Practical Use of Relaxation for Children with Anxious and/or Depressive Symptoms

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“Mindfulness meditation means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

- Mindfulness, meditation and relaxation will be used interchangeably
Meditation does not exclusively belong to any one religion or philosophy;

- **Buddhism** (approx. 500 BCE)
- **Indigenous Religions**
- **Hinduism** (approx. 2400 BCE)
- **Judaism** (approx. 2000-1000 BCE)
- **Christianity** (approx. 4 BCE)
- **Islam** (6th Century)
Guided Imagery

Yoga

Progressive Relaxation

Breathing Exercises

Mantra

Five minute observation
Guided Imagery: setting up the space

- Deep breaths
- Quiet place
- Good exercise for bedtime
- Speak slowly and softly
- Take your time
- Talk through the visualization

Guided Imagery Exercise

- Setting up the scenario

4-8 years old
Guided Imagery
Group Discussion Questions:

~How did this exercise make you feel?

~How do you feel this exercise would benefit children?

~Do you feel this exercise would be a helpful tool for you?
Benefits of Meditation:

- Calming
- Increase in concentration
- Helps with emotion regulation
- Feelings of success
- Increase attention span
- Redirects behavior & emotion

4-8 years old
Developmental Stages: Middle Childhood (ages 6-12)

- **Bio/Physical**
  - Growing 2 in – 3 in./yr
  - Fat tissue developing > Muscle
  - Gross motor skills
  - Optic nerve growth

- **Cognitive (Piaget) – 1972**
  - 18 mo., 7 yrs, 12 yrs.
  - Think logically about objects
    - Conservation
    - Numbers (age 6)
    - Mass (age 7)
    - Weight (age 9)
Self-Instructional Training

- Adult demonstrate, question and assess out loud
- Child imitates
- Repeat again, using whisper
- Child imitates using whisper
- Perform in ways that are not perfect to teach child how to cope with errors
Guided Imagery Techniques:
- Relaxation exercise
- Speak slowly and softly
- Take your time
- Talk through the visualization

Guided Imagery Exercise
- Set the stage...
9-12 year olds
Meditation: Group Discussion Questions

~Share with your group the mindfulness experience.

~How do you feel this exercise would benefit children?

~Do you feel this exercise would be a helpful tool for you?
Benefits of Meditation

- Lengthens child’s attention span
- Develops depth of interest
- Emotional regulation
- Self-soothing
- Ability to cope in a healthy manner
Adolescence (ages 13-22)

- Puberty
  - Hormones (Catalyst/Regulates)
  - 1 yr before visible physical changes occur
  - Early onset boys – peer relationships, confident, athletic
  - Early onset girls – struggle academically, behavior problems

- Brain Development cont. through puberty
  - Impulses faster
  - Improve problem solving
  - Improve coordination
  - Frontal lobe grows
    - Planning, problem solving, judgment
  - Amygdala – emotional response expanding
    - Reading emotion of fear as anger
Cognitive (Piaget)

- Formal Operations
  - Think logically about abstract and hypothetical
  - Consolidates new info into existing knowledge
How to Teach

- Encourage achievement
- Promote competency and independence
- Provide peer and parental support
- Develop coping skills
- Work to accept good performance, not perfect performance
- Moral development (reciprocal respect, empathy, compassion, spirituality)
Mindfulness Meditation Techniques:
- Identify negative self-talk
- Identify physical symptoms
- Lack of concentration/clarity

Instant Release Meditation
- Setting up the stage...
Benefits of Mindfulness~

- Gained clarity
- Acceptance of self
- Increased compassion for others
- Increased concentration
- Self-control
- Reduced physical symptoms of anxiety
What is a Mental Health Diagnosis?

- All experience times of depression and/or anxiety
- Normal emotions
- Interfering with Home, School, and/or Community setting = Diagnosis
Depression

- Feels sad or empty
- Appears tearful
- Diminished interest or pleasure
- Weight loss
- Insomnia or hyper insomnia
- Fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate
Mood Disorders (Depression)

- Major Depressive Disorder (episode = 2 wks > 1 episode)
- Dysthymic Disorder (low grade, long term)
- Depressive Disorder NOS
- Bipolar Disorder
- Mood Disorder Due to General Medical Condition
- Substance-Induced Mood Disorder
- Mood Disorder NOS
Anxiety

- Excessive worry, difficult to control, unfocused
- Restlessness
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep Disturbances (difficulty falling asleep or having restful sleep)
Anxiety Disorders

- Panic Attack
- Agoraphobia (avoid places, situations)
- Specific phobia
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety (6 months of excessive anxiety or worry)
- Anxiety Disorder Due to General Medical Condition
- Substance-Induced Anxiety Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder NOS
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and relaxation techniques yield successful outcomes. For children of all ages and adults relaxation/mindfulness techniques are a major component in avoiding worry and anxiety (Harvey & Payne, 2002; Ree, Harvey et al 2005).
26 controlled trials in which relaxation was found to be generally superior to other modes of interventions including psychological treatments (Jorm & Christensen & Griffiths & Parslow & Rodgers & Blewitt, 2004).
A powerful mandate in the U.S. for provision of mental health care.

Contributes to the knowledge and advancement of care and prevention of mental health illnesses.

Increase the need for effectiveness in mental health interventions based on rigorous scientific research (Aisenberg, 2008).
CBT is a practical and efficient way to teach and support children and families with coping and managing symptoms of mental illness in the home.
Many research has been conducted and there is compiling empirical support for CBT which deem it a medically sound pediatric intervention (Compton et al., 2004).

CBT has more evidence from well-controlled research showing that it works for specified disorders than any other treatment.

Approximately 80% of the treatments for specific disorders (for both adults and children) characterized as having research support fall within the CBT class (Chambless & Ollendick, 2001).
Examples of CBT Interventions:

- Positive Self-Talk/Self-Affirmations
- Scaling
- Journaling
- Self-monitoring
- Restructuring thoughts
- Relaxation Techniques
Self-Care Tips for Parents

- Be patient with yourself
- Enjoy a hobby ~ You time.
- Take a walk
- Remember that you are learning just as your child is learning
- Build supportive connections with others
- Breathe
Self-Care Tips for Parents (Cont.)

- Inspire yourself with art and nature
- Listen to music
- Tap into your spirituality
- Be kind to yourself
- Plan mini-escapes
- Read and play


