

## Meditation and Kids - How Young Is Too Young?

Meditation has been linked to multiple physical and mental health advantages. Lower stress, better longevity, lower health care costs, better emotional control and improved physical performance have all been scientifically proven as benefits of meditation and mindfulness. With such significant rewards, you may be thinking about getting your child involved with a regular meditation practice.

Meditation has been proven beneficial for adults, senior citizens and the elderly. It can improve the lives of men and women, so it is logical for parents, grandparents and others who care about children to wonder, *"How young is too young to introduce a child to meditation?"*

If you are asking this question, you are far from alone. Browse Internet meditation forums and you see more than a few questions like the following:

*"Is my 9-year-old daughter too young to learn meditation?"*

*"My son just turned 6. Is that too young for meditation?"*

*"I have heard about meditation for toddlers. How does that work?"*

Meditation might not be the first thought that enters your mind when you think of energetic, active preschoolers and toddlers. Many think that because these young children do not have fully formed brains, not only are they incapable of meditating properly, but the practice is a waste of time.

Science tells us differently.

Multiple studies show *"immediate behavioral changes in children"* once they begin meditating. The National Therapies Research Unit at the Royal Hospital for Women in Australia performed a study on 26 children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) between 2003 and 2012. The children were between the ages of 4 and 12. A regular practice of Sahaja Yoga Meditation took place for 6 weeks. Here are just a few results of that meditation practice.

- A reduction in medication use by 50% of the child test subjects
- Better parent-child relationships

- Enhanced feelings of self-esteem and self-worth
- A reduction in hyperactivity, and a simultaneous improvement in attention
- Less impulsive activity

A Baltimore, Maryland school teaches children to meditate during detention. Yoga therapist Heather Galea has seen even the youngest children benefit from being around a parent who is performing yoga and meditating. Best-selling childcare author Pinky McKay has seen meditation calm and relax children younger than 2 years of age.

This is happening because studies show increased attention, better grades, lower levels of stress and anxiety, better self-awareness and healthy self-regulation are all benefits from meditation for children. Kaiser Greenland is the author of *The Mindful Child*, and points to years of research that shows meditation helps make children happier and more compassionate, and aids in the developing of good habits.

Teaching toddlers to meditate may be as simple as introducing a calm, relaxed environment where they spend time with a parent or loved one. In older children, more regimented and traditional meditation practices show significant benefits, even years down the road. Children are never too young to benefit from a healthy environment. This means exposure to meditation, relaxation and mindfulness techniques can never begin too early for your child.