

**Report of the Mindful Parenting Meeting  
September 14-16, 2010 at Garrison Institute**

**December 2010**

**Prepared by**

**Ron Rabin, Kirlin Charitable Foundation, and Nancy Ashley, Heliotrope**

## Table of Contents

1. About the Garrison Institute .....	3
2. Nature of the Mindful Parenting Meeting .....	3
3. Definition of Mindful Parenting .....	4
4. Definitions of Reflective Functioning and Reflective Parenting .....	5
5. Problems Addressed by the Mindful Parenting Meeting .....	5
6. Parents Need More Effective Strategies To Reduce Stress and Guide Their Children’s Optimal Development .....	6
7. Goals and Accomplishments of the Meeting .....	7
8. Pre-meeting Accomplishment: Literature Review and Program Mapping .....	10
9. Key Points of Discussion and Agreement .....	11
10. Closing Thoughts .....	14
11. References.....	15
12. Roster of Planning Committee, Meeting Participants, and Philanthropic Support.....	16

## About the Garrison Institute

Founded in 2003, the Garrison Institute is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization exploring the intersection of contemplation and engaged action in the world.

Our mission is to apply the transformative power of contemplation to today's pressing social and environmental problems, helping build a more compassionate, resilient future.

We envision a future in which contemplative methods are widely used to cultivate insight, caring, ethical behavior and courage in individuals, contributing to much-needed value shifts and positive changes in society.

## Nature of the Mindful Parenting Meeting

Hosted by The Garrison Institute and the Kirlin Charitable Foundation, with additional philanthropic support from several other funders (see list on page 17), a meeting on September 14-16, 2010 convened twenty researchers, clinicians and other leaders interested in and working with family prevention and intervention programs that integrate mindfulness-based techniques and practices. The group was gathered around the topics of Mindful Parenting and Reflective Functioning in Parenting, in order to explore views regarding conceptualization and areas of common thinking about possible systems of measurement.

This meeting grew out of a gathering of experts on mindful parenting and stakeholders from other sectors held in Seattle in 2009. The discussions at the 2009 meeting provided the springboard for shaping and convening the 2010 Mindful Parenting meeting with a focus on research and measurement.

Prior to convening in New York, meeting planning and preparation laid the groundwork to attract participants and optimize their time together. This included regular planning sessions with experts from the field and interviews with key thought leaders and researchers exploring those issues and questions closely related to the meeting agenda. Those interviewed included, among others, Jon and Myla Kabat-Zinn, Alicia Lieberman, Linda Mayes, Diane Reynolds, and Arietta Slade.

Although the group meeting at Garrison Institute set and largely met ambitious goals, as the meeting unfolded it was clear that an important part of moving toward those goals was allowing participants to think out loud with one another to explore and articulate both questions and opinions about the complex meeting topics. Meeting participants are on the leading edge of developing new approaches to effective and loving parenting, yet many had never met nor were they aware of the work each was doing toward a shared goal.

The format of the meeting included large group presentations, large group discussion, small group discussions and viewing video clips on the question of how to identify observable behaviors, sharing of one another's work, and planning for future work. Consistent with the Garrison Institute's mission to explore the intersection of contemplation and engaged action, several meeting participants shared mindfulness and awareness activities during the meeting.

The discussions took on a natural flow as participants discovered the richness of their collective work and possible connections upon which to build. The focus on trying to identify the observable and

measurable indicators of mindful parenting and reflective function served as both a container for the group process and a way to inspire people's creative imaginations.

## Definition of Mindful Parenting

### **Mindful Parenting: a working definition**

Mindful parenting is the ongoing process of intentionally bringing moment-to-moment, non-judgmental open-hearted awareness as best one can to the unfolding of one's own lived experience, including parenting. Cultivating mindfulness in parenting starts with self-awareness. It grows to include:

1. recognizing and keeping in mind each child's unique nature, temperament, and needs;
2. developing the capacity to listen and creatively engage with full attention when interacting with one's children;
3. holding in awareness with kindness and sensitivity, to whatever degree possible, both one's child's and one's own physical, emotional and mental states and motivations - including inner feelings, thoughts, body sensations, intentions, expectations, and desires;
4. developing the reflective capacity to make links between physical/emotional/mental states and behavior in self and others;
5. developing an effective set of parenting skills, including greater self-regulation, which in turn can positively affect one's child's ability to self-regulate, and can lead to more positive parent-child interactions;
6. bringing greater compassion and non-judgmental acceptance to oneself and one's children while establishing a relational foundation that is thoughtful and discerning;
7. recognizing and protecting against one's own reactive impulses in relationship to one's children and their behavior, and responding in ways that are decisive and developmentally appropriate to a child's needs.

This approach invites parents to hold their present-moment parenting experiences within the context of the long-term relationship they have with their child, and a vision of relational health, trust and happiness.

(Based on Duncan, Coatsworth and Greenberg May 2009 [1] as modified by Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn, November 2009; and Grienenberger, Kelly, & Slade, 2005 [2]. Modified further by Kabat-Zinn and Kabat-Zinn, June 27, 2010. Also modified by Ron Rabin, by integrating responses to a survey of participants at the 2009 and 2010 Mindful Parenting meetings and other experts.)

## Definitions of Reflective Functioning and Reflective Parenting

Defined by Fonagy and colleagues during the London Parent-Child Study in 1991 [3], reflective functioning (RF) is the behavioral manifestation of an individual's mentalization. Parental RF is the capacity to interpret behavior, both one's own and that of one's children, as motivated by underlying mental states such as feelings, wishes, thoughts, intentions, and plans. Reflective parenting is the application of the mentalization theory to parenting.

In the context of attachment from a psychoanalytic tradition, Fonagy and Target (1997, 2002) [4, 5] propose that mentalization is the ability to understand behavior with the use of underlying mental states and intentions. Mentalization allows one to make sense of and to anticipate one's own and others' actions. It integrates cognitive and affective ways of knowing. It is the capacity to think about feeling and to feel about thinking. A diminished ability to mentalize limits one to only using concrete behavior in understanding oneself and others.

(From Duncan's literature review [6] described below.)

## Problems Addressed by the Mindful Parenting Meeting

**Parents have the most influence on child and youth outcomes yet get the least help.** Although parenting quality is the strongest factor in children's short- and long-term cognitive, social and emotional developmental outcomes, only a small proportion of parents are reached with learning opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills to guide the optimal development of their children.

**Most parenting programs do not provide parents with tools to manage stress and difficult emotions that can result in harm to their children.** Parenting classes and other supports that are available are of variable quality and often do not address how parents' love for their children becomes subverted by the parents' strong feelings of anger, fear, frustration, confusion, or alienation. When that happens, parents can be swept up by their emotions. They may slip into unconscious or self-focused parenting, often exacerbated by high levels of stress, during which they are at high risk of overreacting and causing distress to their children that can result in long-term harm to the children and the parent-child relationship. Available classes and other supports for parents often lack components for managing emotions and stress, and how to make thoughtful and healthy decisions in interactions with their children.

**More research is needed; although interest in and use of mindful parenting approaches are increasing.** Mindful parenting, a relatively new approach to the field of parenting, may well be the missing ingredient in optimizing the effectiveness of a full range of parenting education and support offerings. More and more individuals and organizations are using the concept of "mindful parenting," in their services and workshops, although more research is needed to investigate the dimensions, mechanisms, assessment and effects of mindful parenting approaches to enhance parent-child relationships.

**Researchers interested in mindful parenting lack opportunities to connect and collaborate.** There are only a handful of researchers conducting studies of mindful parenting interventions. They have few opportunities to exchange ideas and explore collaborations that could increase the pace, efficiency, and depth and breadth of thinking for this potential paradigm-shifting approach to parenting, family support, and child development.

## Parents Need More Effective Strategies To Reduce Stress and Guide Their Children's Optimal Development

Parenting is one of the most challenging, demanding and stressful jobs on the planet. It is also one of the most important, for how it is done influences in great measure the heart and soul and consciousness of the next generation, their experience of meaning and connection, their repertoire of life skills, and their deepest feelings about themselves and their possible place in a rapidly changing world.

Stress, and often high levels of stress, are more prevalent in families of all kinds today, all too frequently defining the norm in American family experience. Distraction and dysfunction, spanning the spectrum from the over-use of television and computers, to poverty, mental illness, workplace issues, residential instability, noise, crowding, addiction and violence, compromise otherwise good intentions, aspirations and dreams of good health, happiness and success for all children. Creatively responding to these realities requires new ways of thinking in how to develop inner skills to navigate and mediate these challenges.

Although many stressors are out of the control of individuals, when parents have the inner strength and skills to build positive relationships with their children, they can mitigate some of the individual, family, neighborhood and societal factors that put children and youth at risk. Young people are then less likely to develop serious problems that can diminish their well-being and opportunities at school and in the community. They develop resilience and a flexible posture within their world.

Application of mindful parenting practices could provide a relatively low-cost breakthrough in promoting healthy parenting/family caregiving practices, especially in circumstances where they can be integrated into existing activities, curricula, and support systems, such as childbirth classes, adolescent parenting classes, and home visiting programs. Mindful parenting draws out and strengthens the inner capacities of parents; it is not simply a new skill set, but rather a different way of thinking, perceiving, and knowing. Mindful practices occur in every culture and across faith communities, suggesting wide applicability of mindful parenting.

### How mindful parenting reduces stress

Bringing mindful awareness into parenting interactions can allow parents to stop and fundamentally shift their awareness in order to:

- View their present-moment parenting experience within the context of the long-term relationship they wish to have with their child;
- Attend to their child's needs, by looking past the surface level of behavior to discern the child's unmet needs, and the causes and conditions (physical, emotional, and experiential) which are at the root of their motivation and action.
- Exercise self-regulation and wise choices in their actions. Be able to respond in flexible ways to a situation, by reflecting and intentionally choosing an appropriate direction of action. This response flexibility is the opposite of a "knee-jerk reaction."

As a result of bringing greater mindfulness to parenting, parents can:

- Decrease personal and parenting-related stress
- Cultivate an enhanced capacity for parenting with greater calmness and consistency, and in greater accord with their goals and values;

- Foster a warm and nurturing quality in the parent–child relationship; and
- Promote a more generally positive parent–child relationship (e.g., more positive and less negative feelings, greater relational trust and emotional sharing).

(Duncan, Coatsworth, Greenberg, et.al. [1, 7, 8])

Those actions are the keys to increasing the well-being of their children.

## Goals and Accomplishments of the Meeting

The planning team set six goals for the meeting. Substantial progress was made on each of them, as summarized below.

Results for the first three goals are grouped together, as they build on one another, and meeting participants addressed parts of each of them in preparation for the meeting and in different combinations in formal and informal settings throughout the meeting

- 1. Determine salient and relevant research questions stakeholders want to answer.**
- 2. Develop draft research agenda.**
- 3. Increase coordination across existing and future applied research projects to promote collaboration, avoid duplication and maximize limited funding.**
  - Participants generated many research questions they and other stakeholders need answered about mindful parenting. Through an online survey, participants and other experts generated dozens of possible research questions, which were synthesized and sent to participants in advance. On the last morning of the meeting, participants offered and discussed research questions that were most on their mind.
  - A formal draft research agenda was not developed, as other meeting topics called for more time and attention than had been scheduled. Those conversations were ones that were needed before participants could attempt to come to consensus around a limited number of key items. A more formal and prioritized research agenda is scheduled for attention early in 2011.
  - Discussions and shared interests identified during the meeting led to taking the next step for some existing research strands and developing new projects. In each instance, the leaders invited others to join, and several participants expressed either a commitment or interest in being involved. Those projects are:

A team from Pennsylvania State University will be spearheading and collaborating with others on two major projects emanating from the meeting:

1. *Developing an Observational Coding System for Mindful Parenting.* Initial conceptual work will build on discussions from the meeting to more clearly define and operationalize distinct dimensions of mindfulness in parenting. This will require being more explicit about how mindfulness in parenting is similar and different from other parenting constructs/dimensions of parenting (e.g. reflective functioning;

warmth; control). The project will begin by capitalizing on existing data sets that include video of structured parent-adolescent interaction tasks. The new mindful parenting observational coding system will be applied to the existing video segments which will allow for empirical evaluation of the similarities and differences with other aspects of parenting and with dimensions of adolescent functioning. Participants who have expressed interest include: Doug Coatsworth, Mark Greenberg, Patricia Jennings, Mary Geier, Larissa Duncan, Tom Dishion.

2. *Mixed-method study of mindfulness in parenting across ethnic/cultural groups.* The primary goal of this project is to explore the meaning and measurement of mindful parenting across cultural groups. This project necessarily requires new data collection and it was proposed that those data include qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. Initial ideas have included capitalizing on existing samples of diverse participants already enrolled in studies and adding a brief interview/measure to the assessment. Participants who have expressed interest include: Alfiee Breland-Noble, Doug Coatsworth; Larissa Duncan; Tom Dishion.

Two programs in Los Angeles are now engaged in a collaborative project that addresses some of the key questions and conceptual connections that arose during the meeting at Garrison:

1. The Center for Reflective Parenting currently offers two programs, the Reflective Parenting Program, under the direction of John Grienerberger, and Mindful Parenting Groups, under the direction of Diane Reynolds, that both seek to utilize an attachment based perspective targeting mindfulness and reflection as key factors leading to secure attachment in children (Slade, Grienerberger, Bernbach, Levy, & Locker, 2005) [9]. Literally hundreds of studies have shown attachment to be a critical variable linked to multiple measures of social and emotional functioning, psychopathology, and resiliency across the lifespan (for further details see Belsky & Cassidy, 1994 or Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). [10, 11]

To evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, outcome research is currently underway utilizing a number of different measures that assess parental reflectiveness (mentalization), parenting stress, child behavior, quality of parent-child interactions, and parental psychopathology. Preliminary results are promising, and suggest positive outcomes in a number of areas. However, further data is needed. More specifically, these programs could benefit from research efforts that allow for a double blind study and control groups.

2. In addition to the Los Angeles programs cited above, other efforts in California and Washington state are addressing and researching mindfulness outcomes for families with young children, including childbirth preparation, and have expressed interest in exploring possibilities for collaboration. Among others, these include projects at UC San Francisco under the direction of Alicia Lieberman; projects at the UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine under the direction of Larissa Duncan; the Mindfulness-based Childbirth and Parenting Program under the direction of Nancy Bardacke; projects at UC Davis under the direction of Ross Thompson; the Listening Mothers program under the direction of Yaffa Maritz in



Seattle, Washington; the Center for Child and Family Well-being under the direction of Lilia Lengua, University of Washington; and the Center on Infant Mental Health and Development under the co-direction of Susan Spieker and Jean Kelly at the University of Washington. In early 2011 possible scenarios for collaborative research projects will be explored.

#### **4. Ensure research is shaped and developed by multicultural, multidisciplinary researchers.**

- Meeting participants had frequent and substantive discussions about the need for future research to be developed, implemented and analyzed by multicultural and multidisciplinary researchers. In particular, strong support was expressed for the use of collaborative and participatory processes in which diverse cultural communities had an equal voice in documenting the wisdom and experiences of mindful parenting and caregiving in different cultures. Ethnography and cultural anthropological approaches were suggested.
- Meeting participants stressed the need for researchers to communicate their culture and ethnicity, as a researcher's cultural lens can influence what behaviors he/she observes, how those behaviors are coded, and how they are interpreted. One participant described studies of depressed teens, in which there were no significant differences in the diagnoses of teens by race. However, there were differences by the race of the coder.
- During the meeting, several participants shaped and proposed a project to explore the meaning and measurement of mindful parenting across cultural groups. It was proposed that new data needed for the project include qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. Further details are noted under goals 1-3 above.

#### **5. Ensure research is grounded in the everyday realities of vulnerable children and families in our increasingly diverse society.**

- Prior to the meeting, participants received a background paper to stimulate their thinking about culture. The paper provided an assortment of views about culture, child development and parenting, as well as examples of tools for addressing cultural issues as part of mindful parenting approaches.
- Several participants cautioned the group about assuming that all families share common values, noting that different cultures hold varied views about the "developmental scripts" of independence and interdependence.
- The group had discussions about whether there are "universal" aspects of mindfulness and mindful parenting across a range of different cultures. Among the suggestions of what might fit that definition were calmness, safety, kindness, confidence, and positive connections to others. Participants noted that not all of these characteristics would be high on the list of priorities for some cultures. One participant noted the reluctance of Native communities to look for commonalities among the values of many cultures, because historically this has meant the loss of their culture.
- It was also noted that attachment theory (and the descriptors for "secure attachment") is complementary to the concepts of mindful parenting and reflective function.

## 6. Explore ways to effectively frame mindful parenting to engage diverse communities, funders and policymakers.

- Participants expressed a strong interest in integrating mindfulness and mindful parenting techniques in existing programs not only in the parenting field, but also with other fields such as early childhood, mental health, and K-12 education. For example, in K-12 education, the Garrison Institute has chosen to align mindfulness practices with social-emotional learning as a strategy of building on, and fitting into, existing structures.
- Although there was not time to discuss options and ideas, participants expressed a high level of interest in opportunities for scaling and sustaining mindful parenting practices. They would like to explore further what opportunities exist within policy, social marketing, and community rebuilding efforts to hold, sustain and spread mindfulness practices and reflective functioning. In addition, they noted potential benefits of embodying principles and core elements of mindfulness in research methodology, clinical assessment and treatment.
- Participants shared ideas about how they explain mindfulness or mindful parenting, as well as reflective functioning, in professional services or programs they offer. Language, observational and/or didactic approaches, and the teaching of formal and/or informal mindfulness practices, are tailored to the individuals and groups as appropriate.
  - One participant noted that when doing mindfulness exercises, he talks about their origins in Eastern philosophy and spiritual practice, which triggers both positive and defensive reactions. He chooses this approach because it feels disingenuous to not do so.
  - Another participant explained that he frames the ideas in compassion, understanding emotions, and a way of becoming more aware of how we're experiencing parenting. He takes the approach of exposing participants in his parenting groups to ideas without explicitly "teaching" them.
  - Another participant simply framed the work as stress management and emotion regulation within the context of effective parenting and relational trust.

## Pre-Meeting Accomplishment: Literature Review and Program Mapping

In preparation for the Mindful Parenting meeting, the organizers asked Larissa Duncan and her team at UC San Francisco to conduct a review of the literature on mindful parenting and parental reflective functioning. The review included the theoretical foundation and research base of mindful parenting [6]. The review also examined mindfulness measures, mindful parenting measures, and parenting measures used in research on mindful parenting. Mindful parenting interventions were presented and relevant evidence for their efficacy was considered. Similarly, the literature review included the theory, research, interventions and their efficacy for parental reflective functioning. Duncan also compared mindful parenting and reflective parenting to elucidate areas for future investigation.

The literature review, which will be published at a later date, contained the following conclusions:

- Mindful parenting and reflective functioning have much in common, although they are derived from very different traditions and they utilize different intervention approaches.
- Much research is needed to further investigate the dimensions of mindful parenting and their assessment, and the mechanisms and effects of mindful parenting interventions.
- Greater consensus exists regarding the construct of Reflective Functioning and its measurement, however more trials are needed to test the impact of reflective parenting programs.
- Although both forms of intervention have been tested with some underserved, vulnerable, or clinical populations, very little is known about the fit of these approaches for different cultural groups.
- Studies of fathers and fathering are lacking.
- In terms of theory and assessment, mindful parenting is conceptualized as a broader construct than reflective function, yet reflective function may add depth to the understanding of some key aspects of mindful parenting. The interrelationship of mindful parenting and parental reflective functioning should be tested.
- It appears these two perspectives, both in the early phases of research development, can inform one another to improve parenting and child development among diverse populations.

Duncan was also asked to conduct a mapping project [12] to identify and describe current efforts to provide mindful parenting and reflective parenting programs in practice settings, realizing these programs may not be well represented in the published theoretical and research literatures on these topics. Using a systematic internet search approach, Duncan and her team collected publicly available information from the English-language websites of relevant providers/organizations. The final database contained 118 providers; 90 were found searching for “mindful parenting” and 10 were found searching for “reflective parenting,” the remaining 8 were identified with both phrases. Of the 118 providers, about half were individuals and the other half organizations. The providers are largely counselors/therapists and educators/trainers.

Both products were invaluable aids to discussions and decision-making at the meeting and will provide help and support for researchers, practitioners and policymakers working in the arena of mindful parenting.

## **Key Points of Discussion and Agreement**

In addition to the accomplishments for the six meeting goals, meeting participants advanced their individual and collective knowledge and wisdom about mindful parenting and reflective parenting by observations and questions that arose throughout the three days. Key points and areas of agreement are grouped by topic areas below.

### **Relationship between mindful parenting and reflective parenting**

- Mindful parenting and reflective parenting are not mutually exclusive concepts. They are in fact highly interactive principles and aspects of behavior that researchers and practitioners believe lead to better relationships and positive outcomes overall within families of developing children.

- While the meaning of “reflective functioning” is clearly defined within the confines of its theoretical base and philosophical lineage, as is the meaning of “mindfulness practice” within its lineage and fields of practice, the concept of mindful parenting and reflective parenting invite a number of questions as they come up against other well-intentioned and empirically driven parenting programs. Additionally, issues surrounding values, beliefs, and goals become essential within the context of diverse cultures.
- Capacity for meta-awareness seems to be one of the primary commonalities between mindfulness and reflective function.

Duncan’s literature review [6] suggests several possible area of intersection between mindful parenting and reflective function:

- Paying attention, *being with* [the child, the behavioral problem, the present experience]
- Emotional containment, emotional awareness
- Seeing beneath behavior to underlying wholeness or inner life
- Curiosity and wonder about the experience
- Complexity and changing, impermanent nature of experience
- Self-regulation

#### **Relationship to attachment and other parenting concepts**

- Given the broad acceptance and relevance of attachment theory/secure attachment model, it is important to understand the position of mindful and reflective parenting as complementary concepts.
- From the attachment literature, effective reflective function emerges from a secure attachment base. For a parent who doesn’t have a secure attachment base (with a partner, church, etc.), effective self-regulation is difficult. Group approaches can be very important in building an attachment base for those who don’t have one.

#### **Observation and Measurement of Mindful Parenting and/or Reflective Parenting**

This conversation is still very much a work in progress and one that is central to projects and collaborative efforts going forward. Significant progress was made at the meeting in determining key guiding principles and questions for developing an observational coding system for measuring mindful parenting. A preliminary list of potential indicators to examine through observational assessment was generated to inform future research.

- How do we distinguish what mindful parenting is from what its outcomes or correlates are (so we can actually look at the latter independently of the former)?
- Mindfulness is a way of being, and then there are practices that bring that about – meditation, yoga, martial arts, movement, art forms. They are all ways to bring one into a greater sense of this way of being – but they don’t guarantee any particular behavior or set of outcomes.
- Possible observable indicators:
  - Presence vs. self-distracting behaviors
  - Body – relaxed, open, a level of comfort; fluid vs. jerky/tense
  - Non-verbal communication and attuned facial expressions

- Verbalizing what child is doing/verbal tracking
  - Awareness of speech –avoid harmful or hurtful talk which is anxiety driven, free association, or disconnected
  - Self-regulation
  - Rupture and repair
  - Contingent communication
  - Pause before responding
  - Assume leadership; modeling and sharing wisdom and positive decision-making
  - Identifying, tolerating and working with difficult emotions
  - Self-aware but also aware of what the child is bringing to the interaction
  - Sovereignty
  - Mutuality, such as matching states of attentiveness
  - Eye contact
  - Positive regard
  - Thoughtful – reflective
- Mindful parenting affects the well-being and development of the parents/caregivers as well as the children. We need to code parent behavior, child behavior, and the interaction.
  - Parents are potentially getting tools for coping with chaos, stress, emotional flooding, etc., intrapsychically and relationally in the family and in the community. They may experience benefit in the form of increases in immune functioning, positive affect, less depression/anxiety, better brain fitness, better marital and relationship satisfaction.
  - We should also observe parent-child dyads during a normal time. We should look at the transition from equilibrium to disruption and repair, and then back to equilibrium.
  - Mindful parenting and reflective function can't be measured in a vacuum. We need to consider the context of:
    - The parent/caregiver
    - The situation(s) the parent and child are in
    - Interaction with each child
    - Language and culture
    - The observer
  - We would need to look at a range of contexts to get meaningful measures. There is a danger of labeling a parent based on a brief interaction. We may also choose to include parent self-report, including their assessment of the interaction via video.
  - We need to think about the development of the relationship, how well the parent and child know each other, temperament, and a developmental axis.
  - A parent's values and level of emotional intelligence come into play in assessment. Each of these aspects tends to lead us to different assessment tools.
  - Perhaps we could measure the opposite of what we think of as mindful parenting behaviors: cruelty, judgment, not listening, shaming, distracted, tense, inappropriate affect, etc.

- How do we make inferences about what we see, as well as what the parent/caregiver reports experiencing? How can non-verbal experiences be better described and accounted for in research methodologies?
- Programs that include the learning and practice of mindful parenting techniques should produce behavior change, not just a change in worldview that participants can talk about. Our assumption is that parents will behave one way before the intervention and another way after it.

### **Types of measurement tools**

- The possibilities for techniques for measuring mindfulness, some of which are listed below, are each vast and complex
  - Self-report
  - Interview
  - Hypothetical vignettes
  - Observations
  - Psycho-physiological/reactivity and regulation
  - Immunological function
  - Neural activity
- What is the relationship between narrative measures of mentalization (i.e. reflective function on the Parenting Developmental Interview) and observational measures of mindful parenting?

There is one empirically supported measure of mindful parenting currently available – the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting scale (IM-P). The IM-P was developed by Duncan, and is a self-report measure that encompasses affective, cognitive, and attitudinal aspects of parent-adolescent relations. The IM-P is intended to capture parents' ability to maintain:

- Present-centered attention,
- Present-centered emotional awareness,
- Openness and nonjudgmental receptivity, and
- Non-reactivity in parenting interactions.

There are a number of published self-report questionnaires used to measure mindfulness, independent of parenting (e.g., Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale, Brown & Ryan, 2003; Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire, Baer et al., 2006) [13,14].

The literature review [6] notes that several measures have been developed to measure reflective functioning, based on the Adult Attachment Interview.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Twenty people with a commitment to advancing mindful parenting and reflective functioning approaches had the time to exchange ideas and resources, air different viewpoints, and develop and deepen relationships. To a large extent, the tangible goals of the meeting were achieved. Beyond that, important conversations were started. Plans are in development for early 2011 to directly address the facilitation and coordination of these and other potential collaborative efforts.

Many of the participants expressed an interest in gathering again in one to two years to discuss individual and collaborative progress on these research efforts and advances in practice. They saw this type of gathering as indispensable to shared learning on a topic of high mutual interest.

## References

1. Duncan, L.G., J.D. Coatsworth, and M.T. Greenberg, *A model of mindful parenting: implications for parent-child relationships and prevention research*. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 2009. **12**(3): p. 255-70.
2. Grienenberger, J.F., K. Kelly, and A. Slade, *Maternal reflective functioning, mother-infant affective communication, and infant attachment: exploring the link between mental states and observed caregiving behavior in the intergenerational transmission of attachment*. *Attachment and Human Development*, 2005. **7**(3): p. 299-311.
3. Fonagy, P., et al., *The capacity for understanding mental states: The reflective self in parent and child and its significance for security of attachment*. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 1991. **12**(3): p. 201-218
4. Fonagy, P. and M. Target, *Attachment and reflective function: Their role in self-organization*. *Development and Psychopathology*, 1997. **9**: p. 679-700.
5. Fonagy, P. and M. Target, *Early intervention and the development of self-regulation*. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 2002. **2002**(22): p. 307-335.
6. Chang, V.Y. and L.G. Duncan, *Mindful parenting and parental reflective functioning: Theory, intervention, and research*. 2010: Unpublished manuscript.
7. Coatsworth, J.D., et al., *Changing parent's mindfulness, child management skills and relationship quality with their youth: Results from a randomized pilot intervention trial*. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 2010. **19**(2): p. 203-217.
8. Duncan, L.G., J.D. Coatsworth, and M.T. Greenberg, *Pilot study to gauge acceptability of a mindfulness-based, family-focused preventive intervention*. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 2009. **30**(5): p. 605-18.
9. Slade, A., et al., *Maternal reflective functioning, attachment, and the transmission gap: a preliminary study*. *Attachment and Human Development*, 2005. **7**(3): p. 283-98.
10. Belsky, J. & Cassidy, J. (1994). Attachment Theory and Evidence. In M. Rutter & D. Hay (Eds) *Development Through Life; A Handbook For Clinicians* (pp. 373-402). Oxford; Blackwell Scientific Publications.
11. Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P., (Eds). (1999) *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*. Guilford Press, NY.
12. Bartmess, E. and L.G. Duncan, *Mindful and reflective parenting: The landscape of practice*. 2010, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, University of California: San Francisco, CA.
13. Brown, K.W. and R.M. Ryan, *The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003. **84**(4): p. 822-848.
14. Baer, R.A., et al., *Using Self-Report Assessment Methods to Explore Facets of Mindfulness*. *Assessment*, 2006. **13**(1): p. 27-45.

## **Planning Committee**

Nancy Ashley, Heliotrope

Larissa Duncan, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, University of California, San Francisco

Betty Emarita, Development & Training Resources

Mark Greenberg, Pennsylvania State University

Patricia Jennings, Garrison Institute; Pennsylvania State University

Ron Rabin, Kirlin Charitable Foundation

## **Meeting Participants**

Nancy Ashley, Heliotrope

Alfiee Breland-Noble, Duke University

Doug Coatsworth, Pennsylvania State University

Tom Dishion, University of Oregon

Larry Dumka, Arizona State University

Larissa Duncan, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, University of California, San Francisco

Betty Emarita, Development & Training Resources

Susan Fountain, Garrison Institute

Mary Geier, Pennsylvania State University

Mark Greenberg, Pennsylvania State University

John Grienerberger, Center for Reflective Parenting

Patricia Jennings, Garrison Institute; Pennsylvania State University

Tammy Mann, Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, United Negro College Fund

Yaffa Maritz, Community of Mindful Parents

Bob Marvin, University of Virginia

Ron Rabin, Kirlin Charitable Foundation

Arietta Slade, City College, City University of New York

Kari Snowberg, Garrison Institute

Joshua Sparrow, Harvard University; Brazelton Touchpoints Project

Ross Thompson, University of California, Davis

## **Philanthropic Support**

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Kirlin Charitable Foundation

The Irving Harris Foundation

The Garrison Institute

The Philanthropic Collaborative

Yaffa and Paul Maritz