

1. **I'm interested in offering mindfulness instruction to others (parents/children/staff), where is a good place to start?**

A: It's always important to start with yourself by establishing your own mindfulness practice. With an established personal practice and experience with mindfulness, you will be better able to model and support the process of cultivating mindfulness skills in others and advocate for a more mindful culture within your organization. Reading about mindfulness practice (try *Wherever You Go, There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting* by Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn or *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion* by Christopher Germer). Joining a mindfulness group (online or in person) can also help deepen your skill set and understanding.

2. **How can I become a certified mindfulness instructor?**

A: There are many different ways to pursue sharing mindfulness skills with others. You can become certified to deliver specific, evidence-based models such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction or Mindful Self Compassion or receive training to deliver general mindfulness instruction. As mentioned on the webinar, there is currently a lot of discussion and ongoing research about what kind of training is needed to effectively deliver mindfulness instruction and support. The intensity of the program or curriculum you are intending to deliver is a relevant consideration. For example, if you are adding only brief, informal practices to a broader parent education curriculum, the level of training required may be less than delivering a more intensive program specifically focused on helping parents increase their mindful parenting.

3. **How do you see these practices being offered more broadly, across culture, SES, etc.? Do you see any limitations or barriers to disseminating this more broadly? Have you noticed any trends in dissemination to include all individuals, families and communities?**

A: Dissemination and accessibility of contemplative practices such as mindfulness, varies across communities, as does the language and concepts that are communicated. There are new and emerging efforts to discover and honor the various ways people from different racial/ethnic, spiritual, and cultural communities conceive and integrate contemplative practices, as well as efforts (such as those being undertaken by *Mindfulness for the People* and *Mindfulness in Indian Country*) to support community-based leadership of these efforts.

Perceptions that mindfulness is essentially a spiritual or religious practice can be barriers. However, recent discoveries in neuroscience have demonstrated the usefulness of these practices in a purely secular (not religious) context.

4. **What are some things being done in the *Mindfulness for the People* movement?**

A: You can learn more about *Mindfulness for the People* and their activities [HERE](#).

5. **Do you have a recommendation for a good (simple) scale to measure a preschool child's feelings?**

A: The selection of an appropriate tool for measuring a preschool child's feelings is largely dependent upon the purpose of measurement. There are a variety of tools available for measuring different aspects of social-emotional learning in children. Child Trends conducted a comprehensive review of

measures of social and emotional development in early childhood, and published [an inventory](#) of these measures, which was updated in 2015. There are also tools that screen for specific concerns, such as The Preschool Feelings Checklist, a screen for depression in young children.

**6. Do you think that the mindful parenting techniques described here could be translated to mindful caregiving in preschools or other care settings?**

A: Yes, we expect that the strategies discussed in the webinar to be applicable to all adult-child interactions, particularly those adults in a consistent, caregiving role. More research is needed to determine specific benefits across developmental stages and contexts.

**7. How can we integrate mindfulness into family child care settings and use with family child care professionals?**

A: Reaching a broad and diverse audience in the early childhood field, including family childcare providers, will require multi-faceted approaches. Our hope at ZERO TO THREE is that, as our project grows, the interest of the field and partners will also grow, eventually achieving that broad reach. State systems that license and monitor childcare settings, and organizations that provide support and resources to family childcare providers such as Child Care Aware® of America are important partners for reaching this particular audience. In addition, ZERO TO THREE will continue to look for opportunities to provide professional development and support for implementation across multidisciplinary settings.

**8. Is mindfulness-based parenting most effectively administered in a group or individual/family-based setting?**

A: We do not have a definitive answer in terms of research evidence, however our clinical experience suggests that group-based approaches offer important opportunities for parents and families to form supportive connections with one another, feel less alone in their parenting struggles, and develop a community for ongoing mindful parenting practice. However, beginning in an individual/family-based setting may be most appropriate in some cases.

**9. Can mindfulness strategies be implemented for parents with babies in the NICU?**

A: Mindfulness can be a helpful strategy for many, including parents experiencing stressful situations. There is some research on parents of children with special needs that demonstrates positive effects for both parents and children, as well as pilot research from the University of Washington focused on a NICU population.

**10. As an in-home early intervention program providing therapy and Infant Education how can we best support mindful parenting?**

A: One of the best ways to support mindful parenting is to make sure the providers who are working with families understand and practice mindfulness themselves. Providers who can model and share

mindful and compassionate interactions based on their own experience, will be best able to effectively support parents in doing the same.

There are several examples of programs across disciplines that have integrated parent education curricula or other strategies to increase mindful parenting. Examples that were offered through our ZTT Member Survey include: adaptations of MBSR for parents, integration of informal mindfulness strategies in existing parent education curricula, and hosting mindfulness experts to provide workshops or classes for parents.

**11. We are a group of educators at a lab school and I am just starting to bring mindfulness practice into our community. We chose to focus on us as a community of educators...thinking about the idea of self-compassion...and are wondering what tips or suggestions you would have for us to focus on as we dive into this practice.**

A: Our primary recommendation is that you practice together as a community. Offer opportunities for exploring the relationship elements, organizational structure, and experiences that support the cultivation of self-compassion (as well as the barriers that exist both internally and externally). Foster connection through investigating the shared experiences of the group. Create a book club that focuses on mindful self-compassion together and discuss the books together; we suggest starting with: *The mindful path to self-compassion: Freeing yourself from destructive thoughts and emotions* by Christopher Germer.

**12. Mindfulness while driving? I'm on the road to clients all day.**

Absolutely! Mindfulness can be applied to any of your daily activities. And, the safest way to drive is to drive mindfully. Part of mindfulness is paying close attention – so, paying close attention to the experience of driving is a way to practice. Tips for practicing mindful driving include:

1. Drive in silence - no podcasts or music; silence your phone – so you can tune in to what is happening around you with less distraction.
2. Notice all the traffic around you. Instead of just paying attention to what's right in front of you, use your mirrors and consciously expand your attention to include the traffic or environment beside and behind you as well.
3. Pay attention to how you are feeling internally as you drive. If you are rushing or stressed due to traffic, other drivers, or being late, notice where you feel this in your body. Recognize and label the emotions you are feeling and try to let go of any judgments.
4. Notice the physical sensations of driving: How does your grip feel on the steering wheel? How is your body supported by the seat? Is anything impeding your vision?
5. Use every stop sign and stop light as a chance to take a breath mindfully, or as a reminder to check-in with your focus and come back to the experience of driving.

**13. Can you please share specific mindfulness strategies (for parent and/or child) for EI providers (SLP, OT, PT) to share with families who struggle during daily routines with their child with special needs.**

A: STOP, described in [this resource](#), is a practice used in many mindfulness programs including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). It's a useful, brief, "in-the-moment" strategy to help us re-center and calm down in stressful situations.

**14. Could you refer us to research in the field of mindfulness and its effects on self-regulation of caregivers and the children they tend to in the early childhood period.**

A: The literature on parenting and caregiving in the very early years (0-3) is very small but growing. You can read about related research in our recent literature review [here](#).

**15. Are there differences/limitations/ possibilities in promoting i) mindfulness to caregivers with intellectual impairment/ cognitive deficits versus promoting ii) compassion in self/other for the same population?**

A: A study published in 2014 by a group at Vanderbilt demonstrated benefit of a six-week program for mothers of children with developmental disabilities:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/2/e454.long>

And, efforts are underway to study mindfulness for caregivers of adults with dementia and other cognitive impairment. Across approaches, self-compassion seems to be a critical element of caregiving.

**16. What are the biological or evolutionary foundations of a busy mind?**

A: We are still learning a lot about how our brains work, including attention mechanisms. But it is thought that humans have two primary modes of attention - the “default mode network” and the “task-positive network.” The default mode network includes mind wandering, ruminating, thinking about the past and future; these are hallmark features of a busy mind, but with benefits that include creativity and insight generation. This is the mode our brain defaults to – hence the name. The “task positive network” is what kicks in when we are focusing our attention on a task, on our sensory information, or when we are in states of “flow.” Both modes are important and perhaps ideally should be balanced. Some studies link depression and anxiety to being “stuck” in certain aspects of the default mode. Research on meditators has found increased ability to intentionally maintain and switch between modes as well as increased awareness of what mode they are in.

**17. It is very difficult to be mindful when a parent has two or more little children (e.g. they demand attention at the same time). Is it really possible to be mindful for these parents?**

A: Being mindful in every moment is something out of reach for all of us; instead, what is possible is engaging in a moment-to-moment practice of cultivating mindfulness. This means noticing when we are not present, and intentionally coming back to the present. Mindfulness does not always mean focusing on one person, it means paying attention to whatever is arising in the present moment. If we can fully take in what is happening, even if it is a crying baby AND a screaming toddler, and perhaps noticing if we are becoming overwhelmed by our emotions, we can better see all our response options and identify how we wish to respond (intentionally) to the situation at hand, by caring for ourselves and our children.