

Mindfulness During COVID-19

Right now, we find ourselves in a moment which may be provoking anxiety. There may be thoughts about what we should have done to be better prepared - regrets. There are almost certainly concerns about what will happen next and what the future will look like.

It's true that this present moment may look different than life did even a week ago. It's also true that our worries about what could happen can motivate us to make wise decisions – wash our hands more often, avoid large gatherings, etc. But beyond that, worry and anxiety about all the possible “what ifs” are not helpful and result in us missing the moments that are happening right now and the peace that tends to come when we live in the present.

Since the present moments are filled with changes that can be unsettling, these mindfulness suggestions and resources are offered to help us maintain a sense of focus in the present.

Mindfulness Suggestions

- **Mindful handwashing.** Since we are all more aware of the importance of hand hygiene and may be washing our hands more frequently, those moments of taking action to protect yourself can also be a chance to refocus on “just this moment”.
As you wash your hands pay attention to:
 - *How does the water feel on your hands? Do you notice the scent of the soap?*
 - *Notice your hands working over and around each other, carefully attend to the sensations as the hands move together, the fingers, the palms, the thumbs.*
 - *Send some appreciation and gratitude to your hands, consider the work they do to take care of all your needs, make your food, earn your living*
 - *As you rinse off the soap, allow worries about the future to be “rinsed off” as well, clearing the mind to be focused on what’s happening right now.*
 - *And while drying, notice the sense of life and vitality in your own hands. Feeling some appreciation for this moment; giving yourself credit for doing all that you can, moment by moment, to stay healthy for yourself and those you care for.*
- **Start the day with a pause.** While still lying in bed, before you begin the day, check in with the breath, the body, and sounds. If the mind is already busy or anxious, acknowledge this, but then take some time to really ground yourself by focusing on sensations in the body. Even 1-2 minutes of “check in” with yourself in this way can allow you to begin the day more centered and in touch with the current moment.
- **Practice “STOP” when you notice you are getting anxious to reduce reactivity:**
 - **S Stop what you are doing** and take a moment to be still
 - **T Take a few deep breaths** and just be aware that you are breathing
 - **O Observe any sensations in the body -- thoughts in the mind -- emotions in the heart**
 - **P Pause to come back to the breath** and then **Proceed with your day** with greater calm
- **Call or FaceTime a Friend and practice Mindful Listening.** Rather than texting, consider calling or using FaceTime to connect with a friend or loved one. Really listen to their voice, see their face and feel the connection that comes from being fully present with another person...even virtually!

- **Download (and use) a Mindfulness App** (a few suggestions – initially free/in app purchases)
 - Insight Timer
 - Stop, Breathe & Think
 - Calm
 - Headspace
- **Read a Book on Mindfulness** (a few suggestions)
 - 10 Percent Happier by Dan Harris
 - Mindfulness for Beginners or Wherever You Go There You Are by Jon Kabat-Zinn
 - The Headspace Guide to Meditation and Mindfulness by Andy Puddicombe
 - The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety by John Forsyth
 - The Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Workbook by Bob Stahl

Mindfulness Ideas for Adults that can be shared with Children

- Take a walk outside noticing sounds, colors, etc. look for things you’ve “never noticed before” (this is a great activity to do with children)
- Pause to take three breaths to reduce stress and invite calm
- Eat one bite of breakfast or lunch paying close attention to what you’re eating (is it crunchy or soft, salty or sweet, etc.)
- Before dinner take a moment to go around the table and each person shares one thing they are grateful for or appreciate (avoid any judgement or criticism of what is said and trust this practice will likely become more meaningful to children and teens over time)
- Do some mindful stretching with a few simple yoga postures (videos for kids yoga available on YouTube)
- Before bed, name one thing that went well today, a pleasant moment or a time that felt happy (again, avoid judgement or criticism when you invite your child to engage in this – simply listen)
- Check out other mindfulness resources and ideas for children/teens at <https://mindup.org/>

For more information, visit www.intermountainmindfulness.org