March 2024

THE COUNSELORS' CONNECTION

The Newsletter of the
Elementary Counseling Department

What's in this month's issue:

MINDFULNESS FOR KIDS: BENEFITS AND HOW TO EXPLAIN IT TO KIDS

Introducing mindfulness to kids is an important way to help them learn how to manage their emotions and be resilient. Mindfulness is about being fully present in the moment and noticing one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Tips for speaking with your child about mindfulness:

- **Explain it Simply:** Start by explaining the definition of mindfulness, which is focusing on what you are doing or feeling in the present moment. It is helpful to give an example of mindfulness, such as noticing what sounds your child hears outside or how the sun feels on their skin.
- **Ask them questions:** "What did you notice when you walked outside?"
- **Practice together:** Practicing mindful breathing or completing a five-sensory activity can be a fun and engaging way to spend time together while learning mindfulness.
- **Keep it fun:** Go on a mindfulness walk and notice being present using the 5 senses.
- **Empower them:** Encourage your child to use mindfulness to help understand their feelings and manage big emotions.
- **Use fun and engaging resources:** Check out the Cosmic Kids website for intriguing mindfulness activities. https://cosmickids.com/video/yes-you-can/

Some ways to practice mindfulness with kids:

Practice a fun and engaging breathing exercise such as balloon breathing, rainbow breathing, 5-finger breathing, wave breathing, star breathing, cool the pizza breathing, or encourage journaling. Check out the websites calm, go noodle, or cosmic kids to find videos about mindful breathing exercises.

Benefits of mindfulness for children:

- Developing increased emotional regulation
- Increase in focus and enhanced concentration
- Helps reduce stress
- Develop a greater understanding and empathy toward the feelings of others
- Improved Sleep
- Increased resilience
- Overall well-being and positive thoughts

www.calm.com/

MINDFULNESS APPS: A REMOTE SOLUTION FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL WELL-BEING

Amid the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers from MIT delved into the efficacy of mindfulness apps as a means to bolster children's mental health. Their study, detailed in Mindfulness, uncovered compelling results: children who engaged with these apps at home experienced notable reductions in stress and negative emotions over a span of 40 days.

This innovative approach not only demonstrates the potential of remote mindfulness interventions but also highlights their scalability and accessibility, particularly in reaching a broader demographic of children. Moreover, the study underscores the pivotal role of consistent practice and parental involvement in maximizing the benefits of these interventions.

By harnessing the power of technology, such as through available apps, we have the opportunity to provide children with invaluable tools to navigate the uncertainties of today's world. As we continue to prioritize the mental well-being of our youth, investing in such innovative solutions holds immense promise for fostering resilience and equipping children with the skills needed to thrive in the face of adversity.

Trafton, A. *Practicing Mindfulness with an App May Improve Children's Mental Health.* MIT News, 11 October 2023.

MINDFULNESS APP SUGGESTIONS

Cool Koala Calm

Find more at Common Sense Media

DID YOU KNOW?

Throughout our SEL curriculum students, learn the importance of mindfulness. Students are taught strategies to help them learn to pay attention to their thoughts, their actions, and their bodies.

TRY IT AT HOME!

Try implementing some of these exercises into your family's daily routine to build resilience to stress, along other brain and behavior benefits:

Cool the Pizza: Practice mindful breathing and build awareness of bodily sensations by breathing in through the nose to "smell the pizza" and out through the mouth to "cool the pizza".

Gratitude Journal: Each day, as a family, write down 3 things that you are thankful for. Encourage your child to be specific and have younger children contribute by drawing a picture to go along with the list.

Walking Meditation: Take a purposeful walk while letting go of any thoughts that may be clouding your mind. Focus on what different parts of your body are feeling and doing while letting your thoughts go.

For more ideas, take a look at 20 Ways to Teach Mindfulness to Kids

SEL BOOKS OF THE MONTH