Nurturing parents
Mindfulness-based wellbeing for Parents
Love is a state of openness to another person and competes in our bodies and brains with closed states of self defense.

Dan Hughes  Brain -based Parenting
Mindfulness is the intentional, non-judging and accepting focus of one's attention on sensations, thoughts and emotions occurring in the present moment.

Mindful attention includes a stance of compassion, interest and open-heartedness towards one’s experience whether it is pleasant or aversive. (Kabat-Zinn 1990)

and can be contrasted with states of mind in which attention is focused elsewhere e.g. pre-occupation with memories, fantasies, plans or worries and behaving automatically without awareness of one’s actions.
Good Parenting is:

• Being sensitive and emotionally responsive to children’s needs for attention

• Comforting children effectively and consistently when they are stressed - co-regulation of affect

• Being a first friend as they learn about relationships

• Knowing when to let kids struggle and work through challenges - developing resilience

• Protecting children from the dysregulation of adults’ emotions
Mindful Parenting:

- Mindful Parenting is an on-going creative process, not an end point. It involves intentionally bringing non-judgmental awareness, as best we can, to each moment. This includes being aware of the inner landscape of our own thoughts, emotions and body sensations, and the outer landscape of our children, our family, our home, and the broader culture we inhabit. It is an on-going practice that can grow to include:
  - (1) greater awareness of a child's unique nature, feelings and needs;
  - (2) a greater ability to be present and listen with full attention;
  - (3) recognizing and accepting things as they are in each moment, whether pleasant or unpleasant;
  - (4) recognizing one's own reactive impulses and learning to respond more appropriately and imaginatively, with greater clarity and kindness.
- Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn, personal communication, Sept. 2012
- From Mindful Parenting
  - Bogels and Restifo
Skills of Mindful Parenting

- Recognising Auto-parent
- Recognising stressful states and cultivating the skills to regulate intense emotion
- Bringing gentleness and non-judgement to the self
- Developing curiosity and openness to situations
- Cultivating patience
- Recognising positive events and taking time to integrate them - connecting with joy
- Improving empathy
- Strengthening the ‘executive’ system’
Potential benefits of Mindful Parenting

- Reduces Stress
- Improves well-being
- Improves executive function
- Develops self nourishing and compassion
- Decreases the cycle of intergenerational habits by reducing automaticity
- Improves family relationships
- Teaching mindfulness to parents has an improving effect on the behaviour of the child
- Is likely to have an impact on attachment behaviours
Key elements of the Nurturing Parents Programme

- Based on MBSR (Kabat Zinn 1990) 8 session x 2hr.
- Emphasis on group support
- Developing self kindness and managing challenges
- Introducing attachment theory and basic neuroscience.
- Understanding stress and skills to manage stress
- Communication and relationship skills
- Parental values & understanding intergenerational patterns
  - Emphasis on integration of mindfulness into daily life
Attention

Attitude

Intention
Mindfulness in Counselling & Psychotherapy.

- The practicing therapist
- Mindfulness–informed therapy
- Mindfulness–based therapy

Fulton Siegel and Germer
Embodied presence
Experiential Exercise
5 Domains of Effective Parenting

Dan Hughes. - Brain-Based Parenting 2012

1. Parental Approach System

1. Parental Reward System

1. Parental Child Reading system

1. Parental Meaning Making system

5. Parental Executive System
The 5 Parenting Systems – relationship to Mindfulness Attitudes & Skills
(adapted from brain-based parenting D. Hughes p.80)

Parental Executive System
- Parental meaning making System
- Parental Child reading System
- Parental reward System
- Parental approach System
- Parental Self-defence System

Non-judgement
Self Compassion
- Self-compassion
- Calming breath
- "safe"

Reduced automaticity
- "thoughts are not facts"
- Beginners mind

Empathy
- Enquiry
- Patience
delayed gratification

Openness
- Curiosity
- Delayed gratification

Amygdala
Overlap among secure attachment, mindful awareness and prefrontal brain function

1. Bodily regulation
2. Attuned communication
3. Emotional balance
4. Response flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Insight (self knowing awareness)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality

Siegel 2007
Adaptations for parents

- Shorter practices especially in beginning sessions, and for home practice.
- More time for connecting with other parents
- Greater emphasis on kindness starting earlier in the course
- Exercises with greater relevance to parenting including:
  - Communication activities in the context of family
  - Mindful activity with your child mostly in second half of course depending how they are feeling about their children; earlier emphasis is on care for parents
  - Inheritance track – intergenerational patterns of parenting
- Less manualised than MBCT – ‘empty curriculum’
- Teaching around stress earlier in course – to improve motivation and retention includes some neuroscience education including very simple attachment

Greater emphasis on ‘taking care of ourselves’ throughout whole of course

Gold, 'Nurturing Parents' 2014
Nurturing parents

Mindfulness-based wellbeing for Parents

Key message:

Stress is an OFF switch to connection

Mindful awareness is an ON switch
Experiential Exercise
Some early evidence supporting for Mindfulness -based approaches for Childbirth & Parenting


Thank you for listening