

According to a 2021 Meta-Analysis that combined data from many research studies of mindfulness in children and parents (Xie et al.), practicing mindfulness can improve parent and child mental health as well as family functioning.

## How Can I Practice Mindfulness?

Try each practice to see if it is a good fit for you. Find a regular time to practice and over time work your way up from a shorter practice to a longer time.

- Belly breathing: With your hands resting on your belly, imagine you are breathing behind your belly button. Feel your belly rise like a balloon. As you breathe out, feel your belly drop. (Repeat for 1 minute.)
- Extended exhale: Breathe in while slowly counting to 4, then hold the breath while slowly counting to 2. Breathe out while slowly counting to 7. (Repeat for 1 minute.)
- How do you know when you're uptight versus relaxed? Practice noticing the difference. Gently squeeze all the muscles in your face, hold it for 3 seconds, then relax. Notice how you feel. Now the shoulders...the hands...the belly...the legs...the feet—gently squeeze each body area for 3 seconds and then relax. Notice how you feel. At the end release all the tension. Now notice how you feel.
- Focus: Just like building a muscle, focus can be built up to be stronger. As you breathe in, count to 5 raising one finger for each count. As you breathe out, count more slowly down to 0, lowering each finger. Notice when you get distracted during the counting. Exercise your focus by coming back to counting your breath. (Repeat for 1 minute.)
- Mindful eating: For the first three bites of a meal, try to see, smell, hear, taste, and touch your food.



## Tips for Mindfulness Practice

1. Start small and work up to longer practices.
2. Remember that being still with your body and mind may bring uncomfortable feelings and memories into your awareness. Be gentle with yourself and work with a teacher or counselor if you're having questions.
3. Consider practicing together as a family. Wake up time and bedtime can often benefit from a pause together.
4. Try a mindful eating practice as a family with a simple food like a grape or a bite of chocolate.
5. Small changes make a difference! Even one mindful breath can change your stress level. More practice usually has more benefits.

## Resources and Additional Information: Mindfulness Cards and Tools

- “Mindfulness for Teens in 10 Minutes a Day.” Cards by Jennie Marie Battistin MA LMFT.
- “Yoga 4 Classrooms: Mindful moments making a difference.” Cards can be used anywhere.
- “The Self-Compassion Deck: 50 Mindfulness-Based Practices.” Cards by Christopher Willard, Mitch Abblett, Tim Desmond.
- “Mindfulness Cards: Simple Practices for Everyday Life.” Cards by Rohan Gunatillake.
- App Recommendation: *Smiling Mind* is a free mindfulness app for all ages ([www.insighttimer.com](http://www.insighttimer.com)). Apps like *Calm* and *Headspace* have also been researched; they have subscription fees to use them.