

Mindfulness is a Parent Superpower

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Many of us believe that being a parent means having every answer and being able to meet every need. The baby is hungry, the toddler scraped his knee, the phone is ringing, and our partner can't find a clean shirt. We feel pressured to do four things at once, all with a kind and calm attitude.



What can we do to ease up on ourselves? First of all, we need to accept that there will be missteps, and show ourselves forgiveness and compassion. Mindfulness can help with that. Mindfulness is intentionally paying attention to:

- What is happening around us,
- What is happening inside us,
- What we are doing, and
- How we are doing and feeling.

Dan Harris, correspondent for ABC News and mindfulness advocate, says, “Mindfulness is a superpower.” Brain science has shown us that mindfulness can strengthen the parts of our brain that help us stay calm and be good problem solvers

Parent Resource Cont.

❖ Here are five easy ways to start building your mindful “superpower.”

- 1. Tune in to your body.** Take a few deep breaths into your belly and focus your attention on the feeling of your feet grounded on the floor, or on the feeling of the chair supporting your body. Notice all the places your body is touching the floor or chair, and how you are being held and supported. You might even imagine the whole planet is under your feet holding you up. Take another few deep breaths before you move on.
- 2. Focus on good feelings.** When you are in a moment of having fun, feeling connected to your child or partner and at ease, pay close attention to how that feels in your body. Notice where in your body you feel joy, contentment, and love. Take a moment to savor and appreciate those feelings. You can say to yourself, “This is what well-being feels like.”
- 3. Hug someone.** Spend a full minute hugging or cuddling your child, partner, or someone else close to you. Settle in and be present with the physical experience of touch and comfort. Notice if any areas of your body relax as you do this. A minute can feel like a long time, but stick with it. If you get impatient, or your mind wanders, just notice that and come back to being present, and nestle into the hug. Research has shown that long hugs are calming and soothing and can generate feelings of warmth and love.

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- 4. Imagine someone who gives you comfort.** Think of someone—a family member, teacher, mentor, friend, or dear pet. Imagine they are there with you, with a warm smile or comforting touch, sending you wishes for well-being. Feel their presence, their care and love for you. Spend a few minutes with that feeling of comfort and love.
 - 5. Connect with nature.** Take time for a walk outside, go dig in the garden, or just look at photos of nature. Pay close attention to the colors, textures, smells, and sounds. Explore and see if you can find something you have never noticed before, like the smell of the air after it rains, or the many different shades of green as you walk through the park.
- ❖ What makes these things mindful? We do them as part of our daily routine and pay attention to how we are feeling as we are doing them. We are truly present in the moment. Remembering to take time to do this for ourselves is usually the hardest part. To make practicing mindfulness easier to remember, try scheduling a few minutes for it at the same time every day, like every night before dinner, or be mindful as you do a daily activity, like while walking to the bus every morning.