

## **Appendices**

# Notes to Parents

## Appendix 1

# Mindfulness Activities

Mindfulness refers to the quality of the focus of your attention. Mindfulness skills are helpful on their own and will help every other skill your child is learning work more effectively and efficiently. They are presented first because they are a key component to increasing people's awareness of their own feelings. Teaching children how to use mindfulness strategies will be essential as they start learning how to manage their feelings.

The purpose of mindfulness is to help children understand the different states of mind they have, including those based primarily on feelings, those based primarily on observable facts, and those that include an integration of feelings and facts. Try to help your child understand that the mind is different from a thought. The mind is the generator of thoughts, not the thoughts themselves. Activities 1, 2, and 3 are meant to demonstrate a child-friendly approach to learning this advanced concept.

We refer to thoughts, sensations, facts, and feelings in many activities in this section. Go ahead and use the knowledge your child currently has about thoughts, sensations, and feelings while you work together on this section. Feelings will be covered in more depth in subsequent sections. The distinction between thoughts and feelings is also discussed at length throughout the printed workbook.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- You have three states of mind: one that creates thoughts and urges based on feelings, one that creates thoughts and urges based on facts, and one that creates thoughts and urges based on a combination of both facts and your feelings about those facts.
- The best practice for skillful decision making will be to use the state of mind that incorporates both the facts and your feelings about those facts.
- With continued practice, you can have some control over the thoughts that are being generated by your mind.

## ***How You Can Help***

- Use your own mindfulness practice as a model for your child. This is an important skill for adults as well. When modeling, let your child know what state of mind you are in; for example, “I’m in feeling mind right now and need to take a break.”
- Help your child identify characters from movies or books that are in each state of mind.
- Try incorporating mindfulness practice into your everyday routines; for example, “When we brush our teeth, let’s focus only on the sensation of brushing our teeth.”

## Appendix 2

# Understanding Your Feelings

The purpose of this section is to help children identify the different feelings they have. It is not uncommon for children to misinterpret their feelings. The activities in this section follow an identical format to help your child better understand feelings in general. Each activity first identifies different labels that a feeling can have depending on how intensely it is experienced. This is important because your child may use different words than you would to describe the same feeling, and there will be times when feeling-word choice varies based on the intensity of the feeling being experienced. For example, “annoyance” is often a smaller, or less intense, version of “feeling angry,” but both are anger feeling-word choices.

Next, we list possible prompting events, or situations that can prompt feelings. This will become important later in the book when your child learns about whether an action urge fits the facts that prompted the feeling. At the end of each activity in this section, children will learn about their physical reactions to feelings. It can be helpful to ask them to think about the sensations they notice when having a feeling and how their body and behaviors might look to someone watching. Later sections ask children to notice how facts impact their feelings. Having a basic understanding of feelings will aid in understanding this distinction.

Going through the feelings pages together is an excellent opportunity for you to provide validation around your child’s experience of each feeling. Keep in mind that you can validate a feeling without stating that you agree with an inappropriate behavior. Also keep in mind that feelings can be scary and confusing for young children. For this reason, we strongly recommend that you review these activities with your child.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- Identifying feelings is an important part of mindfulness that will help you and your child figure out why the feeling is showing up and what skills (if any) are needed to reduce the intensity, which is what can help your child feel more in control of his emotions. Sometimes identifying and labeling the emotion actually helps reduce the intensity of the emotion. This is why reviewing these together can be so very helpful.
- Talking about his experience of a certain emotion is a great way for your child to begin the process of de-escalating. Hearing you talk about times when you experienced the same emotion can also be helpful in validating that his emotional reaction or experience makes sense.

## ***How You Can Help***

- In a moment of confusion, prompt the child who is confused about a feeling to go to the pages about that feeling in the printed workbook. Use it as an opportunity for your child to figure out what feeling he is having.
- Use feeling words in your own vocabulary as often as possible. Model for your child that it is okay to have feelings, and that a person can have feelings and still be effective.
- When you notice your child is starting to have an intense feeling, label it. Then ask your child to describe the experience of the feeling. Encourage him to add any additional ideas or experiences in the “For You to Do” portions.

## Appendix 3

# Working with Your Feelings

In this section, we introduce the concept of regulating our feelings. We refer to higher-intensity feelings as “big” feelings and lower-intensity feelings as “small” feelings. We have used this language in our practice with young children and find it to be extremely helpful. For children, feelings can be uncomfortable, and they just want these feelings to go away. Unfortunately, that is not always possible. This can be where children demonstrate acting-out behaviors. Acting out might be a fast way for children who are uncomfortable to change their feelings or might make a child believe that a “big” feeling has disappeared altogether.

In activities 15 through 22, we cover helping children identify the feeling(s) they struggle with the most, understand the purpose of their feelings and whether they make sense, reduce vulnerability to big feelings, recognize that feelings change, and increase positive feelings.

Keep in mind that people often think events prompt feelings, but this is not the case. The way our fact mind and feeling mind interpret events impacts how we feel and react to any situation. This is an advanced concept that even some adults struggle with, and your child may need lots of practice and guidance from you in order to understand. For example, your child may be sad when she arrives at the playground and sees that no other children are there, and she may think, *There is no one at the park, so I am sad*. Another child could arrive at this very same park the very same day with no other children in the park and not be sad. Your child’s reaction is not about the park (prompting event), and it is not about no other children being present (fact); it is about her interpretation of the facts. In activity 15, we talk about helping children learn how to change their thoughts about an event in order to change their feeling.

Activity 20 is important because it teaches your child to break down feelings, urges, and actions or behaviors. This activity can lead to behavioral change. We recommend

rehearsing this with your child as often as possible. You can also model this through your own behavior. It will be helpful to praise your child when you notice her choosing different, more helpful actions.

Activity 21 is a game. Be creative with this, and feel free to add additional feelings or situations that you know your child has struggled with.

### ***Important Takeaways***

- You have feelings for a reason.
- You can change the intensity of your feelings.
- You do not have to act on your urges.
- Feelings come and go.
- No feeling lasts forever.

### ***How You Can Help***

- Notice when your child has an urge and does not act on it, and praise that behavior; for example, "I can tell you really wanted to reach for that cookie, but you controlled your urge and waited. Nice job!"
- Take opportunities to validate your child's feelings. Let your child know that her feelings make sense, given the facts.
- After an intense feeling has passed, highlight the point that it did not last forever; for example, "You were really angry this morning. I bet it feels nice that the anger has passed and now you feel better."

## Appendix 4

# Creating Your Skills Toolbox

This section is meant to teach children how to create their own toolbox of skills that they can use to manage their feelings. Many of the skills in this section are meant to help children tolerate uncomfortable feelings when they are not able to solve a problem right away.

Referring to a skills toolbox is essentially a kid-friendly way to talk to children about how to remember to use the skills they have been learning in actual situations where those skills are needed. The term “skills toolbox” comes from our practice of working with children and adolescents, creating “calming boxes” or “coping-skills kits” with ideas they can take with them to help them remember what was talked about in a therapy session.

In this section, we incorporated language and explanations we have found useful in our clinical practice working with young children in a therapy setting. It can be helpful to think of the skills you are helping your child learn as “tools,” which is a more concrete way of thinking about complex ideas. Children often come to a better understanding when they have a concrete, tangible example of what is being discussed. The section introduction highlights how gardeners and plumbers use different tools because they are doing different jobs. Children will need to use different tools depending on the situation they are in and the feelings they have about the situation. They may initially need help identifying what tool to use.

Activity 24 asks children to think about tools they already have, which provides an opportunity for your child to think of what he might already do that is a healthy way to cope. This allows him to build on existing strengths before learning entirely new strategies for coping with feelings. A child who struggles with identifying skills right away can come back to this activity after learning more skills in the workbook, or you can use this as an opportunity to talk about how your child has practiced skills learned earlier in the workbook.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- You can expect your child to initially struggle when applying these tools to challenging real-life situations. When we are in emotionally intense situations, our brains cannot always access information quickly. Using these tools will take practice on the part of your child and patience on your part as he practices.
- Different skills will be useful in different situations.
- It can be hard for anyone, especially children, to tolerate the distress of not being able to solve a problem right away. Many of the skills in this section are skills meant to help children *tolerate* the distress of what they feel when they cannot solve the problem in the moment.

## ***How You Can Help***

- Model using some of your own tools when you need to calm down. You can even do something as simple as deep breathing. Young children learn from the experience of watching what adults around them do.
- If you notice your child appears upset after a long day at school, suggest that you both use a tool together; for example, try muscle relaxation (activity 27).
- When you yourself are using a tool, mention it out loud. Do this as often as you can to reflect to your child that you use tools too.

## Appendix 5

# Taking Your Tools on the Road

The skills in this section are meant to help your child learn to interact with others in a way that promotes building and repairing healthy relationships, to understand and build self-respect and self-confidence, and to set limits when others are acting toward her in unhealthy and unsupportive ways.

In our clinical experience, skills in this area are generally some of the most challenging for any age group (even adults) to master, but just like any other skill they become easier with practice and rehearsal. While these child-friendly versions of complex skills have been simplified, the basic premise remains: attending to others, developing a positive sense of self-worth, and learning to set limits and boundaries are helpful techniques, no matter what your age.

To facilitate remembering the tools, this section includes acronyms such as PLAN, PLEASE, CARE, and HALT. PLAN encourages your child to think about potentially difficult situations ahead of time in order to be better prepared to cope effectively, using the skills you have been learning and practicing together. PLEASE is a script template meant to help your child more effectively communicate what is wanted or needed when asking someone for something. CARE reminds her how to focus attention on another person when the desire is to express care and understanding toward that person. HALT is meant to help your child set limits based on feelings and values, ideally through the use of the full mind; that is, considering both the facts and her feelings about the facts.

The skills in this section tend to take more time and memorization ability than skills from other sections. We suggest that you start developing your child's use of the skills taught in sections 1 through 4 of the printed workbook before jumping into section 5. When your child feels confident and you notice her using the skills independently, you are ready for section 5.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- While this section may be complex, it is never too early to practice these skills.
- A child who learns these skills at a younger age is better prepared for continued growth and development into adolescence and adulthood.
- It will be important for you to rehearse or role-play these skills with your child.

## ***How You Can Help***

- Use the tools from this section as a family. For example, you can create a plan together for an upcoming event that you think may be difficult for your child.
- Use the acronyms in this section as memory tools to help your child attach meaning to what she is learning. There are likely lots of situations in everyday life that can be practice opportunities.
- Practice in small, less threatening situations at first to build your child's confidence.

## Appendix 6

# Values and Goals

In this section, we help children identify their values and goals. Values and goals are important in developing a healthy sense of emotional and interpersonal competence. Our values inform our interactions with the world. When children are struggling with emotions, it can directly impact how they interact with others. Values inform these behaviors. Activity 36 helps children think about values they might have and how those values translate to daily actions. If your family has values that are not listed, feel free to add them. Activity 37 helps children think about their values and create goals related to them.

This section also talks about problem solving. Teaching young children how to break a big goal into smaller steps can help them gain a sense of competence and control in their lives. This is important in reducing their vulnerability to emotions.

Finally, this section also includes an activity focused on not judging. This can be an advanced concept for children, but it is important. Activity 39 highlights that different people can have different values and goals, and that we can view those as different, not necessarily good or bad. Children who are able to grasp this concept can apply it to themselves and ideally not be judgmental of themselves and their progress. This is an important component in mindfulness and for increasing an awareness of one's thoughts.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- Values inform our daily actions. It is important to live according to our values.
- Goals can be broken down into small steps to avoid a sense of being overwhelmed.
- Engaging in possible yet challenging small tasks is a way to increase a sense of competence and control as well as reduce vulnerability.

## ***How You Can Help***

- When your child expresses frustration about not being able to do something, validate his frustration as well as the effort he has put in, and encourage him to set a goal and outline it. Support his progress.
- Ask your child to describe a recent event he witnessed; for example, an argument on the playground or an interaction at the market. Help him identify judgments he made about the people or places involved, and then ask him to retell what happened using only facts.
- Keep in mind that your child will build self-esteem and grow confidence through the experience of working hard toward achieving goals. Validate for him that it can be frustrating at times. Fight the urge to fix the problem for him.

## **Appendix 7**

# **What to Do If Your Tools Are Not Working**

This online section of the workbook provides an overview of all of the tools that your child has learned. It is most helpful to review this section with your child once you both have a good understanding of the tools through practice and rehearsal. The activity titled “Am I at Risk for Big Feelings Right Now?” helps your child understand how differences in her physical health and environment can influence the way she is able to use skills to decrease emotional vulnerability. Other activities will help you and your child identify if she is using the right tool to control big feelings depending on her goals and circumstances. The overview of tools can be helpful for providing your child with a different perspective on the tools she can use to gain control over previously out-of-control feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and also with more repetition and rehearsal. Differences in tool presentation can facilitate your child’s understanding and use of the tools and can supplement your understanding of the tools as well. There are also tools in this section that help your child think about ways to use tools even when she might not feel like using them.

## ***Important Takeaways***

- Practice, practice, practice—not just to memorize skills but to discover which skills work in which situations.
- Not feeling better doesn't mean the tools aren't working. Often, simply *not feeling worse* can signify that tools are working.
- Identifying patterns that trigger out-of-control feelings and behaviors is important. When similar triggering situations arise, your child can know that extra tool use is warranted.

## ***How You Can Help***

- If your child is sick or especially fatigued, support her in getting at least ten hours of sleep (nap time counts!), prepare nutritious meals, and discourage socializing until she feels better.
- If your child complains that none of the tools are helping, consider working through one or more of the tools together at a time when you won't be disturbed.
- Share a story from your own childhood about a time when you felt stuck in a situation you couldn't change, or when you wanted to give up. What did you do?