

The magic and joy of being present.
How to have more with less.



Just like families, Christmas is never ideal. But with a good dose of realism, laughter and planning, it will have moments to make it special.

Mindfulness can restore the pleasure of life's ordinary and extraordinary moments. Try one or two of these ideas and see how they work.

1. Do less. Most people think they need more time in order to get everything done. The holidays are stressful with all the extra commitments and errands. Instead of trying to figure out how to cram more into every day, try doing less — less shopping, less cooking, less wrapping, less travelling. Giving up some of the things about the holidays that drain you and stress you out allows you to more fully enjoy what remains. You can be less busy and more present.



2. Enjoy the process not just the outcome. This is perhaps my favourite mindfulness strategy and one that I continually have to remind myself of. Left to my own devices, I'm all about the results. I want to get it done and check it off my to-do list. But that's no way to enjoy the holidays! Try to slow down and savour the process of shopping, baking, wrapping, visits to friends and family with your kids. Don't make it just about the finished product, but about spending time, building memories, and connecting.

3. Step away from your phone/computer/TV. Yup, I know we all love our devices and it's hard to put them away. I'm not talking about a day long break. Just put it on do not disturb or stick in a drawer for an hour. The world isn't going to end if you don't respond to every text or notification immediately. They are a distraction and make it nearly impossible to be truly mindful and present to yourself and your children.



4. Take the opportunity to really connect with others. Mindfulness allows us to deeply connect with our friends and family. When we give our full attention, listen with interest, and engage as if we really want to be with them, they will share more, smile more, and allow us to really know them.

5. Spend time alone. I think about spending time alone as an opportunity to connect with myself. Alone time is the easiest way to pay attention to your feelings, your physical and emotional needs. If you're uncomfortable being alone, start with five minutes and work your way up to a 20 or 30 minutes. You may actually find you're a pretty cool person to know!

6. Try something new. We already talked about why it's important to dump the parts of your holiday routine that don't bring you joy. Doing something new increases mindfulness because you're more likely to pay attention and focus on the novelty. Just try driving home a different way and see if you don't enjoy seeing some different festive decorations. There are so many new things to try that may bring new life to your holiday – a new recipe, a different church service, a different type of family gift exchange, hosting a different type of Christmas party. Change can be good (and if it's not, you can always go back to your old way of doing things).

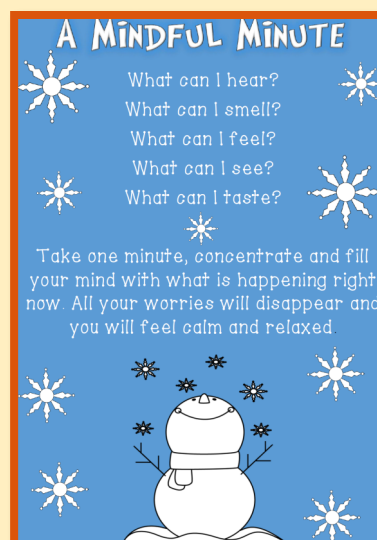


7. Get out from behind the camera. This one requires a bit of compromise. I think photos usually boost happiness, so I'm not against taking photos. But, don't spend so much time behind the camera, trying to get the perfect shot, that you miss out on what you're doing and why you're doing it.

8. Play. Don't be too busy to really play. Play with your kids, your dog, your partner. Adults need playtime, too! Think about what's fun for you (sometimes remembering what you liked as a child can help) and make it happen. No excuses!

9. Practice gratitude every single day. Gratitude can be a mindfulness practice that you do internally by noticing and saying to yourself, "I'm so blessed to have this job." Or "I really enjoyed having coffee with John. That was a real treat." But like a lot of things, gratitude is even better when it's shared. Try actually saying, "John, I really enjoyed our conversation. I'm so glad you're in my life." Thank you notes are wonderful as well. When gratitude is expressed, it's a gift to both the receiver and the giver.

You have a choice in how you spend your Chrimbo season. It doesn't have to be a massive to-do list stuffed full of things that you simply do out of obligation or tradition. Mindfulness is an effective way to cope with holiday stress. I hope that these ways of practicing mindfulness will help you reduce your stress and increase your meaningful connections during the holidays. Most of them are simple and free!



Be a good role model

Be the role model your children deserve. Kids learn by watching their parents. Modelling appropriate, respectful, good behaviour works much better than telling them what to do.

Fess up when you blow it. This is the best way to show your child how and when they should apologise and that making mistakes helps us learn.

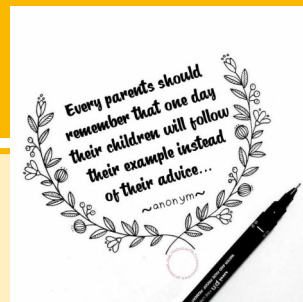
Live a little greener. Show your kids how easy it is to care for the environment. Waste less, recycle, reuse, and conserve each day. Spend an afternoon picking up rubbish around your local area.

Always tell the truth. It's how you want your child to behave, right? But always age appropriately.

Kiss and hug your partner in front of the kids. Your partnership is one example your child has of what an intimate relationship looks, feels, and sounds like..

Manage emotions. Children learn a lot about how to act by watching their parents. The younger they are, the more cues they take from you. Before you shout or react in front of your child, think about this: Is that how you want your child to behave when angry? Be aware that you are constantly being watched by your children. Model the traits you wish to see in your children: respect, friendliness, honesty, kindness, tolerance. Exhibit unselfish behaviour. Do things for other people without expecting a reward. Express thanks and offer compliments.

Above all, treat your children the way you expect other people to treat them and you.



10 THINGS KIDS WANT FROM PARENTS

1. Tuck me in and sing me a song. Also tell me stories about when you were little.
2. Give me hugs and kisses and sit and talk with me privately.
3. Spend quality time just with me, not with my brothers and sisters around.
4. Give me nutritious food so I can grow up healthy.
5. At dinner talk about what we could do together on the weekend.
6. At night talk to me about anything; love, school, family etc.
7. Let me play outside a lot.
8. Cuddle under a blanket and watch our favorite TV show together.
9. Discipline me. It makes me feel like you care.
10. Leave special messages in my desk or lunch bag.

52 CLUTTER-FREE GIFTS

Experiences

- Concert Tickets
- Sporting Tickets
- Movie Passes
- Theater Tickets
- Golf Passes
- Escape Room
- Symphony
- Community Theater
- Restaurant Gift Card
- Indoor Rock Climbing
- Bowling Passes
- Daddy-Daughter Date
- Summer Camp
- Hot Air Balloon Ride

Classes

- Cooking
- Dance
- Sports
- Swimming
- Music
- Internet Master Class
- Coding
- Painting/Art
- Home Brewing
- Scuba Diving
- Private Coaching
- Physical Trainer

Time

- Babysitter
- House Cleaner
- Professional Organizer
- Car Wash
- Massage
- Manicure/Pedicure
- Yard Service
- Date Night Out
- Oil Change

Memberships

- Children's Museum
- Zoo
- Theme Park
- Trampoline Park
- Art Museum
- Science Museum
- State Parks
- National Parks

Consumables

- Fruit Basket
- Flowers
- Chocolates
- Coffee Beans
- Coffee Gift Card
- Local Foods
- Wine
- Desserts
- Meat/Cheeses

Be a Positive Role Model

Show understanding, compassion and kindness

Be in charge of your emotions

Use humour

Take responsibility for your actions

Reach out for support



Reach out to help others

Take care of your health

Take deep breaths when you're stressed

Be patient

Stop and rethink

Let go of being perfect

Stay positive

YOUR WORDS MATTER

INSTEAD OF...	TRY
Be quiet.	Can you use a softer voice?
What a mess!	It looks like you had fun! How can we clean up?
Do you need help?	I'm here to help if you need me.
I explained how to do this yesterday.	Maybe I can show you another way.
Do I need to separate you?	Could you use a break?
Stop crying.	It's okay to cry.
Do you have any questions?	What questions do you have?
You're OK.	How are you feeling?
It's not that hard.	You can do hard things.



TAKE A MINDFUL Break

Breathe

Take 5 deep, slow breaths

Rest

Close your eyes until your mind is clear

Empowering words

Say 3 nice things about yourself

Absorb

Check in with your senses. What do you see, feel, hear, smell, and taste?

Knowledge

Stop and think before you act

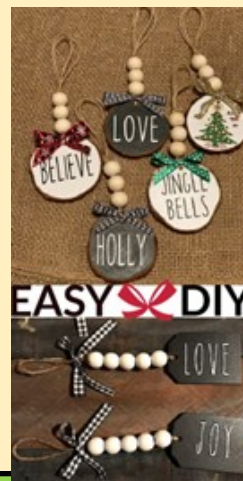
Never let Mummy go to the toilet alone. She might be doing something fun in there and we could miss out.



PAPER CHAIN CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN FOR KIDS!



SERVE GUACAMOLE THE FESTIVE WAY WITH PITA BREAD AND PRETZEL STICKS



**Creamy Oreo
Milkshake**
1 1/2 cup vanilla
ice cream
1/2 to 3/4 cup milk
5 oreo cookies
Whipped cream
optional

Easy to make:

Wrap paper round standard choccie bar = snowman chocolate
Autumn twigs and leaves = confetti wands
Banana and strawberry = candy canes
Lego and photo = desk tidy

My Wish List

SAMPLE
CHILD'S NAME HERE

SOMETHING I WANT:
(the big ticket present)

SOMETHING I NEED:
(hobby item, sports equipment, necessity)

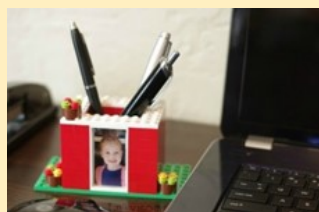
SOMETHING TO WEAR:
(clothing, shoes, name brand, accessories)

SOMETHING TO READ:
(book, magazine, comic book)

SOMETHING TO DO:
(game, movie, outing, adventure)

SOMETHING FOR MY FAMILY:
(game, movie, outing, adventure)

Sometimes as adults, we get so caught up in planning all the details of what we're going to do and when, that we forget to ask our kids what they'd like to do.



GREEN FOOD COLORING AND M&M'S TURN RICE KRISPIE TREATS INTO A CHRISTMAS DESSERT



INDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT

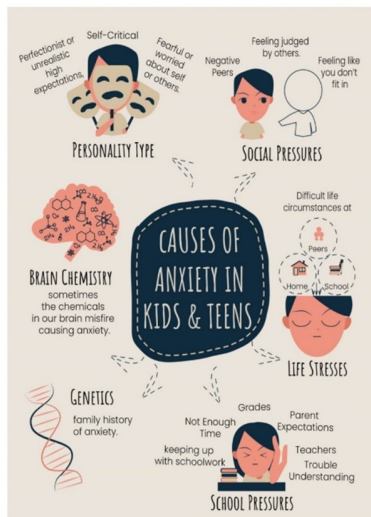
- Something that goes on your head
- Three stuffed animals
- Something yellow
- Book with numbers
- Something round
- Something with a flower on it
- Something soft
- Book with the letter N
- Something plastic
- Something with wheels
- Two things that are blue
- Your favorite toy
- Something with a heart
- Something that makes noise

Sometimes a child's nervous system just needs:

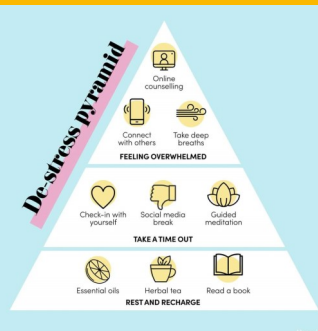
a walk, a snuggle, a bubble bath, a snack, a listening ear, an understanding voice, a moment to be alone, a good belly laugh, a favourite toy, grass between their toes or a warm smile.



Mommy & Me
Arts and Crafts



Winter Activities That Teach Teens Life Skills



Reminders for parents struggling with teenagers at Christmas

Listen to what they say, and accept their feelings.
Ask them if there are certain things about Christmas that are difficult for them. And ask what they think might help.
You could also support them if they want to avoid certain situations.
Try to make Christmas more inclusive, don't forget to plan things that they enjoy too
Remember they aren't trying to spoil Christmas. No one chooses to find things hard.

Activities to do with teens at Christmas

Christmas markets – if there's food, drink and shopping, most teens will find something to keep them entertained.
Christmas light shows, or going for a simple walk around the neighbourhood or into town to look at Christmas lights and decorations.
Games nights – Christmas can mean time for families to get involved in lots of games, trivia, Monopoly, karaoke.
Bake – make gingerbread men/gingerbread houses, decorate cookies.
"Bad Santa gift exchange" – draw names out of a hat and set £5 limit, pick out the worst/tackiest gift possible and wrap it up badly.

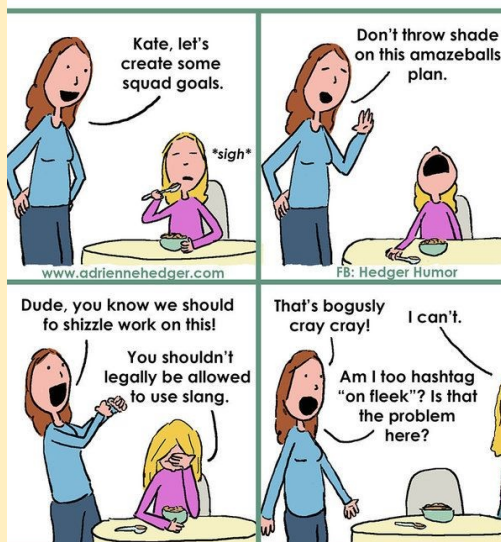


Never have I ever... CHRISTMAS EDITION

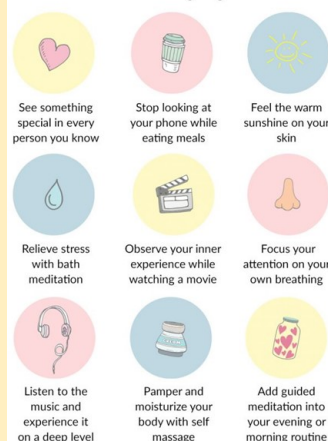
- Used the naughty list to bribe
- Started wrapping at 11:59pm on the 24th
- Played a Christmas film on repeat for 8 hours for quiet-time
- Found presents I forgot to wrap
- Ate all of Santa's snacks on my own
- Forgot to buy batteries
- Made the Christmas washing up into a game
- Re-wrapped presents because the kids forgot about them
- Worn matching festive outfits with my kids
- Wished for Christmas to be over

How to Have Fun With Teens:

Load your sentences with slang.



9 MINDFULNESS exercises



Loss and separation

Traditions are a really important part of the festivities for many families. So, if your family has recently separated or you are grieving for someone you love, you may be feeling a little lost. Yet, rather than see it as a time of loss, why not spin it around? Instead, use your new-style Christmas to create wonderful new traditions that will set the scene for many happy winters to come?

Not only do traditions give us something to look forward to, but they make us feel safe and connected. All of which is super important for separated or grieving families. Traditions can be created simply for the fun factor (and why not?) or they can be based on religion, values or anything which is important to you.

Talk - This Christmas will inevitably be different. Before you make plans, try talking about the fact that it might be really hard this year. That way others will feel that it's OK to be sad or quiet and there's no pressure to put on a brave face.

Keep things flexible - Family relationships often get strained around Christmas, and if you're coping with grief or change of circumstances, you might feel extra anxious about getting together. Be open about your own needs and flexible around other people's. If you can't face organising a meal or visiting relatives, maybe a family walk or video call could work? Likewise, if someone really needs company, explore ways to help them feel supported.

Look after yourself - We all handle our behaviours in different ways, and the festive season can bring back memories that intensify your feelings. To lessen the physical effects look after your mental health, stick to a basic everyday routine: Get up, eat regularly, get some daylight and exercise, and keep in touch with people around you.

Do it differently - Christmas traditions can seem challenging when so much has changed. If something doesn't bring you joy, don't do it. It's OK to not write 37 Christmas cards or cover the house in multicolored twinkling reindeer – motivation can be hard to find. Go away somewhere new, curl up on the sofa, make new plans. The people who love you will understand.

Make new traditions - If you're ready, try creating new traditions that suit your life now. If turkey was never really your thing, maybe now is the time for steak and chips, sushi or a slap-up veggie meal? Or donating to charity instead of buying presents and inviting the neighbours around for mince pies.

Keep it low-key and stress-free - Cutting back Christmas can feel right for some people, especially after change. Opt for Secret Santa instead of buying presents for everyone, or make a donation to your loved one's favourite charity instead of buying and sending Christmas cards.

Find new ways to keep busy - Some people find throwing themselves into Christmas is a nice way to keep themselves busy. The festive season offers plenty of extra work if that's what you need.

Indulge in a little self-care - it can be easy to adopt a care taking role – looking after everyone around you without taking care of yourself. Set aside an evening or a day in your calendar to do just that.

Dabble in some mindful activities – Lots found in this newsletter! Connect with nature. Getting amongst nature improves our overall wellbeing by reducing feelings of stress and sadness.

[Raring2go! Reading](#)

[Raring2go! Oxford](#)



[Raring2go! Ascot, Bracknell & Wokingham](#)



Children's sleepy time: Quality sleep is essential for children's growth and development. A decent night's sleep will help them to do better at school, allow them to react more quickly to situations, have a more developed memory, learn more effectively and solve problems, plus it will make them less susceptible to colds and other minor ailments, less irritable and better behaved!

Does your child suffer with sleep issues?

Do you struggle with your child's bedtime?

Will your child not sleep in their own bed?

WE CAN HELP

03303 530 541

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 7pm - 9pm
Wednesday & Friday 10am - 12pm

50%

Around 50% of children will have a sleep issue at some point*

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SLEEP HELPLINE?

In partnership with Furniture Village, The Sleep Charity has launched a brand new National Sleep Helpline to ensure that everyone has access to high quality, evidence-based advice.

HOW CAN THE NATIONAL SLEEP HELPLINE HELP YOU?

- Run by a team of specialist trained sleep advisors
- Offer you some practical strategies and recommend services that could help
- Ensuring you understand how sleep plays an important part in your child's mental health and wellbeing
- Listen without judgement and help you decide what next steps are right for you
- Empower you with sleep knowledge so you can understand why your child might not be sleeping well and how that can change

03303 530 541

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 7pm - 9pm
Wednesday & Friday 10am - 12pm

the national sleep helpline

Furniture Village

Holiday Self-Care Tips



Christmas gifts that make a difference



To contact the BB4K team, please email us at BB4K@pactcharity.org or find out more about us here on our website: pactcharity.org/bb4k. Please note: the BB4K team will not be working between Christmas and New Year.

Wishing you a merry Christmas from BB4K and everyone at PACT!

