

Whether you are new to mindfulness or a seasoned practitioner, mindfulness can help you through sudden, unexpected, unwelcome change. Try these tips below which have been organized for beginners and long-term practitioners.

For beginners:

1. Learn how to calm your nervous system - all it takes is a few deep breaths to take you out of panic mode. If you are a beginner, simply put one hand on your abdomen, and one on your heart, you'll know you are calming your nervous system when you can feel the hand on your abdomen rise up and down. Conversely shallow breathing that only uses the upper part of the chest will have the opposite reaction, keeping you in a state of fight, flight, or freeze. Practicing this breathing exercise for only three to five minutes, several times a day can be especially helpful during the first few days of a crisis.
2. Get control of your thoughts - The next step to using mindfulness in a crisis is to consciously take hold of your thoughts. In a crisis the tendency is to try to come up with a solution as soon as possible. Often we do not let the mind rest until the crisis has passed. This can be a waste of precious energy as the mind works like a hamster on a wheel reviewing the same story line over and over. **Try taking a break from your thoughts.** Using the same breathing exercise as above, watch your thoughts and **gently** tell yourself, "I am taking a break from thinking right now." The mind will rebel against this idea, but continue to gently bring your attention back to your breath. Know that this break will give you the ability to be a better problem solver.
3. Practice self-care - This may be a foreign concept to beginners, but by extending loving-kindness inward, you will be better able to carry it with you out into the world. **Try this simple exercise:** Using the same breathing technique outlined above say to yourself, "I breathe in peace, I breathe out love." Repeat this phrase, bringing your mind back to the breath if it wanders. You will feel a sense of connection to the universe and a trust in the order of things.

For more experienced practitioners:

1. Remember mindfulness! - Self-care is one of the first practices to go when we are faced with a crisis. Don't forget your mindfulness practice! As an experienced practitioner, you know the power of mindfulness even in small doses. If your schedule is disrupted and you don't have time for a longer formal practice, go back to the simple breathing technique at the top of the page. Try to practice it two or three times a day.
2. Lean on your sangha or find one - Practicing mindfulness on your own is wonderful, but practicing with a group is powerful. Now is the time to stay connected with your meditation community, even if this is only a community of two or three.
3. Beginner's mind - use this opportunity to go deeper into your practice by going back to the basics. This may not be a time to go on a two-week retreat if you are in the middle of major change, but you can go back the beginning of your meditation practice. What prompted you to start meditating in the first place? Taking an inventory of what you value about mindfulness and about life will remind you of what you hold dear, and will help you find your way back to balance.

We wish you twenty minutes of mindfulness every day!

for more tips to help you develop your mindfulness practice visit mindfulhub.com

