

10 Mindfulness Exercises

1. Mindful Smelling. Gather a handful of household items for your children to smell. Citrus, a candle, honey, fresh herbs. Encourage them to think about how they feel as breathe in each one. (“The mint makes me feel energetic.” “The vanilla makes me feel relaxed.” “The peanut butter makes me feel...hungry!”)

2. The Happy/Sad Shuffle. Get comfortable. Turn on a shuffle of songs and, one by one, identify whether each is a happy or sad song. See if your kids can put a finger on what makes them think it’s sad or happy, like the pace, volume, and pitch of the notes. Finish the song if they’re enjoying it, or skip ahead to the next one and repeat. This is a great exercise to do during quiet time or as a wind-down before bed.

3. The Happiness Board. With your kids, print family photos, sketch pictures of warm memories, or cut out happy scenes from magazines. Combine them into a collage, and place it somewhere the kids see often, such as near the dinner table or within sight of their beds. When they’re eating a meal or you’re tucking them in at night, invite them to look at the board and reminisce with you.

Our dopamine output increases not only when we experience something pleasurable the first time, but again when we remember it... [By reminiscing] we and our children can enjoy more of *what we already have*. Goldie Hawn, [10 Mindful Minutes](#)

4. Active Listening. On your walks, encourage your kids to be silent for several moments and identify every sound they can hear. The song of birds, the faint wail of a siren, the hum of nearby bees.

5. Breathing Buddies. Lie down on your backs with a favorite stuffed animal in your arms. Encourage the kids to watch Teddy rise and fall as they slowly inhale and exhale. Learning to focus on breathing is a great life skill, but it can be hard for little people to really wrap their heads around. (When my son is angry and I ask him to take some deep breaths, he balls his hands and yells, “I can’t!”) A visible cue, like a stuffed animal rising and falling, can help them better understand what we mean when we say, “Take a deep breath.”

6. Resonating Sound. Ask your children to take a few deep breaths while they wait for you to make a sound, such as with a bell, a chime, a note on the piano, or even a spoon striking a pot. When they hear the sound, ask them to lock in on it and listen closely as the sound resonates and then fades in the air. When they finally can’t hear it anymore, have them raise their hand.

7. A Gratitude Habit. Make gratitude a part of your family’s daily life by taking a few moments [at the table](#) to each share something you’re grateful for. Alternatively, do it in the car, en route to soccer practice or drama club. :)

We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures. Thornton Wilder

8. Body Over Mind. According to [Amy Cuddy](#), how we hold our bodies shapes the message we send *ourselves*, not just the people around us. Try a few poses with your kids and think about how strong each one makes you feel. These are especially great if your child is nervous about something, like an upcoming test or sporting event.

- The Superman: Fists clenched, arms straight out above you, feet planted firmly a foot apart.

- The Boss: Fists clenched, hands on hips, feet planted firmly.
- The Sphinx (for the yogis out there): Body flat on the ground, belly down. Elbows under your shoulders, supporting your upper body. Palms to the ground. Head and eyes straight forward.

9. Superpower Activation. Sit down with your kids and have each one choose a place on their body that activates their superpower senses. This is your kids' chance to channel their inner Spiderman! Every time they tap their activation site (an earlobe, their nose, a freckle or birthmark), they suddenly can hear, smell, taste, touch, and see with superhuman perception.

10. Touch Points. Together, brainstorm a place in your home that can serve as a reminder—a touch point—for your whole family. Each time you touch the knob on the front door, for instance, you can pause to notice your surroundings and live in that particular moment.