

## Building a Mindfulness Practice How to Stay Calm with Life's Stresses

Life is loaded with stresses. How you handle them is what leads to a great job and life or one that you feel anxious, worried and overwhelmed. This is particularly present when part of your workday includes a reactionary or bully boss.

Though you can't control them, you can work to control your response to them. This is the purpose of mindfulness – of refocusing your thoughts so you calm the body, clear the mind and open your heart. From this place, you are able to better handles the stresses – even the bully boss. You can't always get rid of the stresses – but you can learn to manage how you feel and respond to them.

Here are two approaches to help you relax, stay calm and deal with what (and who) life sends.

Frequently meditation is at the heart of a mindfulness practice. But meditation isn't for everyone. So, if you have a very active mind and can't seem to get any real benefit from meditation, use the **Eyes Open Mindfulness Approach** below. If you want to try meditation or can quiet your mind, use the **Eyes Closed Mindfulness Approach** below. Both are effective – choose what works best for you.

### **EYES OPEN MINDFULNESS APPROACH**

1. **Stop.** Consciously interrupt your thought or your action. Make time. Get comfortable standing, sitting or lying down. Then,
2. **Breathe.** Taking a breath brings you right into this moment. Here are three breathing exercises you can do at any point in your day – try them to see which works the best for you.
  - a. Exercise 1 – [the 4-7-8 Breathing Method](#)
  - b. Exercise 2 – [the 7/11 Breathing Method](#)
  - c. Exercise 3 – [the Belly Breathing Method](#)Now that you have calmed yourself by breathing,
3. **Eyes open.** Observe what is going on in front of you. Don't judge it as good or bad, just observe it. Take note of things around you. Here are 3 ways to expand what you observe.
  - a. What are you seeing – say it out loud. I am looking at clouds. I am seeing a kitchen sink full of dishes. I am seeing kids doing schoolwork. I am seeing the television is on again.
  - b. Notice great details. The clouds have amazing colors. The dishes have been stacked and are soaking. All three kids are at the table focused on assignments. The television is tuned to CNN and they are talking about COVID.
  - c. What are sensing – say it out loud. I am feeling happy or stressed. I am feeling anxious. I am feeling loving. I am feeling respected or disrespected. Pay attention to what is inspiring what you are sensing. Sometimes it is imagined. Sometimes it is real. Again, don't judge it. Just notice it.Now that you are in touch with what is,
4. **Appreciate.** Take note that in this moment that are tough things but there are also great things. Direct your focus onto the great things. Appreciate it. Here is how to stay grateful. And by learning to appreciate, you change your moment. Appreciate that the clouds give you rain and a perpetual show. Appreciate that though there are dishes in the sink, there is food in the house and the family is healthy. Appreciate the moment of calm as the kids are quietly working on schoolwork. Appreciate that we can be informed by the television being on, but that you have the ability to turn it off. Once you find the things to appreciate,

5. **Smile.** Right. Smiling sends a signal to your brain to release the positive chemicals that help you be happy. And the more you smile, the more others do as well. You change the environment you are in, now more confident. Stay in this smiling moment for as long as you want. Then,
6. **Breathe.** Signal to yourself that you are done with your Get Present session. Use the breathing exercises. Notice that you feel lighter, happier and even more in control. You now see that you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think. You got this...
7. **Repeat.** Do it as often as you need to at any moment, at any time.

## **EYES CLOSED MINDFULNESS APPROACH (MEDITATION FRIENDLY)**

1. **Stop.** Consciously interrupt your thought or your action. Make time. Get comfortable sitting or lying down, then
2. **Breathe.** Taking a breath brings you right into this moment. Here are three breathing exercises you can do at any point in your day – try them to see which works the best for you.
  - a. Exercise 1 – [the 4-7-8 Breathing Method](#)
  - b. Exercise 2 – [the 7/11 Breathing Method](#)
  - c. Exercise 3 – [the Belly Breathing Method](#)

Now that you have calmed yourself by breathing,

3. **Eyes closed.** Use the darkness of your closed eyes to quiet your mind and slow down your breathing. Take a few moments, breathing in and out with your eyes closed, noticing what your body is sensing all around it. Get calm. Relax, then
4. **Visualize.** Get a picture in your mind of a peaceful place, a favorite place or a place in nature. Focus on that place. Sense it. Feel it. Hear it. Smell it. Let it take you out of where you. Spend some time here. If you have trouble focusing, then
5. **Say a mantra.** A mantra is a saying or a phrase that helps you focus around a feeling or way of being that matters to you. Repeat the mantra over and over in your mind or out loud. As you do, what you are saying becomes your focus. You help your brain tune in to what you are saying. Your powerful and supportive words help you find your inner strength, happiness, resilience or whatever else you use your mantra to help you consider. Here are mantras that may be helpful. Or, write your own.
  - a. I am aware, not afraid.
  - b. Life is good, I am strong.
  - c. I am brave, I am resilient, I got this.
  - d. I am loved, I am cared for, I care for others.
  - e. I am upbeat, positive and optimistic.
  - f. I am here to make the world a better place.

Stay in this moment as long as you want, then

6. **Breathe.** Signal to yourself that you are done with your Get Present session. Use the breathing exercises. Notice that you feel lighter, happier and even more in control. You now see that you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think. You got this...
7. **Repeat.** Do it as often as you need to at any moment, at any time.