

## Mindfulness and Social and Emotional Learning for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome to the world of mindfulness! We are excited that you have joined us to learn ways to support your own well-being and that of your adolescent. Simple exercises will help you feel more at peace and will enable you and your adolescent to manage the stress of daily life. Following is information about what mindfulness is and how to practice it with your adolescent.

**WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?** Mindfulness is the practice of noticing what we are feeling, thinking, sensing, and doing in the present moment.

**HOW IS MINDFULNESS PRACTICED?** Simple mindfulness practices use an anchor—such as the breath, a bodily sensation, or a feeling—to focus attention. The goal is to focus attention on the anchor and notice when attention drifts. When attention does drift, return your attention to the anchor. Deep breathing is one mindfulness activity that can be practiced to experience an immediate sense of peace and calm.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?** Mindfulness helps us to be our best.

- When you and your adolescent pause and do mindfulness activities together, you both slow your heart rates, which lowers blood pressure and gives a sense of peace and calm.
- Deep breathing and focusing support brain functioning and sharpen the ability to concentrate so that you and your adolescent can relate well and learn together.
- Practicing deep breathing several times per day helps to develop the positive brain habit of pausing and responding with compassion rather than reacting with judgment and anxiousness.
- Pausing and responding with compassion helps to intentionally choose helpful words and actions.

**HOW DOES MINDFULNESS SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?** Mindfulness concentrates primarily on breathing deeply and focusing attention on the present moment, fostering emotional calm and mental clarity. Social and emotional learning (SEL) develops skills and concepts that promote five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Together, these two approaches deepen the ability to understand and manage inner life skills while engaging in relationships and activities in the outer world.

*Mindfulness strengthens our ability to remain calm, respond thoughtfully, and have greater compassion for ourselves and others.*

*Without mindfulness, we tend to be impulsive and reactive, which causes stress and anxiousness that impacts everyone around us.*

