

# EXPECT SUCCESS



## MINDFUL PRACTICES FOR PARENTS AND KIDS

*"You don't always need a plan, sometimes you just need to breathe."*



The practice of mindfulness and its benefits has been in the news a lot recently. Some may call it "new age", others may think of it as age-old meditation while some see it as simply being fully present in the moment. In the world where our heads are swirling with non-stop noise from all the gadgets we are attached to, it is easy to overlook that some of the best anti-anxiety tools we have are the ones we carry with us everyday. Take a minute to check out these mindfulness tools that don't cost any money, take just a little time and can lead to satisfying results for you and your child. You can find the related articles at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/dont-worry-mom/201302/12-tips-reduce-your-childs-stress-and-anxiety> and <http://www.mindful.org/8-mindful-practices-for-parents/>.

1. **GIVE MORE ATTENTION** And less of everything else. Devote one hour a day to giving undistracted attention to your child. Not in activities driven by your agenda, but according to their terms. Undivided attention is the most concrete expression of love you can give.
2. **TAKE A BREAK** Before you break in two. Designate a chair in your home as a "quiet chair," where you or your child can retreat to decelerate conflicts or take a moment to breath. Letting the body sit at rest lowers the heart rate.
3. **FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES** Instead of getting lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism. Be intentional about sharing the little things you are thankful for each day and ask your child to share too. It makes great supper-time talk-even for teenagers. There are some neat gratitude apps for phones if your teen needs some daily reminders.
4. **ELEVATE THE SMALL** And overlook the large. Want to change the world? Forget the philosophical lessons. Instruct your child in how to brush his or her teeth, and then do it, together, twice a day. Start with the little lessons that make a big difference later in life.
5. **FACE YOUR FEARS** Instead of running away from them. It's natural to want to avoid the things that make you anxious or fearful but you can help your child master some scary situations by practicing calming techniques like deep breathing. It also helps to share some of your own fearful experiences and how you worked through them.
6. **IT'S OK TO BE IMPERFECT** Inside and out. Sometimes we get so caught up in wanting our child to succeed in sports, at school, with friends, that we forget to let kids be kids. Teach them to work hard, but know that working hard doesn't always mean their team wins or they get the top grade in the class, so also teach them to stick-with-it.
7. **LIVE BY ROUTINE** Take the needless guesswork out of meals and bedtimes. Let everyone flow into the predictable flow of a healthy and secure life. Routines can reduce anxiety for kids who struggle with the unpredictable.
8. **EXPRESS YOURSELF** And let your child do the same. We have good days, bad days and in-between days. Make time to ask your child about his day and actively listen. Taking some time to validate the "bad" days can help him move on and look to a better day tomorrow. Remember to celebrate the good days too!
9. **STAY CALM** Even if you have to fake it. Kids look to their parents to determine how to react in situations. If you are anxious, your child will pick up on that. Slow down your speech, manage your facial expressions and smile!
10. **JUST BREATHE** In and out. Sometimes the simplest exercise is the best. Model for your child by talking her through some slow, deep breaths - in...out... Have her sit down, close her eyes, rub her back and just breathe. The natural rhythm of our breaths helps regulate our heart rate and blood pressure. Teach your child the importance of paying attention to her breathing (and don't be afraid to model by paying attention to your own.)