

Mindfulness

Remember “emotional flooding” and how it makes us feel? When emotions and stress start piling up, it becomes difficult to think clearly. Our heart can start racing, palms become sweaty, and we feel the urge to react (**Lizard Brain**). This flooding occurs in both children and adults, and it can take up to 30 minutes before our emotions return to normal. It’s important for parents to learn how to relax and switch their brains back to **Wizard** mode so they don’t overreact and so they can teach their children how to do the same.

Mindfulness Bottle

- Imagine for a moment that this bottle represents our minds.
- Right now it is calm and still, and we are able to think clearly.
- However, throughout the day what events or stressors might start to stir it up?
- Shake up the bottle and imagine the glitter in the jar is you or your child’s thoughts, feelings, worries, and distractions. This is how our minds are when we are in a hurry, angry, stressed or upset. With all this distraction it’s almost impossible to make good decisions.
- What can we do? Research has shown that taking a time-out and forcing our breathing to slow down reduces stress and anxiety and helps us to focus and make better choices.

STAR TECHNIQUE

S = Stop what you are doing

T = Take a deep breath

A = Accept the moment

R = Relax your body

4~7~8 BREATHING

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of 4
- Hold your breath for a count of 7
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of 8
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times.

What is the water like now?

Our thoughts and feelings may still be in the bottle, but we can get them to rest at the bottom as we relax and breathe through them. When you pay attention to your breathing, you shift your focus away from your emotions and thoughts. Instead of worrying about the future or the past, you focus your mind on breathing and reduce the distractions in your brain. Once we clear our minds, we are able to make wiser decisions that will help instead of hurt us and those around us. Try this at home with your children.

Make your Own Mindfulness Bottle

1. Fill bottle half way full with warm water.
2. Add fine glitter until there is a 1/2 inch layer of glitter at the bottom of the bottle.
3. Add 2-4 tablespoons of clear school glue.
4. Fill the rest of the bottle with warm water, leaving an inch of airspace at the top.
5. Place glue inside the threads of the bottle lid and screw it on tight.



- Make a mindfulness bottle for each person in the house and keep them in a handy spot.
- Shake your bottle and practice calm breathing even when you aren't feeling stressed.
- The more you practice, the more it will become second nature to grab your mindfulness bottle when you or your child feel the need to calm down or take a time-out.