

Tips for Doing Lions Quest Mindfulness Exercises with Children

At this stage of life, children are separating their opinions from those of their parents and caregivers. Language skills are fairly well-developed and they are getting skilled at expressing their own opinions and feelings verbally. Therefore, the focus of mindfulness exercises at this age is on deep breathing and developing a sense of autonomy and emotional self-regulation and expression.

Mindfulness exercises may be beneficial to practice as a family as well as one-on-one with your child.

Following are simple tips for engaging your child with mindfulness exercises:

TRY OUT THE EXERCISES FOR YOURSELF. It's always best to do the exercises yourself before sharing them with your child so that you are comfortable and familiar with them. By doing these exercises yourself, you may discover that that you are becoming a more patient and responsive parent. Notice how your calm behavior supports the social, emotional, and academic learning needs of your child. Mindfulness is for adults, too!

INTRODUCE MINDFULNESS AS A FUN ACTIVITY. Tell your child that you are going to do something fun together that will help you both feel more peaceful and ready for a good day. Children this age like variety, so make sure the exercises include interesting opportunities to practice quieting the mind and body as well as reflecting together about what your child experienced at the end of the mindfulness exercises.

PARTICIPATE WITH YOUR CHILD. Let your child know that you will be participating in these exercises. Children are much more likely to do these exercises if you share in the experience.

FIND A QUIET AND COMFORTABLE SPACE. Find a place with enough space and no distractions. A quiet space is ideal, as it supports turning the attention inside. Some people like to dim the lights. Turn off all media unless you choose to play soft instrumental music in the background.

PROMOTE AUTONOMY AND CHOICE IN POSTURE AND REFLECTION. Get into a mindful posture, which is generally a comfortable seated position, either in a chair or cross-legged on the floor. You and your child will sit up straight with hands on the thighs. Let your child choose whether to close the eyes or gaze softly toward the floor. Because this age group likes autonomy and choice, you may want to give the option of sitting, lying down, or standing. For lying down or standing, ask your child to find a comfortable position that can be held for up to 10 minutes. At the end of the exercise, let your child choose ways to reflect together—writing, talking, drawing, etc.

CREATE A DAILY HABIT. Young children love routine. Doing a simple mindfulness exercise at the same time every day helps to create a powerful daily habit. Consider doing mindfulness exercises after breakfast or before bed.

