



Christy Keating 00:08

Hi friends and welcome to The Heartful Parent Podcast. I'm your host, Christy Keating. In this podcast, we talk about it all, our parenting, our partnering, and our professional lives, because they are all a part of us. And we were never meant to do this alone.

Christy Keating 00:39

Hello, Heartful Parent Podcast listeners, I am so happy to be back with you for another episode of the podcast. And so grateful that you are here to join me.

Today I have a guest that I'm really excited to introduce you to, because we dive into something that we haven't talked about really on the podcast before. And it's something that I think you will all find beneficial in your lives as parents, in your lives as partners, If you are with a partner, and in your lives as a professional. If you are doing that juggling act of also having a professional career, wherever you sort of are in your space. I think the information that my guest today is going to share with you will have something to offer for you.

So my guest is a gal by the name of Aparna Venkatraman. Aparna lives in North Carolina in the United States. And she has over 20 years of experience connecting with thousands of families and schools, children's hospitals, nonprofit organizations, child advocacy centers, all sorts of really wonderful places. And she's been doing that since her teens.

She is the founder of Beauty In Parenting and coaches parents worldwide. She's also a meditation and breathwork teacher, a motivational speaker and a wellness advocate. She has a background in psychology, child development, and neuroscience. And I think you'll find that her really approachable nature makes her just so lovely to listen to, she will tell you as well that she's got strong intuition and problem solving skills, and loves guiding parents of babies, toddlers and teens, as well as couples and extended family members to empower themselves and build healthy relationships with one another through effective communication, creating boundaries, self care, confidence building and lighthearted mindfulness techniques.

And in fact, that's exactly what she does. In this conversation she shares with us we dive into sort of what meditation and breathwork are, which may seem obvious, at least for some of it. But she also talks about what the benefits are that she's seen with people who have adopted these practices. And then and I love this, at the end of my interview with her Aparna shares three different breathwork practices that you can start using today, as you work to go from being sort of reactive to being more responsive.

And I thought this would be a really lovely practice to do right now are really lovely interview to do right now, as we dive into what for many is a really busy holiday season. So, you know, in the US and Canada, of course, we've got Thanksgiving, and then that sort of launches us in, you know, worldwide into a what can be a very busy holiday season, you know, with Christmas, and Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. And I may be missing something in there, apologies if I am, but I know many of us love this time of year. And many of us also dread it because it brings family together which can put us in our most reactive states. And it also just can bring stress and overwhelm as we balance kids being out of school, our professional lives, our partnering, you know, and then all the extras that come with this season.

So I really believe that what Aparna shares with us today can be a benefit to us all as we move through this and into 2024.

I hope you find it helpful. Without further ado, Aparna Venkatraman.

Aparna, thank you so much for being here. I'm so excited to have you on the Heartful Parent Podcast.

Aparna Ventkataraman 04:41

Thank you for having me, Christy, very excited to be here.

Christy Keating 04:44

You know, I've been doing this podcast for well, not quite a year yet. And we've talked about a lot of things related to parenting and a lot of things related to safety and even our professional lives, but we haven't really dug into that mindfulness and meditation and what all of those things are, and what they can do for us as parents.

So I'm really excited to dive into this conversation today. Can you start by, you know, obviously, I read your bio, but if you could do a little bit more, to kind of introduce how you got into this work, and how you created a mindfulness practice that, I guess for yourself, but also for the, the families and parents, who you work with? How did that all come about?

Aparna Ventkataraman 05:31

Yeah, so it's a really beautiful story that I've been sharing a lot lately in talks and sessions. And so I'm, I'm a parent coach, and a meditation breathwork teacher, and I have a company called Beauty In Parenting. And I've actually been supporting families for 20 years since my teen years. And it started out really, because I went through a lot as a child, I was a very premature baby. And I spent a lot of time in my youth with a lot of anxiety and depression. And I became someone who was quite sensitive.

And I didn't quite know know what that meant, until I later on after studying psychology, and after going, you know, working in schools, working in children's hospitals, and doing a lot of work in after school programs with kids of all ages.

I went through a life transition where I had some death happen in the family. And I didn't quite know what my purpose was. And so I was a teacher at that time, and I had to move and I had to shift gears into something new. And I, that's when I sought out some help from some people to help me, some life coaches, some healers to help me during this life transition of what my purpose was, and what I'm here to do. And I knew, intuitively, that I wanted to keep supporting families.

And so during that time, about 2016-2017, I created my own meditation practice. I have a spiritual teacher, who was also an astrologer. And she encouraged me to start listening to, you know, on YouTube, let's start listening to meditative music, soft sounds, and to learn about the chakras, which are the energies centers of the body. And that visualization and doing that really helped me to recognize the areas of life where I needed to focus on which were my roots, my foundation, my purpose in life, and my joy, and my power. And when I say power, I mean my competence.

And so I spent time for an entire year, pretty much listening to the same one or 230 40 minute meditative practices. And it wasn't easy, I was pretty stressed out, I was pretty frustrated and couldn't sleep well at that time to write. And so having this meditative practice really helped me to get to know myself, it helped me to get to know what I needed better, it helped me to connect to my heart better. And it helped me to recognize that there's more, there's more to life than what's just going on in my head and my to-do list that I got to know myself better as a person at that time.

And so in that healing, I decided to create beauty in parenting. And I decided that I wanted to support families, not only through parent coaching, and helping them with their problems with communication and tantrums and meltdowns and family connection, but I wanted to help families as I had been doing in, you know, places like the Boys and Girls Club and child advocacy centers and children's hospitals, helping families being to be connected and to be present. And to feel mindful.

Christy Keating

Yeah.

Aparna Ventkataraman

Which isn't something that when you're going through stress, or behavioral issues or things with your family, sometimes when you don't know how to voice what's going on. It's a great time to tune in words to see what you really need, as well. Or you can talk with yourself.

Christy Keating 09:13

I so appreciate that. The sort of the backstory of that, because

Aparna Ventkataraman 09:19

It's a big backstory. I know.

Christy Keating 09:21

It is. And obviously, I'm so sorry that you know, you had a difficult time in your life. But I do also find and I should use the word *and* there instead of the word *but* because right and I talked I actually talked to parents about that.

I'm so sorry that you had that experience in your own life. And I am so impressed by folks like yourself who take those really difficult experiences, move through them and then turn that into something that not only serves them but serves sort of the greater good as you said.

Aparna Ventkataraman 09:57

Yeah, it's the both sides of the coin. Mind of healing of doing this work and you'll, you'll feel this impact listeners soon when I share some of these practices with you some of the short practices, but doing this work just benefits both you and it also benefits me as well. It's just a very hard thing.

Christy Keating 10:18

Yeah. Which when we can find work that serves both of those purposes. And, you know, obviously I'm also a parent coach, I do different types of, I don't do breath work, or I should say not a lot of it. I mean, I do some for myself, because sometimes I need it.. But that sense that the work that we're both doing, when it serves both us and the people that we're looking to support is a really beautiful thing.

I also love that piece of your story that you know that you've been working with populations who need that extra support with the Boys and Girls Club, you know, child advocacy centers, and, you know, in my work as a child abuse child sexual abuse prevention advocate.

Aparna Ventkataraman

Yeah.

Christy Keating

And some of my colleagues are working with child advocacy centers, and there's such incredible places.

Aparna Ventkataraman 11:07

Right, right. So child advocacy centers or, for those who don't know, it's places to support children who are going through abuse or have been abused, yeah. And to work through all of that, I also have helped those in recovery. As well too as college students, I've helped a lot of men as well. And a lot of dads as well, too. And in my practice with meditation, breathwork, I've supported not just parents, I've supported

teens, I've supported college students, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, just whomever really needs it, it's really different from parent coaching, and that it can be utilized for anyone who can really need that as a, as a life skill. And to build upon that sense of presence.

Christy Keating 11:52

As you were talking, I was gonna say, I can't really think of anyone in my life or in my professional work, who couldn't benefit from the work that you do, and the breath practice and sort of that, coming back to ourselves in the mindfulness. But I would love to let you explain really, you know, we're talking about the benefits of it. But let's get down into the nuts and bolts here of, you know, what are we talking about when we talk about meditation and breathwork? And how are those two things different from one another? If they are different? And do you find that one is more beneficial for certain folks? Or, you know, how do you decide which one to use with which client?

Aparna Ventkataraman 12:35

Yeah, you know, so I offer both. And I get that question, you know, all the time, obviously, especially from people who want to learn from me, meditation is a beautiful. It's what I started with, it's a beautiful way to relax, and to just get to know your mind and body better. It's not a practice that has to be perfect. I don't think there's any real right way to do it, I think it's just a way that you can really observe your thoughts, and get to know you know what your needs are, get to know how your mind thinks.

And I say observe, instead of quieting the mind or feeling like it has to be like nothing up there, you know, that's not an easy thing to do. But just being observant of, you know, how you're talking to yourself, what's going through your mind, and how your body is feeling. While those things are happening to and just being, you know, mindful of your breath, obviously, but just kind of noticing where you're feeling tense in life, too.

And so when I'm doing meditation sessions, sometimes it's on Zoom, sometimes it's over the phone, because it helps people to just listen to my voice, and to relax. And sometimes we also use essential oils, if they're interested in not to help them just feel relaxed on a deeper level. And just have that sense, but they all usually do a, you know, a progressive, like a body scan or something that's progressive, where we're working through going from the top of the head, down to the toes, and the feet, and you're just taking the time to slowly notice and relax the different parts of your body to you know, you never know, you know, where that tension can be.

Sometimes if you're frustrated, it's tense in your jaw. A lot of the times you sometimes, if you're really you know, anxious or stressed it can be in your stomach, and other places like that as well. So and also sometimes like we tend to kind of subconsciously just clench your fists and things when we're upset when we're angry too.

So I think that's very important for parents and for children to be aware of especially and breathwork is deep breathing it's a way to regulate yourself and to of course calm down but just be able to process emotions as well to be able to process you know, happiness and anger and frustration and sadness grief, some times two, which is happening a lot right now these days.

And yeah, breathwork really just helps you to oxygenate your blood, it helps you to deepen your lung capacity. I didn't have a great lung capacity growing up, because I was a very premature baby and I was in the hospital and couldn't, you know, couldn't breathe very well. And that showed up later in life when I was on, like physical fitness classes or doing sports and things like that. I knew that I couldn't, you know, walk a mile or like run or do a lot that for a long period of time.

So it's been really helpful for me in life, to have my, you know, my health, my immunity to sleep well, and to just be more present with other people to and from a space where I can connect back to my heart, connect back to what I emotionally and lovingly mean. And to be more present with the people around me. And so when I'm working with a client, we're very, it's not just the goal of being calm, but it's the How can I, you know, be in tune with what you need, as well, are you intuitively. So those are just some of the benefits of meditation breathwork,

Christy Keating 16:09

Thank you for that description. Most of us have heard of meditation. But, and I actually, a number of years ago, took a class and mindfulness based stress reduction, which has a lot of beautiful benefits, it's a wonderful course. But for whatever reason, and maybe it was the way that it was taught in this particular class, I had this constant feeling like I was doing it wrong, right. But I wasn't. Because I wasn't able to stay focused on just my breath, or, you know, empty my mind that there was something that I wasn't doing right or something. And I until I got, at times very frustrated with it.

So I really love the way that you described it, which is that it's not an emptying or a blank canvas that we're trying to create, but an observation, our thoughts, and then how our bodies and minds are responding to those thoughts. And that I think if it had been framed for me in that way, and an easier thing for me to, to kind of engage with, and not feel like I was doing it wrong. You know,

Aparna Ventkataraman 17:16

I took, a couple years ago, a traditional meditation class with the cushions and the bolsters and everything from, you know, from traditional teachers I knew and I, I even had that thought that I was doing it wrong, that I wasn't looking exactly like everyone else was doing. And I had to kind of sit there in the middle, you know, in the middle of the class and just be like, you know, I'm going to do what feels comfortable to my body and what my body needs the most.

And when I, you know, even when I'm talking about essential oils and aromatherapy with people, and people are drawn to different scents. And you know, why is that? Or why am I drawn to this, like

everyone's body chemistry is different. And so in our time in our lives, as we evolve, we're going to need different things as well as in our aging process, and all sorts of things where we are in life. And I think just having that compassion for yourself really, is more of an end goal of, of having this mindfulness practice too.

So I tend to, as a parent coach and meditation breathwork teacher, just lean towards ways that I can help you in practical ways in your daily life in short ways in ways that can, that can integrate into what you already have, instead of trying to change you into something that you know, you're just, it's not going to work out for you, it doesn't feel great and you don't you know, you don't want to implement it, then it's not worth the time and energy.

But if it's something that resonates with you, and that you can actually do with your kids around and your pets in your life and your career then great. Yeah, that's the most important thing for me.

Christy Keating 18:53

I would love to hear I mean, you you shared at the beginning that you've worked with people from, you know, a variety of backgrounds, parents, obviously, since you primarily work in that space, it sounds like but you've also worked with people in recovery, or elderly folks, you know, I'd love if you are able to share some, obviously keeping everybody's privacy, but share some stories of clients who have gone through this work, and what sort of benefits or what has been the impact the practice that they've engaged in, how does it change them?

Aparna Ventkataraman 19:31

So I'll share three stories with you. One is with a mom. Another is with someone who is an aunt and a caregiver and the third is with a college student to help you out so the mom came to me and she was someone who has twins, but there were younger twins at that time, around three and four. And she had just had a life transition of moving into a new home. And she was trying to work from home and work on her work and couldn't for the life of her deal with the noise around her with her young children and taking care of them as well.

And so she really wanted to learn how to not yell all the time and not yell at her partner, and sleep well. And focus, pretty much. And so we worked through some exercises to help her identify what her, you know, her needs and core values were and I did a little bit of parent coaching with her as well. But we looked through emotionally like what was going on with her. She was pretty emotional and stressed at that time during that transition, as I can, I can understand as well.

And we did a lot of a progressive body scan, which is what I just talked about, too. And we also worked on ways that she could focus and ways that she and I will share some of these practices as well. So it makes sense, but ways that she could focus on ways that she could set some healthier boundaries

around her time, she ended up getting some noise-canceling headphones, so she could really tune into what she needed. And she could focus more.

She ended up trying out a couple of different essential oils, and were to you know, like massage them on the body and how she could use them with her child to defuse them at bedtime. She also did work on some breathwork, some deep breathing with her children to help them. It was a boy and a girl. And they had some different personalities, but they loved to play together at that time. And so to help them have some comforting objects and some ways that they could relax together and connect together.

And so she's a beautiful mom who plays the harp, and she plays the piano. And she creates her music as a music teacher. And so she would start to sing and play music for her children at night. And when we created that practice of knowing, okay, this is something that's going to help her family, it really changed everyone's self care, it really changed their routines. And it really gave them something, something to look forward to their days, too. And so now she's much better at communicating with her whole family. And they feel much, much more connected as well, too.

Christy Keating 22:14

I love that story. I mean, obviously, you know, kudos to any parents out there who are parenting twins, that is a journey I have not personally had. And then trying to work from home during that and in a new home with that all the transition that you've just described. I love that she not only used it as a way to care for herself, but to connect with her kids, which is just beautiful.

One thing I want to ask you before we because I know you've got two more stories to share. But, you know, as I'm sort of thinking about this, I mean, obviously, it is wonderful when people can have the guidance of someone like you in learning and implementing a practice like this. Is it something that for those parents who may not have the financial means or the time? Is this something that families can learn to do on their own? And do you have recommendations for how to go about that?

Aparna Ventkataraman 23:18

Yeah, so I always offer a free 30 minute call to not only you know, learn about my offerings and how you can work with me, but I also do always with anyone, whether they decide to work with me or not just share one practice or one strategy as well, so that you get that more immediate help. I do have free meditations available on my website. I've partnered with an organization here in Philadelphia in the US called Matthews Mindful Moment. And they release weekly meditations from about thirty, thirty-five teachers worldwide.

And so I have about six, like five or six meditations on there right now for things such as visualizing the good and releasing frustration, inviting in joy, things like that, that I think topics that parents could use from time to time. And I do have also on my YouTube channel, a couple of different short practices and meditations as well, too, that I've had up there.

Christy Keating 24:16

I love that we will obviously make sure that all of those resources are listed in the show notes for anyone who's listening and, you know, doesn't want to pause right now to go look those things up.

Okay. The second story that you said was an aunt, I think he was also a caregiver. Tell us about that.

Aparna Ventkataraman 24:33

Yeah, this is someone who, maybe thirty years older than me, in sixties or so. And they came to me beginning a spiritual practice, just getting into that and had been working with a healer and things like that, and wanted to really have someone that they could meet with regularly and we met every week in the evenings. And I do offer evening sessions as well too because a lot of people need that. So they wanted someone that they could learn from. And I think one of the best things I was talking about with my own practice, when I created it, is to have that consistency of the same voice or same practice that you're learning from.

And so she wanted someone who could teach her a variety of practices, but in the same kind of style, as well, too. So she came to me just, you know, processing a lot of trauma, having issues communicating with her partner at that time, and just not just feeling disconnected from her heart, not just, you know, going through days where she was just really stressed and frustrated, and needed that connection to you know, this was during the pandemic needed that connection to herself at times when she didn't have that connection immediately to other people anymore.

And so we worked together for about a year and a half, going through that practice. And I've had clients who have come to me working for a session, I've had clients who come to me working for a longer period of time, it just depends on how much you want to practice and learn.

But I think she, we ended up doing a lot of visualizations of like beach scenes and nature scenes and different colors, and going through the chakras, that traditional practice I learned very early on, and finding things that, you know, visualization she could use when we were between sessions, you know, and that she loved these places that she loved, and wish she could visit and be and more often, but we worked a lot on positive affirmations and ways that she could just, you know, really get out of that, that head and those thoughts of like, uh, you know, I'm not, I'm not a great person. You know, I feel all this guilt. And you know, my family has XY and Z and all this too, and just connect back to what she needed and who she was as a person as well, too.

I think, you know, we go through life and sometimes we are in those moments of life, we're in a very reflective period. And that can be hard and lonely sometimes. But when we get in touch with what we need, and find ways to relax and help her to sleep well, it was really, really fruitful for her. And she ended up practicing a lot of mindfulness and using oils with her partner, they ended up finding ways to

practice to enjoy date night and have self care time together. And she ended up finding more of a community of like minded people that she could enjoy life with, too.

Christy Keating 27:38

I love that. I love that, especially the contrast between you know, a parent who is actively parenting young twins, and then somebody who is in their sixties, which, you know, for me, many of my listeners know this. I'm fifty, so sixty doesn't seem so old to me anymore. You know, it's definitely you're in a different stage of life at that point.

Aparna Ventkataraman

Yeah.

Christy Keating

And so I love that had applicability for her. You also mentioned that you worked with a college student. And yeah, I have certainly, I'm sure you've seen this with your clients as well that our tweens and teens and young adults are experiencing just unheard of before levels of anxiety and depression. You know, it's really leaving experts and parents kind of baffled as, you know, how do we help them and it sounds like meditation and breathwork can play a role there too. So tell us about that one.

Aparna Ventkataraman 28:36

Yeah. So this is a wonderful college student. She, this was during the time of the pandemic, and she had just gone through COVID and having COVID just moved the year before from the West Coast, and she's on the East Coast. And she had been going through a lot of depression and a lot of anxiousness and a lot of stress with all of her work. She's a PhD student.

And you know, we met every other week for pretty much a year. And she just didn't have a great self care practice. She's someone who had ADHD and focus issues. And at the recommendation of her therapist, she sought out someone who was a breath wreck teacher and to help with deep breathing and just like processing everything she was going through.

At the time, she had some issues with her family and we really looked at her self care. We looked at her bedtime. She was staying up late. We looked at her mealtime and nutrition, she didn't enjoy cooking. She didn't really have regular mealtimes and didn't eat enough. And we really looked at the things that were really stressing her out whether that's her boss, whether that's her schoolwork, whether that's things with relationships, and having more self care time, like what she really wanted to do.

So she ended up learning a series of practices with me and it's just starting. I remember for the first month just, we did this same practice over and over again. Same three and four; three before practices and just like learning, you know, learning how your body responds to a lot, learning how it feels to do things like expanding the belly and expanding the chest and slowing down a little bit more.

And she found that it made her calmer, she found that she could pause in her communication with other people. And she wasn't like lashing out at people and just like, internalizing things or, you know, taking things personally all the time, she found that she could ask for what she needed, she could, it was easier to make friends, for her relationships got better.

And she started grading her own self care practice, she started treating herself more she started dressing up more and making herself feel better. And to not always be in this cycle of work and you know, work in school all the time, she started taking care of her own needs. And she definitely started having a sleep routine that was better for her. And for work, her focus was much better, she ate really well and started cooking together with her partner. And her relationship with her family got much better because she knew how to not react and how to communicate with them. So she's doing much better health got much better, as well with all of that.

Christy Keating 31:16

You know, one of the things that I talk with parents a lot, and people on the podcast have probably heard me talk about is, like the difference between being reactive and responsive. And it sounds like the work that you did with this particular gal, was really to help with that being more responsive and less reactive, which he said, right, it improves our relationships and improves our ability to focus and it improves our self care, like all of those things, when we can thoughtful and intentional and how we respond, as opposed to just reacting you know, in the moment, that's a beautiful thing.

And something that I think any and all of us can benefit from however we get there, you know, whether it's through meditation and breath work or some other practice, learning that responsivity instead of reactivity is so beautiful.

I've heard I know, you've got some, you know, short, little, a few quick breathwork practices that you'd love to guide everybody in. And I just want to give everyone who's listening, sort of the reminder, as I said in the intro to this, that these are practices, best done when you are sitting somewhere comfortable, that is not your vehicle behind the driving behind the wheel. As all those warnings go not while you are using heavy machinery or anything of that nature. Please be careful, smart, wise about this.

But the practices that a person is going to share with you can be used as you move through your day and are looking for those moments where you need a little bit of that calm down and to bring that responsiveness back when you're feeling reactive. So I just wanted to leave that as the caveat to this. But I'm gonna, what can you share with us that can give listeners something that they can try along these lines?

Aparna Ventkataraman 33:14

Yeah, so I will share a quick practice for where you're feeling angry or frustrated, as well.

Christy Keating 33:23

Something most parents can relate to.

Aparna Ventkataraman 33:25

You're just like, not having a great day. And I know, for me, usually it's like, if I haven't slept well or I just like I have a lot on my mind or I like to have something I really want to voice to somebody. But I don't want to, I want to be a little gentler, so hopefully this helps, you know, parents and caregivers or anyone who needs it out there.

I love to have the visualization of when you're holding a dandelion, and you're about to blow it. This is a really beautiful one that's kind of, it's sort of similar to like if you've got like a paper bag, and you're just kind of blowing into it, things like that. But you can also do this with bubbles as well too. And so a lot of these I, as you can tell, I've taught toddlers, you know, these kinds of practices to stay a little bit more mindful. I've taught pretty much children of many ages to and so this I think it's just a really sweet one that I think a lot of us could benefit from too.

So I like to rub my hands together, rub my palms together a little bit, just to create a little bit of warmth and friction. And I like to just kind of place it over the heart. Place both hands over the heart for a second and just notice for a moment, taking an inhale for three seconds, one, two, and three through the nose, and exhaling three, two and one. And then having the visualization of maybe holding up and bubbles are holding up a dandelion.

And inhaling for three seconds 1-2-3 holding this dandelion close to your face, and then making that whistling noise to blow away the paddles. The three seconds, three, two, and one. Do that one more time and herring one, two, and three. Holding it 3-2-1. And this is a great one where you can honestly quickly just release that frustration, that anger in a way that is healthy in a way that just lets you let you pause before you know, maybe react to something like we were talking about or or just, you know, move on with their day too.

Christy Keating 36:10

Okay, I really love that. Because what you did with that, at least for me and I and I did it you may have seen I put myself on mute and did it along with you. What that did for me, as opposed to just saying to somebody, like take some deep breaths is having the visual. And I did Imagine holding a dandelion made it feel, well, first of all, and maybe this is me, listeners. Sorry if this is just me. But it actually, like I almost imagined that I was standing in this beautiful field. Right? Where there were wildflowers and dandelions and you know, all sorts of things around me. And that was calming in and of itself. I don't know why my brain did that. But it did.

But then just having something to imagine billowing as opposed to just taking that deep breath made it feel much more accessible to me. So I love that one. And it's quick, it's so quick like you do that. Right? In a in a few moments when you're right before you're about to yell at your four year old for coloring on the walls.

Aparna Ventkataraman 37:14

Yeah. And so this is something that I also, I teach about, you know, these regulations of self regulation practices, but also co regulation, which is being able to be with your child or your partner or loved one or whomever and doing this with them, teaching them these kinds of practices. I have had, you know, clients that I've worked with who, they did both work together, and they learned all these together so that they could like, you know, children could independently just have this.

It's a great one to do after school or before bedtime, or maybe even in the morning and drop off to just be in the moment of your day and being like I'm here. This is how I'm feeling. And we'll feel that anger rise up. You know, in our bodies, when we're stressed, I will feel our chest tense up. But finding that way to just like settle into things. It's not fun feeling angry or frustrated. But just knowing that we have a healthier way to release. I think it just creates a nice ripple effect, a nice impact for us, a ripple effect on others too.

Christy Keating 38:20

I love that I'm imagining that, you know, that's something I could very easily teach to my six year old and my high schooler right. Both of them. That would be accessible to them.

I think you have another one that you can share.

Aparna Ventkataraman 38:37

Yeah, I do have one for focus. I love to do the one for focus with an essential oil if you have that. If not, that's okay. So you can still rub your palms together. If you're listening and I like to put a drop of an essential oil, something that's just gonna say calming, but actually something, this is more for focus. And so something that's a little bit more mentally stimulating.

It could be a tree oil, like, you know, frankincense or spruce. It could be something uplifting like a citrus like an orange or a grapefruit. Some of them is going to kind of get you a little bit into your mental space. You know, when you have brain fog or just you've got a lot of things you want to focus on. It's a really nice one to do.

So placing a drop of essential oil or rolling a drop of an essential oil in your hands if you want to. And just cupping your hands over your notes. Not touching your nose. We're just copying it, closing your eyes. And just taking that nice inhale 1-2-3 And you can use a visualization if you want to have anything that is calming for you, anything that feels uplifting for you. But natural breathing of inhaling for a couple

of seconds and just exhaling and I do this when I want to shift my mood as well too. If I'm just kind of, you know, having a day where I'm feeling off, or something has happened in my day, and I need to shift back to what I was working on.

This is a wonderful practice that I did with the first mom that I talked about who had the young children around her and wanting to focus on work and couldn't do that. This is a great one to do with, with headphones or noise-canceling headphones. I think parents should probably come with some noise-canceling headphones. I think they can use that or earplugs when they need.

Christy Keating

Yes, yes.

Aparna Ventkataraman

Even children, you know, can do it too. I mean, for homework and other things, too. But it is, you know, a lot of parents do come to me, and they do, they are dealing with focus issues, ADHD neurodivergent, as well, too. And I think that in this time of year, especially as we're going in, I'm getting through the school year over here in the northern hemisphere, I think just having these quick things that we can use as well to connect to like, Okay, this is what's going on, for me, this is how I can be most productive is really nice.

Christy Keating 41:06

I love that because I'll sit down at my desk. And it is difficult to stay focused, especially in this day and age where, you know, you've got emails over here, you know, other notifications popping up here. And then you know, somebody walks by the house and the dog barks and you've got all of these things going on. And then you know, a child knocks on the door and wants to come in or whatever it might be, I could see this one being really handy.

I could also see my teenager, using this one with the essential oil to help her focus on you know, getting done what needs to get done so she can move on with her day. I love that we're coming to the end of our time together, you had mentioned the body scan, I want to just give you a minute to sort of describe for folks that is and then we'll make sure people know where they can find you.

Aparna Ventkataraman 41:57

Sure, so yeah, body scan is a wonderful thing that will help you from head to your toes. I love to do this one if I'm needing some really deep sleep. And sleep is, sleep is a big thing that I work with maybe eighty percent of my clients on.

How can I have longer sleep and deeper sleep as well as to feel rested?

Many of them are going through sometimes, you know hormonal things or health issues or whatnot, like I had mentioned, but it's just a nice way to do this. And also like you know, teaching your partner how to do this and want your child to have a bedtime routine too. You can, we can create a song together and things like that to make it easier at that time.

But really just you know, starting from the top of your head and just sitting in a comfortable position. I like to place my hands on my knees, you can place on the ground or anywhere that feels comfortable for you.

I like to place them face down on my knees and just noticing the ways that you can soften and your breathing can be natural but just softening, you know the top of your head. Forehead, the temples, the jaw line, the tongue and the mouth which tend to tense up and the throat. Letting your shoulders relax and drop your fingers and arms relax. In your chest. You feel everything kind of slowly melt downwards your stomach a little bit. Your hips, thighs and knees are calf muscles, your ankles and each of your toes.

And, listener, this is definitely one that you can do when you want to deeply relax that was deeply relaxing for me. I don't know about you, Christy will probably take a nap at some point later. But that's when you can do it's an essential oil as well.

Just very quickly with oils I love to, you know, offer a free wellness console on my website. But I love to just share the practice of the back of the neck and the bottoms of the feet are great ways to just help you deeply relax with a drop of an oil or less to just massage it into there when you just really need that relaxation too. It's great for travel as well. I did that a lot on my travels recently.

Christy Keating 44:35

I mean, I don't know very many people that wouldn't benefit from deeper sleep, longer sleep. I'm certainly one of those people that could stand asleep a little bit. Well, I could certainly go to bed earlier and you know sleep more deeply while I am asleep.

So I'm you know I'm familiar with the idea of the body scan, but it's not something that I've made into a practice so maybe something I work on doing.

Aparna, I'm so grateful to you for sharing not just sort of the history of this, or the benefits of it, but really diving into and sharing with everybody a couple of pretty quick and easy practices that they can use for, you know, as you said, for managing anger or frustration for managing focus or a needed mood shift, and then for relaxation.

We will put all of the ways you're, I know, you've got a Facebook page and your website and everything, we will put that in the show notes for folks, but you also have a free self care and priorities chart that you are offering, folks, where can they get that?

Aparna Ventkataraman 45:38

This is, if you go to beautyinparenting.com, it is at the top of the page there to download that free chart. This is a purple chart I created two years ago that has basically ways that you can identify your priorities with your, you know, things like chores and your to-do list and your like school tasks and self care time. And you can really schedule, and more self care time and also celebrate some weekly wins with your family as well too. Or for yourself. So this is just a nice way to, you know, even just think more about your self care and ways that you want to show up for yourself more.

Christy Keating 46:14

I love that. Thank you so much for that. And again, we'll make sure that all of those links, for anyone that you know, whose memory is bad. And in terms of remembering links, you'll be able to find all of those on my website that will link you right to Aparna's website.

Thank you so much for being here and sharing this with everybody today.

Aparna Ventkataraman 46:34

You're so welcome Christy, I really, I really appreciate being here.

And I hope everyone took away something that they could use.

Thank you.

Christy Keating 46:41

Thanks.

Oh, goodness, thank you so much for joining me podcast listeners. I'm so grateful week after week that you keep showing up and listening to the podcast. You know, this is a true labor of love for me and all the guests who join me and I hope today's conversation was helpful to you.

I hope it's something that you can try out with your children or on your own as you work through the season. And just life in general. If you found this conversation helpful, or one of the other episodes of the podcast, I'd be so grateful if you did two things for me.

First, if you would hop on to your favorite podcast platform, whether that's Apple podcasts, Amazon, Google Spotify, wherever it is, and drop a five star rating in there. And then secondly, if you would be

willing to share this with another parent or another person who you think would benefit from these conversations.

You know, the more the word spreads, the easier it is for me to continue doing the podcast. And so any help that you can provide and getting the word out there about this content is always appreciated, especially as you dive into this busy time of year.

I'm so grateful.

And I look forward to seeing you next week for another episode of The Heartful Parent Podcast.

See you then.

Cheers.