

MINDFUL AWARENESS AND BREATHING

“Paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” - Jon Kabat-Zinn

What is Mindful Awareness?

Research indicates that people who practise living in a state of mindful awareness are happier, healthier and have improved overall wellbeing.

As a parent, practising mindful awareness supports us as we juggle activities and manage stresses, enabling us to enjoy everyday moments with our children.

Being more mindfully aware allows us to see our children more clearly in the present without making judgements or worrying about the future. We develop a greater moment to moment awareness being able to respond to what's happening calmly, empathically and with compassion; think of this as a 'slow track' response.

Children are shaped by how we live. If we can demonstrate mindful awareness and slow track responding, we are modelling skills that are essential for life.

As we increase our mindful awareness we develop the ability to be more attuned to our children. Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, in their book 'Everyday Blessings, Mindfulness for Parents', describe the importance of attunement, having the ability to connect and be present with our children. It's crucial for a healthy parent child relationship. When a parent is attuned to their child, the child feels safe, seen, connected and understood.

The Core Breathing Practice

Breathing can be used to help this slow track responding to calm the amygdala and to develop our ability for focussed attention. Think of the breath as an anchor that grounds us on the ocean floor surrounded by peace and tranquillity, regardless of the waves that continue on the surface. The breath can do the same for us, creating stillness and peace.



We use a core practice called the Brain Break to make mindful awareness more accessible. When our breathing is slow, deep and measured, it signals our body to be calm and grounded. Think of it as increasing our ability to get to the 'slow track'.

Our Brain Break Script:

Use a chime if you have one or anything with a sound that resonates, or just listen to the sounds around you.

- Close your eyes or look down at your hands.
- Take calm, slow breaths. Gently breathe in and out.
- When you hear the chime/sounds, listen to the sound as long as you can. (hit chime - if using - wait until you cannot hear the chime).
- Bring your attention to your breath (pause for 10 seconds).
- Feel your tummy rising and falling (pause for 10 seconds).
- If your mind wanders, that's ok, just try to bring your focus back to your breath (pause for 10 seconds).
- Feel the air coming into your body and going out again (pause for 10 seconds).
- When you hear the chime again, listen as long as you can or listen to any sounds that you can hear.
- When you can't hear the sound any longer, slowly, gently open your eyes (hit chime or listen to sounds).