

fingertips for the client

BY LAURIE CHANCE SMITH



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MEDITATING WITH YOUR CHILD

Most of us know that meditation is an opportunity to slow down and take a few deep breaths. But, with young kids, how do you find meditation time? Encourage your children to meditate with you. According to a recent study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, meditation can benefit children by promoting a sense of “well-being, calmness, relaxation, [and] improved sleep.”¹

Sydney Solis, author of *Storytime Yoga: Teaching Yoga to Children through Story* (The Mythic Yoga Studio, 2006), says, “It’s okay if they can’t be still.” Meditation doesn’t have to be deep, spiritual, or religious—these fun exercises bring calmness and connectedness to the whole family.

CREATE BREATHING SPACE

In *Being Peace* (Parallax Press, 1987), meditation master Thich Nhat Hanh suggests families dedicate a room in their home to breathing space. “We have a room for sleeping, a room for eating, and a room for cooking, why not have one room for breathing?” If you don’t have an entire room to spare, consider a quiet corner.

In the morning, go to this quiet spot to sit and breathe with your child. Ask the child to close his/her eyes, smile, and then breathe—in, out, in, out—however long the child can stay with it. Solis suggests asking your child a question like, “How does the breath feel in your nose?”



TELL A STORY

Read a book that helps kids deal with anger, like *Sometimes I’m Bombaloo* (Scholastic Press, 2002) by Rachel Vail. Then ask your child to sit in a comfortable cross-legged position and whisper “peace.”

GAZE AT A CANDLE

Young children may especially benefit from a visual aid during meditation. Try lighting a candle, then sit and simply watch the flame.

TAKE A WALK


“The purpose of walking meditation is simply to pay attention to the whole experience of walking; not walking to get somewhere, but just walking and being aware of walking,” according to Mary Jane Ott, a pediatric nurse practitioner. Ask your child what he/she likes best about the grass or a flower’s scent. Smile at each person you pass.

ENGAGE THE SENSES

At quiet time, tell your child a story for the senses. Ask your child to imagine being at the beach, relaxing with the ebb and flow of the ocean. See the frothy waves and smell the fish. Describe the sand squishing under the feet and the wind whipping the hair, spraying salt on the tongue.

TAKE A BALLOON RIDE TO SLEEP

At bedtime, try the balloon meditation. Tell your child to rest on a pillow, snuggled under the blankets, imagining being a balloon floating safe and free. Ask your child to choose where the balloon stops. Among the clouds? Floating into the universe? Hooked onto a star or a planet?

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NOTE

1. R.B. Wall, “Tai Chi and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in a Boston Public Middle School.” *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* 19, no. 4: 230–7.