

Mindsets for Happiness and Success



MINDFULNESS

We either manage and control our emotions or they manage and control us.

Let's TALK about LIFE

The single most important thing we can do for our children is talk to them about life. At dinner, at breakfast, eating burgers in the car, or sipping hot cocoa before bed. Decades of research has shown that children who eat 3 to 4 times a week with their parents are 3 times less likely to get involved with drugs, alcohol, or smoking. They do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and stronger relationships with their parents. With the little time busy parents have, we might as well talk about what's important. All it takes is 10 minutes a day.

LET'S TALK conversation starters have been strategically designed in a specific sequence to help children (and parents) learn the

Happiness and Success

twelve most important mindsets that lead to happiness and success. They are based on decades of research and the literature from hundreds of experts who study happiness and success. In the same way that we learn to walk, play a musical instrument, speak a new language, or dance the salsa, we also build mindsets through repetition. By repeating new, similar thought patterns over and over again during a 30-day period, we actually rewire certain ways of thinking into our brains. Eventually it becomes a habit that we continue without any effort. LET'S TALK is designed for ages five and up. Feel free to adapt the questions to what you know your children are able to understand and can relate to.

MINDFULNESS Intro - 1

There is no question that kids today are experiencing significantly higher levels of stress, anxiety and worry than children did decades ago. There is no need to share statistics or go into reasons why here. We all know this is happening. The goal is to help you teach your children how to manage the thoughts and feelings swirling around in their minds and decrease the amount of stress and anxiety they experience, on a daily basis. The cutting-edge research in the fields of neuroscience, social/emotional learning, positive psychology, and mindfulness training, makes one thing very clear: when we are able to manage our emotions and

Introduction for Parents

MINDFULNESS Intro - 2

calm ourselves down - long enough to think about how best to respond in a difficult situation - we feel better, behave better, learn better, and perform better. There are people who remain calm and rational during heated discussions or crisis situations. They have learned, either naturally or through self-development, to calm themselves, sort through their emotions, consider possible solutions and make a rational decision as to the best way to respond. This one skill set can have an enormous impact on personal relationships, as well as career success. The point of mindfulness is to pay attention

Introduction for Parents

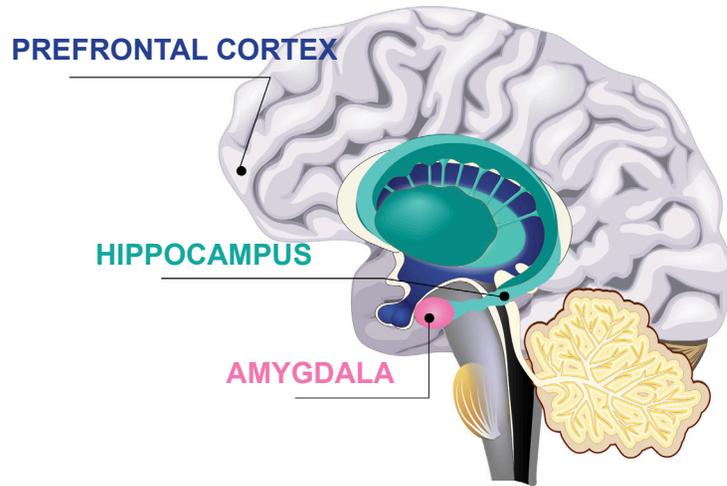
MINDFULNESS Intro - 3

to what is going on in our minds and learn how to pause (do nothing) and give ourselves time to manage those emotions and make rational decisions that are in our best interest. The POWER is in the PAUSE. Counting to ten when we are frustrated, hurt or angry, gives us time to calm down and think clearly. Being mindful is noticing thoughts and feelings but not judging them or reacting emotionally to them. That's what gets us into trouble. Being mindful is about thinking before speaking or behaving and taking time to consider the consequences of our actions before we act.

Introduction for Parents

Card # 1

How does your brain process information when you are stressed, afraid, or anxious?



There are three parts of the brain that control how we think, feel, and behave:

The **PREFRONTAL CORTEX** helps us think, evaluate information, look for solutions, and make good decisions. You use your PFC to solve math problems, decide how to talk to your coach, plan what you need to buy for a school project, or organize your time.

The **HIPPOCAMPUS** is your memory bank, saving everything you have learned and experienced as memories that you can access when you need them, from ABCs to family vacations.

The **AMYGDALA** protects us from danger, watching for possible threats and making us react before we even have time to think about what's happening. Like when you pull your hand away from a hot stove. Or when your mom/dad hits the brakes super-fast just as someone suddenly pulls out in front of your car.

Card # 2

What does a ten-second pause with controlled breathing do for your brain?

When we find ourselves in an emotionally charged situation, we are usually not expecting it and we're not prepared. If we perceive it as a threat, our body reacts quickly and blocks the connection to the thinking part of the brain. We **DON'T** think because we **CAN'T** think. Sometimes we're not even sure how we feel and why. Sometimes the situation is complicated and there are many emotions involved. It takes time to sort them out and really understand what we are feeling. Most of us react emotionally, without thinking and this, almost always, leads to behavior we regret.

Controlled breathing while counting to ten does two things: It calms the body by slowing down your heartbeat and lowering your blood pressure. It also decreases anxiety by overriding the fight/flight/freeze response originally triggered by the Amygdala and passes control to the Prefrontal Cortex where focused and mindful thinking can now take place.

Our brains cannot think two thoughts at the same time, so counting to ten distracts us from the negative thoughts that create fear and anxiety, while giving our minds time to connect to the thinking part of the brain. Once we are able to think about what we're feeling, and evaluate what that means based on past experiences, we can make better choices about how to respond.

Continued breathing practice creates new neural pathways in the brain that soon become a habitual way to respond to fear and anxiety. You create new mental habit in the same way that you create physical habits like brushing your teeth. The more we practice controlled breathing, the more mindful and self-regulated we become. And the more we control our thoughts, feelings, reactions and behavior, the more likely we are to enjoy happiness and success. Mindfulness helps us feel better, behave better, learn better, and perform better.

The **POWER** is in the **PAUSE**.

Card #3 - Some of the many emotions we all feel:



angry, mad, mean



embarrassed, humiliated



excited, hopeful, ecstatic



guilty, ashamed, regretful



sad, hurt, unhappy



jealous, envious, resentful

Card #4 - Some of the many emotions we all feel ... (cont.)



scared, afraid, terrified



frustrated, overwhelmed



happy, joyful, content



discouraged, hopeless



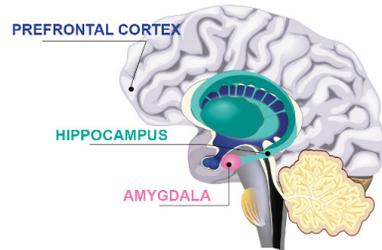
anxious, nervous, worried



lonely, alone, unwanted

How does the brain work? - 1

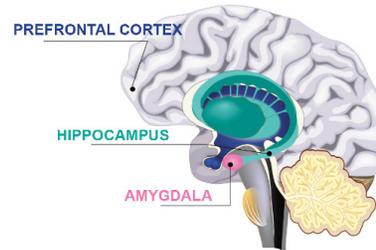
Read Card #1, which is about how your brain deals with fear, anxiety, and stress. Talk about how threats of the past (lions, tigers, and bears), differ from the kinds of situations that cause fear and anxiety today - like a presentation or a performance in front of an audience.



Day 1

How does the brain work? - 2

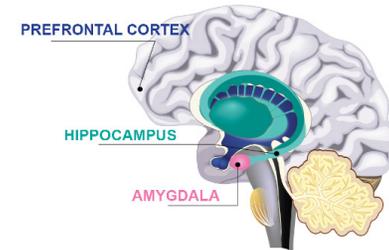
Talk about different kinds of situations in your daily lives that might create fear or anxiety - simply because there is a POSSIBILITY of failure, rejection, criticism, humiliation, loss, or pain. These are modern-day that might cause hi-jacking of the brain.



Day 2

How does the brain work? - 3

Think back to the modern day threats you talked about on Day 2, and describe some of the negative ways you might respond - that are a result of reacting emotionally to a situation instead of taking time to calm down and think.



Day 3

The POWER in the PAUSE - 1

Read Card #2, about the 10-second PAUSE and controlled breathing. Discuss some situations where it might be useful. Then practice the 10-second PAUSE. Deep breath in for 1, slow breath out for 2, deep breath in for 1, slow breath out for 2, deep breath in for 3, slow breath out for 4, etc.



Day 4

The POWER in the PAUSE - 2

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Deep breath in for 1, slow breath out for 2, deep breath in for 3, slow breath out for 4, etc. Explain, in your own words, what happens to the body when you do the 10-second PAUSE and the controlled breathing.



Day 5

The POWER in the PAUSE - 3

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Deep breath in for 1, slow breath out for 2, deep breath in for 3, etc. Talk about situations that you experienced or observed today that might have benefited from the 10-second PAUSE & and deep breathing.



Day 6

What does ANGRY feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are angry? How can you tell when someone else is angry? What does their face and body look like?



Day 7

What does SAD feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are sad? How can you tell when someone else is sad? What does their face and body look like?



Day 8

What does EMBARRASSED feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are embarrassed? How can you tell when someone else is embarrassed? What does their face and body look like?



Day 9

What does GUILTY feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are guilty? How can you tell when someone else is guilty? What does their face and body look like?



Day 10

What does EXCITED feel like?

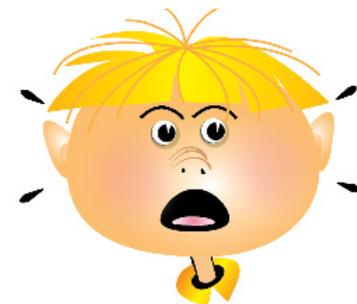
What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are excited? How can you tell when someone else is excited? What does their face and body look like?



Day 11

What does AFRAID feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are afraid? How can you tell when someone else is afraid? What does their face and body look like?



Day 12

What does FRUSTRATED feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are frustrated? How can you tell when someone else is frustrated? What does their face and body look like?



Day 13

What does ANXIOUS feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are anxious? How can you tell when someone else is anxious? What does their face and body look like?



Day 14

What does LONELY feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are lonely? How can you tell when someone else is lonely? What does their face and body look like?



Day 15

What does HAPPY feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are happy? How can you tell when someone else is happy? What does their face and body look like?



Day 16

What does DISCOURAGED feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are discouraged? How can you tell when someone else is discouraged? What does their face and body look like?



Day 17

What does JEALOUS feel like?

What does it feel like inside your body and your mind when you are jealous? How can you tell when someone else is jealous? What does their face and body look like?



Day 18

You didn't make the team.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You didn't make the basketball team (or get picked for the school play), but your best friend did.



Day 19

Someone took credit for your work.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You worked hard on your part of a group project, but another student took credit for what you did.



Day 20

A good friend shared your secret.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You told a close friend a very personal secret and later found out he/she told others at school.



Day 21

The phone call is more important.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: Your father promised to take you somewhere and cancelled at the last minute due to a call from work.



Day 22

The mean kids are laughing.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You froze during a class presentation and the mean kids started making fun of you.



Day 23

Your favorite jacket is ruined.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: Your best friend borrowed your favorite jacket and returned it with a stain - without even saying a word.



Day 24

You're shaking like a leaf.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: Although you've practiced your dance routine 100 times and know it perfectly, you're shaking like a leaf.



Day 25

You get elbowed in the eye. Ouch!

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: Someone in front of you in the cafeteria line turned and accidentally hit you in the eye with his elbow.



Day 26

Your best friend doesn't text back.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You've texted your friend ten times to share some very exciting news, but NO response.



Day 27

Everyone is looking at you.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You accidentally kicked the soccer ball into the other teams' goal. Everyone is looking at you.



Day 28

They cut right in front of you.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: You've been waiting a long time in line, and two people just cut right in front of you.



Day 29

You turned your project in late.

Practice the 10-second PAUSE. Talk about the emotions you might feel in the following situation and describe how someone might react with and without the PAUSE: Your mom promised to help you with a school project but, because your brother was sick, it was late.



Day 30