and tools to learn how to pause, regulate, and parent differently than we were parented.

The good news is, we can learn to pause, regulate, and repair when we make mistakes. Enter mindfulness, awareness of the present moment without judgment. The without judgment is an important piece. We can learn to give ourselves the same grace we extend to others. Mindfulness helps us become aware of our emotions, stories in our minds, energy, and limits. This awareness helps us pause before we react, zoom out and see the big picture, and make decisions that help us stay within our capacity at the time. Mindfulness can help you become the parent you desire to be while giving yourself grace when you inevitably make mistakes. (Because we are human, this parenting gig can be tough, and we are learning.)

Neuroscience shows us that mindfulness actually changes the brain. We can see the areas correlated with attention/focus, stress, and compassion

change after practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness has been shown to help both physical and mental health.

If you think mindfulness means sitting still for hours, and you don't have that kind of time and space, don't worry, neither do we. We practice mindfulness to help us live life, not to spend hours perfecting the practice of mindfulness. Our specialty is supporting you in building a mindfulness practice that you can sneak into little moments of your busy day. Little moments with a big impact to help you feel more joy and ease in life. Guess what? You have practiced mindfulness before, maybe without even realizing it. Think of a time when you were doing something you love. For some, it's gardening, riding a bike, creating, tinkering, walking, being in nature, reading, or anything else you enjoy. What activity fills you up and allows you to be fully present? An activity where you feel as if time doesn't exist and you can flow while doing it? Being in this flow state is mindfulness.

We are fully aware that there are seasons of parenting where these times and feelings are rare, and you may have to think about an earlier season of life. Don't worry one bit, we will help you bring more of these moments into your life while parenting. If you are really stuck, think back to when you would play as a child. Play is the ultimate form of mindfulness!

We practice mindfulness to help us be in the present moment when it is easy to get caught up in the stories of our minds. We practice mindfulness not to be great at our mindfulness practice, but to help us feel more joy and ease in our lives. To enjoy life without letting our thoughts take over. This helps us to feel less stress, pause before reacting, zoom out and see the whole picture, be more aware of what behaviors are showing us, and practice forgiveness and kindness (to others and ourselves).

Mindfulness has helped me lessen the shame spiral, play with my kids (This is so hard for me!), connect deeper, put down my phone, take time for myself, and flow more easily with life's ups and downs.

Tapping into our senses is a great way to practice being present in the moment. Think of how a smell, song, or picture can bring you to a memory. Our senses are powerful connection tools, and they can be simple to sneak into our days to help us feel grounded in the present moment, even when we are busy.

Think of a task you do daily, such as showering, making coffee, brushing your teeth, or eating breakfast. So often we shower while running through our to-do lists of the day. We make coffee as quickly as possible, moving from one task to the next like a robot. We eat breakfast distracted on phones, barely even tasting our food. Imagine being in tune with what you see, smell, taste, touch, and hear (or even just 1-2 of these senses) while completing any of these tasks. Imagine showering as if you are under a warm waterfall in the rainforest. Imagine massaging your scalp (a scalp brush is my new favorite item), smelling your shampoo, and feeling the warm water wash over your body.

Imagine taking time to smell your coffee. Imagine wrapping your hands around the warm coffee cup. Imagine noticing the beautiful, warm, brown color of your coffee.

Imagine savoring a few bites of food. Smelling, tasting, and enjoying.

Using your senses doesn't take a whole lot of extra time, but the presence and ease you feel in the moment are HUGE and give you big payouts in the day as well. The action steps to follow will help you pick a practice and make a plan to

sneak some of these present moments with your senses into your day! An important piece to remember is that we practice these action steps in parenting, mindfulness, and life with relaxed persistence. If we miss a day or get thrown off course, it's not a problem. We pick up and practice again. We start again wiser to what doesn't work, and with more experience than ever before.

Action Steps:

- Pick a daily task and practice being present while you complete that task.

Tapping into your 5 senses can help with being present.

Examples: taking a shower, making coffee, washing hands, preparing a meal, brushing your teeth.

- Practice with relaxed persistence. Miss a day, no problem, pick it up again when you realize. Remember: Small things often are greater than big things once in a while.
- What time of day will you practice?
- How will you remember?
- What can you do if you are lying in bed and realize that you forgot?

Ideas- tap into your senses right there. The temperature and feeling of your pillows and blankets, the smell of your room, etc. Imagine as if you are completing your task and tapping into your senses. Think about your favorite moment of the day, and imagine you are tapping into your senses then.

- How can you be kind and give yourself grace in the learning process?