

# UW Health Kids: Expert recommends stress management techniques for kids this summer

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MADISON, Wis. – The pandemic has created a lot of stress for parents and children.

Children today have reportedly high stress levels and to help them take a break the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) encourages parents to try different techniques for stress management with their children.

With the arrival of summer and more free time for kids, a UW Health Kids expert believes summer is a good time for families to try things like mindfulness and mind-body therapies such as meditation or yoga, which could help prevent physical and mental health challenges that can occur if stress is left unaddressed.

Mindfulness is the practice of bringing one's consciousness and awareness into the present moment, and a way to acknowledge one's thoughts and feelings. Yoga is a technique that combines physical postures, meditation, and regulated breathing to focus the mind and body. These practices can lead to important rest for the mind, body and spirit, according to Dr. Mala Mathur, pediatrician and mental health expert with UW Health Kids.

"These activities benefit both parents and kids and can be a potentially effective therapy for kids coping with emotional, mental, physical and behavioral conditions," she said. "I highly recommend families try them out this summer because it can improve your mood and decrease anxiety and depression symptoms."

Yoga can help kids learn to live in the moment and focus on the task at hand and handle problems peacefully, according to Mathur.

“Yoga offers a release from today’s fast-paced and tech-heavy world,” she said.

Some research has even shown yoga provides benefits for those who have issues with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, school performance, sleep, behavior problems and eating disorders, she said.

“The simple act of teaching children how to stop, focus and just breathe could be one of the greatest gifts you give them,” Mathur said.

### **Meditation Tips**

- When teaching kids about meditation, the appropriate length of time and frequency of meditating can vary by age. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends:
  - Preschool children: A few minutes per day
  - Grade school children: 3-10 minutes twice a day
  - Teens and adults: 5-45 minutes per day or more based on preference
- Try incorporating deep breathing into a bedtime routine. It can help children wind down for the night and make meditation easier to do when other situations arise.
- Remind grades schoolers and teens to take a few deep breaths before answering a difficult question at school, taking a test or before an athletic performance.
- As young children learn to manage strong emotions, deep breathing can be part of the process—especially before and after time outs.

A recorded interview with Mathur is available.