

A Parent's Guide to Mindfulness: Simple Practices for Use in the Home



**Lakeville Elementary School
Great Neck, NY
2016 - 2017**

Introduction

During the 2015-16 school year, Lakeville's Shared Decision Making Committee set out to learn about mindfulness.

Our goal for the year was to learn as much as we could about mindfulness. To achieve that goal, we:

- Engaged in a self-guided investigation of mindfulness that included the viewing of related Internet content, the reading of articles and books, and discussions of both. Based on our research, we have come to understand that the practice of mindfulness is a powerful tool for cultivating a heightened awareness of what is happening in our minds, and learning how our thought patterns, perspectives, and attitudes shape the quality of our lives. As supported by a growing body of scientific research, the application of mindfulness by students and educators has the potential to improve academic achievement and mental health.
- Invited an expert in the field of mindfulness to present to the members of our committee information about mindfulness and mindful practices. Lisa Langer, PhD., led us through a short exercise that allowed us to tap into some of the potential benefits of sitting in a state of heightened awareness. Committee members reported feeling an increased sense of calm following this exercise. Members of the group came to the shared realization that practicing mindfulness could lead to an increase in one's ability to maintain focus and concentration, as well as an improved sense of well-being.
- Brought the subject of mindfulness to the entire faculty so that we could share our findings and gauge interest in further exploration of how related techniques could be introduced into the work that is done with children for the benefit of all. After the committee explored mindfulness, we gathered feedback from students in our school to whom mindfulness had already been introduced. We also considered the positive reaction of many teachers to learning about possible classroom applications of mindfulness. Based on this, we are planning to continue to grow our school's involvement with mindfulness. Plans for the future included:
 - A presentation to parents at a PTA meeting
 - On-and off- site learning opportunities for teachers and administrators
 - A discussion of Teach. Breathe. Learn, by Meena Srinivasan, which will be distributed to classroom teachers
 - Creation of a video from Lakeville classrooms where mindfulness is taking place

Next Steps

Over the summer of 2016, some of Lakeville's teachers and administrators explored mindfulness further through participation in multi-day workshops or retreats, or the completion of online learning courses.

The first PTA meeting of the 2016-17 school year was, in large part, devoted to mindfulness. All in attendance had the opportunity to learn from Cory Muscara, founder of the Long Island Center for Mindfulness, about the many ways in which practicing mindfulness can be beneficial.

Additionally, beginning in September, seventeen members of Lakeville's faculty and staff participated in an eight-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) course for the purpose of becoming more familiar with integrating mindfulness practices into their own lives. And, as mindfulness was the focus of the Superintendent's Conference Day held in November 2016, all members of the District's teaching and administrative staff had the opportunity to learn about mindfulness from a local practitioner.

What now?

At this point in the 2016-17 school year, all of Lakeville's teachers have at least a basic understanding of mindfulness, and its potential to improve academic achievement and mental health. All teachers at Lakeville are in possession of ***A Teacher's Guide to Mindfulness: Simple Practices for Use in the Classroom***, that was created in an effort to bring easy-to-implement mindfulness practices to all those who work with children.

This document, ***A Parent's Guide to Mindfulness: Simple Practices for Use in the Home***, was created in an effort to bring mindfulness practices to parents and families of children who attend Lakeville. It is our hope that you will find the exercises outlined in this guide to be easy to follow and beneficial to both you and your child(ren).

In friendship,

The Members of the Shared Decision Making Subcommittee on Mindfulness

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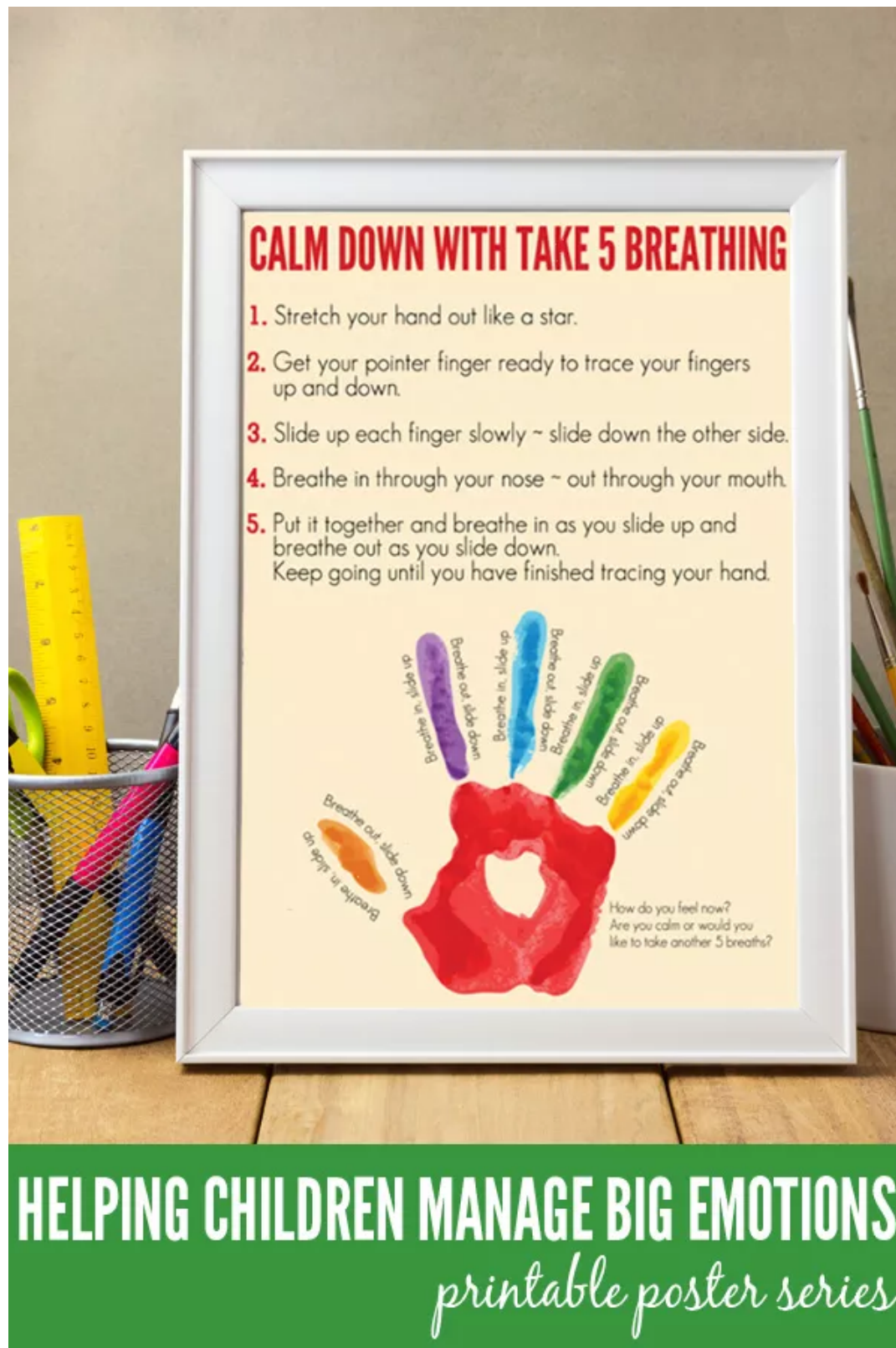
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Take 5 Breathing



Shark Fin

One way to practice mindfulness is to call on your Sharkfin.

To do the Sharkfin, you put the side of your hand on top of your head, and then you move it down your face, in front of your nose. Exhale through your mouth with a “Shhhh” sound and close your eyes as your hand moves down your face. Whether you’re sitting down or standing while doing the Sharkfin, you’ll want to be still, silent and using soft breathing while your hand is sliding down your face.



Adapted from:

Master of Mindfulness: How to Be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress by
Laurie Grossman, Angelina Alvarez, and Mr. Musumeci's 5th Grade Class

Mindful Listening



We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.

- Epictetus

Mindful listening is one way to anchor our experience to the present moment. Actively listening to sounds can be effective to engage our full attention. Sounds can take many forms such as our own breath, bells, other instruments, sounds in the room, sounds outside the room and sounds in nature.

Activity:

- Practice listening to one sound for a period of time.
- Listen to the same sound again but this time, raise a hand when the sound can no longer be heard.
- Try it again with closed eyes and see if it can be heard even longer.
- Next time, listen again but instead of raising a hand, keep listening to the sounds in the room.
- This practice can also be made into a game by making some noises in the midst of silence, and having the child guess the sounds or by counting the number of sounds they hear.

Remind your child to keep their mindful ears open and see if they notice anything they usually miss. Children can gradually increase the amount of time they spend listening. When they realize their mind is wandering they can let the thought go and continue listening. Mindful listening practice will eventually lead to mindful listening in conversation in all settings.

The links below are a sample of a guided listening activity and a read aloud about a mindful listening walk.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oj9bX5DqggI>

Mindful Listening Activity for Kids by Steph Janzen (5:33)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCs66HaouFU>The Listening Walk by Paul Showers (Read Aloud 7:37)

Adapted from:

The Mindful Education Workbook by Daniel Rechtshaffen

Mindful Movement & Walking

It's time to start incorporating the same type of present-time awareness into movement that we've been practicing while still. Mindfulness is available throughout your day, no matter where you are or what you are doing. It is a portable practice.

Sometimes bringing a heightened awareness to movement can feel a little bit like rubbing your belly and patting your head at the same time: difficult to coordinate. For this reason, we'll start with very deliberate, slow movement. We'll use these simple movements to investigate and become more familiar with how the body works and feels.

Mindful Movement

As we're focusing on simple movements, it will be helpful to choose one or two specific tasks that you expect to perform during your day.

Here is a list of possibilities:

- Washing the dishes
- Opening a door
- Picking up the phone
- Typing on your computer keyboard
- Getting in and out of your chair
- Pedaling on your bicycle
- Pushing a shopping cart

The activity itself might not be significant, but using it as a mindfulness bell is very valuable. Notice the body as it's performing the task, notice any emotion, and notice your breathing. Each time you make mindfulness part of your routine, you are retraining your habitual mental tendencies to be filled with more awareness.

Incorporating Mindful Movement into daily life. Imagine it's the end of your day and you need a few things from the store before you go home. The lines are long and you're feeling tired and maybe a little spaced out. You suddenly remember to use your mindfulness and start bringing your attention into your feet and legs. You take some deep breaths and notice how you are feeling. You realize you're tired, but now you're present, and you start to appreciate what's happening around you. It's possible to practice mindfulness even when we don't have much energy. How much effort does it take to be aware? Not much - perhaps at times it even feels effortless. So, the cashier is having a funny conversation with the person in front of you. A couple of kids giggle in the next line. You notice how you're ready to get home but feel ok about being in line at the grocery store. You relax the muscles in your face and continue paying attention to your breath and body sensations. Overall the experience is now richer, and maybe even pleasant.

This is an example of how using mindfulness can have an impact on how you are interacting in the world. Being mindful doesn't mean you're always going to have a positive outlook, but when you bring awareness to a situation you will find that you might be able to choose a different way of being present for what's happening.

Moment by moment, life either softens or hardens the heart. We're practicing a gentle awareness and finding ways to learn from experience.

Mindful Walking

Walking Meditation Practice is a way to connect the action of walking to the present moment.

1. Appreciate. Thank your legs for all their efforts.
2. Ground. Bring your attention to the sensations of your feet and legs as the heel touches the ground, then the base of the foot, then the toes, and then they lift.
3. Come to Your Senses. Walk slightly slower and begin to open your awareness to all your senses. See what is around you, listen to the sounds, taste the air or whatever is in your mouth, feel the warmth, coolness, or breeze on your cheeks, smell the air.

Adapted from: Mindfulschool.org © Mindful Schools | All Rights Reserved
Adapted from: Mindful.org

Journal Activity

Mindful journaling, the regular practice of writing from one's heart and mind is another great mindful practice. It can be used as a tool for reflection and growth. Some researchers believe that through this type of writing, we can gain greater self-awareness and improve mood.

Here are some activities and tips to get you started:

Activities

- Write down up to five things that you feel grateful for.
- Journal one positive experience, in detail, that you've had during the past 24 hours.
- Write a positive email or text praising or thanking someone you know. Try to do it for a different person each time.

Tips:

- Be as specific as possible. "I'm grateful that my co-workers brought me soup when I was sick on Wednesday."
- Go for depth over breadth, elaborating with details.
- Writing about the same people and things is normal, but try to focus on a different aspect.
- Involve your family. Set a regular family journaling time.
- Write regularly. Whether you write every other day or once a week, commit to a regular time.
- Stick with it. Studies show that it takes at least 21 days to form a habit.

Adapted from:

http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/19/writing-your-way-to-happiness/?_r=0

<http://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/a-23-minute-morning-ritual-that-will-transform-your-whole-day.html>

<http://www.mindfullivingnetwork.com/start-a-mindful-journaling/>

<http://www.mindful.org/a-simple-weekly-mindfulness-practice-keep-a-gratitude-journal/>

<http://bouncebackparenting.com/gratitude-journal-prompts-for-the-whole-year/>

Journal Sample and Prompts

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Today's date	Something I did that made me feel happy	Something I saw that made me smile	A moment I felt emotions- what was the emotion	I feel gratitude for- today
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				



30 days of gratitude

#1 What smell are you grateful for today?	#2 What technology are you grateful for?	#3 What color are you grateful for?	#13 What abilities are you grateful for?	#14 What sight are you grateful for today?	#15 What season are you grateful for?
#4 What food are you most grateful for?	#5 What sound are you grateful for today?	#6 What in nature are you grateful for?	#16 What about your body are you grateful for?	#17 What knowledge are you grateful for?	#18 What piece of art are you grateful for?
#7 What memory are you grateful for?	#8 What book are you most grateful for?	#9 What place are you most grateful for?	#19 What touch are you grateful for today?	#20 Who in your life are you grateful for?	#21 What song are you most grateful for?
#10 What taste are you grateful for today?	#11 What holiday are you grateful for?	#12 What texture are you grateful for?	#22 What story are you grateful for?	#23 What tradition are you grateful for?	#24 What challenge are you grateful for?
			#25 What moment this week are you most grateful for?	#26 What form of expression are you most grateful for?	#27 What small thing that you use daily are you grateful for?
			#28 What small thing that happened today are you grateful for?	#29 What friend/family member are you grateful for today?	#30 What talent or skill do you have that you are grateful for?

Text prompts courtesy of www.TextMyJournal.com

Mindful Eating for Children

Mindful eating helps children slow down while eating, and take notice of every part of the experience.

It helps them enjoy, understand, appreciate, and digest their food better.

Before you take your first bite....

Look - What does your food look like? What colors, shapes, or textures do you see?

Feel – Is your food smooth, bumpy, or rough?

Smell - What does your food smell like? Does it smell different if you cut or peel it?

Listen – Does your food make a sound as you cut or peel it?

Put it in your mouth, *BUT* don't begin to chew....

Feel - How does it feel in your mouth?

Taste – Do you taste anything before you start to chew?

Begin to chew your food.

Flavor - As you chew does the flavor change? How many different flavors are there? Is it sweet, tangy like a lemon, spicy like peppers, salty, or sour?

Listen – Does your food make a sound as you cut, peel or chew it? Does it crunch like pizza crust?

Feel - How does it feel when it is in your stomach?

Eat Slower – Eating is not a race. As you slow down you will begin to enjoy your food more, chew it more slowly, and digest it more easily. Try putting down your fork in between bites as you chew.

Enjoy the Silence – Try to remove distractions during meal and snack time. Turn off the television, computer, and cell phone. If mealtime is family time, suggest a game and try eating for a minute or two in silence.

Adapted from:

Five Senses Snack: A mindful Eating Chart, www.mindfulteachers.org

Teaching Kids the Art of Mindful Eating/Michigan State University Extension

Breathing in Stillness

One way to make mindfulness a part of your daily life is to practice mindful breathing. Here's a quick "how to" so you can practice with your child.

SET UP:

1. Go to a quiet spot, lights dimmed.
2. Sit upright in a straight chair (do not lean back-you want to stay focused on the present moment). Feet should be fully on the floor, hands comfortably resting on your lap.
3. Set your phone for 1-2 minutes with a chimes or other signal sound to end your session. (This may be increased as you like)

BEGIN:

The idea here is to focus on your breath. Techniques:

1. Long, full breaths in and out of nose. Feel the breath as it leaves you. You may close your eyes if that helps you stay focused on your breathing.
2. Feel your belly rise and fall-visualize how a baby's belly rises and falls as it breathes. It may be helpful to place a hand over your belly to feel it rise and fall.
3. Count your breaths in your mind-as you breathe in, think 1, as you breathe out, think 2, breathe in-3, breathe out-4, etc. to 10. Then begin again.
4. Have an anchor word. This word can be any word that helps you to stay in the present moment. Repeat this word as you breathe. Some examples are:

- Breathe
- Relax
- Grateful
- Love
- Gratitude
- Kindness

It is natural for outside thoughts to enter your mind. That's okay! This is going to happen. This does not mean you are not being mindful, so don't be hard on yourself. When this happens, go back to a technique that works for you; counting, anchor word, thinking about or feeling your belly rise and fall.

END:

Once you hear the chimes, allow yourself to open your eyes (if they've been closed), and slowly re-enter your surroundings. Hopefully, this exercise will have allowed you some time to reduce anxiety, calm your thoughts, and pay attention to what's important in your life.

Adapted from: <http://www.mindfulschools.org/training/mindfulness-fundamentals/>

The following link has brief mindful breathing exercises (audio as well as a script) for your review.

<http://youth.anxietybc.com/mindfulness-exercises>

How to Create a Glitter Jar for Kids

Making a glitter jar is an activity you can do with your kids to introduce them to how their mind works when experiencing difficult emotions and how to calm down during difficult times. The glitter jar represents the mind settling. It's a great afternoon activity that your kids can keep coming back to as a mindfulness practice.

A mind jar is also featured in the children's book, Moody Cow Meditates. In the book, Moody Cow's grandfather helps him make a mind jar after a particularly bad day and shows him how to meditate on the jar until the sparkles settle and so does his mind.

Supply list for the Glitter Jar :

Jar or Bottle – preferably plastic
Elmer's Clear School Glue or dish soap
Glitter – fine glitter works best
Warm Water
Food Coloring (optional)

How to make the Glitter Jar:

1. Fill your bottle about 1/8 to 1/3 full with glue and/or a few drops of dish soap. The more glue you add, the longer it will take for the glitter to settle after shaking.
2. Add glitter, start with a tablespoon or so. Take a deep breath as you watch your child pour glitter everywhere but inside the bottle. PS: a slightly damp paper towel wipes up fine glitter pretty well. A vacuum works even better.
3. Fill the bottle the rest of the way with warm water and a few drops of food coloring (optional). At this step, before filling the bottle all the way, you can leave a little less than an inch of space at the top of the bottle, cap it, and shake it to see if you want to add more glitter, more glue/dish soap, or just more water.
4. When the bottle is full up to the neck with water, glitter, and glue/dish soap, cap it. You can use a hot glue gun to seal the cap closed by applying a single ring of glue all around the top threading and then screwing the cap on.

How to use the Glitter Jar:

A finished glitter jar can serve as a visual timer for a breathing practice. When you need a break from your day, shake the jar up. As the glitter settles, breathe deeply and let your thoughts settle, too. You can shake the jar and say: "Let's do some mindful breaths until the glitter settles."

Use the jar as a "calm-down jar," to mark and measure calm-down time. Ideally, the entire family can use the calm-down jar together when there is a conflict: "We are all upset with lots of thoughts and feelings right now. So let's all take a break until the glitter in the calm-down jar has settled and then start talking again."

Adapted from:

<http://heartmindkids.com/how-to-make-a-glitter-jar-for-mindfulness/>

Clear a Space

Sometimes a quiet space is what's needed. We can create quiet physical spaces as well as quiet mental spaces. We need these spaces for things like listening, reading and doing homework.

To create a quiet physical space:

Choose a place that offers limited distraction. Stay away from the busiest places in your home such as the kitchen or other centrally located areas. Choose instead a place such as a table or desk in a quiet room.

Turn off devices that will distract you from your work. Look around and ask yourself if devices such as a phone or an iPad could possibly distract you from your work. If so, turn them off, place them in a different room, or look for a more appropriate spot.

Clear your workspace. A quiet and clear workspace is free of clutter and includes only what you need to complete the task at hand. Put away stray books, papers, supplies and materials.

Take a deep cleansing breath and focus your thoughts on the task at hand. While working, it is normal to have wandering thoughts. Just simply notice that they are there, and refocus your mind.

Mindful Meditation - Guided Practices:

During Guided Meditation participants will be directed to listen to instructions either live or by pre-recorded audio. Guided Meditation uses visualization of imagery to promote relaxation and focus.

1. Elevator Down

Imagine that your body is an elevator.

Imagine your head to your chest is the third floor.

Imagine your chest to your belly is the second floor.

Imagine your belly to your behind is your first floor.

Take a deep breathe in.

As you exhale imagine the elevator lowering from your head to your chest and mentally chant “three”. Now imagine the elevator doors opening and inhale the fresh breeze. When you exhale mentally chant “two”. As you inhale again continue to go down in the elevator to your belly. Exhale when you reach the first floor and mentally chant “one”. Pause for a moment and imagine landing to the ground floor fully.

Adapted from New York Times Article “Three Ways for Children To Try Meditation at Home” by Jillian Pransky

http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/05/10/three-ways-for-children-to-try-meditation-at-home/?_r=0

2. Rainbow Bubbles

Imagine that you can blow bubbles.

Every time you breathe out, colorful bubbles blow from your mouth.

Take a deep breath in.

Blow out a bubble that’s your favorite color.

Watch it float away.

Take another deep breath.

Breathe out, blowing lots of colorful bubbles into the air.

Watch the bubbles floating above you, dancing in the air.

Now breathe in.

Blow out red bubbles.

Breathe in.

Blow out yellow bubbles.

Breathe in.

Blow out green bubbles.

Breathe in.

Blow out blue bubbles.

Breathe in.

Blow out purple bubbles.

A rainbow of bubbles float above you now.

Watch each bubble until it floats away.

Adapted from:

“Imaginations 2, Relaxing Stories & Guided Imagery for Kids” by Carolyn Clarke

Books for Children:

Mindful Money, Happy Panda, Lauren Alderfer

Peaceful Piggy Meditation, Kerry Lee MacLean

A Pebble for Your Pocket: Mindful Stories for Children and Grown-ups, Thich Nhat Hanh

A Handful of Quiet-Happiness in Four Pebbles, Thich Nhat Hanh

Imaginations 2 Relaxation Stories & Guided Imagery for Kids, Carolyn Clarke

Meditate Like a Superhero – Empowering Guided Meditations for Children
by Louis Legrand

Peaceful Piggy Meditation- Maclean

What Does it mean to Be Present- DiOrio

Take the Time- Mindfulness for kids- Roegiers

Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids and Their Parents- Snel

Zen Shorts- Muth

Silence- Lemniscates

Anh's Anger- Silver

Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee MacLean

Books for Adults:

For Parents:

Parenting in the Present Moment, Carla Naumburg

The Whole Brain Child, Dan Siegel

The Mindful Child, Susan Kaiser Greenland

Everyday Blessings, Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn

Child's Mind: Mindfulness Practices to Help Our Children Be More Focused, Calm, and Relaxed by Christopher Willard

Little Flower Yoga for Kids by Jennifer Cohen Harper

The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and More Compassionate by Susan Kaiser Greenland

Mindful Discipline: A Loving Approach to Setting Limits and Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child by Shauna Shapiro and Chris White

Teaching Mindfulness to Kids:

Sitting Still Like a Frog, Eline Snel

Ready, Set, Breathe, Carla Naumburg

Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children, Thich Nhat Hanh

Mindful Movements: Ten Exercises for Well-Being by Thich Nhat Hanh and Weise Vriezen

A Still Quiet Place by Amy Saltzman

Teach, Breathe, Learn: Mindfulness in and out of the Classroom by Meena Srinivasan

Articles:

<http://www.mindful.org/the-mindful-revolution/>

Time Magazine, *The Mindful Revolution*

Websites:

<http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-meditation-guided-practices/>

http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/05/10/three-ways-for-children-to-try-meditation-at-home

/

<http://www.mindful.org/creating-a-mindful-library/>

Using Noodle.com Colleen Clemens

<https://www.noodle.com/articles/teach-mindfulness-to-kids-with-these-10-picture-books>

<http://www.mindful.org/a-simple-weekly-mindfulness-practice-keep-a-gratitude-journal/>

<http://www.mindful.org/a-writing-practice-for-those-who-like-to-keep-doing/>

<http://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

Video Resources / CDs:

<http://www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/GNPS/LAKE/Podcasts/Podcasts.html>

Cory Muscara at Lakeville PTA Meeting

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

Anderson Cooper on 60 Minutes (13 minutes)