



PEARLS

Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener

CHILD



Many families experience stressful life events. Over time these experiences can affect your child's health and wellbeing. We would like to ask you questions about your child so we can help them be as healthy as possible.



Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)

CHILD - To be completed by: **Caregiver**

At any point in time since your child was born, has your child seen or been present when the following experiences happened? Please include past and present experiences.

Please note, some questions have more than one part separated by “OR.” If any part of the question is answered “Yes,” then the answer to the entire question is “Yes.”

PART 1:

1. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who went to jail/prison?

2. Do you think your child ever felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected?

3. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who had mental health issues?
(for example, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD, or an anxiety disorder)

4. Has a parent/caregiver ever insulted, humiliated, or put down your child?

5. Has the child’s biological parent or any caregiver ever had, or currently has a problem with too much alcohol, street drugs or prescription medications use?

6. Has your child ever lacked appropriate care by any caregiver?
(for example, not being protected from unsafe situations, or not cared for when sick or injured even when the resources were available)

7. Has your child ever seen or heard a parent/caregiver being screamed at, sworn at, insulted or humiliated by another adult?

Or has your child ever seen or heard a parent/caregiver being slapped, kicked, punched beaten up or hurt with a weapon?

8. Has any adult in the household often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or thrown something at your child?

Or has any adult in the household ever hit your child so hard that your child had marks or was injured?

Or has any adult in the household ever threatened your child or acted in a way that made your child afraid that they might be hurt?

9. Has your child ever experienced sexual abuse?
(for example, anyone touched your child or asked your child to touch that person in a way that was unwanted, or made your child feel uncomfortable, or anyone ever attempted or actually had oral, anal, or vaginal sex with your child)

10. Have there ever been significant changes in the relationship status of the child’s caregiver(s)?
(for example, a parent/caregiver got a divorce or separated, or a romantic partner moved in or out)



Add up the “yes” answers for this first section:

Please continue to the other side for the rest of questionnaire →

PART 2:

1. Has your child ever seen, heard, or been a victim of violence in your neighborhood, community or school?
(for example, targeted bullying, assault or other violent actions, war or terrorism)

2. Has your child experienced discrimination?
(for example, being hassled or made to feel inferior or excluded because of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, learning differences, or disabilities)

3. Has your child ever had problems with housing?
(for example, being homeless, not having a stable place to live, moved more than two times in a six-month period, faced eviction or foreclosure, or had to live with multiple families or family members)

4. Have you ever worried that your child did not have enough food to eat or that the food for your child would run out before you could buy more?

5. Has your child ever been separated from their parent or caregiver due to foster care, or immigration?

6. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who had a serious physical illness or disability?

7. Has your child ever lived with a parent or caregiver who died?

Add up the “yes” answers for the second section:



PEARLS

Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener

TEEN



Many families experience stressful life events. Over time these experiences can affect your child's health and wellbeing. We would like to ask you questions about your child so we can help them be as healthy as possible.



Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)

TEEN (Parent/Caregiver Report) - To be completed by: **Caregiver**

At any point in time since your child was born, has your child seen or been present when the following experiences happened? Please include past and present experiences.

Please note, some questions have more than one part separated by “OR.” If any part of the question is answered “Yes,” then the answer to the entire question is “Yes.”

PART 1:

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7. Has your child ever lived with a parent or caregiver who died?

8. Has your child ever been detained, arrested or incarcerated?

9. Has your child ever experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partners?
(for example, a boyfriend or girlfriend)

Add up the “yes” answers for the second section:



PEARLS

Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener

TEEN (Self-Report)

Many families experience stressful life events. Over time these experiences can affect your health and wellbeing. We would like to ask you questions about your child so we can help you be as healthy as possible.



Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)

TEEN (Self-Report)- To be completed by: **Patient**

At any point in time since you were born, have you seen or been present when the following experiences happened? Please include past and present experiences.

Please note, some questions have more than one part separated by “OR.” If any part of the question is answered “Yes,” then the answer to the entire question is “Yes.”

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2. Have you ever felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected?

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(for example, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD, or an anxiety disorder)

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5. Has your biological parent or any caregiver ever had, or currently has a problem with too much alcohol, street drugs or prescription medications use?

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(for example, has anyone touched you or asked you to touch that person in a way that was unwanted, or made you feel uncomfortable, or anyone ever attempted or actually had oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you)

10. Have there ever been significant changes in the relationship status of your caregiver(s)?
(for example, a parent/caregiver got a divorce or separated, or a romantic partner moved in or out)

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7. Have you ever lived with a parent or caregiver who died?

8. Have you ever been detained, arrested or incarcerated?

9. Have you ever experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partners?
(for example, a boyfriend or girlfriend)

Add up the “yes” answers for the second section:

Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ)

0		DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	
0.1 [C1]	Sex (<i>Record Male / Female as observed</i>)	Male Female	
0.2 [C2]	What is your date of birth?	Day [][] Month [][] Year [][][][] Unknown (<i>Go to Q.C3</i>)	
0.3 [C3]	How old are you?	[][]	
0.4 [C4]	What is your [<i>insert relevant ethnic group / racial group / cultural group / others</i>] background?	[<i>Locally defined</i>] [<i>Locally defined</i>] [<i>Locally defined</i>] Refused	
0.5 [C5]	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	No formal schooling Less than primary school Primary school completed Secondary/High school completed College/University completed Post graduate degree Refused	
0.6 [C6]	Which of the following best describes your <u>main</u> work status over the last 12 months?	Government employee Non-government employee Self-employed Non-paid Student Homemaker Retired Unemployed (able to work) Unemployed (unable to work) Refused	
0.7 [C7]	What is your civic status?	Married (<i>Go to Q.M2</i>) Living as couple Divorced or separated Single Widowed (<i>Go to Q.M2</i>) Other Refused	
1		MARRIAGE	
1.1 [M1]	Have you ever been married?	Yes No (<i>Go to Q.M5</i>) Refused	
1.2 [M2]	At what age were you first married?	Age [][] Refused	
1.3 [M3]	At the time of your first marriage did you yourself choose your husband/wife?	Yes (<i>Go to Q.M5</i>) No Don't know / Not sure Refused	
1.4 [M4]	At the time of your first marriage if you did <u>not</u> choose your husband/wife yourself, did you give your consent to the choice?	Yes No Refused	
1.5 [M5]	If you are a mother or father what was your age when your first child was born?	Age [][] Not applicable Refused	

2		RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS	
When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .			
2.1 [P1]	Did your parents/guardians understand your problems and worries?	Always	Most of the time
		Sometimes	Rarely
		Never	Refused
2.2 [P2]	Did your parents/guardians really know what you were doing with your free time when you were not at school or work?	Always	Most of the time
		Sometimes	Rarely
		Never	Refused
3			
3.1 [P3]	How often did your parents/guardians not give you enough food even when they could easily have done so?	Many times	A few times
		Once	Never
		Refused	
3.2 [P4]	Were your parents/guardians too drunk or intoxicated by drugs to take care of you?	Many times	A few times
		Once	Never
		Refused	
3.3 [P5]	How often did your parents/guardians not send you to school even when it was available?	Many times	A few times
		Once	Never
		Refused	
4		FAMILY ENVIRONMENT	
When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .			
4.1 [F1]	Did you live with a household member who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or misused street or prescription drugs?	Yes	No
		Refused	
4.2 [F2]	Did you live with a household member who was depressed, mentally ill or suicidal?	Yes	No
		Refused	
4.3 [F3]	Did you live with a household member who was ever sent to jail or prison?	Yes	No
		Refused	
4.4 [F4]	Were your parents ever separated or divorced?	Yes	No
		Not applicable	Refused
4.5 [F5]	Did your mother, father or guardian die?	Yes	No
		Don't know / Not sure	Refused
These next questions are about certain things you may actually have heard or seen IN YOUR HOME. These are things that may have been done to another household member but not necessarily to you.			

When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .

4.6 [F6]	Did you see or hear a parent or household member in your home being yelled at, screamed at, sworn at, insulted or humiliated?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
4.7 [F7]	Did you see or hear a parent or household member in your home being slapped, kicked, punched or beaten up?	Refused
		Many times
		A few times
		Once
4.8 [F8]	Did you see or hear a parent or household member in your home being hit or cut with an object, such as a stick (or cane), bottle, club, knife, whip etc.?	Never
		Refused
		Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
		Refused
		Many times

These next questions are about certain things YOU may have experienced.**When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .**

5		
5.1 [A1]	Did a parent, guardian or other household member yell, scream or swear at you, insult or humiliate you?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
5.2 [A2]	Did a parent, guardian or other household member threaten to, or actually, abandon you or throw you out of the house?	Refused
		Many times
		A few times
		Once
5.3 [A3]	Did a parent, guardian or other household member spank, slap, kick, punch or beat you up?	Never
		Refused
		Many times
		A few times
5.4 [A4]	Did a parent, guardian or other household member hit or cut you with an object, such as a stick (or cane), bottle, club, knife, whip etc?	Once
		Never
		Refused
		Many times
5.5 [A5]	Did someone touch or fondle you in a sexual way when you did not want them to?	A few times
		Once
		Never
		Refused
5.6 [A6]	Did someone make you touch their body in a sexual way when you did not want them to?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
5.7 [A7]	Did someone attempt oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you when you did not want them to?	Refused
		Many times
		A few times
		Once

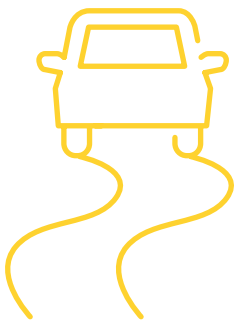
		Never
		Refused
5.8 [A8]	Did someone actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you when you did not want them to?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
		Refused
6	PEER VIOLENCE	
	<p>These next questions are about BEING BULLIED when you were growing up. Bullying is when a young person or group of young people say or do bad and unpleasant things to another young person. It is also bullying when a young person is teased a lot in an unpleasant way or when a young person is left out of things on purpose. It is not bullying when two young people of about the same strength or power argue or fight or when teasing is done in a friendly and fun way.</p> <p>When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .</p>	
6.1 [V1]	How often were you bullied?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never (<i>Go to Q. V3</i>)
		Refused
6.2 [V2]	How were you bullied most often?	I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors
		I was made fun of because of my race, nationality or colour
		I was made fun of because of my religion
		I was made fun of with sexual jokes, comments, or gestures
		I was left out of activities on purpose or completely ignored
		I was made fun of because of how my body or face looked
		I was bullied in some other way
		Refused
	<p>This next question is about PHYSICAL FIGHTS. A physical fight occurs when two young people of about the same strength or power choose to fight each other.</p> <p>When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .</p>	
6.3 [V3]	How often were you in a physical fight?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
		Refused
7	WITNESSING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE	
	<p>These next questions are about how often, when you were a child, YOU may have seen or heard certain things in your NEIGHBOURHOOD OR COMMUNITY (not in your home or on TV, movies, or the radio).</p> <p>When you were growing up, during the first 18 years of your life . . .</p>	
7.1 [V4]	Did you see or hear someone being beaten up in real life?	Many times
		A few times
		Once
		Never
		Refused
7.2	Did you see or hear someone being stabbed	Many times

SLEEP DEPRIVATION

EFFECTS

Lack of sleep is a health issue that deserves your attention and your doctor's help. Not getting enough sleep—due to insomnia or a sleep disorder such as obstructive sleep apnea, or simply because you're keeping late hours—can affect your mood, memory and health in far-reaching and surprising ways, says Johns Hopkins sleep researcher Patrick Finan, Ph.D. Sleep deprivation can also affect your judgment so that you don't notice its effects.

SAFETY



6,000

FATAL CAR CRASHES CAUSED BY DROWSY DRIVING EACH YEAR



1 IN 25

ADULTS WHO'VE FALLEN ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL IN THE PAST MONTH

WEIGHT



MORE CRAVINGS
FOR SWEET, SALTY & STARCHY FOOD

↑ Higher levels of the **hunger hormone ghrelin** | ↓ Lower levels of the **appetite-control hormone leptin**

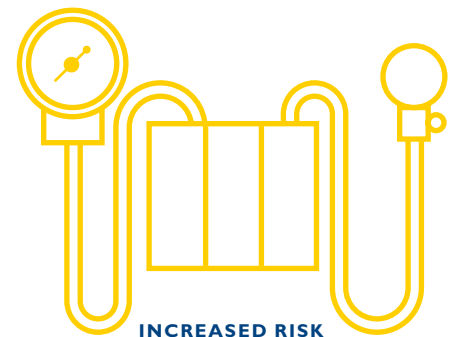
50% HIGHER RISK FOR OBESITY IF YOU GET LESS THAN 5 HOURS OF SLEEP NIGHTLY

HEALTH

36%
INCREASE IN RISK FOR COLORECTAL CANCER

LESS ACTIVE IMMUNITY PROTECTORS CALLED NATURAL KILLER CELLS

NEARLY **3X**
RISK FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES



INCREASED RISK OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

BRAIN EFFECTS

33%
INCREASE IN DEMENTIA RISK



GREATER RISK FOR:

- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Forgetfulness
- ▶ Fuzzy thinking

3-5 YEARS
HOW MUCH SLEEP DEPRIVATION CAN AGE YOUR BRAIN

48%
INCREASE IN DEVELOPING HEART DISEASE

3X
MORE LIKELY TO CATCH A COLD

25 WAYS TO GET MOVING AT HOME



1

Run in place for 30 seconds



2

Dance party for 1 minute

3

Stand up and sit down 10 times



4

Read standing up

5

Hot lava!

Keep a balloon in the air without touching the ground (make it harder by only using heads or elbows)

6

Jumping jacks for 30 seconds

7

Do the hokey pokey

8

See how many squats you can do in 15 seconds

9

Stand up, touch your toes

10

Wall sits while reading



11

One-minute yoga

12

Stretch your hands high over your head



13

Arm circles forward for 30 seconds, arm circles backward for 30 seconds

16

Stand on one leg, put your hands up, put your hands out to the side

17

5 lunges on the right leg, 5 lunges on the left leg

14

10 frog jumps



15

Standing mountain climbers for 30 seconds

20

Practice spelling by doing a jumping jack for each letter

21

30-second plank



ABC 18 123

18

Practice spelling, do a squat for every vowel

19

Run in place for 30 seconds, check your heart rate

24

Ball toss spelling practice. Toss the ball and say a letter then toss the ball to someone else to say the next letter

25

High knees for 30 seconds

22

Practice math problems, do a jumping jack every time the answer is an even number

23

20 leg lifts



THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

That gut-wrenching feeling in the pit of your stomach is all too real – your gut is sensitive to emotions like anger, anxiety, sadness, and joy – and your brain can react to signals from your stomach. All the more reason to eat a balanced and nutritious diet – so that your gut and your brain can be healthy.

WHAT IS “THE GUT”?

The gut includes every organ involved in digesting food and processing it into waste. The lining of your gut is often called “the second brain.”

ESOPHAGUS & STOMACH



SMALL & LARGE INTESTINES



GALLBLADDER



LIVER



PANCREAS

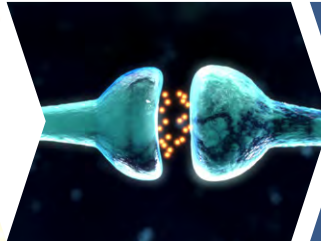


HOW IS THE GUT CONNECTED TO THE BRAIN?

The gut or “second brain” can operate on its own and communicates back and forth with your actual brain. They are connected in two main ways:

PHYSICALLY

The vagus nerve, which controls messages to the gut as well as the heart, lungs, and other vital organs is the gut’s direct connection to the brain.

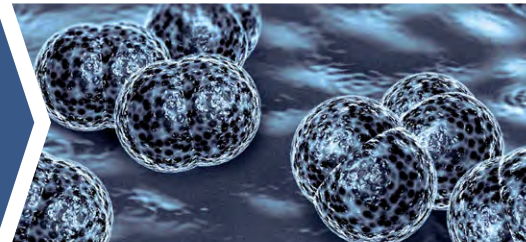
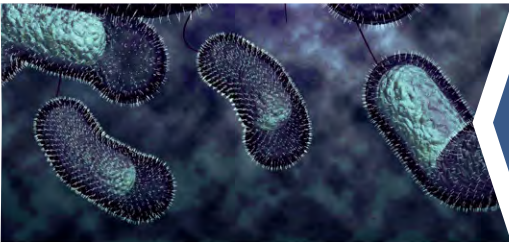


CHEMICALLY

The gut also connects with the brain through chemicals like hormones and neurotransmitters that send messages.

The chemical messages that pass between the gut and the brain can be affected by the bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut called the “gut microbiome.”

The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut may be beneficial, harmless, or harmful.



HOW IS THE GUT MICROBIOME RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH?

There is a strong relationship between having mental health problems and having gastrointestinal symptoms like heartburn, indigestion, acid reflux, bloating, pain, constipation, and/or diarrhea.¹



Research in animals has shown that changes in the gut microbiome and inflammation in the gut can affect the brain and cause symptoms that look like Parkinson’s disease, autism, anxiety and depression.



Having anxiety and depression can cause changes in the gut microbiome because of what happens in the body when it has a stress response.²



TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR GUT

Eating a balanced and nutritious diet is the most important thing a person can do to keep their gut healthy.

DO

Eat a diet full of whole grains, lean meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables.



DON'T

Base your diet on sugary, fried, or processed foods and soft drinks.



Feed the good bacteria, viruses, and fungi that live in the gut what they like to help them grow. These foods are called prebiotics.

Prebiotic foods are high in fiber and work best when they are raw. Try asparagus, bananas (especially if they aren't quite ripe), garlic, onions, or jicama. If you can't stand the taste of these foods raw, you can try steaming them lightly to still get most of their prebiotic benefits. Tomatoes, apples, berries and mangos are also good prebiotic choices.



You can also eat bacteria. Probiotics are live bacteria that exist in foods.

Eating probiotics can be tricky. The types and amounts of bacteria in probiotics vary, and when foods are heated the bacteria often die. Examples of probiotic foods are yogurt (the label should say live or active cultures), unpasteurized sauerkraut and kimchi, miso soup, kefir (a yogurt-like beverage), kombucha (fermented black tea), tempeh (made of soy beans), and apple cider vinegar.



You can also get probiotic supplements to help grow good gut bacteria, but it is important to pick the right ones. Make sure the type of bacteria is listed on the bottle – Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus are some of the most common – and that the label says that the bacteria are live and there are billions of colony forming units (CFUs). Store them in a cool, dry place like the refrigerator.



OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Avoid taking antibiotics unless your doctor says they are absolutely necessary. Antibiotics kill bad bacteria, but also kill the good bacteria that keeps your gut working properly.

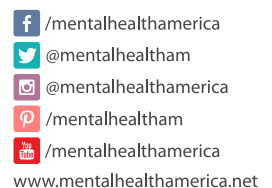
If you have gut problems like an upset stomach or unusual bathroom habits that don't go away it is important to see a doctor. Start with your primary care doctor. They may recommend you see a specialist called a gastroenterologist.

TAKE THE #4MIND4BODY CHALLENGE!

Join Mental Health America this May as we challenge ourselves each day to make small changes – both physically and mentally – to create huge gains for our overall fitness. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for the challenge of the day and share your successes by posting with #4mind4body.

If you are taking steps to live a healthy lifestyle but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. It's free, confidential, and anonymous. Once you have your results, we'll give you information and help you find tools and resources to feel better.

For a complete list of sources, download the complete 2018 May is Mental Health Month toolkit for end notes or visit the corresponding page on our website, www.mentalhealthamerica.net.





COMMENTARY

Meditation for Children

Susan D. Swick, MD; Michael S. Jellinek, MD

November 23, 2022

Meditation has become a popular practice in the United States over the last decade. It is not limited to adults, but can be learned and practiced by children and teenagers also. Variants are being used in many schools as parts of a social and emotional learning curriculum, and different kinds of mindfulness practices are common parts of psychological treatments. In this month's column, we will review the evidence that supports the efficacy of a meditation practice to treat the mental health problems that are common in children and adolescents, and review how it might be a useful adjunct to the screening, education, and treatments that you offer your young patients.



Susan D. Swick, MD

There are many different types of meditation practices, but the unifying feature is known as mindfulness. Most broadly, mindfulness refers to a state of nonjudgmental awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, or sensations. A mindfulness meditation practice involves physical stillness and focused attention, typically on the physical sensations of one's breath. When thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations intrude on the stillness, one learns to cultivate a nonjudgmental awareness of those experiences without disrupting the state of quiet concentration. It could be said that meditation is easy to learn and difficult to master, and that is why it should be practiced regularly. Part of its growing popularity has undoubtedly been served by the ease with which people can access a variety of guided meditations (through apps, YouTube, and beyond) that make it relatively easy to access a variety of methods to learn how to practice mindfulness meditation.

The benefits of meditation in adults are [well-established](#), including lower blood pressure, lower rates of heart disease, lower markers of inflammation, better sleep, and self-described levels of well-being. Meditation appears to be especially effective at mitigating the cardiovascular, metabolic, autoimmune, and inflammatory consequences of high-stress or unhealthy lifestyles in adults. Children and adolescents typically do not suffer from these diseases, but there is growing evidence that mindfulness practices can improve self-reported stress management skills, well-being, and sleep in young people; skills that can protect their physical and mental health. In addition, there is some evidence that mindfulness can be effective as a treatment for the common psychiatric illnesses of youth.

Anxiety

There is robust evidence for the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions (including a regular mindfulness meditation practice) in the treatment of [anxiety disorders](#) in youth. Multiple studies and meta-analyses have demonstrated significant and sustained improvement in anxiety symptoms in these young patients. This makes sense when one considers that most psychotherapy treatments for anxiety include the cultivation of self-awareness and the ability to recognize the feelings of anxiety. This is critical as youth with anxiety disorders often mistake these feelings for facts. The treatment then shifts toward practice tolerating these feelings to help children develop an appreciation that they can face and manage anxiety and that it does not need to be avoided. Part of tolerating these feelings includes building skills to facilitate calm and physical relaxation in the face of these anxious feelings.

This is the core of exposure-based psychotherapies. Mindfulness practices echo the cultivation of self-awareness with focus and physical calm. [Studies](#) have shown that mindfulness-based interventions have significant and lasting effects on the symptoms of anxiety disorders in youth, including those youth with comorbid [ADHD](#) and learning disabilities. It is important to be aware that, for youth who have experienced trauma, mindfulness meditation can trigger a flood of re-experiencing phenomena, and it is important that those youth also are receiving treatment for PTSD.

Depression

There is [evidence](#) that some of the symptoms that occur as part of [depression](#) in adolescents improve with mindfulness-based interventions. In particular, symptoms of anger, irritability, disruptive behaviors, suicidality, and even impulsive self-injury improve with mindfulness-based interventions. Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) have the nonjudgmental self-awareness of mindfulness built in as a component of the therapy. But mindfulness practices without explicit cognitive and behavioral components of psychotherapy for depression are not effective as stand-alone treatment of major depressive disorder in youth.



Michael S. Jellinek, MD

Multiple meta-analyses have demonstrated that [stimulant](#) treatment is more effective than behavioral or environmental interventions in the treatment of [ADHD in children](#) and adolescents, and combined treatments have not shown substantial additional improvement over medications alone in randomized controlled studies. But there is a lot of interest in finding effective treatments beyond medications that will help children with ADHD build important cognitive and behavioral skills that may lag developmentally.

Now there is an emerging body of evidence indicating that mindfulness skills in children with ADHD are quite effective for improving their sustained attention, social skills, behavioral control, and even hyperactivity. Additionally, [methods](#) to teach mindfulness skills to children who struggle with stillness and focused attention have been developed for these studies (“mindful martial arts”). Again, this intervention has not yet shown the same level of efficacy as medication treatments for ADHD symptoms, but it has demonstrated promise in early trials. Interestingly, it has also shown promise as a component of parenting interventions for youth with ADHD.

You do not need to wait for decisive evidence from randomized controlled trials to recommend mindfulness training for your patients with anxiety, ADHD, or even depression. Indeed, this practice alone may be adequate as a treatment for mild to moderate anxiety disorders. But you can also recommend it as an empowering and effective adjunctive treatment for almost every psychiatric illness and subclinical syndrome, and one that is affordable and easy for families to access. It would be valuable for you to recommend that your patients and their parents both try a mindfulness practice alongside your recommendations about healthy sleep, exercise, and nutrition. There are free apps such as Smiling Mind, Sound Mind, and Thrive Global that families can try together. Some children may need to move physically to be able to practice mindfulness, so yoga or walking meditations can be a better practice for them. When parents can try mindfulness practice alongside their children, it will facilitate their child’s efforts to develop these skills, and the improved sleep, focus, and stress management skills in parents can make a significant difference in the health and well-being of the whole family.

Dr. Swick is physician in chief at Ohana, Center for Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, Community Hospital of the Monterey (Calif.) Peninsula. Dr. Jellinek is professor emeritus of psychiatry and pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, Boston. Email them at pdnews@mdedge.com.

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Discover the power of deep breathing.

The 4-7-8 breathing method helps children and adults relax and alleviates anxiety. Take a few minutes to watch a video on deep breathing and practice breathing with your child. Be prepared to release your inner and outer smile.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmBYdfv5RSk>

Sample Christian Meditation For Kids

Did you ever wonder how much God loves you? God loves you so much! He made you and gave you life. God knew you before you were born, and He made you the special person you are.

There's only one you, and you are God's gift to the world. God loves you so much! He watches over you day and night. When you're happy, God's happy. When you're sad, He's sad. God and

His angels protect and keep you company always. God will never go away or leave you. God loves you so much! He accepts you as you are. God will always love you no matter what you do. If you make a bad choice or get in a fight or do something God doesn't like, God keeps on loving you just the way you are. God loves you so much! He wants what's best for you. God knows you better than anyone else. You are His child, a perfect and holy creation. He knows what's good for you and what's not. God's word tells you how to live in a way that's best for you so you can be happy and healthy, and that makes God happy. So whatever you're going to do next, whether it's starting your day or going to sleep, or anything else, just remember God loves you so much!





Create a guided Christian meditation for kids, step by step

Homeschool & Parenting

David and Goliath from the Breviari di Marti, 14th-15th
century (photo credit: Wikipedia).

I've had a lot of requests lately, especially since my [interview on Carmelite Conversations](#), for more details on teaching children to pray. So I've decided to write a step-by-step post to help you create these meditations for your children or students. I will walk you through a meditation I created for my boys. We'll use the story of David and Goliath as a basis for this meditation, because everyone is familiar with it.

You can write a meditation for your kids without first praying over the Scripture passage yourself. I was making a Bible-based curriculum for the boys for a few years before I realized how akin it was to Christian meditation. At that point, I tried meditating on the Scripture passage first. What happened?

The lesson became more personal. I was more excited about it. My kids and I were then focusing on the same things in our spiritual lives. How cool is that? I taught with more enthusiasm and gained a deeper connection with them.

Step 1: Read and Meditate on the story yourself



So, find a Bible and read I Kings 17. This is a long story, so I encourage you to read it outside your prayer time. You don't want to spend all your time with God reading. You want to spend your time in conversation with Him.

Then set aside about thirty minutes for prayer, alone in a quiet place where no one will interrupt you. Place yourself in God's presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your meditation.

Ask yourself: What is this story about? Who are the main characters? What lesson does God want me to take from it?

The most obvious lesson from David and Goliath is courage to fight your enemies. Who are your enemies in the spiritual life? What fears keep you from loving God and others as you should? Do you fear failure? Do you fear betrayal? Do you fear having to let go of your material possessions?

Talk to God about these fears. Offer them to Him. Ask Him to show you how to work to overcome them.

Thank and praise Him for His direction and strength.

Make one specific resolution to work on your fears.

Step 2: Relate this theme to your kids' lives

As a parent, you probably know what your children struggle with. Teachers will have to go for more general struggles that are typical of the age group they teach.

What are your kids afraid of? What are their spiritual enemies?

When we studied David and Goliath a couple years ago, we talked about "your inner bully." That's the voice inside your head that tempts you to do your own will instead of God's. I knew

my boys could relate to the idea of bullies. I wanted them to learn to fight against their baser selves and listen to their well-formed consciences.



Step 3: Find another story to illustrate your point

Search Amazon or your library's online catalog for books on bullies. I look for books from familiar authors, award-winning titles, and those with four or five stars. Here are some options: *Llama Llama and the Bully Goat* by Anna Dewdney (for preschoolers), and *Jungle Bullies* by Steven Kroll (ages 5-8). Or read any stories on courage from *The Book of Virtues* by William Bennett.

Step 4: Connect the story to other academic subjects (optional)

If you are homeschooling, try to connect the story to math, science, music, sports, art, or history as well. These can relate to any aspect of the story, not just your primary focus of courage. Here are some examples:

- Sing “Little David, Play on Your Harp.”
- Use Psalm 27:1 for memorization and copy work (handwriting).
- Learn how to make your own sling shot (if you dare try this one).
- Research armor and weapons in the bronze age.
- Study the painting above. Discuss how it makes David and Goliath into medieval characters. Make a pastel or crayon version with your own twists (perhaps in 21st century garb).
- Go on a nature walk and collect interesting rocks.
- Check out books on fencing.

I encourage even those in a classroom setting to try at least one of these activities with students.

Step 5: Read the story aloud



Have the children narrate it back to you, either orally or on paper, depending on their age. Encourage them to include as many details as they can remember. Discuss new vocabulary.

Tell the kids about your meditation, and any fears you are working on. Introduce the idea of an inner bully. Why don't we always want to do God's will? Do they sometimes feel they are fighting a battle in order to be obedient? What can they do to overcome temptation? Be specific here, especially with your own kids. Which sins are hardest for them to fight?

Look over the prayer below for more specific ideas.

Then do the other activities you decide upon.

Step 6: Pray with them

Here is the prayer I composed to end this unit with my boys. You read aloud the first two paragraphs, then they repeat the last prayer after you :

In the Name of the Father...

Close your eyes and imagine you are David. You stand facing the tallest and strongest man you have ever seen. Goliath towers over you by more than two feet. He is dressed in brass armor, while you wear only your shepherd's clothes. You are naturally afraid, but you put your trust in God. You know God wants you to win this battle. You feel His courage surging through you as you fit a stone in your sling. (Pause)

Now imagine that your greatest enemy is within you. Due to original sin, part of you wants to be selfish, greedy, and angry. When you feel your enemy, your "inner bully", towering over you, you can trust God to help you win the battle. You can slay your desire to sin as David slayed Goliath. (Pause)

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, when you were on earth, you fought against your enemy, the Devil, to bring us victory over sin. Help me to be your good soldier. When I am tired of fighting, or

think I cannot win, give me the strength and courage to continue to fight well. Help me to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Amen.



In the Name of the Father...

More meditations to come

Does this seem to difficult for you to do from scratch? We all have different gifts and talents. Over the rest of this year, I hope to share with you many more of the meditations I have made. I may even write a book in a year or two.

Connie Rossini

Share with us: What other lessons for the spiritual life do you see in the story of David and Goliath? How might we apply them to children?

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About The Author

Connie Rossini

Hi, I'm a Catholic writer and homeschool mother of four boys. I practice Carmelite spirituality. Check out my Books page for publications to help your whole family grow in holiness.

16 thoughts on “Create a guided Christian meditation for kids, step by step”



KYM LOGIN

Resilience Guided Visualization: Be Resilient in our Thoughts...



A couple weeks ago, my daughter was making a buffalo out of origami for her online art class. Suddenly, she crumpled the paper and threw it across the room, screaming that she could not do it. So I swooped in, as any parent or teacher would do, and put on my cheerleader hat to see if I could help guide her through her frustration.

She put herself on mute, turned the camera off, and burst into tears. We restarted the origami buffalo video and concluded together that the project was really aimed at advanced origami makers. In that moment, I was wondering if I should have encouraged her to push through her frustration and complete the buffalo. But then I also had a thought that it takes courage to recognize when your skills are “just right.” Instead of finishing the complicated buffalo, she found an origami dog that she breezed through and was much happier.

I found myself musing about this incident that afternoon. I reflected on how **resilient** our children (including my daughter) have been over the past year of this global pandemic. But yet, they still have much to learn in terms of facing life's little challenges.

That night, there was a news article on BBC World News about a nine-year-old boy from Yemen who is blind. A large group of children attend school in a bombed-out school building missing walls and windows. He was at the front of the classroom, teaching the rest of his peers. There were no teachers in sight.

I couldn't help but think about my daughter having a meltdown over a buffalo origami, as well as this child of the same age, on the other side of the world, teaching his classmates. Both are in quite different situations, but both are responding to the challenge of their life in that moment.


Resilience is truly a foundational life skill, no matter where you are on this planet. And we are at a fork in the road right now.

Many of our children have had a lot of screen time and sugar, and their routines have changed dramatically over the past year. One path is that our children could continue on to have too much screen time and be brought up influenced by commercials and YouTubers. And it really is up to us to take that other path—a path where we are cheerleaders for our children to teach them exactly *how* to:

- self-regulate and know when enough screen is enough,
- build healthy relationships with their friends again,
- be self-confident and self-aware of their strengths and limitations,
- bounce back from challenges with ease,
- and ultimately live a meaningful, happy, and healthy life.

And if we take this moment to zoom out and see the bigger picture—imagine if in a few years' time, we look back on this year and feel proud of ourselves for intentionally guiding our children on this path of resilience.

We absolutely need to invest in ourselves and our children... and make the time to do the activities and have the hard conversations. Planting seeds of resilience now will make such a difference in their futures; I have no doubt of that.

So how do we teach resilience? Let's think about this. One of the ways to teach resilience is to look at how to be resilient in our *thoughts*. 

We can easily get lost in our “monkey minds,” the restless, seemingly uncontrollable thoughts chasing each other around our heads. Children can get bombarded with negative thoughts that make them fight, flee, or freeze when faced with difficult situations.

One idea to help build resilient thoughts is to do **guided visualizations** together. These mind stories can plant a seed of resilience that reminds them that they can ask for help and learn strategies to overcome challenging experiences.

Resilience Guided Visualization

RESILIENCE GUIDED VISUALIZATION

Come to a comfortable seated position with a straight spine. Be still. Close your eyes. Breathe and relax.

Today, we are going on a "thinking journey." Listen to my questions and think about them in your mind.

First, let's think about things we love.

Think of something you do that makes you happy. Think of who you are with when you do those things. It could be:

- Playing sports... listening to music... or doing an art project.
- Watching tv or playing games with your family.
- Or doing an activity on your own, like playing video games... or reading a book.

Think about what makes you feel good. Take a few moments to think about those happy times.

Next, think about a recent experience that wasn't so great. It could have been:

- An argument with a friend or parent.
- Something bad that happened at school.
- Or a time you didn't get what you wanted.

How did you react? Did you yell or fight back? Did you run away? Or did you go quiet and not say anything? Did someone help you in this situation? What did you do to calm your big feelings?

Now, think again about the things that make you feel good and help calm you.

Imagine being in that difficult situation again, but this time, see yourself taking a deep breath.

That deep breath pulls all those good, calm feelings from your favorite things back into you. When you breathe out, push out all the bad feelings. Feel your shoulders and your muscles softening and your heart calming. Instead of stiffening or struggling against the situation, imagine yourself being flexible and embracing challenges.

Once you are calm, you feel stronger and ready to face the challenges in front of you with good ideas instead of negative emotions.

Take a deep breath. When you are ready, open your eyes.

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RESILIENCE GUIDED VISUALIZATION

Life is full of unexpected challenging experiences. It is up to us to learn ways to respond in a kind and productive way. Imagine being able to stay calm in the face of whatever challenge life brings you.

First, we must be calm. Then we can think about *who* can help and which *strategies* calm your mind.

We use *courage* and *positivity* to build resilience.

Come to a comfortable seated position with a straight spine. Be still. Close your eyes. Breathe and relax.

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LOVE YOGA



I am positive.
EXTENDED SIDE ANGLE



I am graceful.
DANCER'S POSE



I am confident.
COBRA POSE



I am proud.
PIGEON POSE



I appreciate myself.
BRIDGE POSE

SUPERHERO YOGA



I am brave.
WARRIOR 1 POSE



I am strong.
WARRIOR 2 POSE



I am peaceful.
PEACEFUL WARRIOR POSE



I am kind.
WARRIOR 3 POSE



I am a superhero!
HALF MOON POSE

ANTARCTIC ANIMALS YOGA



I am a penguin.
MOUNTAIN POSE VARIATION



I am an albatross.
WARRIOR 3 POSE



I am an octopus.
STANDING FORWARD BEND



I am a seal.
COBRA POSE



I am an orca.
DOWNWARD-FACING DOG POSE

CALM DOWN YOGA for kids



I am strong.
WARRIOR 2 POSE



I am kind.
TREE POSE



I am brave.
CHAIR POSE



I am friendly.
DOWNWARD-FACING DOG POSE



I am wise.
HERO POSE

OCEAN YOGA



I am a jellyfish.
STANDING FORWARD BEND



I am a shark.
LOCUST POSE



I am a dolphin.
DOLPHIN POSE



I am a crab.
TABLE TOP POSE



I am a turtle.
TORTOISE POSE

YOGA CARD GAMES

Memory Card Game

Place all the yoga cards upside down in rows. Take turns flipping up two cards at a time. If the player gets a yoga pose matched with its keyword, then that player keeps the pair. The game continues until all pairs have been matched up.



Yoga Pose Spinner Game

Grab a deck of yoga pose cards. Place a Post-it note under one corner of a fidget spinner to act as a pointer. Pick out six yoga pose cards and arrange them in a circle around the spinner.

You might want to use Blu Tack or something similar on the bottom of the spinner to make sure it doesn't spin away. Spin the spinner and then practice the pose that the pointer lands on. You can change the pose cards after a few rounds and play again!

Yoga Cards Dice Game

Grab a die from a board game you have at home. Write the numbers 1 through 6 on sticky notes, one note for each number. I wrote both the numeral and the number symbol found on dice. Have your child pick out 6 yoga pose cards from the deck. Stick a number note on each yoga pose card. I put the yoga poses in a logical yoga flow with standing poses first, followed by floor poses, and resting poses. Roll the die and practice the yoga pose associated with that number.

