Mindful Parents, Mindful Families: Effective Parenting in Trying Times

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PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Thinking Brain

AMYGDALA

Feeling Brain
Emotional arousal

Request for validation

Environment responds with effective validation

Decrease in emotional arousal
Emotional arousal \rightarrow Request for validation

Environment responds with **ineffective** validation
- Ignoring or dismissing emotional response
- Punishing emotional response
- Blaming emotional response on character flaw

\rightarrow Increase in emotional arousal \rightarrow Increase in dysregulation

Repeated cycles eventually lead to validation
What is mindfulness?

- Freedom from having to have what you want all the time.
- Freedom from having to change anything or anyone.
- Paying attention in a particular way, in the here and now, the present moment.
- The opposite of autopilot.
- *The opposite of problem solving.*
OBSERVE: Just notice. Teflon mind versus Velcro mind

DESCRIBE: What you observe, without interpretation.

PARTICIPATE: Entering completely into the present moment with both mind and body.

NON-JUDGEMENTAL: Judgment categorizes something as good or bad, moves away from the facts.

ONE-MINDFUL: Do one thing at a time and with all your attention.

EFFECTIVE: Letting go of being right and focusing on what works. Deal with the situation you are in and not the situation you would like it to be.
Mindfulness = Validation

1. We listen to hear, not to respond
2. We can repeat back what he/she is saying
3. We can imagine how he/she is feeling
4. If what he/she is feeling is typical, we tell him/her so.
5. We connect the dots -- we relate this experience to an experience he/she has had before.

6. We believe he/she can manage his/her emotions!

We do not fragilize.
Sometimes all we can do is accept

- Acceptance does not mean approving of the problem
- Acceptance does not mean being passive by giving in or giving up

- Acceptance means:
  - Reality is as it is
  - Everything has a cause
  - I can manage even if I have pain
  - I commit to not making the problem worse by staying miserable and fighting reality
Develop a family frame based on your unique and individual values as a family
BECOME FLUENT IN YOUR FAMILY’S EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE
“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, even you.”

Anne Lamott