

The TN Child Care Resource & Referral Network employs 15 Family Engagement Quality Coaches who are located statewide. We provide referral, education and training services to parents, families, child care educators and communities.



Sharing Family Traditions

As 2021 ends, a season of gathering and connecting with family, friends and loved ones begins. During this time of connection, life may grow hectic. To combat the chaos, there are many activities that families can do together to continue to build positive bonds with their children. These activities can also benefit adults as moments of mindfulness and self-care. They are reminders to slow down and enjoy simple activities with children, family, and loved ones. Some of the activities that can be completed as self-care include:

1. Going on a nature walk or hike together
2. Visiting a local park or museum
3. Having a snowball fight or building a snowperson
4. Raking leaves into piles for jumping
5. Having a movie night with popcorn and cocoa
6. Reading a favorite book together
7. Going on a scavenger hunt for seasonal items, like leaves, acorns, winter birds, etc.
8. Practicing yoga together
9. Exercising together
10. Creating a glitter jar
11. Practicing mindful breathing

Whatever activity you select as a family, practice being present and aware. Enjoy the memories you are creating with your child.

“Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.”
- Robert Brault

Parenting Tips

Your calendar may be filling up with gatherings and events during this season. Minimize stress and maximize connection to your family with these tips:

1. If you catch yourself rushing around the house, try to pause, take a deep breath, and notice what is happening in the moment—for example, the sound of your children’s laughter or the sunlight streaming in the window.
2. Do you feel thankful for what you notice? Let your family know. Exchanging words of gratitude with your loved ones can boost your family’s happiness.
3. Add meaningful contact to these moments through plenty of smiles and hugs.

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Family Activity

The Moody Mind Jar:

Create a glitter jar and practice mindful breathing. Glitter jars can be a useful mindfulness tool that can help children learn about emotions and feelings. Children watch the glitter swirl to the bottom of the jar, which can give them the time they need to regulate their emotions and gain back control of how they are feeling. In the book *Moody Cow Meditates*, Peter the cow is taught how to calm his frustrations using a Moody Mind Jar. Your family can make one at home too!

1. Begin with any empty and clean bottle or jar. Plastic jars are best for small children.
2. Fill the jar 3/4ths full with warm water.
3. Add vegetable glycerin almost to the top and add 4 drops of dish soap.
4. Mix together.
5. Add a pinch of glitter/sparkles for each frustration.

Once you've tightly put the lid on, have your child shake the jar while explaining that this is their upset mind. Have them place the jar down and breathe in and out slowly while watching the sparkles settle to the bottom. As the sparkles settle, explain how their mind settles as well.

Directions for creating a glitter jar and how to use it to help calm the mind with breathing can also be found in the book, *Moody Cow Meditates*.

CONTACT US

To reach an FEC Coach visit:

www.tnccrr.org



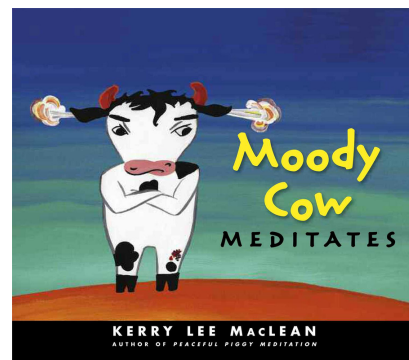
The Book Corner

Moody Cow Meditates by Kerry Lee MacLean



In this month's book corner, you will find a book that helps children and families practice mindfulness activities together. *Moody Cow Meditates*, tells the tale of a cow named Peter who has a very bad day and takes it out on those around him, only compounding his misery. Then his wise and mindful grandfather teaches him how to tame his anger and calm his thoughts.

For another book on mediation, see **Breathe With Me** by Mariam Gates



*Scan the QR codes on the newsletter for links to book read-alouds, music, drum alongs, parenting resources, and more!

Seasonal Affective Disorder

As the days get shorter and the weather gets colder, does your mood become shorter and colder too? The winter blues are real! The National Institute for Health (NIH) says that feeling sad, lethargic, sleepy, and hungrier for carbohydrates are some symptoms of the winter blues. This seasonal sadness is usually brought about due to stressful holidays, less sunlight, or reminders of absent loved ones. Families that experience this seasonal sadness spend less time together. So, what can you do? The NIH says getting outside is one way to beat the winter blues. Take walks outside or play in the snow. Get as much sunlight as possible. Also, boost your spirits by visiting with trusted friends and loved ones. Try setting aside time to exercise with family and share a meal rich in fruits and vegetables. Check in with yourself and practice some mindfulness. YouTube has wonderful short videos of guided meditations. If the winter blues persist, see your doctor to make sure you are not experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD can have more severe symptoms and intervention from your doctor might be needed. For more information on winter blues and SAD visit www.mayoclinic.org.