



## Mindfulness & Activity: The Connection

**By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director**

Do you ever wonder: if I am present, in the moment, focused, will that have an affect on my physical health? Well you might not wonder, but I do. According to [verywellfit.com](http://verywellfit.com), “Sometimes, there’s a benefit to zoning out during workouts.” And more importantly, “... when you’re *too* distracted, you lose the connection to what you’re doing: that magical moment of feeling your own [strength and power](#) as you exercise. There’s a flow that happens when we are in the moment. This flow provides many benefits.”

I’ve always assumed that there is a positive connection between being in the moment and health. If you are mindful, for example, when you are eating, you are more likely to choose “all-the-time foods,” as we say in school. No judgment is passed when you choose the potato chips over the celery; there are just some food choices that should be considered as “all the time” as opposed to the other choices that would be “some of the time.”

And today on my walk, I was so not mindful. I was productive: planning my day and the rest of my week, organizing my thoughts about dinner and various other projects. But I was not in the moment or focused and I noticed a marked difference in how I felt when my walk was complete. I still got in the steps, according to the app on my phone but did I really receive all of the health benefits?

### **How Mindfulness Affects Physical Activity & Health**

“When you exercise mindfully, you may improve your physical health. For example, some research connects mindfulness with increased cardiovascular health. Loucks E, Britton W, Howe C, Eaton C, Buka S. *Positive associations of dispositional mindfulness with cardiovascular health: the New England Family Study. Int J Behav Med.* 2015 Subjects who practiced mindfulness had lower body mass index (BMI) and fasting glucose (blood sugar) levels.” But that makes sense doesn’t it? If you are focused, you clear out all other thoughts and put the exercise at the forefront of your mind, how could the health benefits not increase? When you look at athletes, they are completely focused on their physical performance. It’s how they get ahead and succeed in their chosen sport.

### **Better Mental Health**

According to the website, researchers found “that when mindfulness was combined with exercise, participants showed improvements in (their) stress (levels). (They also had a lower incidence of) depression and anxiety.<sup>2</sup> (*Mindfulness.* 2017) In addition, this study found that mindful exercise can help improve [sleep](#), which can also benefit mental health.



Another study found similar results. This one was conducted on college students and found that moving mindfully for 14 days helped improve negative thoughts.

### **So What About Children?**

Nothing is universal. All children are different. Clearly there are the immutable differences, age, background, experience. But then there are the personality differences. However, think about anecdotal information. Think about how your children or those that are a part of your life in some way. What happens when they are just going through the motions? Do children even operate that way? From what I see, they throw themselves into just about everything with their whole heart, with their whole being and because of this, the children would get the maximum benefits of exercise and physical activity - mentally and physically.

### **Be Child-Like**

Ahh. The pleasures of being a kid again. Take on your activities with your whole heart; your whole being. Be mindful and have intent with your day-to-day decisions. As the researchers have proven, your mind and your body will thank you.

Shabbat Shalom!