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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

Self Regulation Strategies.... How You Can Help Your Child

Before you get to this.....



As we have discussed in the past, most Autistic children have issues with self regulation and tend to have difficulty expressing themselves. Zak typically struggles to tell us how or what he is feeling. Zak typically struggles to tell us how or what he is feeling. And once that frustration takes over for him, it is too late. He explodes. He melts down. It is heartbreaking to see because, as we sit on our neurotypical high-horses, we feel like self-control should be easy by simply expressing himself. But that is not the case in our autistic kids (and any child

or adult for that matter). There are many things that we are constantly doing to help improve his self-regulation and emotional responses.

Here are some tips we are learning and strategies to use if your child has difficulty with self-regulation.

1. Provide a predictable, structured routine. This has really helped Zak over the course of time and is especially helpful in school. Self regulation in school is very important to his success.
2. Provide visual supports (gestures, facial expressions, photos, schedules). Visual support is helpful for every child, not just one's affected with ASD. Most or autistic kids benefit from visual support materials when it comes to self regulation strategies.
3. Offer choices to your child. It is important to provide both verbal and nonverbal support and allows the child to feel more in control of the situation.
4. Recognize the signs. One of the most important things you can do is understand what causes your child to melt-down (not a tantrum which is handled much differently). Provide information before an issue occurs (Zak, you have only two more, you can do it!). This can be key in self regulation as the child knows there is an end point give them some control over the situation.
5. Follow your child's lead. Offer assistance or join in.
6. Use time-delay to encourage initiations.
7. Allow your child to work at his/her pace.
8. Ensure expectations are developmentally appropriate. Pushing your child is good. Pushing them over the edge, beware what is to come!
9. Model appropriate nonverbal and verbal communication and request imitation.
10. Define clear beginning, middle and end to activities. Use reminders and timers to help.
11. Provide repeated learning opportunities throughout the day for targeted skills.

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SELF REGULATION STRATEGIES CONTINUED....

It is a non-stop process and you must be focused to ensure the child's self regulating success. I can tell you it is not easy. Sometimes, stress or simply being tired are easy excuses – been there. It is the most important thing you can do to help your child is to help them understand how self regulation strategies will help them stay in control. Give them the tools and skills necessary to succeed and constantly work with them to ensure self regulation success.

For years, we have been working with Zak. The therapy and the reinforcement, we know we are doing something right as he continues to improve every day. Especially when Zak come home with a positive day or when he gets on the phone and talks all about his day to grammy! Makes it all worth while.

(Prizant, B., “Module 4: Enhancing Social Developing for Students with ASD in General Education Classrooms”. www.usm.med.sc.edu)

MINDFULNESS

The Power of Mindfulness

HOW A MEDITATION PRACTICE CAN HELP KIDS BECOME LESS ANXIOUS, MORE FOCUSED

Juliann Garey

By now there's a good chance you've heard the term “mindfulness.” It seems to be everywhere—touted as the new yoga, the answer to stress, the alternative to Xanax. But beyond the buzz, what is it? Jon Kabat-Zinn, the scientist and widely recognized father of contemporary, medically based mindfulness—over 30 years ago he developed a therapeutic meditation practice known as Mindful Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)—defines mindfulness simply as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”

That's the short version. To expand on that just a little, mindfulness is a meditation practice that begins with paying attention to breathing in order to focus on the here and now—not what might have been or what you're worried could be. The ultimate goal is to give you enough distance from disturbing thoughts and emotions to be able to observe them without immediately reacting to them.

In the last few years mindfulness has emerged as a way of treating children and adolescents with conditions ranging from ADHD to anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, depression and stress. And the benefits are proving to be tremendous.

But how do you explain mindfulness to a five year-old? When she's teaching mindfulness to children, Dr. Amy Saltzman, a holistic physician and mindfulness coach in Menlo Park, California, prefers *not* to define the word but rather to invite the child to feel the experience first—to find their “still, quiet place.”

Choosing Behaviors....

“We begin by paying attention to breath,”.....

Continued on page 3.

MINDFULNESS CONTINUED....

Choosing Behaviors....

“We begin by paying attention to breath,” she says. “The feeling of the expansion of the in-breath, the stillness between the in-breath and the out-breath. I invite them to rest in the space between the breaths. Then I explain that this still quiet place is always with us—when we’re sad, when we’re angry, excited, happy, frustrated. They can feel it in their bodies. And it becomes a felt experience of awareness. They can learn to observe their thoughts and feelings, and the biggest thing for me is they can begin to choose their behaviors.”

In her private practice, Saltzman, and her *Still Quiet Place CDs for Young Children and Teens*, teaches mindfulness to children and adolescents with a variety of challenges. “I work with kids individually with ADHD, with anxiety, depression, autism, anger management issues. The lovely thing about working one-on-one is you get to tailor what you offer to them.”

Saltzman also conducted a study in conjunction with researchers at Stanford University showing that after 8 weeks of mindfulness training, the fourth through sixth graders in the study had documented decreases in anxiety, and improvements in attention. They were less emotionally reactive and more able to handle daily challenges and choose their behavior.

As a teacher at The Nantucket New School where every student gets instruction in mindfulness, Allison Johnson has learned first hand what a difference it can make for kids. So she tried it at home. “I have a six-year-old son with ADHD,” she says. “I brought a chime home. We use it most nights before bed. ‘Cause he doesn’t love going to sleep. We sit on the floor facing each other, we close our eyes and we ring the chime. Sometimes we incorporate a visualization—like he’s floating on a cloud. We go on this little journey. And we ring the chime again and we say ‘when you can no longer hear the chime it’s time to open your eyes and come back to focus.’ And now if he gets in trouble and gets sent to his room, I can hear him upstairs doing it himself. Or when he’s getting unusually rowdy he’ll say ‘okay lets do our mindful breathing now.’” Johnson says since Curren started practicing mindfulness she’s seen subtle but noticeable differences in his behavior. “He’s more able to bring his focus and attention back to where they were—remembering to raise his hand and not move around so much.”

MINDFULNESS AND TEENAGERS

While the research on children and adolescents is really just beginning to gain real traction, there are several small studies showing that for kids who suffer from anxiety and ADHD, mindfulness can be especially helpful. Diana Winston, author of *Wide Awake* and the Director of Mindfulness Education at UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center, started taking teens with ADHD on retreats for what she calls “mindfulness intensive camp” back in 1993. Twenty years later the program is still going strong.

“Teens benefit tremendously,” she says. “Kids talk about their lives being transformed. I remember one girl with ADD who’d been very depressed and I didn’t think we were reaching her. On the last day of class she came in and said, ‘everything is different. I was really depressed. My boyfriend broke up with me and it’s been so hard but I’m finally understanding that I’m not my thoughts.’ That concept is huge—the non-identifying with the negative thoughts and having a little more space and freedom in the midst of it.”

Stress reduction and self-acceptance are two of the major perks of mindfulness, benefits Winston says are particularly important during the drama and turmoil-filled teen years. “Emotional regulation, learning how to quiet one’s mind—those are invaluable skills.”

Continued on page 4.

SANTA



“Autism-Friendly Santa”

Sunday, Dec. 4th

1:00pm-5:00pm

Autism Society Oregon

5100 SW Macadam Ave. Suite 400, Portland Oregon.

Each family signs up for a 10 minute block of time to meet Santa in a calm, stress-free environment. Siblings, extended family and friends are all welcome, and “elves” will take pictures as requested. Gluten-free snacks provided, low lighting and low/no music available. Please let us know if there are other sensory or dietary needs and we’ll do our best to meet them.

This event is free, but registering in advance is required. To reserve a spot, please contact the ASO office at 503-636-1676 or go to www.AutismSocietyOregon.org.

For information only, not sponsored by LBL-ESD.

MINDFULNESS CONTINUED....

MANAGING ANXIETY

Randy Semple, PhD, an assistant professor at the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine, has spent her career developing programs to teach anxious kids how to quiet their minds. “When I look at childhood anxiety I see an enormous problem and a precursor to other problems in adolescents and adults,” she says. “So I figured if we could manage the anxiety we could head off a lot of the other problems.” *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Anxious Children*, the book she co-authored, is based on the program she developed. A study she and her co-author, clinical psychologist Jennifer Lee, conducted from 2000-2003 showed significant reductions in both anxiety and behavior problems in 8- to 12-year-olds in Harlem and Spanish Harlem who participated in the program.

Teaching mindfulness to children and adolescents is a growing trend—in private practices as part of therapy and increasingly as part of the curriculum in both Special Ed and General Ed classes throughout the country. “We’re at the beginning of a movement,” says Megan Cowan, co-founder and executive director of programs at Mindful Schools in Oakland, California. “Jon Kabat-Zinn’s work really set the stage for mindfulness to be visible on a mainstream landscape. I think we all have the sense that society’s a little out of control. Education is a little out of control. We’re all looking for a way to change that. This is meaningful to almost everybody.”

<http://childmind.org/article/the-power-of-mindfulness/>



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We need CHILDREN AND TEENS (12-17 years old)
with Asperger Syndrome or High functioning Autism
for a brain imaging study

Researchers at the University of Oregon need your help to learn
more about the ways kids and teens think and interact with others.

The study takes about 2 hours per session, with 1-3 sessions possible.

Eligible participants will:

- Do computer tasks
- Answer questionnaires
- Learn about science
- Get pictures of their brains
- Earn about \$10-25 per hour



DEVELOPMENTAL
SOCIAL
NEUROSCIENCE

Interested in Participating?



Sign up here:
dsn.uoregon.edu
(541) 346-5213
dsnlab@uoregon.edu

Permission from a parent (biological or adoptive) or legal guardian is required for participation.

For information only, not sponsored by LBL-ESD.



What Is Self-Regulation?

Self-regulation is one of those odd things that most people are unable to define, but EVERYONE notices when it's missing.

A person may be unable to self-regulate if:

- He prevents himself from falling asleep by slapping his own face or thrashing his limbs around even when he can barely keep his eyes open.
- She giggles to herself, which escalates into uncontrollable laughter or crying for a long period of time in an inappropriate situation, and cannot stop herself.
- He doesn't understand the difference between feeling hungry or full. He doesn't recognize the feeling of needing to use the bathroom until it is almost too late. Mild stressors, such as temporarily misplacing a toy, send her into a panic.

Does any of that sound familiar to you?

Oh, I've got colorful stories to tell about each one of those symptoms — but I digress.

So...what is it?

In his book *The Developing Mind*, Daniel Siegel defines self-regulation as “the way the mind organizes its own functioning... fundamentally related to the modulation of emotion... Emotion regulation is initially developed from within interpersonal experiences in a process that establishes self-organizational abilities.”

See? Clear as mud.

I'll break it down for you:

Self-regulation is a cognitive process that begins in infancy.

Every time a caregiver responds appropriately to an infant's cries, vocalizations, gestures, eye contact or other nonverbal communication, the infant is learning cause and effect. The infant learns to modify his or her own behavior so that basic needs are met.

Self-regulation is an “executive function” of the human brain.

Individuals with neurological conditions such as ADHD, Autism, seizure disorders, traumatic brain injury, and even those undiagnosable folks who aren't quite neurotypical may find difficulty with self-regulation.

Self-regulation is intertwined with emotional development.

We all feel satisfaction when our needs are met, and some level of distress when we are not fulfilled. Most people learn how to soothe themselves during times of distress. Most people also learn when it is appropriate to express or suppress different types of emotion.

Self-regulation is intertwined with social development.

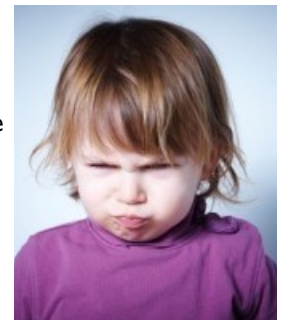
This means that every time a person interacts with another person, new social cues are absorbed, and behavior subtly adapts to new people and situations. The psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who was one of the first researchers to study self-regulation, wrote, “Through others we become ourselves.”

Regulation-Dysregulation-Regulation

What can you do if someone whom you love is in a constant state of dysregulation?

Remember: this is a learned behavior, and no one learns it alone.

The pattern for learning self-regulation is always the same, and always has been for the history of humanity. We start in a state of equilibrium with another person: some type of interaction, movement or a quiet state. Then a challenge is introduced, and we become imbalanced. Finally, we find our way back to a state of regulation.



Continued on page 7.

WHAT IS SELF REGULATION CONTINUED.....

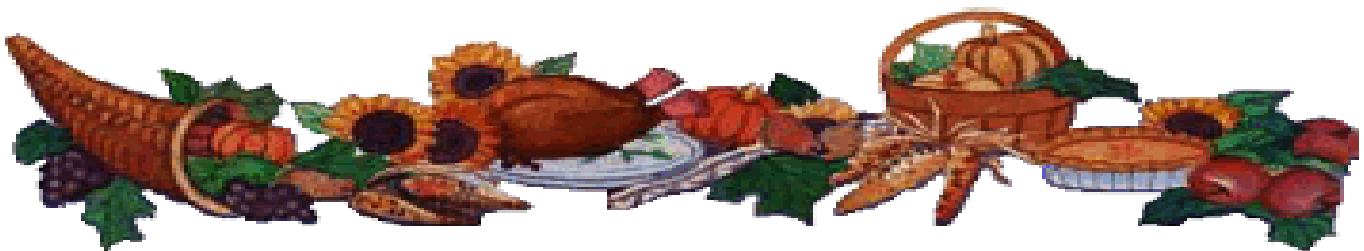
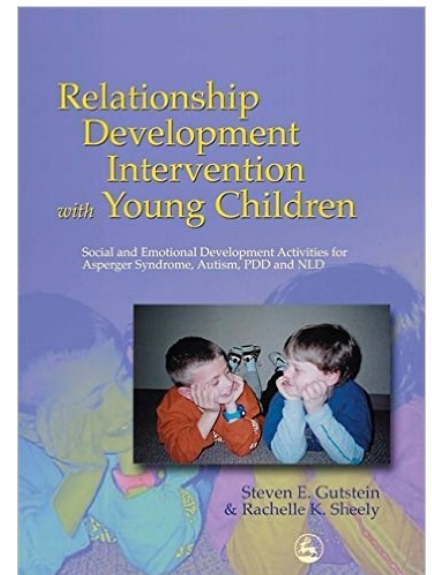
Here's a beginner's list of ways to teach self-regulation :

1. Play a game that involves starting out slow, going faster and faster, then slowing down again, such as patty-cake or singing nursery rhymes. Fingerplays like "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" also work well at changing speeds.
2. If your child will walk with you, make it a game for the child to match your pace. Give the child plenty of time to adjust to your speed. Start off walking slowly, then walk quickly, jog and walk slowly again. My husband just reminded me that we used to surprise our son by stopping suddenly and waiting for him to notice – our son thought this was hilarious.
3. Using chalk outdoors or masking tape indoors, write instructions on the ground for different types of movement to do with your child. For example, write "Walk," then 8-10 feet later write "Hop," then "Crawl," then "Run," then "Skip," and finally "Walk" again. Even better if there's a happy surprise at the end of the walk: I prefer to end this game with the instruction, "Kiss."
4. Many traditional kids' games are based on self-regulation, such as "Simon Says," "Red Rover," "Red Light, Green Light" and "Mother May I?"
5. Board games or simple collaborative games also provide an opportunity self-regulation, by requiring turn-taking and careful observation of other players' movements.
6. Community-based outings are another great way to teach self-regulation. This is one of the reason my family loves to go to amusement parks: a certain type of behavior is expected while waiting in line, then we get to experience the excitement of a ride together, and we calm ourselves as we choose another ride and go wait in line for it.
7. Taking a break from a preferred activity and doing something different, such as Brain Gym or Bal-A-Vis-X exercises, then returning to the preferred activity, is excellent practice for self-regulation.
8. The book [Relationship Development Intervention with Young Children](#) by Steven Gutstein and Rachelle Sheely has a chapter full of self-regulation exercises for children with special needs .

When my first son was little, the only way he could fall asleep and remain asleep was to press his ear right up to my heartbeat. Unable to self-soothe, he depended on the external regulation of my heartbeat to calm himself. I often woke up with the shape of his tiny ear perfectly imprinted on my chest. Eventually, as his receptive language progressed, I was able to teach him how to fall asleep on his own by describing the feeling of relaxing muscles in the simplest language possible. Through repeated interaction over many years, he learned how to slow himself down enough to feel tired and to recognize the feeling of drowsiness.

But his ear is still stamped upon my heart, a memory of the lesson he taught me about our shared humanity.

<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2011/11/30/what-is-self-regulation/>



Mom Creates Autism Law Enforcement Response Training for Police Officers



As a former police officer and mother to a child on the autism spectrum, Stephanie Cooper knows how important it is for police officers to be able to recognize autism. To help ensure safer interactions between the police and people with autism, Cooper started [Autism Law Enforcement Response Training \(ALERT\)](#), a training program for police officers that provides officers with [sensory kits](#) designed to help autistic people.

"People with autism have communication issues, and law enforcement officers need to be aware that their typical approach when responding to a call or an emergency situation with someone with [autism spectrum disorder](#) may not work," Cooper told The Mighty. "By the police being aware of people with autism it helps ensure the safety of not only the person diagnosed with ASD, but the police on the scene as well."

Cooper created ALERT after watching a police officer interact with her son, who's on the spectrum. "When the officer arrived [my son] was having a sensory overload," Cooper recalled. "The officer luckily understood about autism and helped me keep David calm while we filed the report. But it got me thinking what would have happened if the officer did not know about autism."

Cooper asked the officer if his department had any autism training programs, but it did not. Wanting to ensure more positive interactions between law enforcement and people with autism, Cooper began researching autism training programs for police. "I realized even though there are some training programs out there for the police that there are still not enough training programs available to assist every law enforcement agency," she said. "So I offered to train my local police agency, and it all started from there."

As part of ALERT's "Autism 101" training, Cooper trains officers how to recognize a person who has autism, what behaviors they may exhibit, what types of calls may be received and tips for how to interact with a person on the spectrum.

"Officers [should] know that an autistic person may flee when approached by an officer, and fail to respond to an order to stop," Cooper said. "Officers should not interpret any of these actions regarding an individual with autism as a reason for increased force. Officers [need] to take their time when dealing with an individual with autism, to allow for delayed responses, to speak slowly and clearly to an individual with ASD and to be aware that autistic individuals react to their environment."

Once they've completed "Autism 101," officers receive a kit filled with items designed to help people with autism, such as visual communication cards and a variety of calming sensory items.

So far ALERT has provided training and more than 100 kits to law enforcement agencies in Cooper's home state of Florida. In December, Cooper will be training the Hammond police department and the Tangipahoa Parish sheriff's office in Louisiana, and handing out 200 autism sensory kits.

Beyond Florida and Louisiana, Cooper is working on expanding ALERT into a nationwide initiative, with the goal of training and giving kits to law enforcement agencies in every state.

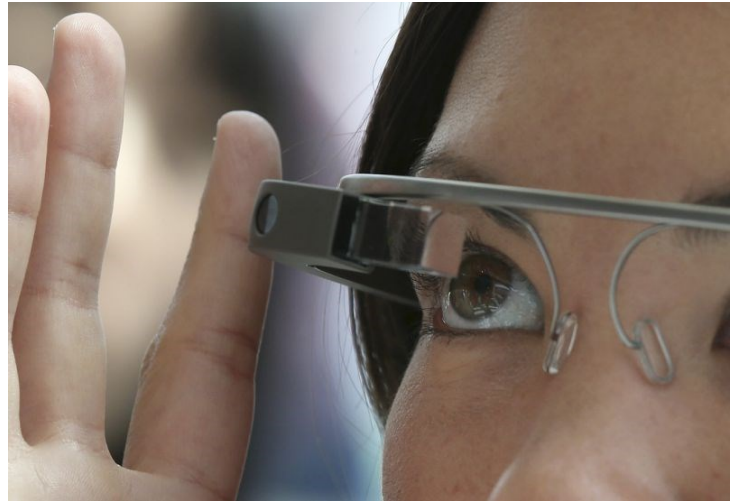
<https://themighty.com/2016/09/mom-stephanie-cooper-starts-alert-autism-training-for-police/>

GOOGLE GLASS IS HELPING KIDS WITH AUTISM LEARN ABOUT EMOTION

BY KRISTEN BAHLER SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

Google Glass may have been an [epic flop](#) with consumers, but the beleaguered headgear has found new life among an unexpected demographic.

The Autism Glass Project, based out of Stanford University, is using the wearable technology to teach kids on the autism spectrum to read social cues, [CNBC](#) reports. With the help of Google Glass, the project provides families with facial recognition software, which clues users in to different emotions they are seeing. The effort goes far beyond the traditional flash cards that behavioral therapists typically use to teach kids to recognize emotion.



Catalin Voss, founder of the Autism Glass Project, told reporters that he wants to release the technology as a reimbursable medical product next year.

“The goal is to make something that can reach families at large in areas where wait times for behavioral therapists are 36 months,” he said.

Google donated 35 Google Glass headsets to Stanford for the project, but the Autism Glass software can work with any augmented reality device. The project has been in development for two years, and has been tested on more than 100 children with autism, according to [CNBC](#).

Google Glass is also making waves outside of the behavioral health space. [Popular Science reports](#) that the product is being deployed to help EMTs and paramedics communicate with doctors during emergencies.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/google-glass-helping-kids-autism-195552833.html>

APPS

Go Noodle: <https://www.gonoodle.com/> This is a website to help kids get moving at home and in the classroom. Free

The Social Express II: <http://thesocialexpress.com/> This is a website to help individuals learn social emotional skills through a variety of social situations. Free trial.

All apps are suggested and not endorsed by LBL-ESD.

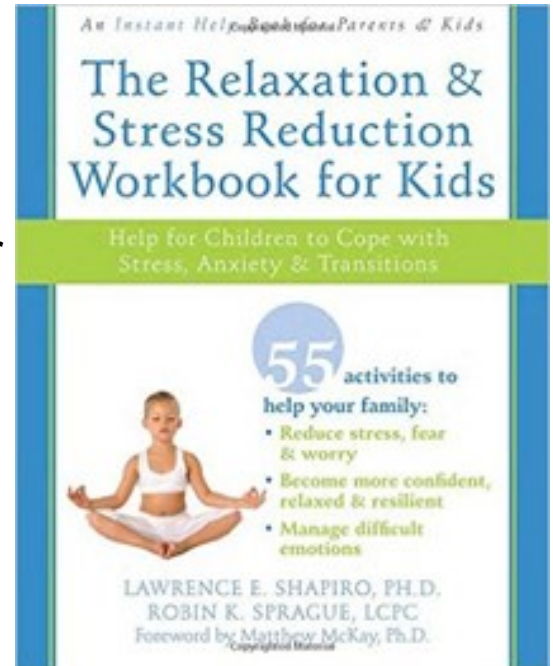


The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids: How to Help Children Cope with Stress, Anxiety and Transitions

by Lawrence E. Shapiro and Robin K. Sprague

Children pay close attention to their parents' moods. When parents feel upset, their kids may become anxious, and when parents wind down, children also get the chance to relax. When you feel overwhelmed and stressed, it can be hard to help your child feel balanced. **The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids**, written by two child therapists, offers more than fifty activities you can do together as a family to help you and your child replace stressful and anxious feelings with feelings of optimism, confidence, and joy.

You'll learn proven relaxation techniques, including deep breathing, guided imagery, mindfulness, and yoga, and then receive guidance for teaching them to your child. Your child will also discover how taking time to do art and creative projects can create a sense of fulfillment and calm. By completing just one ten-minute activity from this workbook each day, you'll make relaxation a family habit that will stay with both you and your child for a lifetime.



The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time

by Dzung X. Vo

Being a teen is stressful! Whether it's school, friends, or dating, the teen years are full of difficult changes—both mentally and physically. *The Mindful Teen* offers a unique program based in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) to help teens deal with stress. The simple, practical, and easy-to-remember tips in this book can be used every day to help adolescents handle any difficult situation more effectively—whether it's taking a test at school, having a disagreement with parents, or problems with friends.

"*The Mindful Teen* is a beautifully written book that walks the line between making mindfulness easy and accessible to teens who may or may not be inclined to delve deeply into the topic and providing real substance and depth to a powerful practice and way of living. Full of understandable, doable practices, super relevant examples, and quotes, this book doesn't talk down to kids, but speaks up to future adults who deeply desire to overcome the challenges they face and not only succeed, but thrive."



—**Steven D. Hickman, PsyD**, founder and executive director of the University of California, San Diego Center for Mindfulness
For more information and resources: <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/>



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VISUALS

