**Cosgriff Health & Wellness**

**April 8, 2020**

Mindfulness is the practice of bringing our awareness to what we are experiencing in the present, both internally and externally, without judgment (Kornfield, 2009). It is a wakeup call to become conscious of the ways we perceive and respond to life’s situations. As we become more mindful, we broaden and build several inner resources that help us strengthen our resilience. Living resiliently is more than just “bouncing back.” It is about shifting our perceptions, changing our responses, and learning something new.

We, as individuals and as a community, are creating the narrative and thus, the lasting impact this pandemic is going to have on ourselves, our children, and our communities. We have the opportunity to bring mindful awareness to the challenges, disruptions, loss, suffering, and loneliness brought on by COVID-19. We can also bring mindfulness to the relationships, time, opportunities, gratitude and new perspectives that are being offered to us in these days. The changes we are enduring now have the possibility to bring endless growth, freedom, and rebirth. Let us all be aware of Christ alive in us, with us, and through us this Holy Week as we all suffer in the death of the familiar. We all wait in the tension of the unknown. We all long for rebirth and resurrection – for both Jesus and ourselves.

**Mindfulness activities for families**

**(Growing up Mindful, by Christopher Willard, PsyD)**

**\*These could be fun ways to connect over ZOOM with family and friends.\***

**Smile Meditation**

There’s a saying, usually attributed to Thich Nhat Hanh, that goes,”Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.” This practice, which I learned from my friend Janet Surrey, works best when kids are seated in a circle, or at least not in rows.

*Close your eyes or just relax then and let them rest on the floor in front of you.*

*Invite a smile to your lips. Notice what the sensations of the smile feel like. Also notice what your emotions are when you smile.*

*Now continue to smile while you open or raise your eyes and simply look around the room. Share a smile and eye contact with anyone you see, noticing what emotions come up as you do.*

*Once you’ve smiled at everyone in the room, lower your eyes, and take a moment to smile to yourself.*

*(Allow twenty seconds or more, depending on the size of the group, then ring the bell to signal the end of the session and open a discussion.)*

You can have kids do this practices while walking around a small space. In this adaptation, omit the direction to have them close their eyes. Another variation is to have the group send smiles to one person at a time in a “smile wave” as the smiles move around a circle. If there are only two of you, you can just smile at each other for a few breaths, then lower your eyes again.

**The Human Mirror**

Another fun game for all ages that teaches paying attention to and attuning with others is the Human Mirror. Many of us played versions of this game when we were kids, and in retrospect we can see how much it cultivates interpersonal mindfulness.

You can do this practice as a partner with your child. The two of you should sit or stand facing each other. Decide which of you will be the leader first.

The leader begins by moving parts of his or her body, starting slowly and then speeding up. The other person mirrors the movement. After a minute or two, ring a bell or signal in another way that it’s time to switch roles. Now your child moves, and you follow. Continue taking turns for as long as you like.

In a variation, the leader makes different facial expressions representing different emotions. Another, more intense variation is to have the partners maintain eye contact the entire time and use only their peripheral vision to notice movement. If you are doing this practice with two kids, you can take turns being the leader while the other two (or more) players follow. You may want a music accompaniment to inspire movement.

**A rainbow is a promise**

**Of sunshine after rain**

**Of calm after storms**

**Of joy after sadness**

**Of peace after pain**

**Of love after loss**