

Mindfulness as Medicine: Practical Strategies for Stressful Times

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Mindful Practices for Your Daily Life

Starting the day with calm and clarity

- When you wake, pause, breathe. Check in with your body and mood. Pay attention in a friendly, kind, nonjudging manner.
- Reflect on 3 things you are grateful for.
- Reflect on your intention. What is a meaningful to you? What really matters?

Morning Routine

- Take time for 5 – 30 minutes of mindful breathing
- Take seconds to savor. The presence of a family member, the smell of morning coffee brewing, the view out a window. Briefly pay attention and appreciate a small pleasure.
- Avoid morning news. Instead, start the day listening to the music you like or to silence.
- Give yourself moments of mindfulness in the shower. Savor the pleasurable sensation of the warm water washing over your body.
- If there is someone in your household you say good-bye to as you leave, practice a mindful hug good-bye. Be fully present in your body. Luxuriate in the sensory experience of holding this loved one in your arms. Become aware of your breath and take in the full experience of the moment.

Transition from Home to Work

- Practice mindful driving, walking, or traveling on a bus or train. Breathe. Bring awareness to your present moment experience.
- Avoid looking at your phone when you walk. Instead, let your mind rest with the present moment miracle of walking.
- If driving or traveling on a bus or train, listen to calming music or something inspiring.

Mindfulness at Work

- As you walk into your facility, reflect on your purpose. What motivates you? Why do you do this work?
- Remember how connected you are with your immediate colleagues and/or colleagues around the country. Savor the experience of being in this together. Let yourself both receive and offer the experience of connection and support.
- Accept administrative circumstances that are not in your power to control or change.
- Accept that life includes great difficulties and suffering and make peace with the circumstances and suffering of your patients that are not in your power to relieve. Never underestimate the power of your kind, compassionate attention to bring comfort.
- Bring mindful awareness to your breath and body throughout your day.
 - Breathe diaphragmatically.

- When you are with a patient who is highly distressed, let your awareness rest 20 – 50% with your breath while the rest of your attention is with your patient. Meet your reaction to the patient with acceptance and friendliness. Remember the power of reflective listening in these circumstances.
- Practice mindful listening throughout your day with patients. Experiment with the balance between *being* and *doing* with your patients.
- Be fully present with greetings and good-byes. The feeling of connection with patients can energize us. Savor this connection when meeting or saying good-bye to a patient.
- Practice mindful hand washing. Let go of the to-do list and your work demands. Pay attention to your breath, the warm water on your hands. Release any tension from your body that can easily be released. Say a kind word to yourself.
- Talk to yourself as you would a good friend. This is a powerful, wise and skillful means to reduce your stress. Be on your side and not your case.
- Take a compassion break.
 - When you feel yourself getting stressed, frustrated, upset, acknowledge what is happening.
 - Accept yourself right where you are and how you feel. Avoid struggling or judging yourself or others.
 - Breathe deeply with a kind, warm-hearted attitude.
 - Acknowledge “This is a difficult situation for me.” “I am just tired from having so many new patients on my schedule.” “I am feeling overwhelmed by my paperwork right now.” “I’m losing it.”
 - Meet yourself with acceptance and compassion.
 - Imagine a loving friend or family member at your side. What would he or she say to you? Take these words to heart.
- Bring mindful awareness to waiting.
- Practice mindful walking when and wherever possible, even if just for a few steps.
- Deliberately choose a routine activity and do it in a calm and relaxed manner
 - Charting
 - When you walk to get coffee or lunch
 - Going up or down stairs
 - Waiting for and riding in an elevator

Transition from Work to Home

- Review what went well during your day. Reflect on a success you had with a patient. Savor knowing you made a positive difference in someone’s life today.
- Practice mindful driving, walking, or traveling on a bus or train. Breathe. Bring awareness to your present moment experience
- Avoid looking at your phone when you walk. Instead, let your mind rest with the present moment miracle of walking.
- If driving or traveling on a bus or train listen to calming music or something inspiring.

Evening Routine

- If there is someone in your household you greet as you arrive home, practice a mindful hug. Be fully present in your body. Luxuriate in the sensory experience of holding this loved one in your arms. Become aware of your breath and take in the full experience of the moment.
- Take time for 5 – 30 minutes of mindful breathing
 - Reflect on what you are grateful for and your intention, engage in your meditation practice, close with dedicating the goodness of your efforts to benefit others
- Take seconds to savor. The presence of a family member, the smell of dinner cooking, the view out a window. Briefly pay attention and appreciate a small pleasure.
- Be deliberate about how much time you spend on the news.
- Bring mindfulness to eating dinner.
 - Turn off the TV, put the phone away, close the laptop.
 - Pay attention to the colors, textures, taste of your food. Bring mindful awareness to eating.
 - Eating is an affirmation of our inherent connectedness. Recognize how the food is a gift of the earth's ecosystem and the efforts of many people and how you can never be separate from this miraculous ecosystem and community.
- Create a calming bedtime routine.
 - Is there something that would bring you comfort or ease before bed?
 - 30 - 60 minutes before bed, turn off electronic devices.
 - Review small pleasures of your day. Generate the feeling of joy, appreciation, goodness as you recall the small pleasures of your day. Savor the experience.
 - When in bed, bring mindfulness to lying in bed. Relish the sensation of being totally supported. Feel your body sink into the bed. Let yourself be totally supported. Feel the coziness of your head against the pillow and the coverings over your body.
 - Bring your attention to your breath. As you breathe in, imagine breathing in calming qualities. As you breathe out, imagine these calming qualities circulating, just like oxygen, throughout your body. For example, you could breathe in peace, and on the outbreath, imagine peacefulness bathing every cell in your body.