

Practicing Present Moment Awareness to Promote Wellness

Heather Kunz
MSW, CSW

Salt Lake County Health Department
Parents as Teachers

Goals for Presentation

- Why Mindfulness matters
- How it connects to infant trauma
- Inspire YOU to practice mindfulness

WELCOME

- My journey and what I do now in home visiting
- Common words that can describe practicing present moment awareness
- Favorite definition of mindfulness
- Supporting professionals, that support families, that support infants with trauma
- We can all benefit from mindfulness
- Benefits of Mindfulness
- Story from PAT Program
- Short two minute Video
- Information and tools to use with families

My Personal Journey

- Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) 2014
- Master of Social Work (MSW) 2016
- Certified Social Worker (CSW) 2016
- 7+ years of practicing and researching present moment awareness
- Salt Lake County Health Department
- Parents as Teachers Supervisor
- Home visitation programs
- Parents as Teachers/Protective factors are a huge part
- Nurse Family Partnership

Common Words Used to Describe Present Moment Awareness

- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Presence
- Attention
- Awake
- Connection
- Awareness
- Grounding
- **I tend to use the words mindfulness and present moment awareness interchangeably**
-

One of My Favorite Definitions of Mindfulness

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

Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Supporting Professionals, that Support Families, that Support Infants with trauma

- My experience supervising professionals who work directly with families that have many challenges with trauma
- How professionals can be supported to work with families that have infants who've experienced trauma
- Mindfulness and meditation are such a huge/broad topic of research, practice and study.
- I'm only giving the smallest, tiny, sliver of the pie. I hope to inspire each of you to learn more!
- Get curious about mindfulness!

We Can All Benefit From Mindfulness

Anyone can benefit from practicing present moment awareness!

Including, but not limited to this audience:

Professionals who work with infants and their families (but don't necessarily have a clinical mental health degree), including early intervention specialists, home visitors, those working in childcare, medical professionals, and anyone else working with infants and families!

Reducing stress and building connection/relationships

It all ties back to the five protective factors

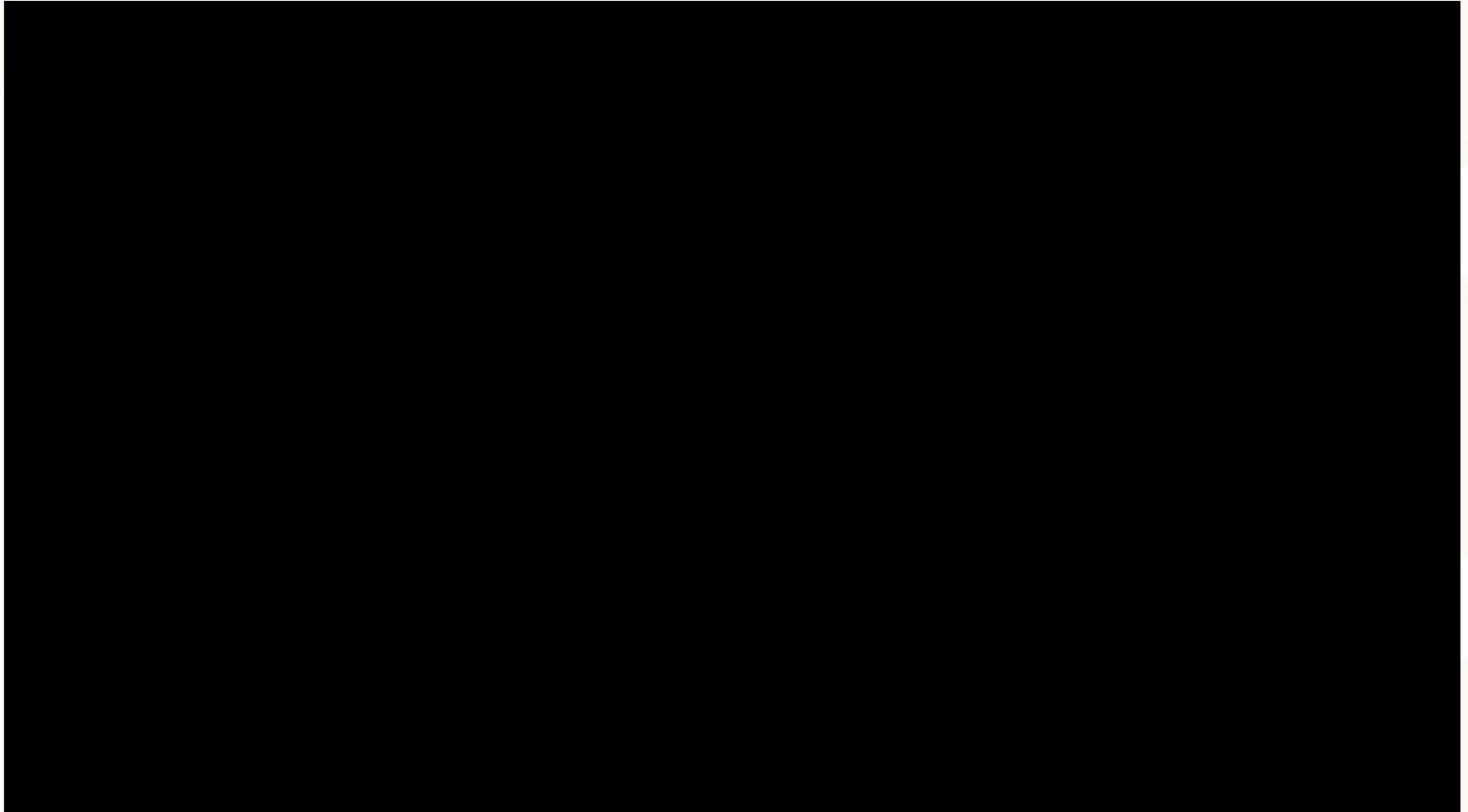
Benefits of Mindfulness

- Decreased stress and psychological distress in adults and employees
- Enhanced mental health and functioning
- Increased emotion regulation and self-control
- Decreased anxiety, depression, worry, and rumination
- Improved social and relational skills
- Reduction in aggression and problem behaviors in children
- Reduced symptoms of burnout in employees
- Decrease in turnover and turnover intentions at work
- Enhanced job performance
- Increased ability to cope with bullying
- Enhanced resilience in children

The 23 Amazing Health Benefits of Mindfulness for Body and Brain." *Positive Psychology Program*, 6 Mar. 2017, positivepsychologyprogram.com/benefits-of-mindfulness/.

Story about a family with an infant that had experienced acute trauma and how they have benefited from practicing Mindfulness

Meditation 101: A Beginners Guide



Information and Tools to use with Families

- Evidence-based Research of MBI's
- Mindfulness-based Interventions (MBI)
- Mindful Childbirth and Parenting
- A Definition of Mindful Parenting
- Six Reasons WHY mindfulness can help parents
- Promoting wellness
- Maternal Mental Health and MBI's
- Window of Tolerance chart to explain Polyvagal Theory
- Be present with the five senses exercise to practice
- Self compassion
- Loving Kindness Meditation
- Mindfulness for children
- How Mindfulness Supports the Five Protective Factors
- Suggestions for expansion
- Why PRACTICE Mindfulness

Evidence-based research of MBI's

“Presenting with common mental health difficulties, particularly depression and anxiety, there is also preliminary evidence that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCCT), mindfulness-stress reduction (MBSR) and integrated mindfulness yoga practices may also be effective in reducing common mental health difficulties during pregnancy.”

Shi, Zhenrong, and Angus Macbeth. "The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Interventions on Maternal Perinatal Mental Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review." *Mindfulness* 8.4 (2017): 823-47. Web.

Mindfulness-based Interventions (MBI's)

- Mindfulness-based Cognitive therapy (MBCT)
- Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting (MBCP) Formal adaption from MBSR
- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Mindful Childbirth and Parenting

“Mindfulness-based interventions delivered to the family unit during pregnancy may be one way to effectively influence aspects of the stress response that can in turn influence maternal-fetal health and family relationships. Laying a foundation of healthy coping through mindfulness instruction during the perinatal period of family formation may promote family resilience across the life span, effectively placing new families on a healthier developmental trajectory than they might otherwise have experienced.”

Duncan et al. BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth (2017)17:140

Definition of Mindful Parenting

“Jon Kabat-Zinn (1997) defines mindful parenting as: “paying attention to your child and your parenting in a particular way: intentionally, here and now, and non-judgmentally”

Mindful Parenting: Six Reasons Why Mindfulness Can Help Parents

- (1) reducing parental stress;
- (2) reducing parental preoccupation resulting from parental and/or child psychopathology;
- (3) improving parental executive functioning in impulsive parents;
- (4) breaking the cycle of repeating dysfunctional own upbringing schemes and habits;
- (5) increasing self-nourishing attention; and
- (6) improving marital functioning and co-parenting.

Mindfulness (2010) 1:107–120

Promoting wellness

- Trauma and mindfulness-based interventions
- Parents with mindfulness skills are able to better support infants with trauma and the process of healing
- Awareness of one's own stress level will be the most important factor in caring for an infant that has experience trauma
- Emotional awareness and infant attachment
- Having awareness of your own emotions to build trust with infant

Promoting wellness continued

- Love and kindness or Metta meditation
- Self-compassion
- Positive affirmations
- Self-care with mindfulness
- Cultivating Empathy
- Practicing Gratitude
- Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

Maternal Mental Health and Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI)

- Complex when the caregiver or parent is having their own trauma or any Postpartum challenges while caring for an infant with trauma
- Many studies supporting mindfulness based interventions for anxiety and depression
- Maternal mental health is an entire training alone, however know that mindfulness is an important consideration in this area

Window of Tolerance Chart to Explain Polyvagal Theory

- I like to explain Dr. Porges Polyvagal Theory to people from this window of tolerance chart by, Dr. Marie Dezelic
- It seems to break it down in a tangible way as it relates to mindfulness
- How mindfulness can help you be in the “comfort zone” or “social engagement” as we learned earlier

Using the five senses to practice mindfulness



Be Present with the Senses Exercise

- Five things you can see
- Four things you can feel/touch
- Three things you can hear
- Two things you smell
- One thing you can taste

Self-Compassion

“Self-compassion involves treating yourself with the same kindness, concern and support you’d show to a good friend. When faced with difficult life struggles, or confronting personal mistakes, failures, and inadequacies, self-compassion responds with kindness rather than harsh self-judgment, recognizing that imperfection is part of the shared human experience.”

Neff, Kristin D., and Katie A. Dahm. “Self-Compassion: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Relates to Mindfulness.” *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation*, 2015, pp. 121–137., doi:10.1007/978-1-4939-2263-5_10.

Loving-kindness Mindfulness Exercise

- May I be free from inner and outer harm and danger.
- May I be safe and protected.
- May I be free of mental suffering or distress.
- May I be happy.
- May I be free of physical pain and suffering.
- May I be healthy and strong.
- May I be able to live in this world happily, peacefully, joyfully, with ease.

www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/loving-kindness.

Mindfulness for Children

“Research in this field is preliminary, however scientific studies suggest that children who practice yoga-based movement, conscious breathing, and mindfulness/meditation activities are better able to regulate their emotions, manage stress and calm themselves.”

Yoga 4 Classrooms®.” *Yoga 4 Classrooms® | Research | Supporting Research Resources*, www.yoga4classrooms.com/supporting-research.

How Mindfulness Supports the Five Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

A great way to remember the five protective factors

How to remember the 5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS that make your family strong.

Use your Thumb to remember **Social & Emotional Competence of Children** because a "thumbs up" is one of the first ways we learn to communicate our emotions.

Your Index Finger represents **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development** because you are your child's **1st** teacher!

Your Middle Finger can help you remember **Social Connections** because it should never stand alone! We all need a positive social network.

Your Ring Finger stands for **Parental Resilience** because your first commitment must be to yourself in order to be strong for others.

Your Pinky Finger signifies **Concrete Support in Times of Need** because it is the smallest finger and reminds us that we all need help sometimes.

strengthening families

GREAT START COLLABORATIVE
Charlevoix, Emmet
Northern-Antrim Counties

Suggestions for expansion

- Practice present moment awareness through one of the five senses
- Get curious about mindfulness and create your own exercises
- Loving Kindness meditations to cultivate self-compassion
- Connecting through presence to support calm
- Honoring the moment with your loving presence
- Refer back to the five protective factors and how they intersect

Why Practice Present Moment Awareness?

The more I practice,
the more I remember to practice,
and the more I remember to practice,
the stronger that part of my brain
becomes!

References

- L. Psychogiou, et al. *Self-Compassion and Parenting in Mothers and Fathers with Depression*. 3 May 2016.
- L. Psychogiou, et al. "Mindful with Your Baby: Feasibility, Acceptability, and Effects of a Mindful Parenting Group Training for Mothers and Their Babies in a Mental Health Context." doi:10.1007/s12671-016-0528-6.
- Larissa G. Duncan, and Nancy Bardacke. "Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting Education: Promoting Family Mindfulness During the Perinatal Period." doi:10.1007/s10826-009-9313-7.
- Dezelic, Marie S., and Gabriel Ghanoum. *Trauma Treatment: Healing the Whole Person: Meaning-centered Therapy & Trauma Treatment Foundational Phase-work Manual*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Dezelic & Associates, 2016. Print.
- Shi, Zhenrong, and Angus Macbeth. "The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Interventions on Maternal Perinatal Mental Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review." *Mindfulness* 8.4 (2017): 823-47. Web.
- Psychogiou, L., et al. "Self-Compassion and Parenting in Mothers and Fathers with Depression." *Mindfulness*, vol. 7, no. 4, Mar. 2016, pp. 896–908., doi:10.1007/s12671-016-0528-6
- Neff, Kristin. *Self-Compassion: the Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*. William Morrow, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2015.
- Neff, Kristin D., and Katie A. Dahm. "Self-Compassion: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Relates to Mindfulness." *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation*, 2015, pp. 121–137., doi:10.1007/978-1-4939-2263-5_10.
- www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree/loving-kindness
- Harris, director. *Meditation 101: A Beginner's Guide*. Happify, GobbyInne, 24 June 2015
- Yoga 4 Classrooms®." *Yoga 4 Classrooms® | Research | Supporting Research Resources*, www.yoga4classrooms.com/supporting-research.
- The 23 Amazing Health Benefits of Mindfulness for Body and Brain." *Positive Psychology Program*, 6 Mar. 2017, positivepsychologyprogram.com/benefits-of-mindfulness/.