

## MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: EXPLORING THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS WITH YOUR CHILDREN

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a non-judgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis.” It begins by paying attention to breath: the expansion of the in-breath, the stillness between breaths, and the release of the out-breath.

Research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help children and youth: pay attention better; be less distractible; learn more; stay calm under stress; avoid getting too upset about things; slow down instead of rushing; listen better to others; be more patient; get along with others better and feel happier and enjoy things more.

Here are some ways that you can teach your child/youth mindfulness and incorporate these practices into the family routine:

- Teach deep breathing. Blowing bubbles or a pinwheel are fun ways for younger children to practice.
- Go on a listening walk. Go for a walk and ask your children what sounds they hear.
- Mindful eating. Ask your family to focus on their five senses as you eat supper.
- Practicing gratitude. Start and end each day by saying what you are grateful for.
- Guided meditation: <https://family.gonoodle.com/channels/flow>
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Gradually tense every muscle for a few seconds then release them.
- There’s an app for that! Check out these free apps: Breathe, Think, Do; Smiling Mind; MindShift; Headspace

Mindfulness is a great way to help children (and yourself) build autonomy and develop a sense of self!

For more information, please contact the RRDSB Mental Health Leader: [tracey.idle@rrdsb.com](mailto:tracey.idle@rrdsb.com)

