

What Is It & How Is It Useful?

Appropriately responding to intense, negative emotions can be a significant challenge for many children. One way to develop skills to effectively deal with these emotions is by utilizing the “Soles of The Feet” meditation, as it helps children to quickly calm down and resist the urge to act out in a physically or verbally aggressive manner. It is important to note, however, that anger should not be eliminated completely, as it does serve a useful purpose. It is common for angry feelings to arise in all of us, but we should try to remember that feeling an intense emotion does not mean we have to act on it.

The purpose of this exercise is to teach your child to shift their attention quickly from an aggressive interaction or trigger to a neutral grounding point in the body— the soles of the feet. This in turn has a calming effect on the body, and the attention is diverted from the negative stimuli. This intervention was initially designed for children with autism about ten years ago, and has been successfully replicated in other populations since.

How It Works

1. If you are standing, stand in a natural rather than an aggressive posture, with the soles of your feet flat on the floor. If you are sitting, sit comfortably with the soles of your feet flat on the floor.
2. Breathe naturally, and do nothing.
3. Cast your mind back to an incident that made you very angry. Stay with the anger.
4. You are feeling angry, and angry thoughts are flowing through your mind. Let them flow naturally, without restriction. Stay with the anger. Your body may show signs of anger (e.g., rapid breathing).
5. Now, shift all your attention to the soles of your feet.
6. Slowly, move your toes, feel your shoes covering your feet, feel the texture of your socks or hose, the curve of your arch, and the heels of your feet against the back of your shoes. If you do not have shoes on, feel the floor or carpet with the soles of your feet.
7. Keep breathing naturally and focus on the soles of your feet until you feel calm.
8. Practice this mindfulness exercise until you can use it wherever you are and whenever an incident occurs that may lead to you being verbally or physically aggressive.
9. Remember that once you are calm, you can walk away from the incident or situation with a smile on your face because you controlled your anger. Alternatively, if you need to, you can respond to the incident or situation with a calm and clear mind without verbal threats or physical aggression.

