

Introduction to Mindful Parenting

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION





“Parenting can be full of challenges, big and small, yet parenting provides countless opportunities for parents to grow in tandem with their children.”

Mindful Parenting for Parents and Caregivers,
Washington State University Extension Fact Sheet

Objectives

Introduction to Mindful Parenting

- *Describe* mindful parenting
- Learn the *benefits* of mindful parenting
- *Practice* some mindfulness exercises
- *Set a SMART goal* to practice mindful parenting

“

Mindful Parenting

“Mindful Parenting is defined as parents’ abilities to **pay attention** to their child and their parenting in a way that is **intentional, present centered, and nonjudgmental.**”

(Coatsworth et al, 2018, p 513)

”

Comparison of “is not” and “is”

Mindful Parenting is not ...	Mindful Parenting is ...
A parenting style	An on-going, creative process, not an end point
An expectation to be perfect (no one is!)	“intentional, compassionate interactions with youth”* Present, not perfect
An additional thing to add to the “to do” list	Elements of mindfulness are brought to the specific role and relationship of parents with their children
A one-size-fits-all	Multidimensional

*(Coatsworth et. al., 2018)

Benefits of Mindful Parenting

Parents

- Reduced parent stress as well as life stress
- Increased self-compassion
- Less depression and anxiety

Children

- Healthier self-esteem
- Better school performance
- More positive relationships
- Greater flexibility and adaptability

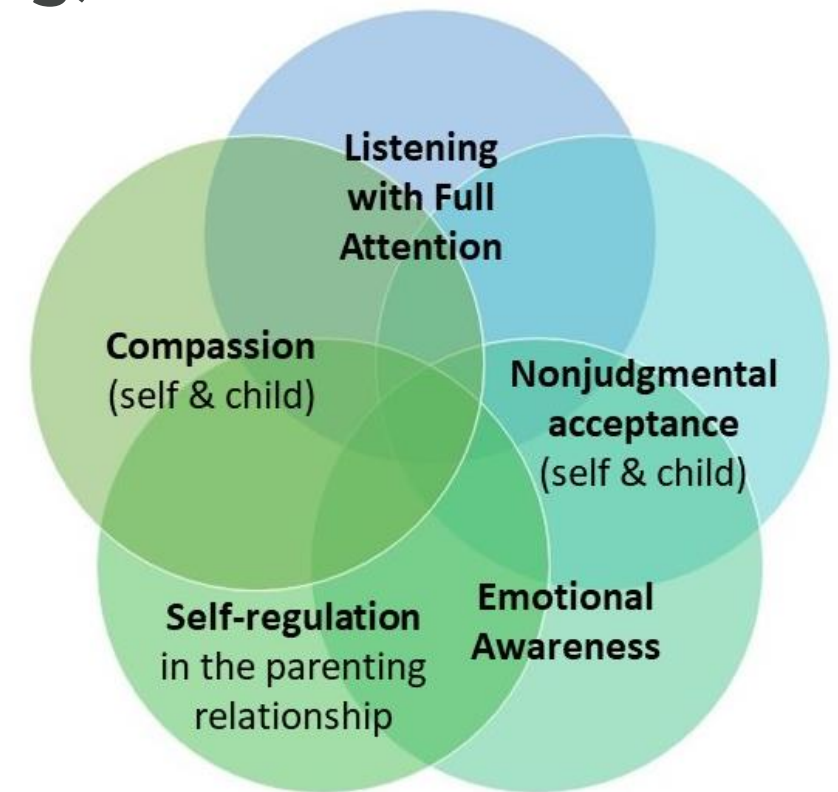
Parent-child relationship

- Improved quality of relationship
- Improved communication
- Well-being

Five Dimensions of Mindful Parenting

From Duncan, Coatsworth, and Greenberg, 2009

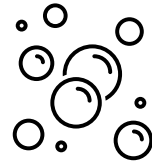
1. Listening with full attention
2. Nonjudgmental acceptance of self and child
3. Emotional awareness
4. Self-regulation in the parenting relationship
5. Compassion for self and for child



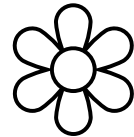
5 – 3 – 1

Mindfulness exercise

Center on this *present moment* with *nonjudgmental awareness*.



FIVE
Deep breaths



THREE
Things you are thankful for



ONE
Act of kindness you've
experienced or witnessed

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/join-the-movement/try-the-5-3-1-practice>

1. Self-regulating in the parenting relationship

- Life can be stressful and parenting can be stressful
- Learning to pause between the challenge of the moment and our reaction
- Less over-reacting

Keep Your Cool

- **Is it difficult to do?**

Yes.

- **Is it impossible to master?**

I wouldn't know.

- **Does it get easier with practice?**

Yes.

(Schrag Hershberg, 2019)



Self-regulation

Can you relate?

- Monday morning preschooler
- Bungled advice to your 5th grader
- They don't appreciate what you serve for dinner ... and ... there's dirty dishes all over
- Child's D+ on a math test
- You couldn't attend music recital
- Teen slams the door

Short Mindfulness Practice

Mindful S.T.O.P.

Stop

Take a breath

Observe what is happening

Proceed with awareness

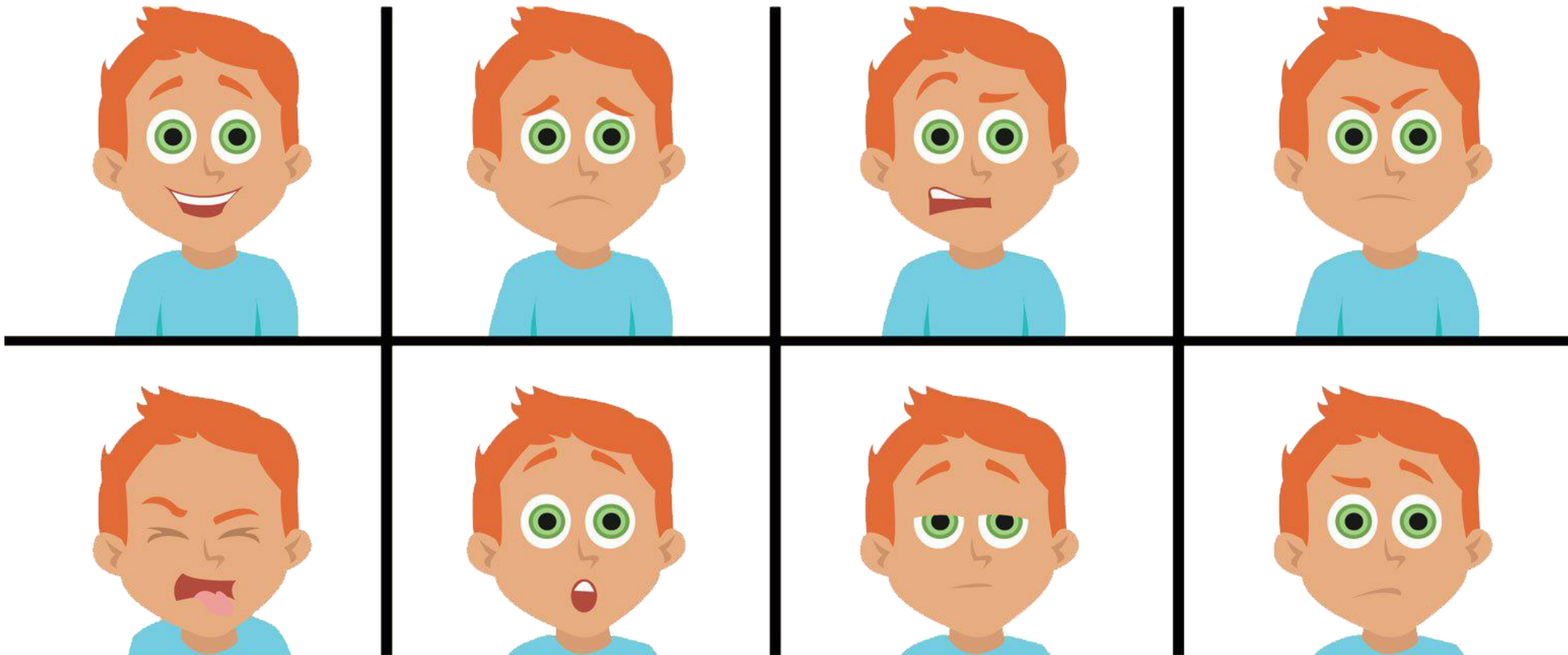
(Fuller and Fitter, 2020)

Self-regulation: Sometimes a mirror, sometimes two different sides of a coin

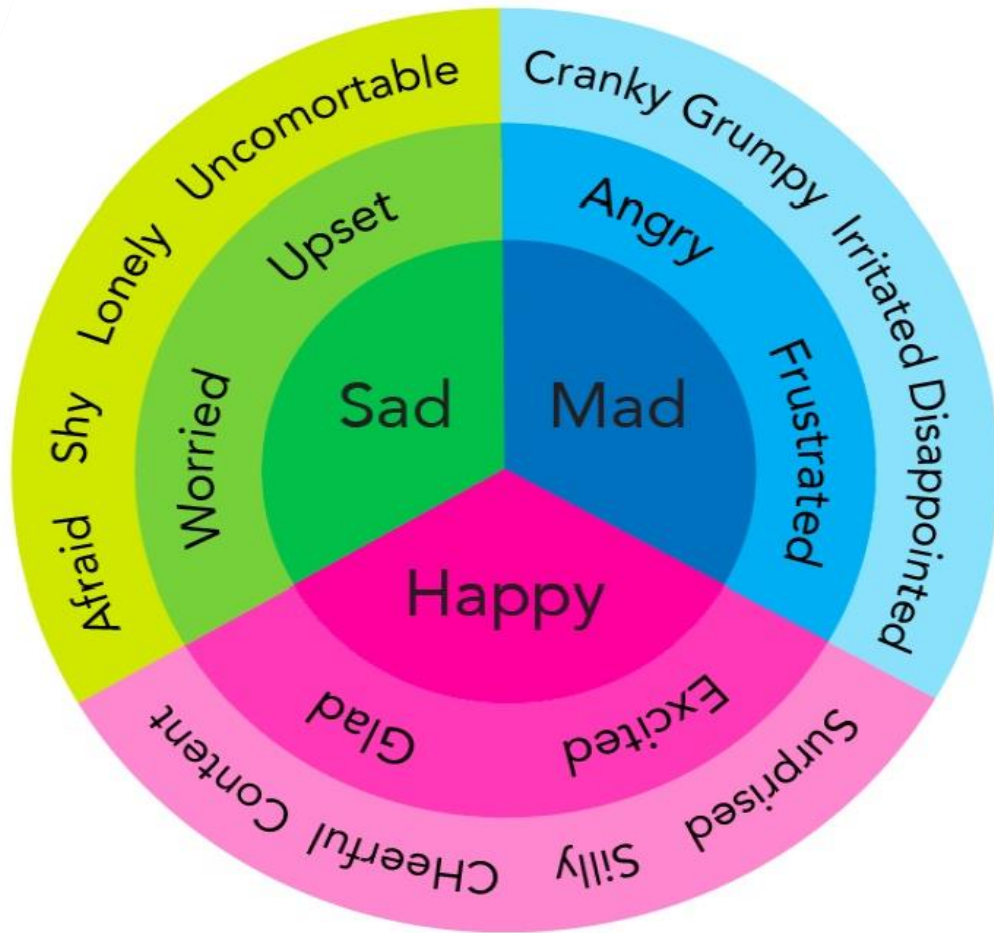


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2. Emotional Awareness



Feeling Wheel
Expand the words used to describe feelings in infants and toddlers



For more information:
prism.ku.edu

Feelings Wheel

- This example is designed for young children (more detailed ones available)
- Naming emotions is a way to regulate
- Nonjudgmental attitude towards emotions
- Comfortable/uncomfortable (not good/bad)
- I feel _____

From Juniper Gardens Children's Project, University of Kansas prism.ku.edu/project/feelings-wheel/

3. Listening with full attention

- Present centered (from definition)
- Present, not perfect
- Mindfulness helps bring us to the present when our minds wander
- ***Beyond simply hearing words:*** behavior, tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, cues



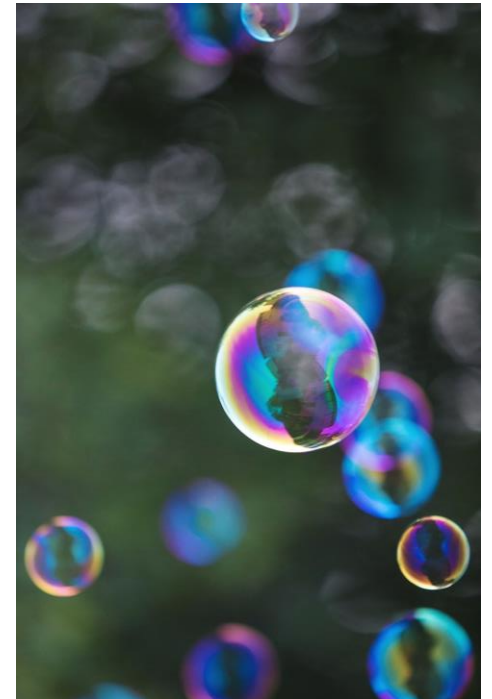
Mindfulness Practice: 4, 5, 6 Breathing

Deep, belly breathing is a great way to restore calm when we are feeling stressed.

- Take a deep inhale down into your belly and a full exhale through the mouth
- Now breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of five.
- Breathe out for a count of six.
- Repeat this deep breathing three times.

Notice how you feel—physically and emotionally—after breathing deeply.

(Gehl, Kinsner, and Parlakian, 2018)



Nonjudgmental acceptance – of self and child

- recognize they have their own thoughts, feelings, desires, and goals, which may/may not be ours (Coatsworth et. al, 2014, p5)
- “acceptance is a form of perspective-taking related to empathy and compassionate actions for self and others” (Coatsworth et al., 2014, p5)

Compassion -

for self and child

- Sometimes hard to offer ourselves the same kindness we offer to others, especially in times of great stress (Coyne et. al, 2021)
- It's really hard to stay calm and compassionate when it “seems like” your child is purposely giving you a hard time
- Appreciating our common humanity – know you are not alone
- Self-compassion builds resilience

Questions?

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(Coatsworth et al, 2018, p 513)

The Five Dimensions of Mindful Parenting

1. **Listening** with full attention
2. **Nonjudgmental acceptance** of self and child
3. **Emotional awareness**
4. **Self-regulation** in the parenting relationship
5. **Compassion** for self and for child

SMART Goals

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely

How can you use mindful parenting?

Examples SMART goals

- Before I go to sleep at night, I will use the _____ (mindfulness) exercise. I will try it for 10 nights.
- This month I will post the STOP handout on the wall and I will use it 5 times. I will see how it works.
- This week, when I am in conflict with my child I am going to notice my feelings. When we are not in conflict, I will share with my child how I am feeling. Ex: “I feel _____ when we _____.
- By next week I will email Patrice to see if she has any resources related to our question about _____.

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References

For detailed list, please visit: go.osu.edu/mindfulparenting

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