



The Wellness Family

Dr. Heather Keeps You Informed

Mindfulness

We live in a microwave society; we want everything now. This is the age of distraction and our attention span has suffered for it. We don't have time to read an entire article; just give us the highlights. We don't want to review the entire research paper; just give us an abstract. We don't want a five minute phone call; send us a text. We don't want to dedicate our time to life; we're too busy living it. A lyric from a popular song by John Lennon says, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

But it doesn't have to be this way. A new movement called "mindfulness" is opposing this societal norm and equipping those who choose to really live.

What is Mindfulness?

Psychology Today defines mindfulness as a state of active, open attention to the present. When one is mindful they observe their thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad. Instead of letting life pass by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience.

Flow Magazine says that mindfulness is a solution for the troubles faced in this busy life. It's about living with eyes wide open and looking at what is happening right now; enjoying ordinary things, small pleasures and less worry.

Basically, live in the moment. Don't worry about the future, it hasn't come yet. Don't fret over the past, it can't be changed. Live in the now and stop wasting precious time.

How to Live a Mindful Life

Mindfulness can be applied to numerous facets of life: everything from work, to self, to parenting, to keeping house, and many other areas. As a Family Wellness parent, emotional health is just as important as physical health, and living life to its fullest is a valuable goal for every family – parents and children.

This introduction to mindfulness may just be the key to tying all of the family's wellness objectives into one manageable and achievable goal.

Mindful Eating

Dr. Mark Bertin, a developmental pediatrician and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at New York Medical College, says that mindfulness and eating are a natural fit. There are very few areas of our lives to which we give so little attention as our eating habits. We tend to go on autopilot when it comes to eating and our dietary choices have been made through lifelong choices; they call them eating "habits" for a reason.

Mindful eating develops healthy eating with awareness, conscious decision-making and responsiveness when under stress as opposed to reacting under stress. It requires little more than paying attention to what we're eating, when and how much. Easily develop mindful eating habits by following just a few recommended guidelines.



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While this is not an exhaustive list, these guidelines are the first steps down a path to mindful eating.

- Pay attention to the "why" behind eating – is it hunger or does it just smell good?
- Be aware of shopping or eating habits – habitual behaviors can be changed; without self-judgment for what has happened before, pause before making choices and then be intentional when deciding what to purchase or consume next
- Take little pauses while eating – in between bites, set down the fork or spoon to consider body cues; stop eating when full, not when the plate is clean
- Be patient – avoid negative self-talk; recognize that habitual criticism of self is not beneficial and give credit where it's due. Changes, no matter how small, are steps in the right direction

The most important step in living a mindful life is recognizing negativity in our lives and removing it gently but firmly. Focus on the positive, focus on the now, don't dwell in the past and don't worry about the future.

Mindful Parenting

One of the greatest things we can do for our children is to be there; more than just occupying the same space as our children, but genuinely engaging with them. In this age of distraction, cell phones and television tend to be more important than time with our kids. Being a mindful parent can easily remedy this.

Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn are co-authors of the book *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* and Jon is the biomedical scientist who first introduced

mediation into mainstream medicine. In a recent interview, Myla said, "We are so caught up in our thoughts that we're being continually pulled away from the now – and we tend to miss it."

The most important step to being a mindful parent is to enjoy our children for who they are, not who we expect them to be or hope they someday will be. Mindful parenting is about moment-to-moment, openhearted and non-judgmental attention. When interacting with our children it's important to ask ourselves, "Am I reacting here or am I responding?"

During that same interview, Jon said, "The more complicated our lives are, the more important it is to live in the present moment – otherwise we'll miss much of our lives. As a parent, you can't withdraw to a cave to meditate. It's all about now. When you tune into the breath and sensations in the body, you are stepping outside of time. Moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness cultivated by paying attention - we are all capable of this. Mindfulness actually saves us a tremendous amount of time because we don't go down so many dead ends with our thoughts. It doesn't take any more time to be more mindful. It's not a philosophy, it's a practice. You don't have to get less busy or fix anything. Simply reclaim your moments by showing up for them."

Mindful Living

The most common theme in everything "mindful" is to avoid negativity. Elaine Smookler, part of the faculty at the Centre for Mindfulness Studies in Toronto, says that it's crucial to approach negative thinking with gentleness and that self-punishment often hides out as self-management. In other words, we are not living in the moment if we're beating ourselves up over the past and that is the source of negativity.

It is impossible to live in the now, to focus on the present, and still be irritated with ourselves over something we've done in the past. We can't judge ourselves based on our past, we don't live there anymore.

The same can be said for worrying about the future. Mark Twain once said, "I have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened." Thoughts directed into the future are working against mindfulness. Gently direct all thoughts back to the here and now.

Mindful living means recognizing that life is happening now. Too often we let the present slip away as time rushes by us. Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace says, "We're living in a world that contributes in a major way to mental fragmentation, disintegration, distraction and decoherence." Whatever we're doing we tend to be focused on what we're not doing. For example, when at work we wish we were on vacation and when on vacation we can't help but think about the work piling up on our desk back at the office. This is the polar opposite of mindfulness.

The Chiropractic Factor

This introduction to mindfulness should help your family become more focused on living in the now, striving for a more positive attitude and mindset. In every area of mindful living, the most important step is to not let life just happen. We are not merely along for the ride.

A Family Wellness Chiropractor is the only health care professional that recognizes the vital role that a properly functioning nervous system plays in every area of your family's health: physically and emotionally. Be sure to make your regular chiropractic adjustments a priority for your family.



*Dear Patient,
Dr. Heather is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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