



# A MOMENT OF SILENCE

A PARENTS GUIDE



MEANINGFUL  
MOMENT

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT...IN A LUNCH BOX

As a parent, you always make sure that your child has what to eat at school. If your child's school doesn't have a lunch program - or if the lunch program serves 'mystery meatloaf' too many times a month - you pack them a nutritious meal, a delicious snack, and a drink to go with it. You always pack it with love, and sometimes, if you are feeling generous and loving, you write a little love note on the back of the napkin and sneak it into the lunchbox. But what about food for thought? What big ideas do you send along with your child to unpack, think about, and reflect on in school?

While most would agree that the purpose of education is to provide children with all that they need to navigate life, rarely, if ever, do schools take a step back and provide students with perspectives on the big questions of life. Schools focus on preparing our children for the workforce and pack in the subjects to make sure our children are equipped with all the tools they need in order to succeed in whichever career path they choose to take. Discussions of a moral, existential, and religious nature are strictly kept out of the classroom, especially in public schools.

This is not by accident. America prides itself in its commitment to providing freedom of religion to all its citizens, even those in its educational system. The government is not allowed to impose beliefs and values on citizens, nor should they be allowed to. We live in a free society that respects the individual, and imposing a set of beliefs and values in our school system would detract from that freedom.

However, the issue still remains. Due to our commitment to liberty, our children are being starved of a healthy diet of morals, meaning, and ethics. Is there a way that we, as a society, can have our cake and eat it too? Can we preserve individual liberty, while making sure our children receive a 'nutritious' education, filled with depth and meaning and complete with values and morals? The answer is yes, and the simple solution is in the hands of both the school and you - the parent.

**“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason but no morals. ... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”**

—Martin Luther King Jr., speech at Morehouse College, 1948

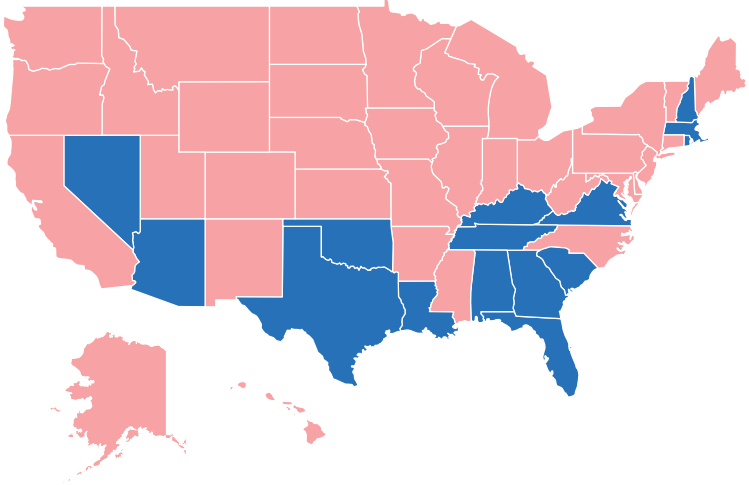


# THE BLANK CANVAS OF SILENCE

The Moment of Silence Project is a movement to encourage schools to incorporate a period of structured silence at the beginning of each school day. This way, students have the opportunity to enter their inner world and focus on what is meaningful to them before they start their day.

The campaign to incorporate a daily Moment Of Silence into the public schoolday has already been met with tremendous success. As of 2022, it is legal for schools to provide a Moment of Silence in practically every state, and is **mandated** in:

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Massachusetts
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- Oklahoma
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia



Florida recently joined the list of states mandating a moment of silence in public schools. The bill states, “a moment of silence [is] to be set aside for public school students during each school day. The bill directs the principal of each school to require first-period classroom teachers in all grades to set aside 1 to 2 minutes for a moment of silence.”

**The music is not in the notes,  
but in the silence between.**

-Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Silence, the saying goes, is golden. It has been shown to lower one's heart rate, relieve stress, induce calm, and can provide us with a much-needed opportunity to mentally disconnect from all the noise and busyness of modern life. But more than that, when we close our eyes in silence, we instantly encounter a blank canvas. What we decide to think about, what we decide to reflect on, and what we decide to condor up in our imagination, is entirely up to us. It is the perfect starting point for any internal experience, whether it be meditation, contemplation, prayer, or reflection. When your child starts off their day like this, the benefits are endless.

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## PARENTAL PAINT

The school does not have the authority to speak to your child with moral and religious authority, but you do. As a parent, you have the unique privilege, right, and responsibility to impart your values and beliefs onto your children. It doesn't really matter what you believe in. Your right to educate your child is almost always in your purview.

**“The mind is not a vessel  
to be filled, but a fire to be  
kindled.”**

- Plutarch

If the silent moment at the beginning of the school day is a blank canvas, then your guidance serves as the paint. As a parent, you have the ability to provide your child with inspiration that they can use to paint strokes of meaning in their mind. You have the capability to share with your child the rich and colorful ideas that provide you with purpose and depth. You can share your perspectives on the big questions of life.



the words of the Florida bill “[This] bill prohibits a teacher from making suggestions about the nature of a student's reflection during the moment of silence. Instead, teachers must encourage parents to discuss the moment of silence with their children and to make suggestions to their children about how they

should use this time.” In this arrangement, you, the parent, provide the content; the food for thought; the paint. While the school provides the opportunity; the time; the blank canvas. With all the tools in place, your child is free to develop their own inner world and character. By starting their day with a moment of silence guided by your inspiration, they have the opportunity to consistently reflect on their personal beliefs and fill the schoolday with depth, purpose and meaning.

# MAKE A MOMENT OF SILENCE PLAN WITH YOUR CHILD

Whenever you feel the time is right, have a talk with your child about what you believe they should think about during the moment of silence at the beginning of the schoolday. While it is entirely up to you how to have this conversation, here are some suggestions for how to have a meaningful talk:

**TEACH THEM TO MEDITATE:** Meditation holds incredible value for mental health! Encourage your child to spend the moment of silence clearing their mind and focusing on the sensation of breathing. Teach them that its important to embrace silence, calm, and quiet. Train them to realize that they are not their thoughts. Encourage them to use the moment of silence to practice this vital exercise.

**SHARE THE VALUES YOU BELIEVE IN:**

Whatever your values may be, its important that you communicate them to your child. Ask them to spend the moment of silence thinking about the importance of kindness, integrity, honesty, or whatever else you think is an important value. Encourage them to use the moment of silence to think about how they can incorporate the value you spoke about into their daily lives.

**SHARE THE FAITH YOU BELIEVE IN:** There is a good chance that you possess a faith in a Higher Power. If you do, the moment of silence is a perfect opportunity for your child to start their day with a prayer. You can teach your child a central prayer or affirmation of your faith, that they can memorize and reflect on during this time. Alternatively, you can point out to them that their actions matter in the eyes of this Higher Power, or how this Creator cares about and guides them.

**"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."**

-Anne Frank

**"The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice."**

- Peggy O'Mara



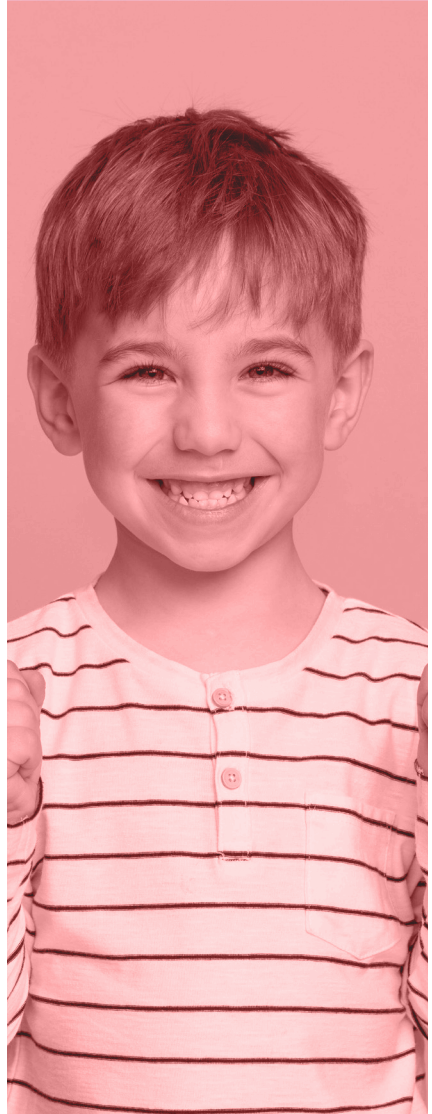


**LET YOUR CHILD LEAD:** Start the other way around. Encourage your child to ask you the 'big questions' of life, and start the conversation on their terms. You can ask them what they believe in and work with them to develop and finetune those beliefs. Challenge them with questions that they can ponder during the moment of silence.

**TALK ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND THEM:** Children these days consume media in ways like never before. Current events - from war to celebrity breakups - are constantly blaring wherever they turn. Use a current news story as an opportunity to teach your child about your values, your faith, or your convictions. Ask them to use the moment of silence to think of their own lessons that they can learn from the story.

**INSPIRE THEM TO HAVE GRATITUDE:** Almost everyone can agree that gratitude is a virtue. It inspires generosity, content, and joy. Challenge your child to spend the moment of silence thinking about one thing they are grateful for. Going one step further, encourage them to chanel that gratitude in to generosity towards those who have less than themselves.

Whatever you decide to discuss, it is most important to follow up with them. Randomly ask your child what they thought about during that days moment of silence, or give them a new idea to think about. Maybe even set a designated time once a week, or once a month, where you will discuss these ideas.



# GET INVOLVED

While the first step is to talk to your child, it is by far the last. The Moment of Silence Movement really is a grassroots movement, and really needs people like you to move it forward. If you would like to go even further, here are some ways to do that:

**TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS:** Next time you talk to your fellow parents, whether they be friends, co-workers, gym partners, or coffee buddies, talk to them about the Moment of Silence Movement, and how you started implementing it with your own child. They will love to hear about it!

**POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA:** You can influence your friends to talk to their kids about a moment of silence by posting on social media and pointing out that you just had a **#SilenceTalk** with your child.

**TALK TO YOUR SCHOOL:** While the Moment of Silence is mandated by several states, that doesn't necessarily mean that schools implement them properly. Ask your child about how the Moment of Silence is implemented in school. If you aren't satisfied by what you are hearing, reach out to your child's school. School's will be more than happy to implement the system once they see that it is something that matters to parents.

**TALK TO US:** We would love to hear from you! You can reach out to share with us your thoughts, stories, and ideas regarding the Moment of Silence Movement. We are constantly looking for more people to get involved in our work. You can reach out to us on [ameaningfulmoment.org](http://ameaningfulmoment.org)





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