

Parenting in a Pandemic

An Informational Newsletter from Relate Counseling Center

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION



Join two Relate Counseling Center therapists on Tuesday, February 23 from 6-7 pm for a free Facebook Live webinar on how to manage stress through mind and body activities. Simply visit our Facebook page at the designated time to tune into the webinar.



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Tips for Managing Stress to Care for Mind and Body



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These chilly winter months amidst a pandemic have left many of us feeling more emotions and moving around less. We are often hunkered down in our homes, staring at screens, and facing ever-changing stressors. Have you ever paused to notice the connection between your mental and physical health? When your child is hungry or tired, are they ever more irritable? When you are feeling anxious or stressed, do you experience headaches and muscle tension? Do you ever feel more energetic and focused after a brisk walk outside?

Research shows that our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes can positively or negatively affect our biological functioning. The converse is also true – so when we work to improve our physical health, our mind (continued on page 2)



Parenting Tips (contd.)

often follows. Now, more than ever, it is important to intentionally foster a strong connection between our mind and body in an effort to better manage stress. Here are a few tips to help you and your family get started:

Know Your Stress Responses: Stress is the body's response to any demand placed upon it. This response has physical, psychological, and behavioral components and can present very differently depending upon the person. The first key for managing stress is knowing you are stressed. Be aware of your warning signs and what symptoms typically show up when you feel stressed.

Check-In: Practice bringing your awareness to your experience in the present moment with a quick check-in. Notice your thoughts, feelings, body sensations, surroundings, behaviors. Take 2-minutes to ask yourself or help your child reflect, "How do I feel in my body right now?" and "What emotions am I experiencing?" Being able to feel how your body responds and holds onto emotions is an important step. Make it a routine and check in throughout the day.

Prioritize Sleep: Lack of sleep can interfere with your ability to think rationally, make good decisions and cope with stressful situations. Skipping sleep may give you more hours in the day, but it can increase your risk of getting sick or feeling depressed or anxious. Try experimenting with your sleep schedule and create a "wind-down" routine that works for you. Planning ahead and prioritizing can help you get the sleep you need. If you struggle with falling asleep, try listening to a sleep meditation, limiting screen-time before bed, or practicing a deep-breathing relaxation technique.

Practice Mindfulness: Contrary to common belief, mindfulness doesn't only happen during meditation. Rather, mindfulness can really be completed anytime, anywhere, as long as you are shifting into a mindset of observing with curiosity and without judgment. For example, mindful walking occurs when a person notices what it feels like to take each step. It involves observing what one's feet feel when walking and rolling from heel to toe. Try practicing incorporating mindfulness into your daily activities. Take a mindful moment at home by observing together with your child and appreciate all the sounds, sights, colors, and other sensations that you are experiencing in that moment. With practice, you will continue to build your "mindfulness muscle" and may experience the some of the many benefits of mindfulness, such as improved mood, immune system, emotional regulation, focus, and resilience.

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Parenting Resource Corner:



Mindfulness + COVID-19 Stress:
[Check out this article](#) for a great list of tips on how mindfulness can help families manage COVID-19 stress.



Using Essential Oils for Wellness:
Curious about why essential oils are so popular? Turns out, there's a lot of research supporting their efficacy in managing anxiety, depression and stress. [Read more about integrating essential oils into your daily wellness practice.](#)



Mindfulness YouTube videos:
We asked our therapists for their favorite mindfulness YouTube videos to use with kids in therapy. Here's what they shared with us:

- [Butterfly body scan](#)
- [Bulldog finds his quiet place](#)
- [Rainbow relaxation](#)
- [Belly breathing for children](#)
- [Secret treehouse guided meditation](#)