

The Impact of Mindfulness Ideas on Family Relationships during the Adolescence Period

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Abstract. Mindfulness is an objective and self-reflecting approach for oneself to acknowledge what one is feeling without interpretation or judgment (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Understanding mindfulness not only helps people relieve stress and improve the feeling of happiness but also helps to build good family relationships, especially with those who are in adolescence period. This essay argues about the impact of mindfulness ideas on family relationship from both perspectives of parents and adolescents, and analyzes the usage of mindfulness in reducing the chance of adolescence rebellion, developing appropriate parenting style under various real world situations, and promoting self-reflection among family members about their behaviors and thoughts.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Adolescence, Parenting Style, Psychology.

1. Introduction

Most parents would say that adolescence is the most difficult period to tackle since their children are in a rebellious phase, and everything they do is working against their parents. In fact, most parents want to know their children and get close to them. Sometimes, the wrong way leads to psychological distance (Liga et al., 2015). Therefore, it is critically important to use mindfulness idea as a tool to improve the connection between adolescents and parents. When mindfulness is used in parent-adolescent interaction, it will positively affect parents, adolescents, and parent-adolescent relationships.

Mindfulness is the practice of acknowledging what one is feeling without judging the emotions as they are experiencing them (Grossman, 2015). There is no right or wrong, good or bad; it is just a state to maintain a moment-by-moment awareness of the thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and surrounding environments (Williams et al., 2006). Most of the time, people are unaware of the inner world, allowing themselves to repeat rigid thought patterns and emotional reactions without seeing what is happening inside. For example, when two people have a conflict, some harsh words will be spoken as soon as they get furious. At that moment, people don't have time to see what is behind the anger and whether the words hurt. Even though there are other options, the people, in that case, can not see alternatives besides saying something that is hurting. However, mindfulness requires people to stop reacting immediately by becoming aware of what one is thinking and feeling in the moment (Hede, 2010). Understanding mindfulness not only helps people relieve stress and improve the feeling of happiness but also helps to build good family relationships, especially with those who are in adolescence period.

Adolescence has unique and complex inner thoughts. Adolescence is a period of heightened self-awareness (Sebastian et al., 2008). Adolescents like to express themselves and try to prove themselves to the outside world. In their interpersonal communication, they are willing to find close friends and develop friendships, establish various peer groups and gain a sense of belonging (Drolet & Arcand, 2013). During this period, the emotions of adolescence and parents become complex. On the one hand, they have high self-awareness, emphasizing the difference between themselves and their parents, since they are entering the so-called "parental hatred period" and gradually getting away from their parents' feelings. On the other hand, adolescence is a period of constant conflict because they depend on their parents due to lack of experience and other reasons (Kwak, 2003).

2. Mindfulness from adolescent's perspective

Building a harmonious relationship between parents and adolescent children is often one of the most important issues in family relationships (Lamb, 2010). The interpersonal process of the mindfulness education is reflected in the awareness that parents and children are in this relationship when interacting with each other. When mindfulness embraces adolescents, it can reduce the chance of adolescent rebellion (Selekman, 2015). It helps adolescents face their minds. It can help them reflectively consider the relationship between the people around them and themselves. When children enter adolescence, family is an important living scenario and socialization impetus, even though family influence at this stage is less than that of infants. On the one hand, the family atmosphere the parenting style will influence the development of the adolescent, along with a counter effect on the parenting style. Parents should help adolescents develop correct understanding and positive emotions and attitudes about themselves according to the reaction of the surrounding environment so that they can realize that they are meaningful and valuable in this world. As Shorey and Ng have mentioned in their study, parenting mindfulness can influence children's emotional and behavioral outcomes (Shorey & Ng, 2021). For example, by using the mindfulness idea, adolescents can label their angry thoughts and feelings as a reaction to rejection in their quarrels with their peers. Doing so can reduce stress and build a more loving, understanding relationship with people around them (Rybak, 2013). Hence, encouraging mindfulness parenting and reducing harsh punishment can indirectly help adolescents avoid certain risks, such as rebellion.

Mindfulness can help adolescents consider the suggestions from their elders (Coatsworth, 2010). One of the obvious characteristics of adolescence that their acceptance of parental authority gradually decreases as they grow up, and at the same time, conflicts between parents and children increase. At the end, the interaction between parents and adolescent children decreases relatively. For most of the circumstances, instead of ignoring everything from parents, adolescents tend to weight the importance of understanding and inclusiveness (Hitti and Killen, 2022). As parents, when they can see the world from the children's point of view, the adolescents could directly feel the true care and love from the parents and would like to consider more of the elder's suggestions. In this sense, mindfulness can create a more harmonious relationship between parents and adolescents and form a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere that promotes each other's growth.

Mindful ideas can also decrease adolescents' overconfidence about their understanding of the world and themselves (Karelaia & Reb, J, 2015). Most of the time, adolescents are used to being overconfident and holding on the thoughts that can make them look powerful. In this process, they will gradually develop fixed concepts about themselves. For example, 'I can win.' However, being overconfident often results in disappointment, which will harm the development of adolescents. With mindfulness ideas, the parents can guide the children to let go of these overconfident ideas and keep an open mind to possible changes in life, whether they want them or not. By promoting the philosophy of just letting it go, they won't cling to the overconfidence of things and allow things to happen naturally.

3. Mindfulness from parent's perspective

Besides reducing the rebellion of adolescents, mindfulness can also adjust parenting styles (Gouveia et al., 2016). Mindful parenting requires parents to pause before making automatic responses, thus, fostering self-control and parenting behavior choices. Instead of stereotyping adolescents subjectively, it is also helpful for parents to occasionally refresh their understanding by looking at them from different angles. As Kowalski mentioned in the study, the teenage years are stressful for both parents and the child (Kowalski, 2022). While facing the care and supervision from parents, most adolescents could not listen patiently. In this case, parents need to change their educational styles and look at things from different angles. For example, some parents may monitor their children by looking at their children's mobile phones secretly. If they see something they thought inappropriate, they will try to delete it. To put the issue of privacy aside, such behavior will naturally

cause disgust in children. Normally, the parents want to understand their children's feelings and behaviors, but children also have their personalities and thoughts rather than the parents' tools. Such a tough way of interrupting children's life, especially adolescence, is improper. Instead, parents should communicate with their children in a non-judgemental manner. Adolescents are in the process of changing from children to adults. Thus, the parents should also refresh their understanding by looking at them differently. By putting themselves in the adolescent's shoes, they can better understand their ideas and achieve the purpose of resonating with the children.

Sometimes, the disadvantage in one way may positively impact another situation. In China, for example, most parents would like to tell adolescents what to do and what not to do based on their own experiences (Xia et al., 2004). Often, parents reject the children by completely denying the adolescents' behavior because, in the eyes of the parents, these behaviors are not desirable. Such kind of parenting style is highly undesirable. From adolescents' perspective, communicating with them in a non-judgemental manner would be more acceptable, thus, will have a better effect on parent-adolescent communication.

When interacting with adolescent children, parents may often say words such as "You are just a child" or "You will understand in the future." Such kinds of words, however, won't have any good in preventing adolescent rebellion. On the contrary, treating adolescents like mature adults would be more helpful in letting them express their ideas. Doing so will shorten the distance between parents and children. Even in the face of the children's unreasonable behaviors, parents should try to communicate with children equally rather than in a commanding attitude to deal with the problem.

4. Mindfulness for both parents and adolescents

Parents are the children's first teachers, and many children's behaviors are learned from parents. To improve the children's well-being in life, both adolescents and parents need to objectively reflect on their behaviors and thinking (Mischel et al., 1988). After all, everyone makes mistakes, and each side should have no additional strictness. In most cases, parents are likely to educate their children with a judgmental mind in daily life. When things happen, however, parents can try to make a conscious effort to accept the behavior of the adolescents as they are. When parents notice the children doing something undesirable, they can bring awareness to the body and breath and try to breathe with the thoughts and emotions that come up. Instead of embracing or rejecting them, embrace them with kindness and awareness. Even if they strongly urge to change the situation, parents try to see things from the children's perspective and guess their needs and feelings. Mindful parenting can improve parents' ability to recognize and adjust their emotions and promote their ability to interact with and understand their children. In fact, the higher levels of mindfulness in parents were associated with higher levels of mindfulness in adolescents (Moreira et al., 2018), which is associated with less stress. When parents could make self-reflections and try to break habitual patterns by using mindfulness, it would be beneficial for parenting their children. Automatic and habitual responses can include a range of thoughts and emotions, from mild irritation and unhappiness to intense anger, distress and fear. When children act or talk in a way that adults don't like, it is easy to fall into automatic response mode. When this happens, parents need to pay special attention to it and make some self-reflection. This can be quite challenging in the heat of the moment, but over time, such practices can lead to new insights and opportunities. As parents, self-reflection can get them a lot of practice breaking out of habitual patterns (Lea et al., 2015). It is never too late to introduce mindfulness into life, and there is no better time to start than when parents make a conscious commitment.

5. Conclusion

Being a parent is one of the most demanding and stressful jobs, but in the same time, it might also be one of the most important jobs that an adult could possibly experience. This job becomes much more tiring when the children grow up to the stage of adolescence. In order to reduce the chances for

adolescents to rebel their parents and help the parents find the most effective parenting style for themselves, mindfulness seems to be an appropriate solution. Mindfulness ideas help parents exploring and understanding the thoughts and concerns from the perspective of adolescents, which could possibly lead to mutual understanding between each others. Furthermore, mindfulness creates a better picture for the adolescents about their real selves. They can get a chance to figure out their true ideas toward their family situations, and develop their own values and understandings about how to get along with the people around them. Most importantly, the growth brought by mindful parenting will be a virtuous cycle of parent-adolescent communication, which would lay a good foundation for family relationships.

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