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TOOLBOX FOR PARENTS

This is a parenting toolbox, I use to help me to live a more mindful life with my children (with extracts from 'Parenting from the Inside out' by Daniel J. Siegel (MD) & 'Authentic Happiness' by Martin Seligman).

MINDFUL BREATHING

Remind your children once or several times a day to focus on breathing mindfully for a minute or so. It is a great stress reliever and helps them to feel present. It is also a great tool to use before a test to create a calm focus.

MINDFUL SENSING

Get your children to focus on actively being present when using their five senses. Such as, for example:

1. **Tasting.** Really taste the food and not just scoffing it down. What are the flavours, textures?
2. **Smelling** – what is it that we can smell? Fresh rain on a hot summer's day? The ocean?
3. **Hearing.** What can you hear right at this moment?
4. **Seeing** – what do we actually see? The little blossoms in the flower, the light reflecting on the green leaves in the garden?
5. **Touching/Feeling** – how does the water feel on our skin during showering? How does it feel to be touched?

OPTIMISM

Teach your children to take a positive perspective no matter what the situation. Implement simple rituals that give them something to look forward to. Create a positive environment.

HAPPINESS

We cannot be happy all the time, yet we can lead joyful lives. Acknowledge and accept sad feelings. It is part of life. Encourage children to remember a really happy moment in their lives and focus on feelings of positivity.

GRATITUDE

Get your children to reflect daily on three happy moments during their day, moments that they were really grateful for. I usually do this during dinner time. Tell them one thing that you were really grateful for that they did. Write a gratitude journal yourself before going to bed, and remind yourself every so often what it is that you love in your partner or friends.

ANGER

Teach your children the traffic signal game. "Red light" – recognise the signals of feeling angry. Take a few breaths, then stop and go to a quiet spot to do some mindful breathing.

SADNESS

Encourage children to talk about feelings. It is quite all right to feel sad. Everyone feels sad from time to time. Get them to draw or write about their feelings which is an excellent therapeutic release.

FEAR

Talk about their fears, acknowledge and validate them. Use an imaginary 'worry box' where they can lock away their worries/fears. Mindful breathing also helps to release fear.

EMPATHY

Encourage your children to put themselves in other people's shoes. Create some mindful family rules and your own family crest highlighting the needs of every family member. Showcase the crest in your house where everyone can see them and where you can refer to them in need.

KINDNESS

Encourage your children to come up with random acts of kindness, even if they are small ones. Role model acts of kindness yourself.