

Curriculum Framework on Parent Education (Kindergarten)

Mindful Parenting

Notes for Parents

Exploring Yourself (I)

A. Please list 3 challenges that you have encountered in the parenting process.

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B. Please list 3 of your personal strengths that you have discovered in the parenting process.

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Exploring Yourself (II)

Developmental Experience: Your Personal Past

1. How was your childhood experience? Who are the members in your family?
2. Can you describe your relationships with your parents? Have you ever tried to make yourself similar to or different from your parents?
3. Was/Were there any childhood event(s) that was/were traumatic or overwhelming? How much do you still remember? How do these memories affect your life?
4. What was the hardest thing you had to go through in your childhood?
5. How were you raised as a child? How has this experience influenced your way of parenting?
6. How did your parents communicate with you when you were happy or excited? Did they respond to your feelings and share your joy? How did your parents react when you were frustrated or unhappy? Were you “allowed” to feel your emotions?
7. In your opinion, how has your childhood affected your interpersonal relationships as an adult? Are there any behavioural patterns that you would like to change but you find difficult to do so? If so, what are they?
8. In conclusion, how did your childhood affect your adult life, including the way you perceived yourself and your relationship with your child?
9. If you could go back in time and change your childhood, what would you like to change?
10. Please think about a period of hardship in your childhood. If you could go back in time, what would you like to know? Now close your eyes and imagine yourself as a child and that you are providing support for your own self.

Parental Experience: Your Present Self

1. What kind of parent do you want to be?
2. Can you describe the relationship between you and your child? Have you ever tried to make your child similar to or different from you? If yes, what have you tried to do?
3. How do you upbringing your child? In your opinion, how does your developmental experience affect your way of parenting?
4. How do you communicate with your child when you are happy or excited? Do they echo your feelings and share your joy? How do they respond when you are frustrated or unhappy? Are they “allowed” to feel their emotions?
5. What strengths do you think you have as a parent?
6. What struggles do you face as a parent?
7. How do you handle the challenges you face in life? Please list some strategies that are beneficial for and harmful to your health, respectively.
8. What are your weaknesses? Instead of criticizing yourself for your flaws, try having some compassion for yourself.

Close your eyes and practise a short meditation of care:
“May happiness, health, and peace be with me.
May I feel relaxed.”

What is Mindfulness?

A. What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the awareness of what you are doing at every moment. You may be absorbed in reading these few pages, or you may be reading with a distracted mind. It is also possible that you may not even realise you are reading. Mindfulness can be applied to all activities except for sleeping. For example, all our senses may be fully engaged while eating. However, we may not be able to truly taste the food if we are preoccupied with thoughts related to the past or future while eating.

We may focus on the following four aspects:

Thinking	“ I must be stupid in behaving like this”
Feeling	Distress, anger, anxiety, fear, etc.
Behaviour	Attack, inhibition, breathing practice
Physical changes	Rapid breaths, dizziness, numbness in limbs, and regurgitation, etc.

Features of Mindfulness

Pause for a while

Pay attention

Realise what is happening at the moment

Do not judge what is happening at the moment as either “good” or “bad”

B. What are the benefits of mindfulness?

Your mind is like the other parts of your life. Learning and practising to improve your mind will be advantageous to you. Mindfulness practice has the following notable benefits:

Stabilizing your mind	Keeps your mind in a stable and focused condition, so that it does not swing between the extreme states of boredom and annoyance.
Alerting your mind	Orients your mind toward any designated issues, instead of letting it jump around from one issue to another.
Self-consciousness	Helps you become more aware of the content of your mind so as to better understand your typical thinking pattern.
Respond instead of React	<p>When you encounter an issue that needs to be managed, you may react accordingly, without having the time to consider whether your reaction is appropriate or not. With a brain that never stops working, you may always be preoccupied with evaluating the past or worrying about the future. Such preoccupation may predispose you to view and experience facts, reasons, and outcomes in a negative manner.</p> <p>Mindfulness helps you react in a more peaceful way. For example, when you are angry, mindfulness helps you arrive at an appropriate response. Mindfulness is not a futile practice. Like any other forms of psychotherapy, you need to practise consistently and persistently to achieve real changes. In terms of mindfulness, you may need to practise 6 times a week.</p>
Doing something for your child vs. being with your child	Most of us live in “doing mode”. You may continually set goals and expectations for both your child and yourself. For example, you may need to help your child prepare for tests on the next day, monitor your child’s homework on returning home and finish several other tasks for the week. You constantly feel that you need to prepare in advance. In contrast to the “doing mode”, the “being mode” implies that the parents are not required to prepare or manage tasks. Instead, you can just simply understand your own and your child’s feeling and mind through observations, and take that moment in a non-judgmental way.

<p>Judgmental attitude vs. non-judgmental attitude</p>	<p>Everyone wants to be seen and fully accepted. However, based on their personal experiences and expectations in close relationships, people typically adopt a judgmental attitude when they communicate with others, with no exceptions in parenting.</p> <p>Acceptance without judgment means that you accept your own and your child’s personalities, traits, and behaviours, and try to understand and accept the events happening at the moment, including the struggles in parent-child relationships. Acceptance does not mean that you completely identify with your child’s misbehaviour, instead it means that you fundamentally accept your child. At the same time, you can still explain to them the expected behaviours of them given the social-cultural expectations and their developmental stages.</p>
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C. Stop “automatic” behaviour

This activity aims to include mindfulness in your daily life.

i. **Choose one “automatic” activity that you do on a daily basis.**

Suitable activities include brushing teeth, eating, showering, preparing for sleep, having a walk in the park, etc. We suggest that you stick with that particular activity for at least a week instead of switching between activities.

ii. **When it is time for the activity, please engage in it with sufficient mindfulness.**

You should pay attention to the activity itself and everything that is happening at each moment during the activity. For example, when you are brushing your teeth, feel the texture of the bristles of the toothbrush on your teeth and gums. You may also listen to the sound of brushing your teeth, as well as feel the taste of the toothpaste. Just like when you are doing the breathing practice, if you realise that you are distracted, please bring your attention back to the sensations and feelings related to the brushing of your teeth within 1 or 2 seconds.

iii. If the activity you choose lasts more than a few minutes, for example, having a meal or having a walk in the park, **please practise mindfulness during the first few minutes of the activity.** Pay attention to what you see, listen, and smell. You should also feel your clothing in contact with your body when you walk.

iv. Your overall goal is to pay attention to the instant sensation of “seeing”, “listening”, “smelling”, “tasting” and “touching”. You may focus on your own emotions and bodily feeling at all times, for example, rapid breathing and tensed muscles.

v. Upon completion of the activity, try to maintain your mindfulness as you move on to the next activity.

Incorporate Mindfulness in Your Morning Routine

Choose one activity that you do as part of your everyday morning routine, for example, brushing your teeth, shaving, or showering. Concentrate on what is happening at each moment when you are engaging in that activity: body movement, taste, tactile sensation, scent, sound, etc.

For example, when you are showering, pay attention to how the water spurts from the showerhead and drips over your body. Listen to the pattering sound when the water goes into the pipe. Feel the water temperature. Pay attention to how the water stays on your hair, shoulder, and how it trickles down your thighs. Smell and feel the consistency of the soap and shampoo when you apply them on your body and hair. Pay attention to the water droplets on the wall or curtain, the droplets gliding over your skin, as well as the rising steam. Concentrate on your arm movements when you are cleansing your body and applying shampoo.

Please admit and accept other thoughts that may arise, but at the same time, try to bring your attention back to showering. You will be distracted again and again. Whenever you notice any distracting thoughts, please gently accept them and bring your attention back again to showering.

A. Perform mindfulness practice when doing housework

- i. Choose one household chore, for example, ironing clothes, washing dishes, or vacuum cleaning, and practise mindfulness while engaging in the chore.
- ii. For example, when ironing clothes, pay attention to the colour and shape of the clothes, observe the patterns created by the creases and the new patterns after ironing. Listen to the hissing sound of the steam, the squeaking sound of the ironing board, and the faint sound of the iron moving along the clothes. Feel the force when you are holding the iron, together with the movements of your arm and shoulder.
- iii. If you feel bored or frustrated, please admit and accept the emotions and bring your attention back to the work on hand again. Acknowledge any other thoughts and emotions as they arise but you do not need to intentionally change them. You just need to bring your attention back to what you are doing at the moment.
- iv. You will be distracted again and again. Whenever you realise the distraction, please gently take note of and accept it, and bring your attention back again to the activity that you are engaging in at the moment.

B. Ten breaths

- i. Please remember to make time during the day to pause for a while and practise taking ten slow, deep breaths. Exhale as slowly as possible, until you feel that all the air in your lungs has been expelled. Consciously use your diaphragm to breathe.
- ii. Please pay attention to the emptied lungs, falling chest, and expanding abdomen when exhaling.
- iii. Pay attention to the thoughts that may arise during the process and to your bodily feelings.
- iv. Please observe the arising thoughts and feelings without judging whether they are good or bad. It is not necessary to try to change, escape from, or attach to them. The only thing you need to do is to observe.
- v. Focus on observing the thoughts and feelings just the way they are with tolerance and acceptance. Feel the experience associated with these thoughts and feelings.

C. Focus on five items

This is a simple exercise that may help you find your focus again and better connect with the external environment. You may perform the exercise at any time during the day, especially when you feel trapped by intrusive thoughts and feelings.

- i. Pause for a while.
- ii. Look around and pay attention to 5 things you see.
- iii. Listen carefully to 5 sounds you hear.
- iv. Pay attention to the feelings of 5 touches on your body, for example, the watch on your wrist, the pants on your legs, the air on your face, the feeling of your feet on the floor, and the feeling of your back leaning against the chair.

Mindful Parenting

Parenting may be one of the most stressful, demanding and challenging roles among the various roles in life. Uncertainties and hesitations are inherent in the parenting process, but it is also a meaningful and valuable experience that may be life-transforming. How we perceive the parenting process depends on whether we think of it as a positive or negative experience.

Most parents tend to “automatically” react to their child’s behaviours, rather than paying attention to their child and thoroughly processing the situation at that moment. Parenting may be described as a subjective action that is affected by various internal and external factors. As time passes, we tend to react automatically and focus on the consequences instead of engaging in the activity at the moment. Past habits and reflexive behaviours will over time result in a particular type of parenting style.

Through establishing a mindset of self-awareness and behavioural patterns, parents may consider adopting mindfulness when they interact with their child.

A. The principles of mindful parenting

The relationships between children and their parents or caregivers change from time to time in accordance with children’s experiences and developmental stages. Therefore, the parenting process also changes and evolves continuously. Mindful parenting involves accepting the child’s uniqueness and letting them know that they are always loved.

Over-expectation is a common stumbling block in the parenting process. Parents tend to react automatically to children’s behaviours and performance in many aspects, such as academics, sports performance, physical appearance rather than sincerely respond to the current situation.

Discipline is crucial to children’s development. However, parents should execute discipline with care and love for their child. They should also engage and participate wholeheartedly so that they can enjoy every moment with their child.

The key to mindful parenting is to help parents understand their child so that their parenting behaviours will not be unduly influenced by their personal fears, expectations, or anxiety. As parents, we sometimes automatically or even radically react to our child; such behaviour is not conducive to his/her healthy development. Unfortunately, many parenting behaviours are associated with creating or fulfilling certain “acceptable” or “reasonable” parental expectations. Children raised by parents who adopt such parenting style will grow to become people-pleasers, instead of healthy, independent adults who are happy and confident.

Mindful parenting helps children make proactive and responsible decisions. There are many dual-earner couples nowadays. Most of them do not have as much time to spend with their child when compared to a few years ago. They have no choice but to handle the household chores with the limited time they have. We should review the problems associated with reactive parenting and replace it with a parenting style that features mindfulness, care and love, involvement and engagement to keep up with the dynamic pace of the modern world.

B. Key points about mindfulness and involved parenting

Parents should establish self-discipline before teaching their kids

The modern parenting style encourages parents to learn and practise the principles of self-discipline. Parents should learn to observe and love themselves so that they can get along with their child in a calm, steady and interconnected way, instead of a habitual and reactive way. This kind of parenting helps reduce the child's need and desire to please their parents — a tendency that proves beneficial only to the parents.

Calm and peaceful introspection can help promote your self-awareness, which in turn gives the parent-child relationship greater clarity. On the other hand, the continuous practice of reactive parenting will be transmitted to the next generation, meaning that your child will adopt the same parenting style to raise and communicate with their child when they become parents one day.

It is worth noting that the child will change upon parents' influence and vice versa.

The difference between mindful parenting and habitual reward and punishment

The impact of habitual reward and punishment is at most unclear. In the book, *Unconditional Parenting*, Alfie Kohn listed the adverse effects of this parenting style with the support of concrete research and figures.

Regardless of the performance and accomplishments in their lives, children should believe that they are loved and accepted unconditionally. This cognitive belief helps nurture the child, so that they may grow up to be a healthy, happy, and responsible adult.

Therefore, parents should always show care, love, and acceptance to their child without relating these to the child's accomplishments. You may be surprised to learn that positive reward is actually a form of "conditional acceptance". Parenting with punishment, anger, and punitive reactions instills fear in children, which hinders their learning. These children may be afraid of exploring the unknown. They lack confidence and flinch in the face of challenges. When they grow up, they may think in one way, feel it the second way, and act in the third way in the course of time. Simply speaking, their personality becomes scattered and incoherent when they grow up.

However, with mindful parenting, involved and engaged parents can help their child experience happiness and confidence, because the child is confident that they are loved unconditionally.

Learn to mind your verbal expression

As parents, we may sometimes blurt out words that hurt our child when we feel disappointed, angry, or frustrated, and feel guilty afterwards. Inappropriate verbal expression may have adverse effects on your child's self-esteem and confidence.

What we say to our child will have crucial influence on their development and growth. Therefore, we need to be very careful with our verbal expression when we speak to them. Try to adopt mindfulness and an involved attitude to change negative expression into positive ones.

For example:

Please say "Would you like to do your homework now?" instead of "Why are you still not doing your homework?"

Please say "We can only go to school after you finish your breakfast." instead of "Have your breakfast taken quickly now!"

Mindful parenting requires you to offer your child unconditional love

Unconditional love means to surround your child with love and not have the love be contingent on their performance or behaviours. You love them because they are the way they are, not because they are the way you want them to be. They should not have to "win" your love by performing well on exams or in sports competitions. We need to love ourselves before we can provide our child with unconditional love.

Mindfulness can help enhance self-awareness, which allows us to observe our own negative perceptions and beliefs non-judgmentally. Loving ourselves and loving our child are not mutually exclusive, so loving ourselves does not mean neglecting our child.

Mindful parenting can help parents love their child unconditionally in a concrete and holistic manner.

C. Wisdoms of mindful parenting

The following are 10 wisdoms of mindful parenting:

i. Adjust your attitude when communicating with your child

When facing pressure and difficulties in relation to parenting, pause for a while, and imagine you were your child. Try to consider the situation from their point of view before you make any responses. To do so, you may have to put aside your own points of view, needs, and responsibilities.

ii. **Avoid being self-centred**

This can help you understand your behaviours from the perspective of your child. Do you want to have parents like yourself? What kinds of unconscious body language, verbal expressions, or gestures would you like to change? Self-awareness can help us establish the positive changes we want to achieve.

iii. **Completely accept your child**

You have to learn to accept your child completely, including their uniqueness, although this may need a lot of practice. You need to put aside your subconscious expectations and demands, and accept your child.

iv. **Review the objectives behind your expectations**

It is common for parents to have certain expectations of their child. For example, they want their child to be well-behaved, perform well at school with good conducts, excel at sports, be humble and polite. However, these expectations are endless. Mindful parenting techniques require parents to review the objectives behind all these expectations.

Are your expectations the most favourable to your child's development? Do you subconsciously want to satisfy yourself through all these unrealistic expectations? The key to mindful parenting is to learn to be aware of both your unexpressed and expressed expectations.

v. **Be involved and live for today, even under pressure**

As parents, you may come across difficult and stressful situations from time to time.

For example:

Your child might have broken your neighbour's windows or be caught smoking in school campus. Venting anger or frustration is a natural, human instinct that stems from operant conditioning.

Mindful parenting encourages parents to stop their immediate actions and pay attention to what is happening at the moment. You should allow time and space for the intense emotion to rise to its peak and then slowly dissipate before you make any responses. You should focus on your breaths by breathing slowly. You will then be able to understand the situation intuitively, and consciously respond, rather than passively react to it.

vi. **Mindful parenting requires good listening skills**

Have you noticed that we always shout or react before our child finishes speaking? Mindful parenting requires you to carefully listen to your child, and observe his/her body language, gestures, and tones before you respond to him/her.

You should also be aware of your feelings, body language, volume, and tone when you speak. A few minutes of meditation every day may help you calm down skillfully.

vii. **Practise being aware of the present wholeheartedly**

Parents are their child's fulcrum, where he/ she starts to learn about the world and himself/herself. Use mindfulness techniques (pause, observe emotions, and breathe) to live for today, and focus on only one thing at a time. Practising mindful parenting regularly may help improve patience and concentration.

viii. **Apologise to your child**

After you engage in introspection and reflection, if you notice that you have lost the trust of your child, please apologise to them calmly and explain to them the reasons behind the apology. Mindfulness helps establish a compassionate thinking pattern. Valuing your child's needs more than your own can only be achieved through enhancing your self-awareness.

ix. **Powerful communications**

Sometimes you will need to engage in clear and powerful communications. For example, your child may take things that belong to others or they may cheat on a test. You will need to communicate clearly in these circumstances.

You will still need to carefully create an atmosphere full of compassion, love and care, and awareness even in these situations. Your tone and wordings should not convey a sense of control and authority, nor should they induce fear.

x. **Enjoy every single moment**

The best thing about mindful parenting is that you can enjoy every single moment including happiness, sadness, stress, and excitement with your child. We learn to view the parenting process as a learning curve, and that we grow with our child. Parenting allows us to understand the pleasure of life. We respect our child and treat him/her as the inspiration of mindfulness practices at every moment.

Raising your child with mindful parenting means that you have to strike a balance between excessive indulgence and authority. It requires you to choose to adopt a conscious way to respond to your child instead of a habitual way to react.

Mindful parenting allows us to realise that parenting does not aim at raising our child to become materially abundant or successful. Instead, it aims at letting us enjoy a relationship full of love, care, and awareness so that we can raise our child to become a confident, healthy, and happy person.