

Mindfulness Techniques for Emotion Regulation

Why emotion regulation?

In these unprecedented times of global quarantines, it is only natural that we may have strong and possibly confusing emotions. For children, this can be even more difficult if they do not yet have the skills to regulate their emotions.

The following mindfulness techniques are intended to build the skill of staying attuned to the present moment rather than worrying about the past or future. By staying attuned to the present, we can attune to our emotions, which can then allow for effective communication about them.

It is best first to introduce and practice these techniques with your children when they are in a calm state of mind. That way, when you find they are experiencing a time of emotional dysregulation, you can prompt them to engage in one of these techniques and they will already be familiar with the exercise.

Mindfulness Techniques

5 Things of 1 Color

Ask your child to point to and name 5 things of 1 color that they can see. The great thing about this technique is that you can continue through the rainbow of colors as needed.

Example: “Red pen, red backpack, red cup, red lines on the picture, red on your shirt.”

5 Senses

Ask your child to name 5 things they can currently see, 4 things they can currently feel (are touching), 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can taste, and 1 thing they can smell. It should get harder to identify as they get to the senses of taste and smell, which should also aid in more acutely attuning to the present.

Example: “I can see a desk, a chair, a painting, a window and a bowl. I can feel the chair underneath me, the floor under my foot, the desk under my elbows and my hair on my shoulders. I can hear the rain outside, the click of the keyboard and the creak of the floorboards. I can taste the water and tea that I am drinking. I can smell the tea.”

Describe the Room

Ask your child to describe the room in which they are located in great detail, including colors, textures, sounds, and smells.

Example: “I am sitting in my kitchen. There is a black refrigerator with many colorful magnets. There is a black stove and oven. There is a silver toaster and I can smell the bread that was just toasted. There is a large window and a small window and I can hear the birds outside.”

Body Scan

Ask your child to identify how they are feeling in each part of their body. It is helpful to ask sequentially either from feet to head or from head to feet.

Example: “My head feels fuzzy and has a lot of thoughts running through it. My eyes feel heavy. My cheeks feel flushed. My neck and shoulders feel tense. My chest feels tight and my stomach has knots. My legs feel restless.”