

Parenting Tips for Managing Stress and Anxiety

Mindfulness – paying attention to the present moment with kindness and without judgement. *Mindful Parenting by Kristen Race, Ph.D.*

- **Stress is contagious – children can sense when their parents are overwhelmed – so try to manage your own stress (self-care) and don't start a discussion when you are feeling anxious**
- **“Be the person you want your kids to become” – let go of trying to be perfect, we don't expect our kids to be perfect so cultivate self-compassion (Use mistakes as lessons and talk about yours)**
- **Listen to hear and understand (validate), not to respond or fix (Recognize the emotion, emotions are not bad!)**
- **Turn off the amygdala (emotion center of the brain, smoke alarm) to access the pre-frontal cortex (thinking, logical part of the brain, to be able to put out the fire)**
- **Model good self-care and mindfulness activities. It takes practice!! We have to exercise the pathway in the brain that leads to the rest & digest response (parasympathetic nervous system)**

- **Mindfulness activities to calm the amygdala:**
 - a. **Pay attention to the breath ie. Square breathing**
 - b. **Create awareness of your surroundings ie. Grounding exercise: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.**
 - c. **Practice gratitude with a gratitude journal, jar, or at dinner take turns saying 1 thing you are grateful for that happened today**
 - d. **Cultivate empathy by volunteering together and talking about why it's important.**
- **Focus on 1 task at a time (Don't watch a movie with your kids while checking your emails or Facebook)**
- **Praise the process, not just the outcome**
- **Try to involve all 5 senses to cultivate a relaxing environment**
 - a. **Nice music, b. aromatherapy, c. fuzzy or weighted blanket, d. coloring books/designs, e. favorite candy savored slowly**
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **Visualization**
- **CALM reminder (William J. Kelleher, PhD)**

Chest - breathing slower and deeper

Arms – Shoulders sag, arms and fingers loose

Legs – Loose and flexible (knees slightly bent if standing)

Mouth – Jaw drops, lips and teeth slightly parted