Helping Migrant Parents and Children

# Small Hands, Heavy Loads

## Lightening the Burden Caused by Stress and Anxiety:

## Using Mindfulness Strategies and Books to Mitigate Stress

9/15/20

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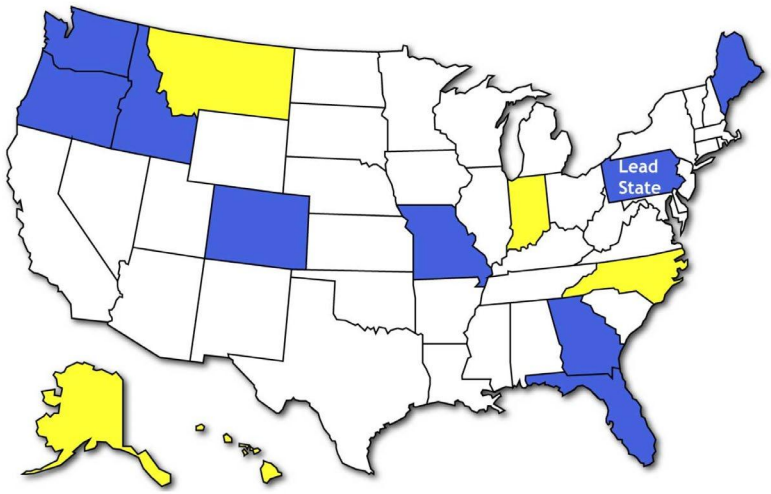
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

# Preschool Initiative

- PI Lead State: **Pennsylvania**
- PA State MEP Director: **Carmen Medina**
- PI Coordinator: **Michele Cheney**



# PI CIG Goals

- Expand the capacity of state and local MEPs to serve migrant PK children.
- Ensure that more services are provided to migrant 3 to 5-year-old children.
- Disseminate information on evidence-based and promising practices.

# Co-Conspirators of Trauma/Stress Modules

- Cynthia Chasteen, MO
- Michele Cheney, ESCORT
- Lyssandra Alexander, PA
- Marisela Trejo, GA

# Session Goals

- Define mindfulness
- Explore the science behind its impact on reducing stress/anxiety.
- Identify books that can be used with kids to help cope with stress and anxiety.
- Discuss methods and practices that service providers can use to improve outcomes for kids.

Mind Full, or Mindful?

# Defining Mindfulness

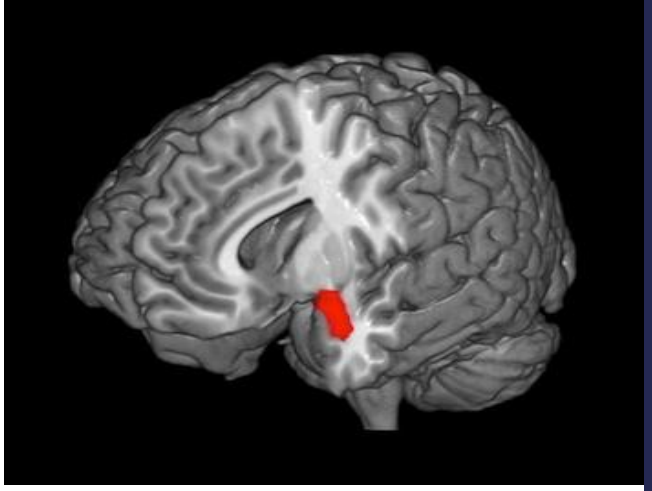
- *Jon Kabat Zinn defines mindfulness as: "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (1994, p. 4).*

- *"A particular state of consciousness that involves awareness and acceptance of whatever is happening in the present moment," (Jennings, 2015, p. 1).*

- *"Noticing your thoughts, feelings and physical sensations in the present moment without harmful judgment" (Biegel, 2020).*

# The Science of Mindfulness

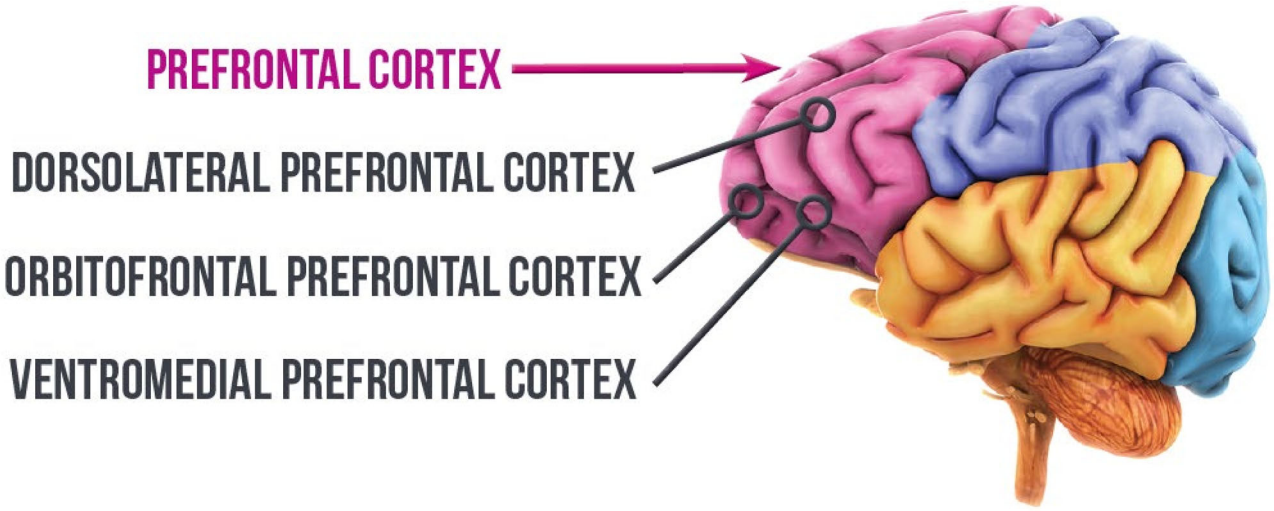
# Amygdala



MRI scans show that after an eight-week course of mindfulness practice, the brain's "fight or flight" center, the amygdala, appears to shrink. This primal region of the brain, associated with fear and emotion, is involved in the initiation of the body's response to stress.

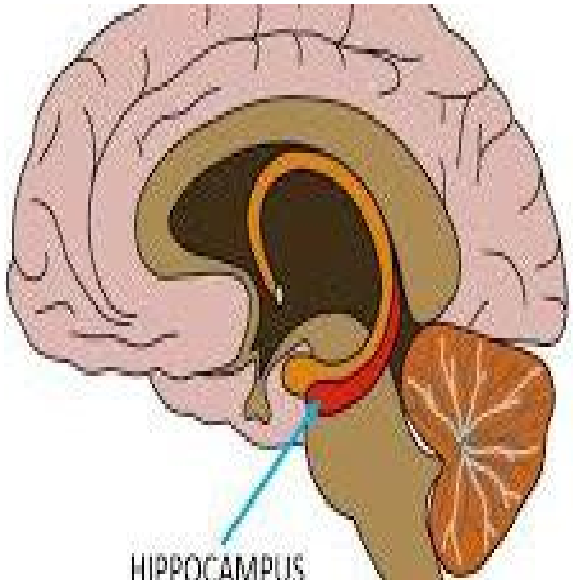
# Prefrontal Cortex

As the amygdala shrinks, the pre-frontal cortex – associated with higher order brain functions such as awareness, concentration and decision-making – becomes thicker.



# Hippocampus

Mindfulness and meditation increase cortical thickness in the hippocampus, which governs learning and memory.

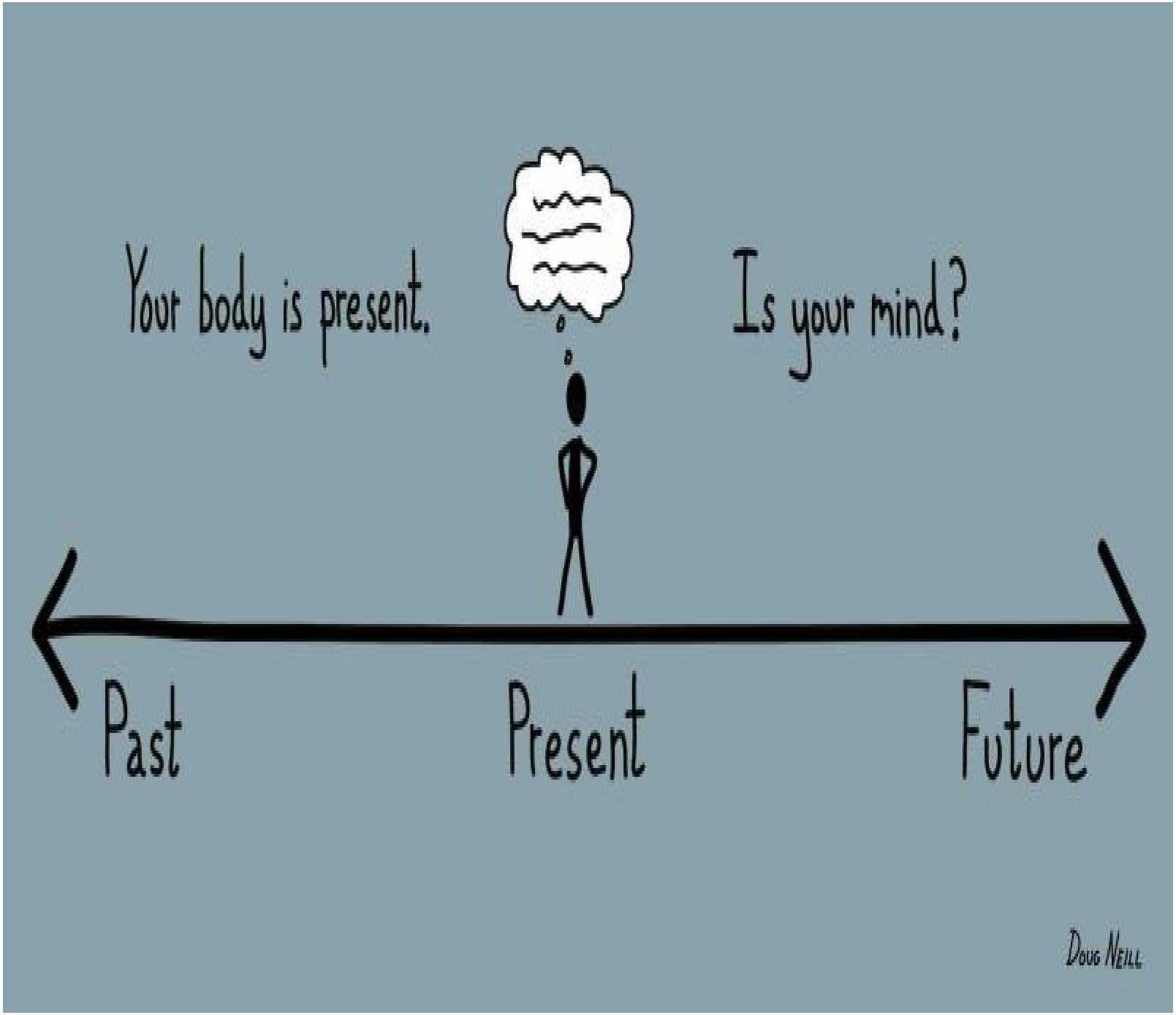


# Mental Benefits of Mindfulness

- Increases brain gyrification (folding of brain tissue), which allows the brain to process information more efficiently, providing a better grasp on life's stressors
- Fights PTSD
- Improves academic performance
- Helps regulate emotions and depression
- Fights anxiety and memory loss

# Physical Benefits of Mindfulness

- Reduces rheumatoid arthritis
- Reduces heart disease risk
- Helps Irritable Bowel Disease
- Fights chronic pain
- Slows HIV Progression
- Aids in weight loss
- Lessens cold and flu effects
- Improves sleep


Your body is present.
Is your mind?
Past
Present
Future
Doug Neill

# Mindfulness Practices: 3 Deep Breaths

- Put your hands on your abdomen
- Breathe with your diaphragm so your body fill with air
- Feel your abdomen rise on the inhalation and fall on the exhalation
- Feel the flow of the air as it fills your body from your nose to the bottom of your lungs
- Feel the air flow out of your body
- Repeat three times
- (Taken from Jennings, 2015, p. 24)

# Mindful Walking

Inside or out, bring children together in a circle.

Explain that the circle is our own little world and we are going to work by staying inside of it.

Using music, a drum, or just the sound of your voice instruct children to walk slowly.

Ask them to keep their bodies in their own space and not touch others while walking.

Work to make this a silent listening activity to tune into the music or sounds of nature all around.

# Mandala Making

- Collect natural materials such as shells, beans, acorns. Be mindful to select materials that are safe and not poisonous. Show children examples of mandalas. Ask for their observations and point out shapes, symmetry, and repetition. Give each child a square surface such as a piece of cardboard. Allow them to select materials of their choice and make sure you have ample amounts of each option. Give children 5-15 minutes to work on creating the mandalas. Work toward silence during the activity. Give kids a chance to share and talk about their work. When finished, practice a collective clean up. Part of the mandala-making practice is sweeping it away, this teaches children to learn to let go.

# Gratitude

**6 Daily Habits of Gratitude From Jack Canfield:**

1. Take 7 minutes each morning to write down everything you appreciate in life
2. Make a conscious effort to appreciate at least 3 people every day
3. Play the appreciation game
4. Carry a small token of gratitude
5. Remember to appreciate the smallest blessings
6. Appreciate yourself

# Storytime Yoga/ Mindful Movement

- Learn simple yoga poses on your own. Many poses are named for animals or parts of nature. Then find a children's book about animals, plants, or the seasons. As you read the story out loud to children, pause to practice the poses. Simple instructions and a brief demonstration is all that's needed to get children connected to poses that have meaning.

# Mindfulness Strategies & Tools

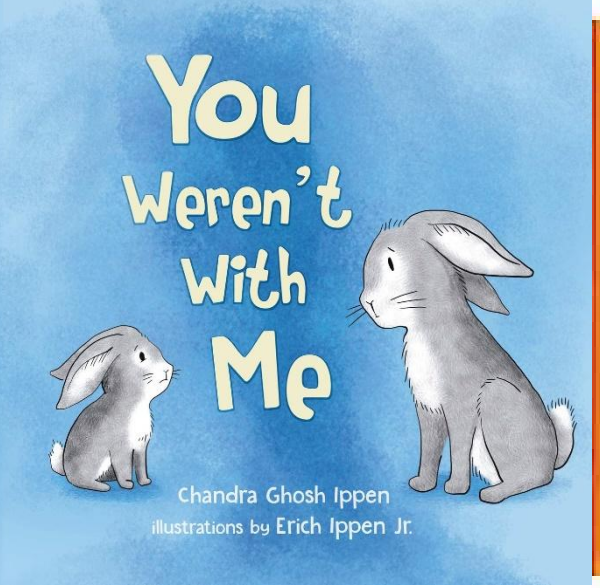
# Peace Place/Quiet Corner/Nook

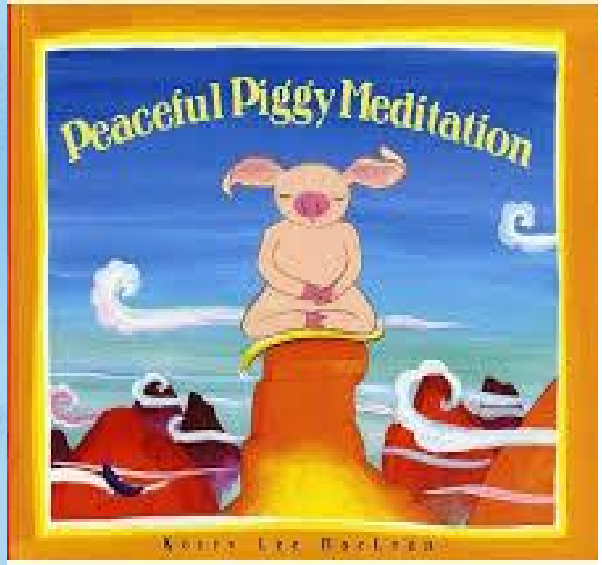
# Comfort Kits

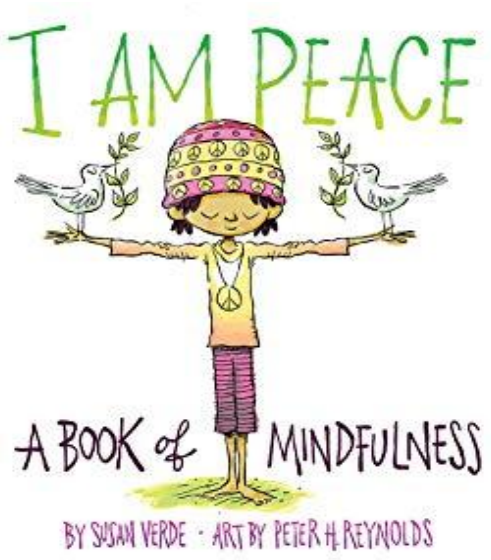
- Can help reset/manage emotions.
- Should be personalized.
- Should be done in collaboration with the family, if feasible.
- Items may be bought at the dollar store or Amazon.
- Ideally, assemble the kit with the youth and practice how to use the items.
- Place in an easily accessible/secure area

# Comfort Kit Examples

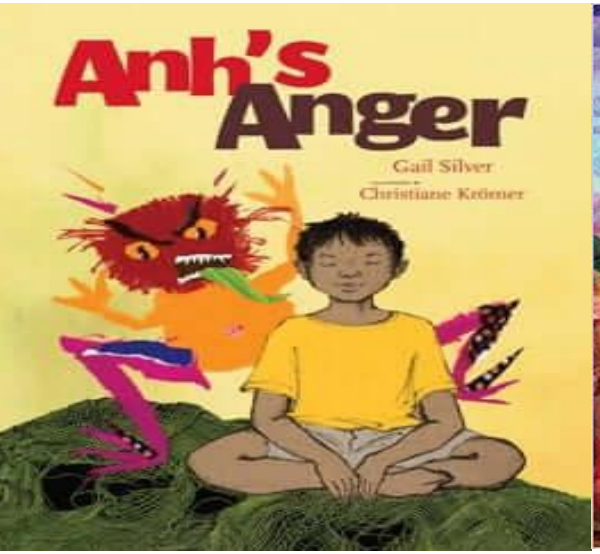
- iPod or MP3 player with music for different moods
- Family Pictures
- Snacks/Candies/Water
- Essential Oils
- LED Candles
- Puzzle
- Craft Project/Art Supplies
- Journal

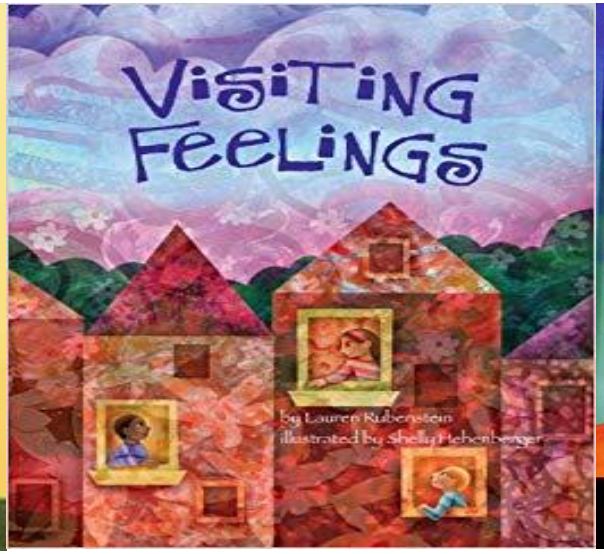


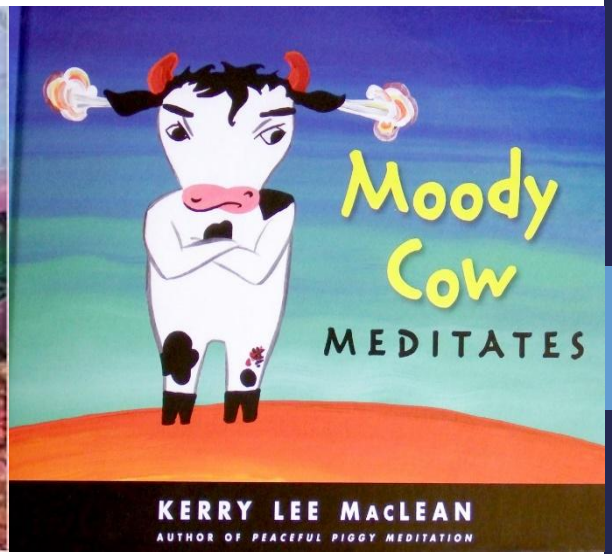




# Books to Support Students

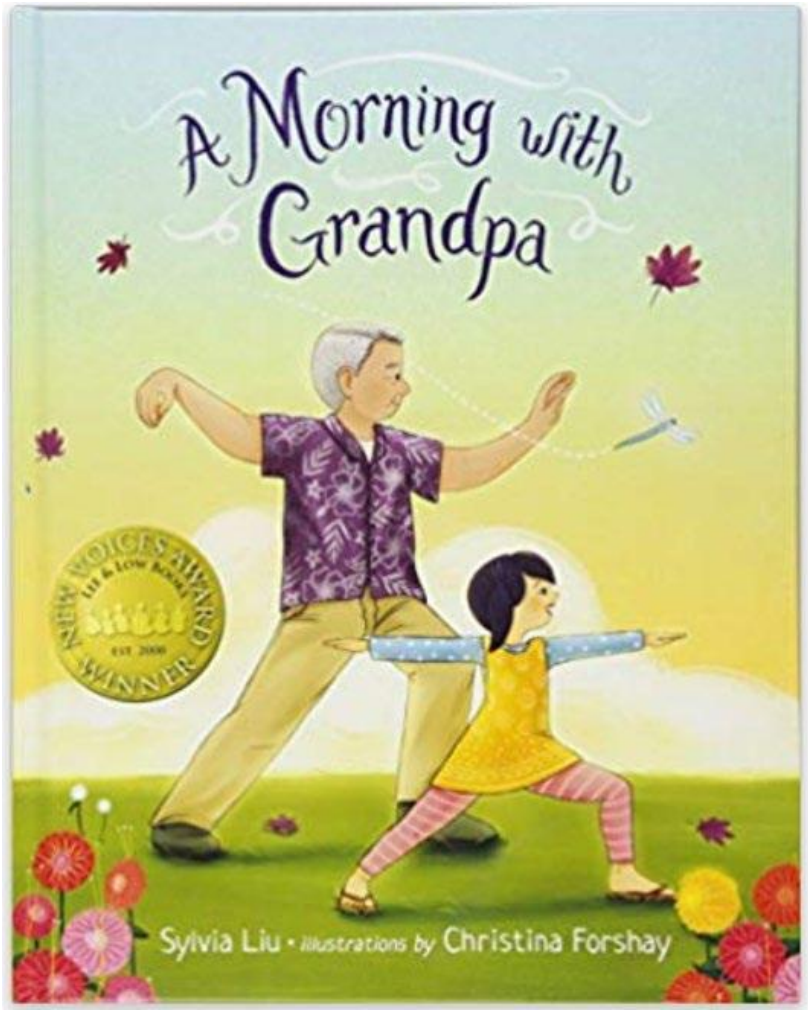


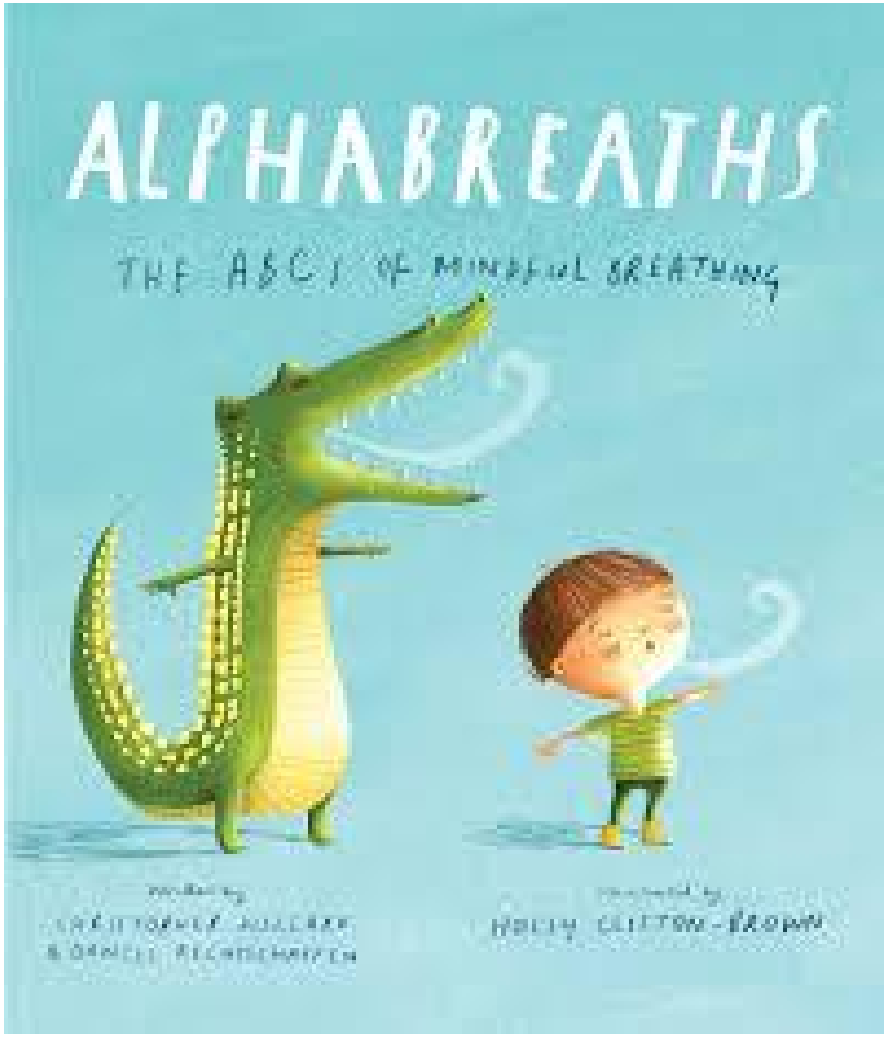
# A Morning With Grandpa

Winner of the LEE & LOW New Voices Award, this title celebrates, with lively spirit and humor, the special bond between grandparent and grandchild and the joy of learning new things together. Readers of all ages will want to try out some tai chi and yoga too!



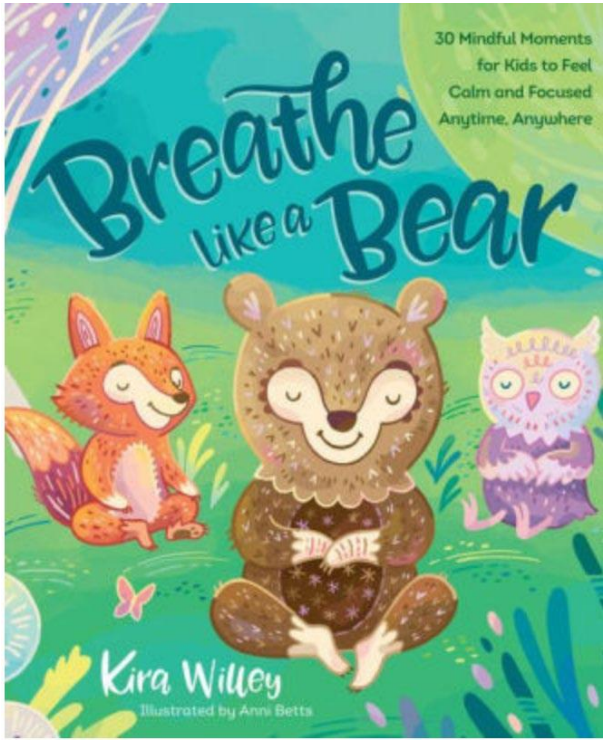
# Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing

In *Alphabreaths,* children will learn their ABCs and the basics of mindfulness through playful breathing exercises.

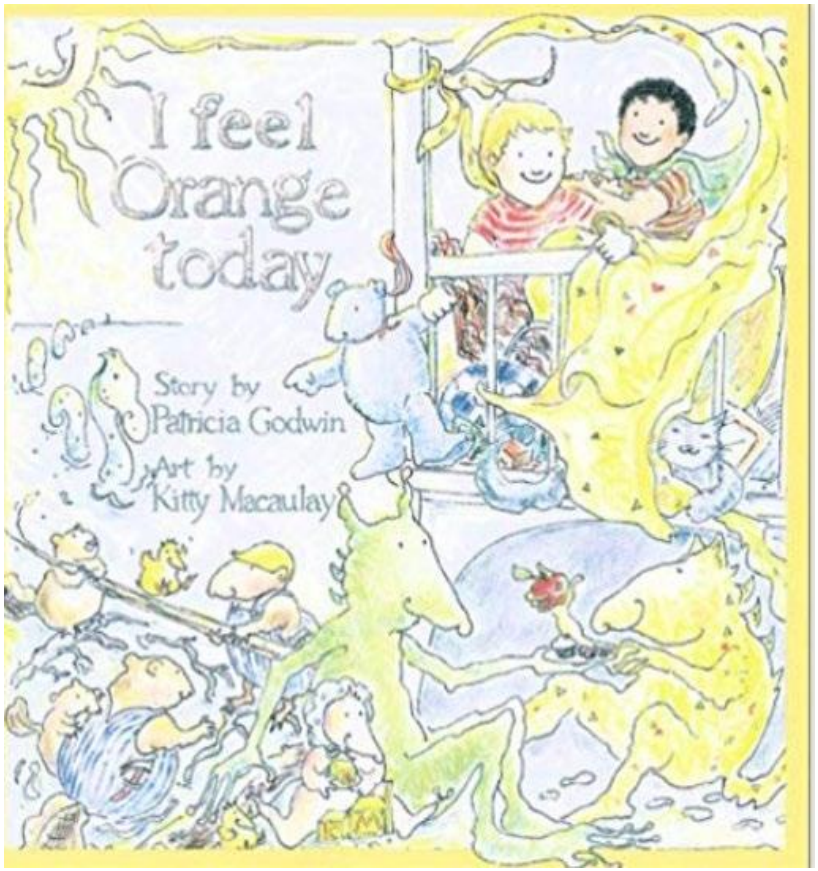


# Breathe Like a Bear-Kira Wiley

"30 mindful moments for kids to feel calm and focused anytime, anywhere"



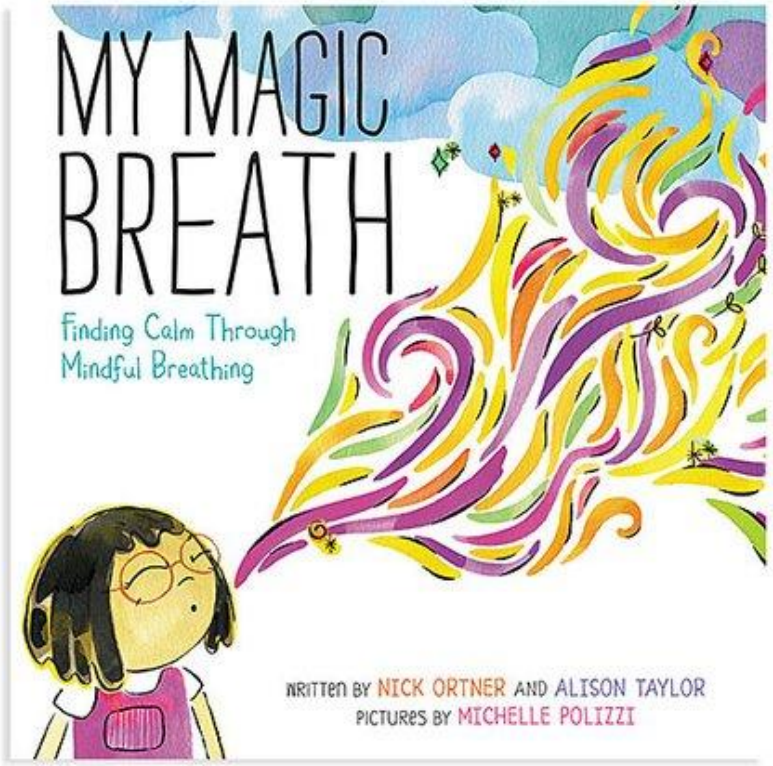
# I Feel Orange Today




In this warm and appealing prose poem, **Patricia Godwin** skillfully explores children's emotions as they may emerge on any given day, joyous sometimes, even jubilant, occasionally sad and lonely.

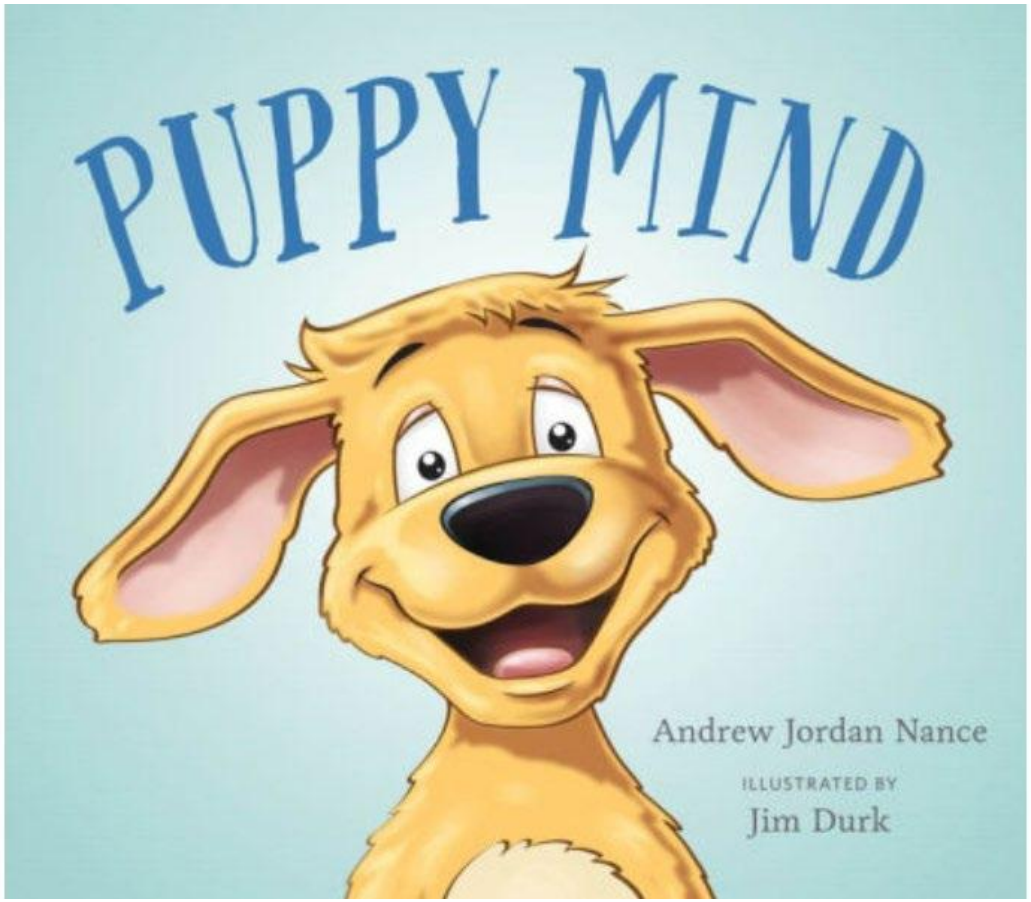
# My Magic Breath

From *New York Times* bestselling author Nick Ortner comes a beautiful picture book that will help children discover calm through the magic of mindful breathing:



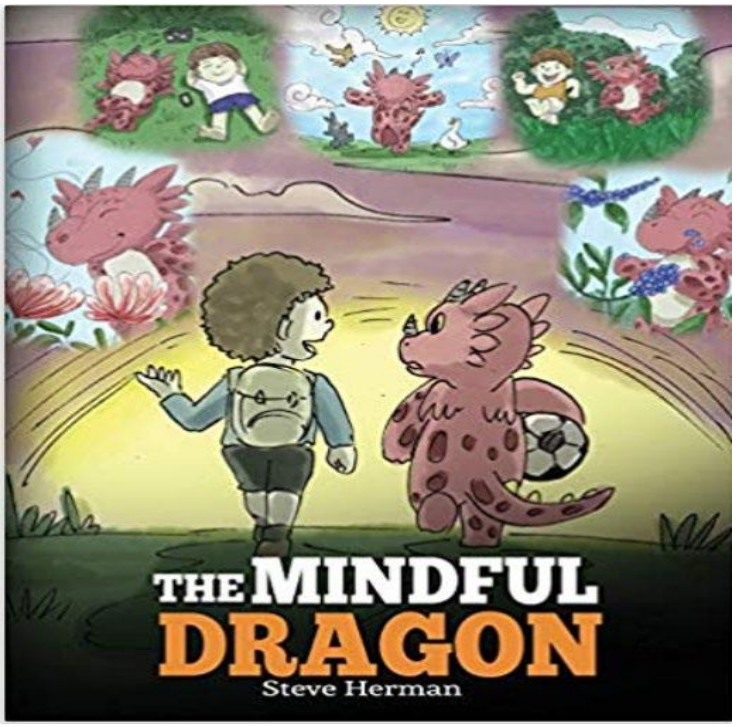

In a world that is sometimes too busy, with too many things going on, *My Magic Breath* will help steer children into a serene space of mindfulness, self-awareness, and balance.

# Puppy Mind




In this picture book for children and adults, illustrated by Jim Durk, who is adored by thousands of children for his many *Clifford the Big Red Dog* and *Thomas the Steam Engine* books, a young boy discovers his mind is like a puppy, always wandering away, into the past or the future.

# The Mindful Dragon




You can teach your dragon to sit, stand, roll over, and you can even potty train him...

But what if your dragon is worried about so many things?

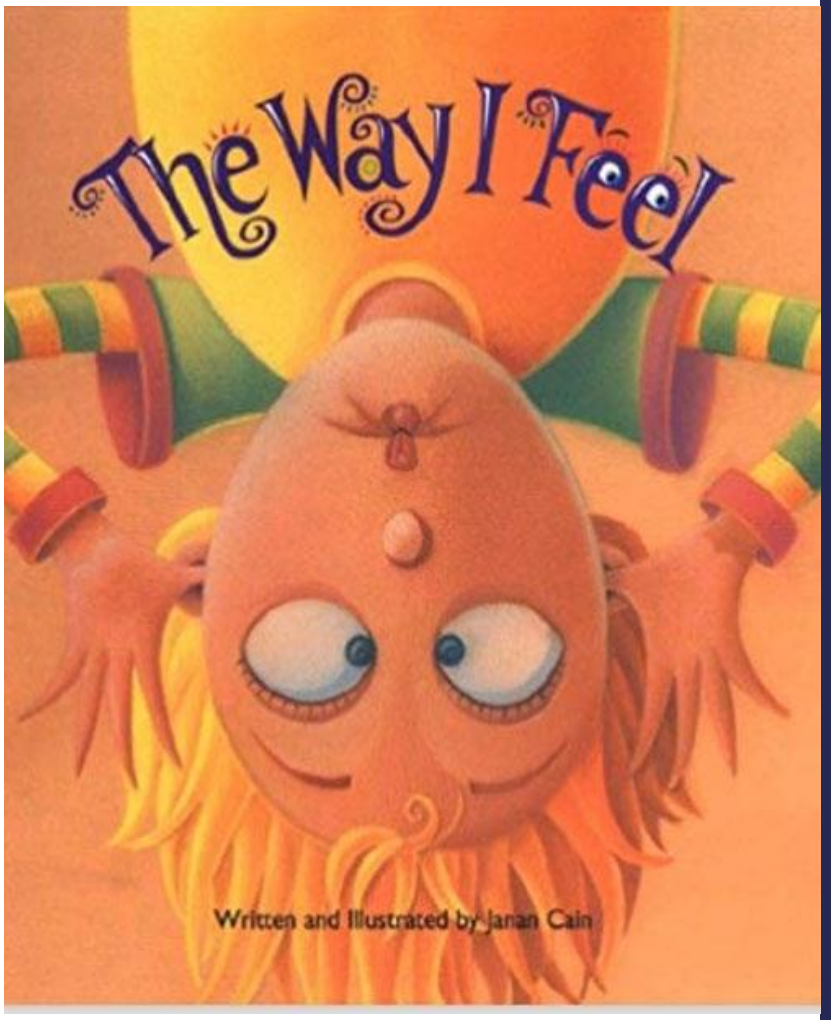
What do you do?

You teach him about mindfulness

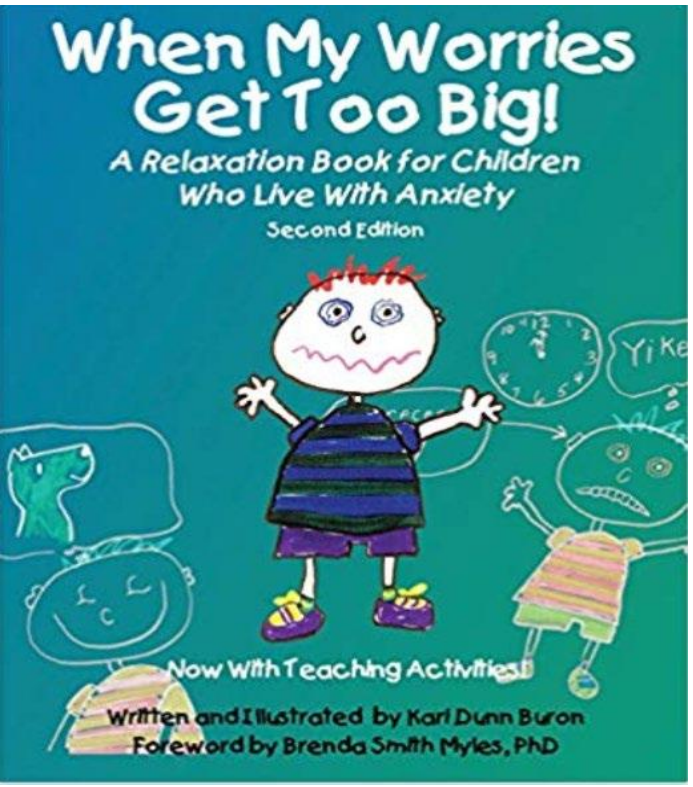
- You teach him to be mindful!

# The Way I Feel

The Way I Feel uses strong, colorful, and expressive images which go along with simple verses to help children connect the word and the emotion. Your child will learn useful words, and you will have many chances to open conversations about what's going on in her/his life.



# When My Worries Get Too Big




Now with a special section on evidence-based teaching activities for parents and teachers alike, this bestselling children's classic just became even better and more relevant. Engaging and easy to read, this book is filled with opportunities for children to participate in developing their own self-calming strategies.

# Activity: Building Book Knowledge

Read a book from the selection available.

Share your books with each other.

How would you use the book with kids?

What other books do you know or have you used that would be helpful?

# BOOKS

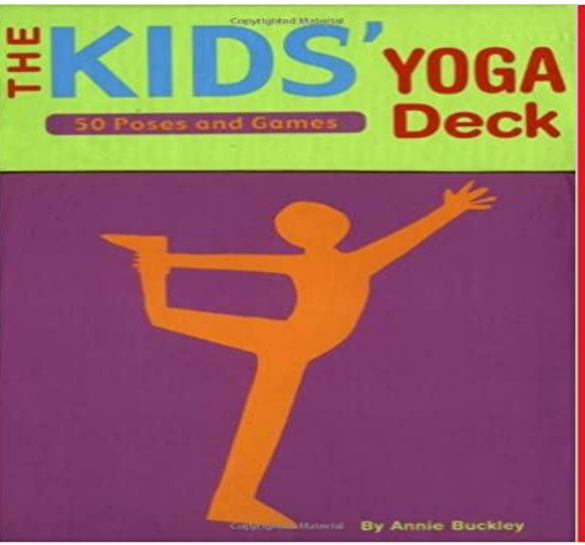
- Link to mindBe list of books:

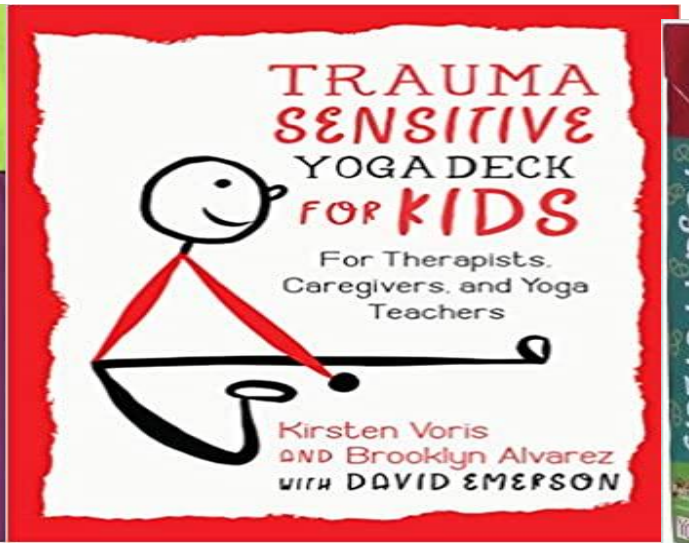
https://mindbe-education.com/books/

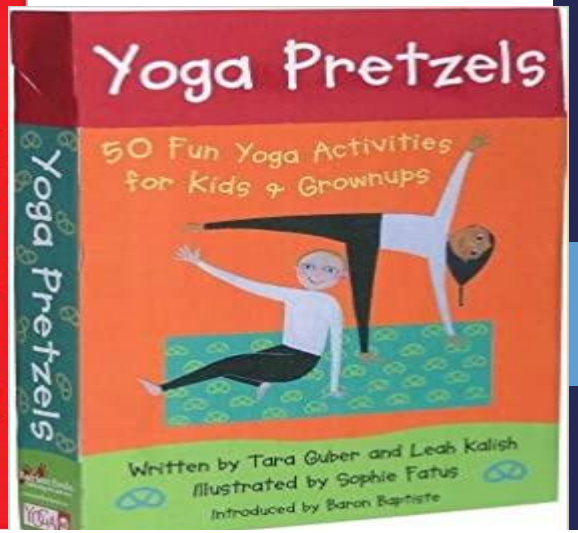
- List of books in Resource section

# Kid's Yoga Resources

- https://www.yoginos.com/
- https://www.littleflowеryoga.com/
- https://www.childlightyoga.com/
- https://www.karmakidsyoga.com/
- https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga



# Additional Resources

**Greater Good Science Center at Berkley:**

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_silent_epidemic_in_our_classrooms

**Jack Canfield:** https://www.jackcanfield.com/blog/6-daily-gratitude-habits-that-will-attract-more-abundance-and-joy-into-your-life/

**Mindful.org:** https://www.mindful.org/

**Mindful Schools:** https://www.mindfulschools.org/

**Self Compassion:** https://self-compassion.org/

**Activities:**

**Creating Eye Pillows**: http://www.lazylizardsyoga.com/kids-yoga/creative-crafty-and-calming/

**Glitter Jar**: https://preschoolinspirations.com/6-ways-to-make-a-calm-down-jar/

*The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*

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