

HELPING KIDS REDUCE STRESS

MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES TO TRY TODAY



“In our culture today, we live in survival mode, reacting from the survival mechanisms in our brain,” said Dr. Kristen Race. “Each time we experience a spike in stress, we strengthen



the neural pathways to the limbic system—the fight-or-flight part of our brain—making it the easiest pathway for our brains over time. Eventually, even small things become stressful to us.”

Dr. Race spoke at PIN’s Annual Brunch, held this month. “Our kids are often stressed before they even get to school,” said Race, explaining, **“When we’re in the stress part of our brain, we can’t think well or learn.** We have to bring our brains back into balance.” Signs of stress include not paying attention, forgetfulness, anger, impulsivity and defiance.

Dr. Race’s mindfulness strategies are rooted in the latest brain science. “There are a lot of things we can’t change about the world our kids are growing up in, but what we *can* do is help them become more resilient to stress.” In the same way physical fitness uses repeated exercises to create

muscular change, mindfulness relies on exercises to create change in the structure and function of our brains. A few of Dr. Race’s mindfulness practices include:

- 1. Real Connection.** “We need connection to thrive. Facebook, texting, Instagram are not forms of connection,” said Race. A study of 12,000 teenagers showed that the best predictor of the teen’s health and the strongest deterrent from risky behavior was a close relationship with a parent. “When we engage in fun activities with people we love, we increase trust and decrease the brain’s stress response. This means not rushing from one activity to the next, but truly being engaged with our kids without an agenda,” said Race.
- 2. Three Good Things.** Each night before bed, recognize three good things that happened that day and your role in them. When done for 14 days, this practice can have lasting effects that are more powerful than antidepressant drugs, leading to lower burnout, increased happiness, and better sleep.
- 3. Embrace Mistakes.** What’s 1 mistake you learned from today? When we acknowledge our mistakes and frame them in terms of growth to our kids, we help them change their neural pathways, no longer sending them into panic when they make mistakes, but instead allowing them to grow. Show yourself and your kids compassion and understanding in your mistakes.
- 4. Acts of Kindness.** Showing kindness to others gets us out of our survival/stress brain and measurably increases our happiness. An act of kindness can be as small as letting someone ahead of you in line.
- 5. Rose, Bud, Thorn.** Around the dinner table, have each person recount one good experience (rose), one mistake they learned from (thorn), and one act of kindness they witnessed or initiated that day (bud).

*The Stress Problem:
“Up to 90% of doctor visits are due to stress-related causes, and 1 in 3 teens show signs of depression due to stress.”*

“We have to develop skills of grit and resilience in order to survive,” said Race. “It’s not about pretending to be perfect, but is instead about becoming more attuned to everything around us, being present and engaged, and communicating more effectively and compassionately.”

Learn more about reducing stress in your home and sign up for Dr. Race’s FREE newsletter at www.MindfulLifeToday.com. Visit www.PINccsd.com for next year’s speakers, podcasts and more!