

# Family Mindfulness

Webinar  
21 May 2021

**Always  
connected**



## Overview of Session

The Mindfulness Session will focus on:

- What is mindfulness?
- Characteristics of mindfulness
- How to become more mindful

Once we know and are aware of mindfulness, we can look at using it with (and for) our family

- How can we be mindful as a family?
- Characteristics of mindful families

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is being fully in the moment- being fully present. It can help us focus, be calm and be more present for our families. It's a way of signaling to our brain that our wise-thinking part of our brain is in charge, and not our emotions.

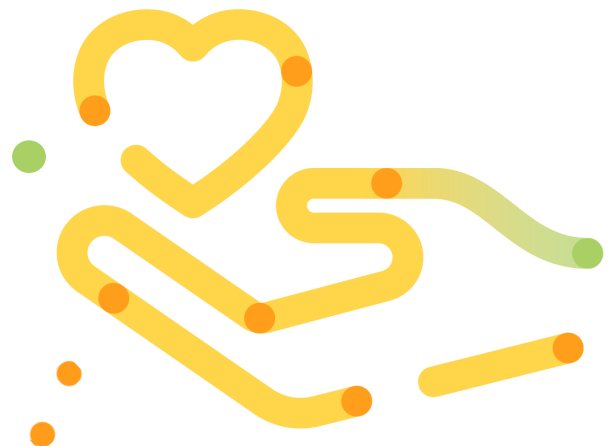
We may still experience stress, anxiety, and other strong emotions; however, we are able to work through this, potentially coming out a stronger version of ourselves.

**"Wherever you are, be all there" - (Jim Elliot)**

## Characteristics of a mindful person

A mindful person may display the following characteristics:

- Strong sense of where they are going
- Ability to really "be there" for their family
- Calm
- Focused
- Clearer mind to solve problems
- Can manage strong emotions
- Caring



## How do we become more mindful?

- Mindfulness can be built up like a muscle! We can develop areas of our brain to be more focused and have a clearer sense of where we are going.
- We learn about the brain and how to use different parts of it to our advantage- prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus.
- We become more aware of what is happening in our bodies and can manage strong emotions before they get too BIG- learning to tune-in to the clues our body gives us helps us to calm ourselves and regain focus before we get too out of control.

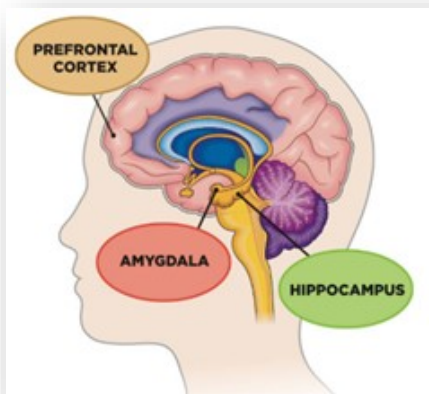
## Mindfulness as a family

Incorporating mindfulness in your family can:

- Improve your parenting and relationships: It teaches you to calm yourself and tune-in to what is happening for your children.
- It can help you to recognise signs of stress/anxiety in your children and give them ideas how to calm/focus themselves
- Mindfulness as a family can help with sleep time

## Mindfulness and the brain

- **Prefrontal cortex or PFC** (point to your forehead) It's like the WISE OWL. It makes our wise decisions. **We use it to control our bodies during mindfulness.**



- **Amygdala** (point to both sides of head, just in front of the ears: it's like our SECURITY GUARD. It's designed to keep you safe at all costs and help you react in a flash. It blocks information from going to the PFC (above) so it can cause you to react without thinking. **Mindful practice can help keep the amygdala in check so you can think clearly.**
- **Hippocampus** (point to just behind the ears on both sides): it's like a TREASURE CHEST. It creates, stores and processes all important facts and memories the PFC passes onto it—such as texting shortcuts, schedules and the warm smell of baked bread. **We want to open this up during mindfulness.**

("Mindful Brain Poster", n.d.)

## Characteristics of a mindful family

If you are aware of what is happening for another person, you can be better at supporting each other

A mindful family may display the following characteristics:

- **Approach problem-solving – together- in a calm manner:** can problem-solve positively, using each other's strengths and the open, honest communication to find solutions.
- Ability to explain what is happening when things get difficult.
- Parents are more "present" for their children and able to put their own issues aside
- **Strong communication skills – honest & open** – because they are more aware of what is happening in each other's lives, families can communicate more effectively.
- **Respectful relationships** – if people are more aware of each other they are less likely to do thoughtless things.
- **Family time** – allows time to connect and build on relationships.
- **Look after each other** –looking after each other is important.
- A sense of connection.
- **Stay positive** – Mindfulness helps us to regain perspective and see the positives. Again, the more you understand and relate to each other the better you'll know how to bring out the positivity.

## Mindfulness activities for families

### 1. Take a listening walk

Go someplace—even your backyard—and walk together in silence, listening for sounds you typically overlook: leaves rustling, a pine cone falling from a tree, your own steady breath.

### 2. Really taste what you're eating

With the taste, textures, and temperature of foods so different, [mindful eating is one of the easiest practices](#). Ask everyone to spend the first few minutes of certain meals silently playing with the food in their mouth, noticing the varied sensations.

### 3. Go inside your body

Complete a body scan: "Sit or lie with your kids and, starting with the toes, silently or out loud bring awareness to one body part for a moment, until you've worked your way up to the top of your head. A variation is for everyone to take turns naming one part of their body out loud and briefly describing how that part feels. You might start by saying, "I'm focused on my stomach, and it feels rumbling." Your child then continues, "I'm focused on my left toes, and they feel tingly." Continue for as long as there's interest, or just do one round periodically through the day. This mindfulness activity for kids can also serve as an anatomy lesson!

### 4. Savour some silence

During a period of enforced quiet, everyone goes through their regular routines—but they don't speak. Start with 5 or 10 minutes and try to work up to an hour or more.

### 5. Try a sitting meditation

A formal meditation, where you sit without moving and focus on a single thing, can be difficult for kids (and adults!). Turn down the lights and your phones off and have everyone sit on the floor (or a chair with a back) for a few minutes. The most common form of meditation is to focus on the breath. Kids can get the hang of this by envisioning they are slowly blowing out to cool a cup of hot tea, then slowly breathing in to sip the cooler tea. (Eventually, work up to breathing in and out through the nose.) End each session with a moment that solidifies the sacredness before everyone makes their mad scramble. In our home, we stand in a circle and hold hands, "squeezing" a bit of love into the hand of the person to the right, until the love goes around a few times.

### 6. Use the Stop, Breathe & Think Kids app

Playing video games or screening Netflix is the opposite of mindfulness, but that doesn't mean you should ignore your phone entirely. Some apps—such as [Stop, Breathe & Think Kids \(free; App Store\)](#)—focus on mindfulness [activities for kids](#). The app encourages users to check in with their emotions through emojis, and it also has a series of "mindful missions" that increase focus while calming the mind.

Other apps include Insight Timer

(Landau, 2021)



## Mindfulness activities

**This 5 senses exercise is a GROUNDING activity. It gets children using their prefrontal cortex, rather than being ruled by emotions.**

Have your child stand still on two feet (or sitting, with both feet flat on the ground).

Say to them: "Inside your head name:

**5** things you can see

**4** things you can hear

**3** things you can feel touching your body eg. clothes, the hardness of the floor underneath

**2** things you can smell

**1** thing you can taste eg, your toothpaste, your breakfast"

("5 Senses Grounding Exercise PDF Freebie - Your Therapy Source", 2020)

## Mindful-S.T.O.P.

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**S**

STOP any busyness temporarily and invite our attention to rest on the PRESENT MOMENT



**T**

TAKE 3 slow, deep and mindful breaths



**O**

OBSERVE & label 3 sounds around us (e.g. fan, bird, car) or pay curious attention to what we Hear, Touch or C/See (H.T.C.)



**P**

PROCEED with whatever we need to do mindfully and with a smile 😊



## References

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“Wherever you are, be all there” Quote from **Jim Elliot**

## Our Services.

CatholicCare is the social services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, covering the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Macarthur and Southern Highlands Regions. We support people to establish and build positive

relationships and connected lives. Our aim is to help people through difficult times to help them achieve self-reliance and realise their full potential. We also advocate for social equality and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable.

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