



Be Smart, Eat Well, Move More & Be Mindful!

Mindfulness programs are popping up in schools nationwide, and studies are surfacing that reveal their positive impact on academic performance, stress levels, and emotional maturity. Because kids are all growing up in the digital age, they may not seek mindfulness themselves, but they have a lot to gain from learning how and when to integrate it. The tricky part is figuring out how to capture their attention and interest long enough and at the right time to gain a basic understanding of mindfulness, which will ultimately allow them to integrate this into their lives. Just like sometimes hiding the vegetables within a dish, introducing mindfulness in creative ways may just allow this to become habit!

For those of you who are less familiar with Mindfulness, this is not a new or mysterious concept. In fact, it has been around for over 2500 years. Defined best by psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn as, "Paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-reactively, nonjudgmentally and openheartedly as possible." Wouldn't we all like to feel that way more often?

We, at the Cincinnati Flying Pig Marathon, think that working toward a goal, exercising and eating well are vital for good health. We would like to plant the seeds of mindfulness as part of the Kids' Marathon's overall mission to improve the daily wellness habits of kids in our communities.

What would it mean to have some of them understand how to be more present? To be able to have a moment where they can pause and slow down their bodies and minds, just for a moment? To pay more attention in school? To feel more confident and in control of themselves? To react less often, speak and act more compassionately to themselves and others? To sleep better at night? This could be a gift they will have for the rest of their lives.

You can introduce this concept in a number of ways...for starters, as they are about to go out for their run, you could just ask them to pause a moment, close their eyes, and just pay attention to their breath for one minute. Ask them to breathe a little bigger than their normal breath, and to pay attention to their inhale and then their exhale, noting any sensations - any warmth or coolness - they can silently count the number of seconds it takes them to inhale and exhale to themselves to allow them to focus on breathing. Their breath should be felt all the way into their bellies and up through their chest. At the end of the minute, you could have a short chat on how that felt for them (do they now feel calmer, more attentive, more energetic, happier..., sleepy, silly) or you can just move on to get ready for the run. Personally observe the energy of your child before, during, and after to get a sense of how practicing mindfulness may be affecting them. If you get some giggles from them for the first few times you try this, just know this is normal. Some of them may not be comfortable closing their eyes and that's ok too. They will still get the benefit from the breathing exercise.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our mindfulness guru directly. She can be reached at barbara@centerforhumanperformance.com or at 513.961.8400.