Mindful Parenting
Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience

What is Mindfulness?
According to the American Psychological Association, Mindfulness is: "awareness of one’s internal states and surroundings. The concept has been applied to various therapeutic interventions—for example, mindfulness-based cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and mindfulness meditation—to help people avoid destructive or automatic habits and responses by learning to observe their thoughts, emotions, and other present-moment experiences without judging or reacting to them."

Mindfulness Key Components
- Bringing awareness to experience
  - Paying attention on purpose
- Practicing non-judgement
  - Removing good/bad labels and rather seeing things for what they are
- Being non-reactive
  - When we react, it’s often automatic. Being nonreactive, means pausing, connecting to the moment i.e. mindfulness and choosing your response

Mindful Parenting
Mindful parenting has a twofold purpose – awareness of one’s own emotional state as well having a deeper meaning of child’s emotional state. When we can bring awareness to our own emotional state, the impact that it may have on co-regulation (take a look at our co-regulation training) and how we’re responding, we are supporting ourselves in recognizing our needs and in making better choices in those moments. It also allows us a better understanding of the child and what his/her thoughts and feelings are. This creates improved understanding and communication, more effective problem-solving, and strengthens the trust and relationship bond.

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Benefits of Mindful Parenting

- Improves parent-child communication
- Strengthens parent-child relationships
- Improves parenting satisfaction
- Improves overall family wellness
- Promotes parental involvement
- Boosts parental stress management
- Decreases parental symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Lessens parent and child aggression
- Reduces child impulsive behaviors
- Promotes child decision-making skills
- Improves child self-regulation
- Reduces risk of blind anger/maltreatment

Tips to Practice Mindful Parenting

**Identify, name and discuss emotions.**
Using daily check-ins, "which three feelings came up the most for you today?" are helpful.

**Practice acceptance.**
Feelings are always valid, however, sometimes expressions/behaviors driven by those emotions need a little extra help and support. Try not to shame a child for experiencing an emotion. For example, it’s healthy and acceptable to be angry. However, it’s not safe to hit someone/throw objects. Instead, develop healthy coping skills to express and regulate those emotions. Remember, behaviors are symptoms of emotions.

**Practice “pause” moments.**
Integrating moments to “pause, look and listen” allow grounding, awareness of surroundings and promote connection to the present moment.

**Practice gratitude.**
This is a fantastic way to stay grounded to experiences and feelings and promote a feeling of being present, grateful, calm and happy.

**Using structure and routine.**
When things are predictable, it eases big emotions like uncertainty and anxiety and allows a child to be mindful of what is happening throughout the day.

**See the world from the child's perspective.**
Everything is new, exciting and full of potential for a child. We could all use a reminder of this approach to life! Try to match their excitement and emotion through your conversations – this shows connection and understanding.

**Model and practice self-care.**
Practicing self-care independently models this skill, and practicing it together as a family helps children learn and utilize those skills too.

**Use books and stories to introduce mindfulness.**
Stories can highlight experiences, thoughts and feelings a child may have had that are relatable as well as teach ways to include mindfulness into daily life.

**Practice moments of quiet/meditation.**
Having these calm, peaceful times to regulate one's mind/body can assist the child throughout the day. This can also be used in the child’s daily routine - perhaps between activities or before going to bed. The more that this skill is practiced, the stronger it is!

**Remember - some is better than none!**
There’s no such thing as a “perfect” mindfulness practice. But rather, a little practice each day has cumulative benefits for child and family!