

Mindfulness and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

[Mindfulness](#)-based interventions offer a promising complementary approach to managing ADHD symptoms, which affects [seven million children](#) in the United States.

Emerging research suggests that mindfulness, the practice of staying open and attentive to the present moment, can support ADHD treatment in both children and adults.

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental, highly genetic condition usually diagnosed in childhood. It is characterized by changes in attention, motivation, memory, effort, impulsivity, organization, hyperactivity, and social skills, which are carried out by the brain's frontal lobe.

The two main types of ADHD are the inattentive or hyperactive/impulsive types. An **inattentive** child may have difficulty paying attention or following instructions, avoid or dislike tasks that require focused attention, like homework, or have trouble organizing tasks or activities. An impulsive child may always be on the go, talk too much, interrupt others' conversations or activities, run around or climb on objects inappropriately, or have difficulty staying seated in the classroom.

How Do Mindfulness-Based Interventions Support Children with ADHD?

Children usually show signs and symptoms of ADHD before age twelve. Boys may tend to be more hyperactive, while girls may present as quietly inattentive.

Mindfulness-based programs support children with ADHD by improving attention, emotional regulation, and challenges with relationships and overall behavior.

These techniques include yoga instruction, meditation, breathing exercises, and body awareness practices. Parents of children may participate in mindfulness training to improve family relationships and reduce their own stress levels.

A 2022 review of 12 mindfulness-based [studies](#) demonstrated improvements in impulsivity, hyperactivity, attention, and overall emotional well-being. The three most common approaches were yoga exercises, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and meditation training. The mindfulness programs lasted approximately 90 minutes, once a week, for eight weeks. Some, but not all, of the studies included mindfulness training for the parents.



What's the Difference Between Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for ADHD?

Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, is the primary, evidence-based, non-drug treatment for children and adults with ADHD. CBT has different behavioral interventions that may influence children in other ways. Research supporting mindfulness-based interventions is growing, as they have been shown to reduce parent stress and improve emotional regulation in children and adolescents. Compared with CBT, mindfulness-based interventions such as the [Mymind](#) youth program improved children's behavior and attention equally.

What's the Difference Between Mindfulness and Medication?

Stimulant medications are the current primary treatment for ADHD, but they have drawbacks such as serious side effects, low adherence, short-term effects, and uncertain long-term safety. As a result, there is increasing interest in alternative therapies. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) show potential as a non-drug option, effectively addressing core ADHD symptoms like inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

An eight-week [mindfulness training program](#) for fourteen adolescents and their parents demonstrated improvements in attention,

happiness, mindful awareness, self-control, and connection to others. The children

3 Ways Mindfulness Programs Help Your Child

- Improve attention
- Enhance emotional regulation
- Improve relationships & overall behavior

and their parents showed immediate improvement following the eight-week program, and this improvement was sustained at the eight-week follow-up.

[MBIs](#) can reduce key ADHD symptoms such as impulsivity and inattention. Children participating in mindfulness programs showed improvements in attention and behavior compared to control groups. Further research is needed to confirm long-term benefits.

How can I design a Mindfulness Program for My Child at Home?

Mindfulness helps children increase their awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Therefore, mindfulness programs need to be [creative](#) and engaging.

Here are [three foundational techniques](#) to help you create a program at home.

1. **Body Scan:** Have your child focus on different body parts from head to toe, noticing sensations without judgment. This promotes attention regulation and body awareness.
2. **Grounding Techniques:** Teach your child to shift focus from thoughts to sensory experiences through slow, deep breaths, stretching, or pressing their feet into the floor.
3. **Focused Meditation:** Instruct your child to sit comfortably and concentrate on their breath for 5-10 minutes. Encourage them to bring their attention back to their breath when distractions arise.

The Final Word

In light of the seven million children in the United States who have been diagnosed with ADHD, we must explore evidence-based mindfulness interventions for ADHD.

Mindfulness programs offer children and their families safe, non-drug options to help improve attention and behavior. While CBT and medications are primary therapies, MBIs can help foster self-awareness and enhance the emotional well-being of both children and their parents.

Parents may find these resources helpful in getting started with a mindfulness program:

- [Mindfulness and ADHD: 4 Relaxation Games for Children](#)
- <https://www.abct.org/books/mindfulness-for-kids-with-adhd/>

Further Reading

[ADHD: The Facts](#)

[Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder - National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

[Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder \(ADHD\) in children - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)

[How Mindfulness Tunes Function in 4 Key ADHD Brain Circuits | Psychology Today](#)

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