



Creating Your Calm

Stress Management Tools to Enhance Well-being

It's especially important when there is so much change, to intentionally care for yourself by taking small moments throughout the day to regulate your nervous system. Here are a few ways that can assist you in finding a calm, conscious presence.

BREATHE!

Seriously often, throughout the day, intentionally. This helps your nervous system balance out. The "fight, flight or freeze has been turned on and duck taped. Breathing will activate the other part, our parasympathetic part of our nervous system that tells us, it's ok to relax, rest and digest. We want this! (Even after a pandemic – make it a lifestyle practice)

1. Belly breathe
 - Put a hand on your chest, and the other on your belly.
 - Breathe so that your BELLY expands out first and then your chest rises second.
 - Practice with slow inhale for 4-5 counts. Hold for 2, slowly exhale for 5-6 counts
2. Box breathing
 - 4-2-4 – Inhale for 4, hold for 2, exhale for 4, hold for 2 - repeat
 - Make your exhale longer than your inhale

GROUNDING:

1. Meditate – even for 2-3 minutes. Take a minute and go inward and notice yourself present. Focus on your breath. (Ap: Insight timer has good guided meditations)
2. Look for 5 beautiful things in your current environment and stay with each for 5 breaths
3. Breathe while washing your hands, splash water on your face, have a snack

N.E.S.T:

- **NUTRITION** – Aim to nourish your body and mind. / Hydrate with plenty of water, limit caffeine intake if anxious
- **EXERCISE** – Helps regulate the nervous system, aid in sleep, improve outlook and mood
- **SLEEP** – Aim for regular sleep wake cycle, journal an hour before bed to empty thoughts. Set an intention to reflect on gratitude prior to sleeping. What went well today?
- **TIME:** Identify what's important to you, prioritize, organize by priority, allow flexibility for setbacks.

NAME IT

What is bothering you, concerning you – give it a name, a label. "I'm feeling... *overwhelmed, fearful, anxious* helpless, angry, sad ..." When we name and own hard things it gives us power.

1. Notice feelings, sensations. You must feel it, to heal it.
2. Normalize what you're going through
3. Put it into perspective –
 - a. This is not permanent
 - b. You might look back and say...
4. During this time, we have a tendency to armor up and move away from being ourselves
 - a. You'll feel less weird when you stay in your values. You're doing your best, and that's enough.
5. Reality check expectations
 - a. For you and everyone around you

- b. Speak the truth - This may stink for awhile
- c. Expectations are just resentment waiting to happen

JOURNAL

1. Gratitude journaling – might seem hard, but even in the midst of this pandemic or election result, there are things to notice that are beautiful and what we can be grateful for.
2. Purge thoughts on paper, observe and do nothing with thoughts (mindful observation with compassion). Watch them pass by.
3. Document your experience – you are a part of history!

Be your own BFF

1. Meet your own needs – do you need a moment, a hug, a meal, some friendship?
2. Pay attention to your self-talk, make it encouraging.
3. Get lost in your interests: not just Netflix – dive deeper into your studies, read, explore, learn – GROW!
4. Find your Funny – a TV show, comedy, etc. Laughter is good medicine!
5. Validate your pain, grief & loss. Its real and you're allowed to have it. Don't compare who has it worse. The worst loss is always your loss.
6. Bypass on self-judgment & judgment of others. It creates disconnection.

FILTER – Election Talk

1. Limit exposure to on-going news and social media feeds. Stay informed, take note of your feelings but carve plenty of time for you and your interests.

Other Things

1. Be with people who uplift you
2. Help others in whatever way is appropriate to you
3. Reach out to others for support – its ok to ask for help
4. Be ok trading off helping others, and letting others help you. Collectively we can get through this. Exchange bearing witness to one another's struggle.
5. Connect with your spirituality or religion if appropriate for you (read, meditate, pray, attend online services)
6. Reach out to a therapist if needed (most transitioned to telehealth).
 - Visit www.psychologytoday.com to search for therapists in your community by insurance and many other filtering tools.

Remember -Be kind to yourself.
 -You don't have to have it all figured out to move forward.

May you be safe.
May you be free from harm.
May you be connected.
May you be encouraged.
May you be well.

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(Created by Christine Zes, LMFT #110347-Some excerpts taken from the work of

Brene Brown, Ph.D. / David Kessler, Finding Meaning, the 6th stage of Grief)