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Mindfulness and Mindful Parenting

The Parent Corner is a professional publication with the goal of providing Jericho parents with practical tools and effective strategies that can serve to strengthen family ties and protect our children from harm and unnecessary stress.

TOOLBOX SKILLS
★ Mindfulness
★ Managing Test Anxiety
★ Relaxation Skills
★ Positive Affirmations
★ Cost Benefit Stress Analysis
★ Minimizing Overgeneralizations
★ Serenity , Courage and Wisdom

This issue of the Parent Corner is specially designed to help families reduce stress by embracing resiliency skills. Resilient families are families that are less prone to problems when faced with adversity. There are many ways to promote resilience in families. One of these ways is through the use of the principles of mindfulness and mindful parenting.

Mindfulness is an activity in which a person becomes intentionally aware of his or her thoughts and actions in the present moment, and tries to regulate their emotions in a healthy way.

Mindful parenting is a lifelong practice, where one tries to focus their attention on desired outcomes, while simultaneously being mindful of the circumstances and emotions that are present in your child's life. Mindful parenting is about being present in the moment and understanding your child's particular strengths and current limitations.



According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the founded fathers of Mindful Parenting there are **Five Core Principles of Mindful Parenting**. They include:



1. Listening to our children with full attention
2. Maintaining emotional awareness of oneself and one's child during parenting interactions
3. Practicing nonjudgmental openness and receptivity when children share their thoughts and feelings
4. Regulating one's own automatic reactivity to our child's behavior
5. Adopting compassion towards oneself as a parent

<http://life.gaiam.com/gaiam/p/Calm-Mom-5-Ways-to-Be-a-Present-Parent.html>

TIPS FOR MINDFUL PARENTING

Determine your own feelings and opinions before you initiate a discussion, especially, if this discussion is about a sensitive issue. Remember that there may be more than one solution to the issue at hand.

Trust your intuition. You have a lifetime of experience behind you, use it!

Find the balance between love and discipline. Set clear boundaries, but be sure you praise good behavior and healthy values that you observe in your child.

Be open to listen and hear your child's feelings and opinions (even if they are rolling their eyes and pacing).

Allow enough time to be patient and to give your full attention to your child's feelings and opinions. Do not start a discussion just before you get in your car to go to work.

Listen openly and communicate honestly. That does not mean that you have to share everything with your child. Keep in mind the age and developmental stage.

Ask questions that cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no.' Avoid probing too deeply; you do not want to sound like a police detective.

Ask for solutions to the issue. Many times a child will be harsher than the parent will. If their solution is appropriate, agree with it and try to set it into motion.

Practice mindful listening. Listen to your child as if you're listening to a great piece of music. Listen with full attentiveness and respond as necessary.

Be lighthearted. If you make a mistake in your parenting, don't beat yourself up, instead see if you can laugh or at least smile about it. You're human after all, and so is your child.

* Resources

Mindfulness for Dummies, Shamash Alidina, *Everyday Blessings*: Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Parenting Solutions*: Nancy Sander

REFLECTION

Reflection Activity

Time travel: You are 16 years old. Where did you go to school? Who were your friends? What were your strengths? What were your challenges? Reflect upon parenting that was helpful to you. Reflect upon what else you may have needed or welcomed from your parent – when you were a teen.

Return to 2011: Focus on your child. Ask the same questions. How might your reflections modify how you carry yourself, how you speak, what you say?

Finally, let's all remember that in order for children to grow into healthy young adults; we must be willing to let them experience life one step at a time. It's helpful for us as parents to try and allow our children small steps of independence, slowly allowing them the ability to take responsibility for their actions and make mindful choices on their own.