



## **Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Teaching Mindfulness to Children**

May 20, 2020

Dear Epping School Community,

As promised, this is the second edition of our series on mindfulness. In this newsletter we will give you some tips for how to talk about mindfulness with children of different ages, some ideas for mindfulness activities to do with your child, and some suggested resources if you would like to explore this topic further. Teaching mindfulness to our children is a way to help give them skills to increase their awareness of both their inner and outer experiences. It can help them understand their feelings and how they experience emotions in their bodies, mindfulness can teach them to be able to notice when their attention has wandered, and it gives them tools to control how they react to their emotions. Research shows that mindful awareness helps students with self-regulation, optimism, and planning and organizational skills.

First, however, I'd like to share with you my personal experience of mindfulness with my own child. I have a beautiful, bright, joyful 6-year-old daughter. Early on we discovered that along with her almost boundless capacity for joy and laughter, she has equally big emotions on the opposite end of the spectrum. She has a very low tolerance for frustration and is quick to react with tears, yelling and stomping when sad, disappointed, frustrated, or angry. Yes, of course, tantrums are normal for young children, however, she seems to have particularly intense tantrums and the littlest thing can set her off. When she was younger and having a tantrum, I would often sit her on my lap and just quietly take big deep breaths to show her how to do it. As she has gotten older, we have read some books on mindfulness, watched a few videos and have done a number of meditations together. She is now able to take deep breaths on her own, unprompted, when she starts to get upset. I see her using positive self-talk ("I can do this!") and taking deep breaths when she is nervous about doing something, like learning how to ride her bicycle without training wheels. Have her tantrums gone away? No, they have not. However, the tantrums are generally much shorter in duration and she is now able to tell me what she is feeling and why. And, much to my chagrin, she will remind me to take deep breaths when she sees me starting to get mad!

We hope that you find this information helpful. As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Wagner and the Epping Counseling Department

## TEACHING MINDFULNESS TO CHILDREN

**Keep it simple.** You can explain that mindfulness is awareness - noticing our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and anything that is around us right here and now



**Make it fun.** For younger children, you can have them practice deep belly breaths on the floor with a stuffed animal on their stomach, watching the toy rise and fall. Older children might enjoy a mindful eating activity, in which you use all your senses to experience something like a piece of fruit or chocolate before eating it slowly.

**Model mindfulness.** Find opportunities to practice mindfulness in your child's presence and explain what you are doing. For example, if you find yourself getting overwhelmed or frustrated you can say: "I am starting to feel frustrated, I need to take some deep breaths so I can think more clearly."

**Encourage "brain breaks."** When children are doing schoolwork or maybe transitioning between activities, have them take a few minutes to just sit quietly and take some deep breath to quiet their minds. Sometimes, they may need to do something physical first, like running up and down the stairs, doing 30 seconds of jumping jacks, or "shaking the sillies out" (10 seconds of wiggling the whole body).



**Go on mindful walks.** Take walks as a family where you walk quietly for one whole minute and then talk about all the different sounds you heard. Look for something you have never seen before in your neighborhood.

**Use technology.** There are some great mindfulness apps for children and teens, as well as many videos. Here some suggestions:

### Free Apps

Stop, Breathe and Think



Smiling Mind



Mindfulness for Children



Sleep Meditations for Kids



### Videos

Just Breathe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>

Lesson 1 Mindfulness Basics (great introduction for older kids):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg>

What is Mindfulness and How do you do it? (great introduction for younger kids):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rp5bpFIUpg&t=321s>

## RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Families First is offering opportunities for parents to connect with other parents online to help decrease the feeling of social isolation we are all facing. These groups are informal with no agenda except for sharing stories and ideas, venting frustrations and reminding ourselves that we are not alone as we get through this challenging time together.




Tuesday Evening Parent Recharge  
weekly at 6:30 p.m.  
Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/540259112>  
Meeting ID: 540 259 112

Thursday Morning Parent Recharge  
weekly at 9:30 a.m.  
<https://zoom.us/j/334557303>  
Meeting ID: 334 557 303

### **Heads Up: Coping through COVID-19**

Six-part webinar series on mental health



 Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health



Heads Up: Coping through Covid-19 is a mental health webinar series from Dartmouth-Hitchcock with several webinars focused on parenting: <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/patient-education/mental-health-webinar-series.html>

#### Counselor/Psychologist email and office hours:

##### **EES**

Julie Kratimenos: [Julie.kratimenos@eppingsd.org](mailto:Julie.kratimenos@eppingsd.org),  
9:00am-12:00pm

Marianne McDonough: [mmcdonough@eppingsd.org](mailto:mmcdonough@eppingsd.org),  
8:30am-10:00am, 2:00pm-3:30pm

Kathy Stanley-Berting: [KStanley-berting@eppingsd.org](mailto:KStanley-berting@eppingsd.org), 8:00am-10:00am, 1:00pm-  
2:00pm

##### **EMS**

Sarah Wagner: [swagner@eppingsd.org](mailto:swagner@eppingsd.org), 8:30am-  
10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Nick Degruttola: [ndegruttola@eppingsd.org](mailto:ndegruttola@eppingsd.org), 9:00am-  
12:00pm

##### **EHS**

Sarah Wagner: [swagner@eppingsd.org](mailto:swagner@eppingsd.org), 8:30am-  
10:00am, 1:00pm-2:30pm

Julie Morin: [jmorin@eppingsd.org](mailto:jmorin@eppingsd.org), 9:00am-10:30am,  
1:00pm-2:30pm

Melora Bisallion: [mbisailion@eppingsd.org](mailto:mbisailion@eppingsd.org)  
10:30am-1:30pm

#### Community Resources:

Dial 211 for statewide resources

Waypoint confidential support and advice for families: 1-800-640-6486

Seacoast Mental Health Center: 431-6703  
and 772-2710

Unemployment assistance: [www.nhes.nh.gov](http://www.nhes.nh.gov)

Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-237-TALK  
(8255)

Crisis Text Line: Text 741741

Community Partners: 516-9300

HAVEN: 994-SAFE (7233)