



Staying in the Present Amongst the Chaos

What about my young child's development without access to school? What if something happens to my elderly parents, will I risk the health of my family to go care for them? What if a new restriction is given that keeps me from going outside? How will I meet my work expectations while caring for a toddler at the same time? What if my depression overtakes me and I'm not able to care for those who depend on me?

The list of "what-ifs" is never-ending. If we constantly focus on what the future could bring it could lead us to a place of panic, frustration and fatigue. The thing is, no one truly knows what the future will hold. What we do know is what is happening in the present, right here, right now.

Take a moment right now to pause. What are you doing? Where are you? What can you hear? What do you feel? Get in touch with the present moment and let yourself just pause. See how your body rises and falls as you breathe. Let yourself be present and mindful of yourself and your surroundings.

Being mindful allows us to focus on the here and now, while recognizing what *IS*, not what could be. We slow our bodies and minds down and get a break from the pandemic,

our social distancing, and the stressors that may be in the future. These breaks are essential to maintaining a state of wellness.

Below are some simple practices from the [Child Mind Institute](#) that can help bring more mindfulness to your day. Practice them alone or with family members.

- **Squeeze Muscles:** Start with one muscle in your body and squeeze it tight. Count to five and release. Notice how your body feels and the changes you experience. Try this on muscles throughout your body.
- **Belly Breathing:** Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. Take a breath in (expand like a balloon) and slowly breathe out (release the air from the balloon).

COVID-19: Compassion in Action

- **Mindful Eating:** Focus on the food you are eating. What smells do you notice? What does it feel like in your mouth? What flavors can you detect?
- **Meditation:** Sit in a comfortable position and find one item to focus on — your breath, a candle, a rainbow of light on the wall. As your mind wanders, let the thoughts pass like clouds in the sky and bring your mind back to the item you are focusing on.
- **Coloring:** Take time to draw something. Focus on the colors and shapes you are forming. How do the colors come together? What designs are you creating?
- **Listening to Music:** Give your full attention to the song, perhaps focusing just on one instrument or specific voice. See how these change over the course of the song.

Practicing mindfulness can be as simple as having our family share one thing we are grateful for before we eat or pausing to fully appreciate our morning coffee. Practicing mindfulness will help us learn how to tolerate the uncertainty of today's world, free our mind to more creatively solve current challenges, and leave us feeling more physically and mentally well. Being as present and mindful as possible will help us navigate this moment in time.

