

# Helping Your Child Manage Stress through *Mindfulness*

By Michele Kane, Ed.D.

SHARE THIS PULLOUT SECTION WITH YOUR CHILDREN!

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Let's face it: The task of raising gifted children can be daunting! As a parent of six adult gifted kids and grandmother of eight (soon to be 10), I know only too well the struggles and the joys of gifted family dynamics. For our clan, and likely yours, the incessant questioning, insatiable curiosity, depth of insight, and creative play combines with social justice concerns, emotional intensity, heightened sensitivity, and perfectionism. This bubbling stew of wide-ranging thoughts and feelings creates conditions that are ripe for stress and anxiety.

As parents, we are confronted with keeping our gifted children intellectually stimulated and emotionally balanced. This challenge creates a different type of stress when we try to balance our own intense feelings and need for intellectual stimulation with the needs of our children.

Contemplative practices, specifically mindfulness, can help address some of the issues we all face. Why mindfulness? Much of the appeal of mindfulness lies in the fact that many of the practices are portable, inexpensive, unobtrusive, and effective. Also, mindfulness practices can enhance executive functions like planning, organization, and self-regulation, plus provide a sense of calm and peacefulness.

Recent research provides evidence that mindfulness helps people develop quick, easily accessible tools necessary to respond to stressful situations.

I invite you to give some of the suggestions on the following pages a try and encourage your children to do the same. There are many pathways to find the individual practices that are best suited for each unique gifted and talented person.

**Michele Kane, Ed.D.**, is a professor of special education and coordinator of the master of arts in gifted education program at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. She has served in leadership roles on NAGC parent advisory committees and networks, and for the Illinois state affiliate. Michele is co-author (with Dorothy Sisk) of *Planting Seeds of Mindfulness: Creating the Conditions to Help Flourish and Bloom Intellectually, Emotionally, and Spiritually*.

