

Children Learn Meditation
by Example



Susan Kramer

Children Learn Meditation by Example © 2023 Susan Kramer

Text: 2,085 words

Photo by Polly Rice on topic teaching school age kids

Other photos by Susan Kramer

Published by SusanKramer.com

Email: susan@susankramer.com

Santa Barbara, California

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

All Rights Reserved

Contents

page

4. Children Learn Meditation by Example
6. Benefits of Meditation
8. How to Teach Young Children Sitting Meditation
10. Teaching School Age Kids Sitting Meditation
12. Guided Reclining Meditation
14. Guided Walking Meditation
16. Links

Children Learn Meditation by Example



The most useful legacy you can leave your children is imparting the knowledge that their spiritual nature is part of their whole being.

Meditation practices scaled down to child-size begin to open the pathway to their expansive nature which is beyond though inclusive of body and mind.

Taking into account a child's life experiences so far, use examples a child can relate with to explain and practice meditation.

For example, a resting dog or cat is being very still just as we need to be when meditating. Explain that for us, the stillness, while remaining awake, gives us a chance to reflect on and work through problems in a quiet and thoughtful way. We are giving ourselves time to think about different ways to act to get to the needed results.

Share with children that quiet time, without fidgeting, gives their body a chance to calm down and rest when feeling agitated. Demonstrate even and regular breathing. Inhale and exhale evenly and in a natural way without holding the breath. Just this practice alone calms us down. Children can watch the body of a resting dog or cat as its belly rises and falls in a regular and relaxed pattern.

A minute is long enough for a child to reap mental relaxation. And if in school or doing homework, a few minutes contemplative reflection can help resolve stumbling blocks.

And all along the way the parent can instill the spiritual aspect of deeper meditation by first having the child see examples of your acts of kindness. Modeling virtues gives children first-hand experience in their esoteric spiritual nature of being connected with others and all of creation.

As with ourselves, spiritual growth is a process that grows over time and practice and the more exposure we give our kids on their expansive nature, the more they will carry meditation practices into their adult life.

Meditation is useful at all stages of our life, revealing greater joy with maturity of practice. Give your kids a solid start in meditation, step-by-step into their practical and spiritual nature, both.

Benefits of Meditation



1. Learning even, regular breathing gives instant stress relief on a moment's notice. The regular even breathing is a bridge that ties body to mind; when breathing is made regular it calms the physical body.
2. Following the sequence within a meditation develops memory and the ability to concentrate, which carries over into school work.
3. Longer meditations give the body and mind time to deeply relax and center.
4. I found in teaching, that active or hyperactive kids moving in rhythm with the group, such as in walking meditation, derive a calming effect.
5. Meditation is non-competitive, and each can participate within the limits of their own ability, with adaptations if needed, or by working with a partner.
6. Meditation can be done individually or in a group setting and it does not need a special place to practice.

7. Beginning meditation practice in childhood sets up a lifetime habit for a way to handle stress, and as the child matures spiritual qualities can be added to meditate upon, such as kindness, loving, honesty, compassion.
8. Developing the discipline to sit still for meditation carries over into learning how to sit and concentrate to work out a problem or do school work.
9. Meditation practice develops strength of character, as the child learns about virtuous living by thinking over the qualities of each virtue.
10. Meditation can help a child learn to think for themselves, and determine a best course of action by reflecting on possible solutions.
11. If the child is being raised in a particular religion, the quiet time of meditation is a chance to reflect on the spiritual lesson for the day.
12. Meditation is a positive activity that can be an example to a child's friends of a way to handle stress and work out problems.
13. Meditation feels good because a calm mind and relaxed body generate feelings of harmony.
14. As kids grow up meditation deepens feelings of joy, to be shared through caring actions, making meditation a win-win activity.

How to Teach Young Children Sitting Meditation



Young kids love being outdoors and pretending, so images from nature for teaching beginning meditation fit this age group. In this lesson I've included the example of a puppy for the kids to visualize.

To introduce children to sitting meditation you are going to be the model to emulate: Everyone sits in a circle with you on a carpet or blanket, facing in to the center, with legs crossed in, and hands clasped resting in their lap. No need to stress sitting up perfectly straight or not fidgeting. The perfection of the pose comes with lots of practice and the maturing body.

Next, ask the children to copy your special breathing. First explain what you are going to do such as: "We are going to breathe in and out evenly like a little puppy does while taking a nap. On the first count we breathe in (model the "in" breath), and on the second count we breathe out (model the "out" breath). Let's all try the even breathing now (let everyone try 3 sets of evenly spaced in and out breathing)."

If you are working with preschoolers explain that even breathing, like a little puppy resting, also gives them a rest and time to feel better when they have been upset or crying.

Now, moving on to the sitting still portion of the meditation practice, ask the kids to close their eyes and imagine a special little talking dog out in the yard who is going to tell a story about the world.

The talking dog says that he represents all the animals of the planet, and wishes all people to live in harmony with each other, the animals, and the environment, because we all depend on nature for air to breathe, clean water and food. The little talking dog now sits still, and asks the kids to join him for a few minutes thinking about how they can be kind and caring with each other, animals and everything on our planet.

By now, the children are probably quiet and relaxed. When the group begins to stir ask everyone to follow you by taking a deep breath in, letting it out, standing up and stretching.

Though this meditation example uses images from nature, if you are teaching in a particular religious setting you could use those examples. Either way, spiritual energy flows through everyone and the quiet time of meditation helps get in touch with our deeper inner peace and calm: our spiritual nature.

Teaching School Age Kids Sitting Meditation



This age group is used to sitting still at their desks for a determined period of time, which is a head start in teaching sitting meditation. For learning meditation the teacher and students sit in a circle on the carpet facing in, or the students can sit at their desks with their hands clasped in their laps. Encourage students to sit upright rather than slouch to keep their attention on the lesson.

Breathing practice

If your students are at least school age explain that even breathing calms them down when they are stressed or angry. And, that it is a good practice to use that no one else will even know they are doing: it is like their own first aid kit for regaining calm and control of themselves.

Demonstrate the meditation practice of evenly spaced regular breathing. Have them first count from one to four. Then demonstrate that on count 1 they breathe in, and on count 2 they release the breath; then breathe in on count 3, and breathe out on count 4. And, that this even pattern at their own regular breathing rate continues through the meditation.

Imagery and quiet time

Now, moving on to the sitting still portion of the meditation practice, ask the kids to close their eyes, and sitting very still imagine the sun rising in the sky, such as the child in the photo with this meditation. It is brightening all the world so plants and trees can grow, and people can see where to go.

By now, the children are probably quiet and relaxed. When the group begins to stir, (no time limit), ask everyone to follow you by taking a deep breath in, letting it out, standing up and stretching.

Remind the kids they can do this meditation anytime they need to calm down, or need some quiet time to work out problems they may be having at home, school or with others.

In this meditation I have not mentioned any particular religious imagery, but the palms together are a universal peace symbol, which you can add in if you are teaching from a particular religious perspective. This meditation can be called quiet time and used in the schools for stress reduction, or to recover order in the classroom.

*Quiet time with even breathing
Helps to banish stress from living.*

Guided Reclining Meditation



Let's go on an adventure!

But, instead of rushing out the front door, let's go on an adventure within, to a beautiful place inside, in our thoughts.

Lying on the bed, floor, carpet, or the lawn or beach in warm weather, stretch out on your back, arms and legs resting easily. Close your eyes, let your body go limp as a rag doll, while counting to 10 in your mind.

Lying so still and relaxed, keeping your eyes closed, walk through the inner doorway in your mind onto the beach, on a warm sunny day. In your mind, feel yourself standing still for a moment looking around, seeing the waves wash against the shoreline in their regular rhythms, over and over again.

While watching the regular pattern of the waves, just breathe in and out, evenly in and out, over and over again.

Watch the waves, while breathing evenly in and out.

Enjoy the relaxed feeling in your own body that is lying so limply on the bed or carpet. Feel whole and comfortable in your resting body and mind.

When some time has passed, begin to come back to your everyday active self. Stretch out those limp arms and legs, take a deep breath, sit up.

Do you feel your new energy, all set and ready to go again!

Guided Walking Meditation



This meditation has 2 parts that combine to energize the body and coordinate mind-body (thinking-moving):

1. Even breathing.
2. Walking with arms and legs in opposition.

Walk briskly while swinging arms easily back and forth. When the left foot steps forward, the right arm swings forward. And, when the right foot steps forward the left arm swings forward.

Example of breathing pattern to follow:

Count 1: breathe in

Count 2: breathe out

Count 3: breathe in

Continue...

More benefits of walking:

Walking meditation is an opportunity to think over problems and possible solutions. When deciding how to act about a problem choose the way that is a good

outcome for everyone; a win-win situation. It is also an opportunity to think about and plan new projects, and think about short term and long range goals.

Regular walking is an exercise that is sometimes recommended to be good for your health.

To finish, stretch arms overhead; bring arms down to sides; resume other activities.

About the Author



Susan Kramer graduated from Peabody Institute Preparatory Dance of Johns Hopkins University as a young adult, and in her early 30s became a classical yoga practitioner, and international author of more than 20 books and thousands of articles on rhythmic dance, ballet, music, philosophy, social issues, relationships, yoga, meditation, and practical spirituality for children, teens, adults, and those challenged, and with her husband, Stan Schaap, lives in Holland.

Email: susan@susankramer.com

Books: <http://www.susankramer.com/books.html>

For more information about meditation for children consult this longer book or ebook of 102 pages, 10,600 words:

Meditation for All Kids – <http://www.susankramer.com/meditationforallkids.html>

