

Incorporating Mindfulness into Parenting Interventions

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Disclosure

- The author does not have any relationships with commercial companies to disclose.
- The view(s) expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the official policy or position of St. Luke's Health System.



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Learning Objectives

- At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:
 1. have a general understanding of mindfulness
 2. define mindful parenting
 3. list 5 mindful parenting strategies that can be used in challenging situations with children
 4. recognize ways in which helping parents refocus on big picture values can improve parenting skills



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Overview

- **Mindfulness**
 - What is it?
 - Misconceptions
- **Mindful parenting**
 - Why?
 - Proposed mechanisms of change
 - Outcome studies
 - 5 specific strategies



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A note to remember...

- When “parents” is used = primary caregiver
- “We” = humans (primary caregivers, professionals)



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Mindfulness

MindLESSness

- moving through life with limited awareness
- getting lost in the past and future
- multi-tasking (hurry up!)



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What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally

Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994, p. 4)



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What is mindfulness?

- Mindfulness means that we are aware of what is happening, as it is happening, without any judgement or opinion.



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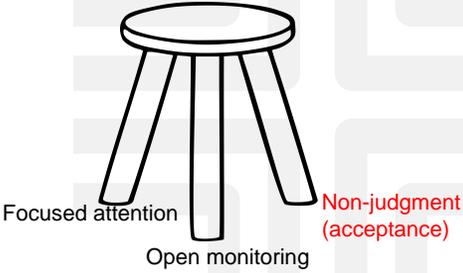
What is mindfulness?

- Awareness of present experience
 - Focused attention
 - Open monitoring



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What is mindfulness?



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What is mindfulness?

- A superpower.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>

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Mindfulness roots

- Asian tradition
- Jon Kabat-Zinn
 - Founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
 - Used mindfulness for chronic pain



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Misconceptions

- “These practices are designed to create a blank mind”
- “It will get rid of unpleasant emotions”
- “The mind is separate from the body”



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Mindful Parenting

Mindful parenting

- *Paying attention to parenting actions and to the child in a specific way that is: intentional, here and now, and nonjudgmental.*



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Why mindfulness to improve parenting

- Parenting is hard.



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Why mindfulness to improve parenting



- The home is the child's first community.
- What we say and do matter.
- Are love and good intentions enough?



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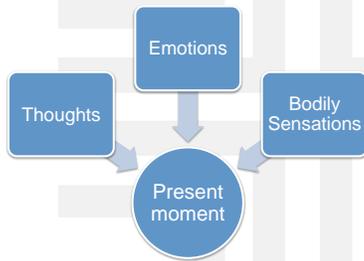
Why mindfulness to improve parenting

- When things don't go our way, it becomes a lot harder.
- We resist discomfort.
- Impacts of the mind-body connection.



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Why mindfulness to improve parenting

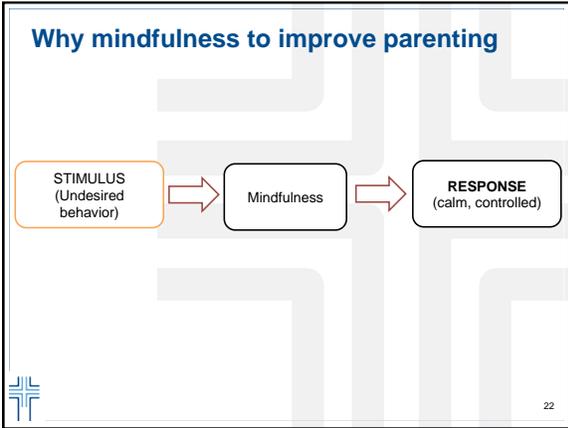


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Why mindfulness to improve parenting



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- ### Why mindfulness to improve parenting?
- Proposed hypotheses
 - Reduces parenting stress
 - Reduces parental preoccupation
 - Parental executive functioning
 - Increases parent self compassion
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- ### Parenting stress
- Under stress, parents are more rejecting, controlling, and reactive; less warm (Belsky, 1984; Webster-Stratton, 1990).
 - Cumulative stress from daily hassles predict fewer positive parent-child interactions
 - Basic survival reaction (vs. responding)
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Parental preoccupation

- Repetitive, negative, preoccupied thinking
- More likely to miss child's cues
- Mindfulness promotes mental presence with self and child; unbiased attention



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Parental Executive Functioning

- EBT for child ADHD
 - Medication works for a period of time, side effects, treatment fidelity often low (e.g., Schachter et al., 2011)
 - Parent management training has poor outcomes for parents with ADHD (e.g., Sonuga et al., 2002)
- Adults with substance use, conduct problems, and personality disorders tend to be more reactive.



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Lack of self compassion

- Parenting dilemma
 - Children deplete attention and resources from parent
 - Parents need to replenish resources
- Learn to devote positive attn to self
- May be necessary first step to provide compassion toward others



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Other mechanisms?

- Marital functioning & co-parenting
- Intergenerational transmission
- More research is needed!!!



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Outcome Studies

Bögels, Hellemans, van Deursen, Romer, and van der Meulen (2014)

- 8-week mindful parenting training
- N = 86 parents
- Outpatient mental health clinic
- Reduction in child and parent psychopathology
- Improvements in parenting and co-parenting
- Reductions in parental stress



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Meppelink et al. (2016)

- 8 week mindful parent training
- N = 70 parents of 70 children
- M age of children = 8.7 years
- Increase in general and parent mindfulness
- Decrease in child and parent psychopathology



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Meppelink et al. (2016)

	Pre-post		Pre-follow-up		Post-follow-up	
	Par. Est.	SE	Par. Est.	SE	Par. Est.	SE
ASR total	-.38**	.12	-.63***	.12	-.23	.16
Internalising	-.39**	.12	-.62***	.14	-.22	.16
Externalising	-.35**	.12	-.56***	.14	-.21	.13
Attention	-.21*	.10	-.44***	.10	-.23	.12
CBCL Total	-.25*	.10	-.33**	.10	-.07	.11
Internalising	-.34**	.10	-.31**	.10	.03	.12
Externalising	-.22*	.10	-.37**	.11	-.15	.10
Attention	-.26*	.10	-.42***	.11	-.17	.09



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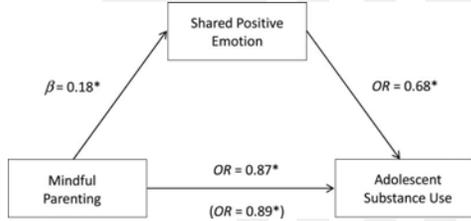
Turpyn and Chaplin (2015)

- 157 teens (ages 12-14) and primary caregivers
- Lab: Emotionally arousing conflict
 - Mindful parent practices reported
 - Parents' emotion expressions during conflict were coded
 - Drug screen
- Results: Mindful parenting decreased adolescent substance use via shared positive emotions



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Turpyn and Chaplin (2015)



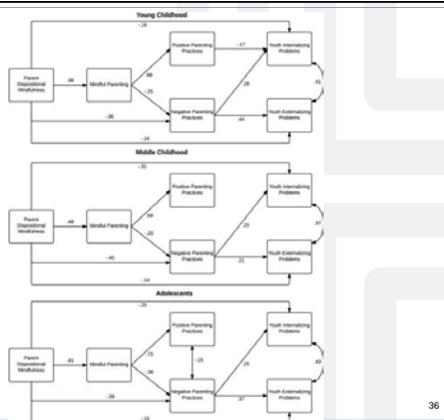
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Parent, McKee, Mahon, and Forehand (2016)

- Ages 3-7, 8-12, and 13-17
- Parents reported on general mindfulness, mindful parenting, parenting practices, and child's psychopathology
- Mindfulness → mindful parenting and lower negative parenting practices → reduction in child psychopathology



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Coatsworth, Duncan, Greenberg, and Nix (2010)

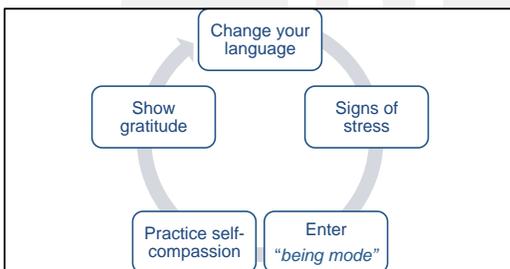
- Randomized trial
- N = 65 families, kids 10-14 y
- Strengthening Families Program
 - Infused mindful parenting vs. typical intervention vs. delayed intervention
- Adapted version:
 - Increased use of mindful parenting
 - Increased use of child management practices
 - Enhanced parent-adolescent relationship



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Five Mindful Parenting Strategies

Mindful parenting strategies



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Change your language (#1)

- What is happening with my child in this moment?
- What does my child feel?
- What does my child need?
- What am I feeling?
- What do I need?



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Change your language (#1)

What is wrong with me?! Why can't I handle this?

to

What do I need right now? What kind of support would help me?



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Change your language (#1)

Velcro

vs.

Teflon



I need to spank him! I am a horrible parent. I'm going crazy. AARRGGGG!!!

I have the thought that I want to spank him, the thought that I am a horrible parent. What do I need right now?



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Connect the dots (#2)

- **Recognizing signals of stress**
 - body sensations
 - thoughts
 - feelings
 - behaviors



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Connect the dots (#2)

- **Body sensations**
 - Tension in the shoulders, heart beating fast, headache...
- **Thoughts**
 - "I can't take this anymore," "I can't handle this," "this ALWAYS happens"...
- **Feelings**
 - Angry, sad, frustrated, guilty, tired, exhausted...
- **Behaviors**
 - Yelling, avoiding, substance use, accommodation of undesired behaviors...

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Connect the dots (#2) – Triggers for common parenting mistakes

- **Irritation, child should have listened the first time, distracted by other things**
 - Giving a command but failing to ensure child completes it
- **Embarrassment if behavior escalates (esp in public); Thoughts that it would be easier to "give in"**
 - Giving in to child after limit setting

Adapted from Coyne and Murrell (2009) 45

Connect the dots (#2) – Triggers for common parenting mistakes

- **Anger and frustration, child “deserves” punishment, punishment will “teach” child**
 - Use of punishment instead of teaching appropriate behavior
- **Thoughts that “I’ve tried everything!” and it hasn’t worked**
 - Con’t “trying” things instead of using consistent strategies



Adapted from Coyne and Murrell (2009) ⁴⁶

Connect the dots (#2)

- **Putting mistakes in context exercise**
 - Think about a time when things were going well for you. Focus on those thoughts and feelings.
 - Now focus on a time when parenting mistakes occurred. Thoughts and feelings? What contributes to getting stuck in parenting mistakes?
- **Stress (or lack of) can set stage for choosing how to parent.**



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Connect the dots (#2)

- **Attempt to acknowledge *all* reactions, nonjudgmentally**
- **Create opportunity to feel and identify the urge to react**
- **Pause before taking action**



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Being vs. doing mode (#3)

- Mindfulness opens the possibility of “being mode”
- Goal is just to be with what is
- Approach with curiosity and openness



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Be in the *being mode* (#3)

- Connecting with the body to return attention to the moment
 - doing mode → *being mode*
- Experience life by tuning into body
- Ground ourselves in our bodies to experience the situation fully and pause before reacting
- Result: Makes the situation more likely to de-escalate



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Be in the *being mode* (#3)

- If we are out of sync with our body, how do we truly tune into others?
- We do mindfulness practices
 - Anchor in the present moment



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Be in the *being mode* (#3)



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Be in the *being mode* (#3)

- **S** – Stop what you're doing
- **T** – Take a deep breath
- **O** – Observe your experience
 - body sensations, thoughts, feelings, and action tendencies
- **P** – Proceed with something that will support you in the moment



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Self compassion (#4)

Self compassion is:

1. Awareness that this is a moment of pain
2. Connecting with our common humanity
3. Self-kindness



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Self compassion (#4)

Acknowledging that:

- You are **human**
- We **all** make mistakes
- We **all** have challenging interactions with loved ones
- Pain is inevitable; choosing compassion instead of suffering



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Self compassion (#4)

- Especially needed when beginning focused mindfulness practice (or any new skill)!



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Self compassion (#4)

- Letting go exercise
- Two Monks
- In order for me to be in the present moment with my child, I need to let go of...



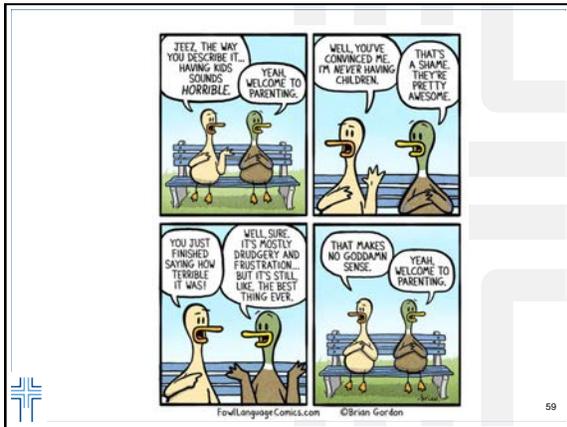
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Gratitude & Values (#5)

- Thankfulness or appreciation
- One of the most powerful ways to feel calm.
- Gets lost in daily struggles
- “Why did I ever become a parent?”



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Gratitude (#5)

- Intentionally focus attention on things that may otherwise get lost
- If parenting is a value,
 - What do I feel grateful for in my child?
 - What do I feel grateful for in myself as a parent?



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Gratitude (#5)

- Parenting goals & values exercise
 - Write down key words about reason for seeking help for your child
 - Consider what you wrote without judgment, notice thoughts and feelings



From Coyne and Murrell (2009) 61

Gratitude (#5)

- Write down a parenting value
 - "I want my child to know that they are safe."
 - "I want my son to feel unconditional love from me."
 - "I want to be different than my parents, to be kind to my son."
- Write two goals to help move forward in direction of identified value
 - "I will learn and practice proper time outs"
 - "I will tell my daughter I love her every night"
 - "I will not use physical punishment, like spanking, with my son"



From Coyne and Murrell (2009) 62

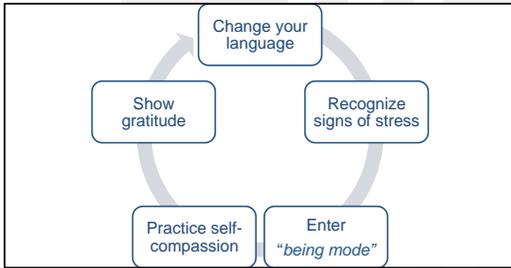
Gratitude (#5)

- Gratitude jar exercise
 - Draw pictures or write it
 - What are you grateful for about today?
 - Who or what brought about this feeling?
 - Review at dinner or before bedtime



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Review



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Summary



This is Bob.

Bob is distracted by Facebook.

Bob is ignoring his child.

Bob is not using his mindful parenting skills.

Don't be like Bob.



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Great Mindful Parenting Resources

- **Bogels and Restifo (2014)**
 - Mindful parenting: A guide for mental health professionals
- **Race (2014)**
 - Mindful parenting: Simple and powerful solutions for raising creative, engaged, happy kids in today's hectic world
- **Coyne and Murrell (2009)**
 - The joy of parenting: An ACT guide to effective parenting in the early years
- **Mindful.org**



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THANK YOU!

When we are mindful, we see
what is before us.
When we are not mindful, we
see what is in our mind.
—Scott Rogers



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