

New research reveals mindful parenting reduces child stress

January 20 2016, by Anne Rahilly



Children benefit when they're parents are more mindful of their emotions

Mindfulness in parenting significantly reduces children's stress levels, according to a new study by the University of Melbourne's Director of Positive Psychology, Professor Lea Waters.

While mindfulness – a present-focused, open and non-judgmental state of attention – has become a mainstream stress management technique, evidence of its impact on children is sparse.

Professor Waters said that child stress is becoming increasingly widespread with 31% of Australian children feeling "very stressed," and 40% feeling that they worry too much.

"This stress and tension often leads to children having physical symptoms such as headaches, abdominal pain and difficulty sleeping," she said. "We know from past research that when a child is stressed they draw on their [parents](#) for support, and that their parents have the power to diminish or increase their children's [stress levels](#). "We now have strong evidence that children benefit when their parents are more mindful of their emotions, and pause before they react with anger, stress or frustration."

While most parents intuitively value the provision love and emotional support to their children, Professor Waters said mindfulness can aid emotional support by helping parents regulate their own attention and emotion. The good news is the mindfulness can be learnt and anyone can become more mindful with practice.

"Mindfulness is more than just a "buzzword." It's about being present and giving each task your full [attention](#)," she said. "Taking the time to listen and understand your child's problems, promotes trust and emotional connection leading to a richer and more authentic relationship.

"It also teaches children how to be open and aware of the whole situation including their own thoughts, feelings and sensations, which in turn makes them less stressed."

The start of the school year can be a big adjustment for [children](#) so it's a good time to explore how to bring mindfulness into your daily routine to help ease the transition Professor Waters said.

"There are a number of [mindfulness](#) programs, smartphone apps and

books dedicated to helping parents become more mindful, including "bite-size" exercises that are just a few minutes."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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