

Mindful parenting shapes emotional health of youth, study shows

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Young adults who were raised by parents who were supportive of them expressing emotions tend to be more emotionally healthy and report lower levels of depression and anxiety, according to a study led by a

Georgia State psychology researcher.

"When [parents](#) respond to their children's emotions in supportive ways that suggest acceptance and non-judgment, their children tend to be more accepting and non-judgmental of their own experiences," said Laura G. McKee, an assistant professor of psychology and lead author of the study. "In general, we found that those who were raised by parents who were interested in their children's emotions and encouraged them to share them, had better skills for coping with emotion."

McKee says that while decades of research have substantiated the impact of emotionally [supportive parenting](#), few studies have focused on the specific variables and processes—including mindfulness—that connect parenting styles to the mental health of their children. Mindfulness, she explained, is characterized as paying attention to the [present moment](#) without judgment, regulated attention and an attitude of curiosity, acceptance, and openness.

"Previous studies have shown that emotionally supportive parents tend to be more mindful themselves, but we don't know of any previous work that shows that emotionally supportive parents raise children who are mindful," McKee said. "This is an exciting new area of research that is an important next step, particularly to guide family-centered prevention and intervention programs."

In the study, McKee and research collaborators asked 256 college and graduate school students to answer questions about how their mothers and fathers reacted to their emotions during [childhood](#). Survey questions focused on parental responses to both positive emotions such as happiness and interest, and negative emotions, such as sadness, anger and fear. The researchers asked questions such as "When you were sad as a child, what did your mother/father do?" Participants indicated how typical it was for parents to respond, for example, by listening, providing

comfort, and problem solving with them.

More information: Laura G. McKee et al. Emotion Socialization and Young Adult Internalizing Symptoms: the Roles of Mindfulness and Emotion Regulation, *Mindfulness* (2019). [DOI: 10.1007/s12671-018-1079-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-1079-9)

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