Bring Mindfulness Into Your Family

*\*Excerpt Taken from article “Eight Ways to Bring Mindfulness Into Your Family” by Randy Taran.* [*http://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/news/general-parenting/eight-ways-to-bring-mindfulness-into-your-family*](http://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/news/general-parenting/eight-ways-to-bring-mindfulness-into-your-family)

Some of the most frustrating and embarrassing behaviors include temper tantrums, lashing out at others, impatience, and short attention spans. So what can you do about them?  Research has found that having a sense of mindfulness, or the ability to be present and think before reacting, can provide us with the skills we need to better understand our feelings, to pay more attention and to make wiser decisions. Mindfulness is a wonderful way to help us manage our emotions, reduce stress, improve academics, and even develop greater empathy. Here are eight easy ways to get started:

**1. Take on a Family Mindfulness Challenge**: Close your eyes and use your other senses, like listening. A simple minute of mindful breathing is a great way to start. There are also free apps and websites available to help guide your practice, which can be great for beginners.

**2. Choose a “Mindfulness Corner”:** Designate a physical location that is comfortable and uncluttered. Each family member can add a personal symbol. Having a physical location set up allows for mindfulness to become a regular family habit.

**3. Set a Time:**  Have a specified time to practice mindfulness also helps make it a habit. Choose a time that works for the entire family. When you practice moments of calm, it makes going to that space in moments of stress easier.

**4. Have Mindful Mornings:**Getting out the door for school is stressful. Consider ways to de-stress, like waking up a little earlier for some quiet time, or encouraging your children to help (as they can) to prepare for school the night before.

**5. Practice Mindfulness around the Table**: Schedule a time (i.e. once a week) where everyone talks about what they are grateful for in their life and something they appreciate about others at the table. This is all about being in the moment and taking time to notice the good stuff. It will uplift everyone there.

**6. Designate Mindful Boundaries:**Having established boundaries promotes a feeling of consistency and safety. They provide a perimeter, within which children can exercise their autonomy. If the boundaries are mindfully thought out in advance, then there is less reason for you to constantly say no. It’s equally important to create situations where your child can experience autonomy. Children need a degree of autonomy to develop a sense of responsibility over their lives. They also need clear boundaries, which gives them a sense of safety, and a clear idea of who is the parent and who is the child. Ask yourself, “What is most needed in this moment? Is it space, autonomy, or a boundary.

**7. Be Mindful with Discipline:** Look at discipline as teaching, rather than confrontation, the first step is pausing enough to be mindful of what your child is feeling. In No-Drama Discipline, Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Bryson suggest:

* Communicate comfort so your child feels safe to open up. Get down to your child’s eye level, and put your hand on his arm or hug to give him a sense of reassurance.
* Validate and say something like, “If I were in your shoes, at the same age, I might feel the same way.”
* Listen. Rather than lecture, breathe.
* Reflect. Say back what you hear like,
* Redirect. After you understand what was happening internally to your child, you can determine what you want to teach and how best to do it.

**8. Share Your Experiences:**The more you and your child practice mindfulness, the more natural it becomes. If you used mindfulness when you felt your emotions rising, (in traffic, at the office, with friends), and you were able to pause before reacting, share that experience with your child. Encourage her/him to do the same. You will inspire one another in ways you might not even imagine.

*For the complete article and more parenting tools, visit* [*http://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/news/general-parenting/eight-ways-to-bring-mindfulness-into-your-family*](http://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/news/general-parenting/eight-ways-to-bring-mindfulness-into-your-family)