

MGH Institute of Health Professions
Greeting Gratitude & Cultivating Compassion: Intentional Self-Care
IHP Schwartz Rounds
April 2020

Some helpful tips for greeting gratitude, cultivating compassion, and intentionally choosing activities that bring balance, enhance health, and support self-care & compassion, along with stress-reduction during this time of change and uncertainty.

IHP – *Intentional Health Practices*

First, below, are some helpful apps, resources, and websites or classes that are being offered for free. If you haven't already, aside from breathing practices, eating well, exercising, and finding occupations and activities that enrich your time outside of work are helpful.

21 -day free series on **Hope**- I believe you can sign up whenever to access these helpful ideas on hope. I'm on day 16!

- https://chopracentermeditation.com/?utm_source=21-Day%20Meditation%20Experience%20-%20News&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=HUTR+Recruitment+-+%232a&utm_campaign=21-Day%20Meditation%20Experience%20-%20News2020328

Websites

1. https://www.theschwartzcenter.org/covid-19?utm_source=website&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=covid19
2. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/greater_good_guide_to_well_being_during_coronavirus
3. <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/3/18/21181644/coronavirus-covid-19-mindfulness-meditation-anxiety>
4. <https://kfor.com/health/coronavirus/10-apps-to-help-you-deal-with-stress-and-anxiety-during-covid-19-outbreak/>
5. <https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/>
6. <http://www.mindful.org>
7. <https://www.mindful.org/how-to-create-a-glitter-jar-for-kids/>
8. <https://www.mindful.org/mindful-kids-practice-coming-back-positive/>
9. <https://blissfulkids.com/>
10. <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/mindfulness-for-children>
11. <https://www.cosmickids.com/mindfulness-meditation-videos-kids/>
12. <https://www.stopbreathethink.com>

Apps (some are for children):

1. Calm
2. Headspace
3. Stop, Breathe, and Think
4. Breathing Bubbles

5. Smiling Mind
6. Calm Counter
7. emotionary
8. Take a Chill
9. Chill Outz
10. Super Stretch Yoga
11. Relax Melodies

What's going on within the IHP MGH/ PHS communities currently?

IHP Self-Care Challenge - Daily

From Kerry Kearns, Office of Student and Alumni Services and Amanda Tarbet, Office of the Provost

Bring out your inner yogi and take a stretch break. This can be done easily at your desk, your living room, or outside in the fresh air (making sure to still safely social distance, of course). Show us your moves on Instagram @IHPStudentLife, use #IHPSelfCare, or [email Student Life](#).

PHS:

NEW Resources for Employee Mental Health and Well-being

Our Behavioral Health teams from across the system have been working together to develop several mental health and well-being resources to help support employees during this time. We want to let you know about several new programs that are available, including one specifically for frontline providers. We have also created a [Mental Health and Well-being section](#) on the COVID-19 page on Partners Pulse.

- **Clinician Resiliency Groups:** This program provides resiliency skills building for frontline physicians and nurses. The one-hour sessions are designed to help those providing direct care to patients. [Learn more and sign up here](#).
- **Self-Service Apps:** These apps, which have been clinically vetted by Partners mental health experts, are available for employees and offer a range support.
 - **The Headspace app**, available via iOS, Android or desktop, offers sets of guided meditations aimed at tackling problems related to anxiety, sleeplessness and relationships.
 - **The Evermind app**, available via iOS and Android, can help you build resilience and handle stress using cognitive behavioral therapy techniques. In the app, you can access guided programs on improving sleep, disconnecting, challenging negative thought patterns and more.
 - **The Care Online: iCBT program**, available via iOS, Android or desktop, is an online self-directed cognitive behavioral therapy course offered to patients with anxiety or low-to-moderate levels of depression to help them self-manage symptoms of these conditions.

To learn more or sign up for these programs, [visit the self-service resource section](#).

Gratitude

Focus on the good that IS all around, daily. Pick a time with yourself, the people with whom you are living, and/ or loved ones via phone or online, and intentionally focus on the experiences and moments that are good in this new normal. You can journal at a set time during the day, or tune in on a walk/hike outside, or notice new patterns in your household that have emerged or strengthened that bring you the realization that there is a lot to be grateful for. Pay attention, with intention. Also strengthen this mind muscle during friend, family or collegial conversations. Pay attention on the phone or online to what is good about the person and relationship that you have with them.

For example, I've found I'm noticing the signs of spring in my neighborhood, and cultivating life through an herb garden and flower planter. Every day I see it in the sun and am grateful for the beauty it brings my entryway. I'm grateful for the new meals I've been able to cook with new recipes. I'm grateful for the time spent with my husband. I'm grateful for FaceTime calls from my nieces who are 3 and 6, who are fun, silly, and bring cuteness galore to my world.

Gratitude Practices:

- Journal nightly about the tiny moments of which you are thankful.
- Create a gratitude tree in your home, placing “leaves” of thankful thoughts to create a composite of gratitude. Watch it grow!
- At mealtime, an expression of gratitude for something that was good during the day. (Also known as grace in some religious / cultural practices).
- Gratitude walks, hikes, bicycles, at a safe distance, in your neighborhood.
- Look at the heroes in the news. Be mindful of what type of news/media you absorb, and search out the good stories, tweets, and Instagram posts over all the difficult news.

Building Gratitude in Health Care as a Health Care worker / with Colleagues

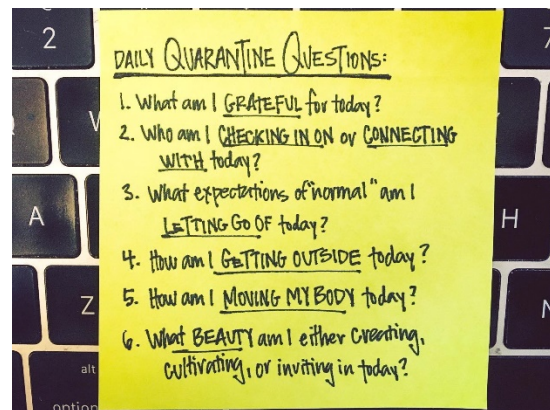
- Foster Connection in small moments of eye contact, recognition
- Gratitude – help each other shift outlook before the start of the shift; celebrate ALL patient/client victories and practice random acts of kindness toward each other
- Empathy – All of us are going through a hard time. In the midst of your own hardships, staying empathic to what makes your colleagues work/day/home life tough in this situation will make the days a team effort.
- Meaning and Purpose – Connect with your meaning the purpose that started you on this healthcare /caregiver journey.
- Self-Compassion – practice kindness with the voice in your head. This is HARD, and not your normal. There will be times you need to vent, cry, be woeful, and times that you can pick yourself up and get back to work. Stay kind throughout! *You are doing enough.*
- *You are enough.*

Universal Prescription – *Structure in Chaos* (Elizabeth Markle, Open Source for Wellness)

1. Move
2. Nourish
3. Connect
4. Be

Daily Questions to ask Yourself or with which to support your HC colleagues

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_daily_questions_to_ask_yourself_in_quarantine



A Breath Counting Practice for Stress (mindful.org)

This is a counting practice, for those times when we're feeling really unsettled and really off.

1. **Find yourself a comfortable posture** (or you can do this standing). Pick a place you can be still for just a moment and then lower your gaze. Shut your eyes if that's appropriate and you're comfortable with it.
2. **Begin to recognize that there is a physical motion with each breath.** Tune in to that sensation of breathing, not because we're trying to do anything with our breath. But just because it's always there, so it can be an anchor for your awareness. Your thoughts will continue. Recognize that. It's okay.
3. **Come back to your breath each time you're aware of that distraction.** And back to the next breath again. Breathing in and breathing out.
4. **You can count your breaths.** Counting up to seven breaths. And then if you find your way to seven, starting over with one.
 - So, breathing in, one. Breathing out, one.
 - Breathing in, two. And breathing out, two.
 - And if you lose touch with the counting, that's fine, too, starting over wherever you last remember.
5. **For a few moments of practice, there is nothing to do, nothing to fix.** And letting go of any sense of striving or trying to make yourself feel any different than you do.
 - Just breathing in and breathing out.
6. **And when you're ready opening your eyes,** bring your awareness back to the moment.

A practice like that isn't meant to make you feel anything in particular. It's an opportunity to carve out a few moments for yourself, to bring yourself back from all the different places your mind has gone through the day. And hopefully, a practice like that can become something intuitive, something available to you anytime you need it. As you practice, it might be something you can do for a longer stretch of time once a day.

Certainly, the bigger premise with mindfulness practice is that by practicing regularly over time, it becomes part of our life. We develop almost a trait where we can fall back on it in moments of stress. But that practice is also something you can use multiple times in the day, no matter how busy your day is. Taking seven breaths, or you can do 15 breaths, can be a way to catch a moment and bring your awareness back.

Let your brain settle for just a minute. Give yourself a little rest. Even during the busiest day, fifteen breaths usually takes about a minute.

Six Ways to Manage Zoom so we Can Find Balance and Connection

Steven Hickman, Psy.D., executive director of the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion

Here's what I am going to try starting today (and suggest you consider) when my new reality resumes anew and I find myself on various calls with all manner of people looking to connect in various ways:

- **Take a few moments before clicking "Start" to settle and ground your attention.** Take a few breaths, feel your body on the chair, notice whatever is present in your mind and allow yourself to [arrive fully to the moment at hand](#). If you're feeling unsettled or preoccupied, you might place your hand on your heart in a supportive and comforting way as if to say "I'm here for you. It's ok to feel how you feel at this moment."
- **Take the time to truly greet whoever is in the room with your full attention**—offer your attention to each face that appears (if the group is not too big). Give yourself a moment for each person to make an impression on you, and "take in the good" as Rick Hanson would say. Give yourself an opportunity to feel what it feels like to be in the presence of another.
- **Choose "speaker view."** In Zoom, one can choose Speaker View or Gallery View, and I think I prefer Speaker View so that the one person who is speaking has more of my attention and the others are more peripheral. This seems to be more like sitting around a conference table where we are aware of everyone there but we direct our attention primarily to whoever is speaking. Tracking an array of 24 (or more) faces on the screen can be a challenge!
- **Resist the urge to multitask.** I sheepishly have to admit that I am a multi-tasker on Zoom many times and have been known to read and fire off several emails while also sitting in a meeting. This has got to stop. Not because I need to hyper-focus on just what is happening in the meeting, but because I can't be putting additional effort into attending to anything else. If anything, I need to let go of a bit of "efforting" and let my attention rest more lightly and lovingly on what (and who) is before me. I can periodically ease up my focus and look out the window behind my screen, or at the knick-knacks on the shelves in my office, or just soften my gaze to take in the array of

faces on my screen (to *see* without *looking*) without having to analyze or scrutinize any of them.

- **Try to take measured breaks between sessions.** As a clinical psychologist, when I used to do psychotherapy, I was fairly good at enforcing a 50-minute hour. That gave me ten minutes to write notes, run to the restroom, get a drink of water and generally settle and decompress. Quite often my Zoom meetings run back to back and I find that sometimes my Zoom room becomes a kind of random encounter anteroom where people from various aspects of my personal and professional life bump into each other for a few moments on their way in and out of a meeting with me. Fun as these moments are sometimes, I need to take better care of my precious attention and energy, and take a [refreshing pause](#). Why not give that a try yourself?
- **And finally, remind yourself periodically that this is a new place** between presence and absence that we will have to learn how to accommodate as we go forward into the uncertain future. It is both better than absence (imagine life in a pandemic without FaceTime, Zoom, Skype and the rest) and not quite as resonant as presence (do we know if mirror neurons still function over the internet like they do in person?). Let's see if we can simultaneously refrain from high expectations without dismissing the clear benefits of online communication.

And let's not forget those benefits. We can have important meetings while only dressed appropriately from the waist up. Our beloved pets can be perched lovingly in our laps while we review our colleague's budget projections. If we are the host of the meeting we can "accidentally" mute or remove a colleague in a way that would never be socially appropriate in person. We can even feign a poor connection if the meeting is getting so deadly dull that we are in danger of nodding off and striking our heads on our keyboards.

But on a serious note, let's not dismiss this amazing technology, but instead learn to find a way to assimilate it into a full spectrum of interpersonal experiences that our new lives include. Let's be present to absence, without becoming absent to presence. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it to develop this new capacity.

STOP Practice (Elisha Goldstein, PhD)

S

To begin, the "S" stands simply for **stop**. Literally. Just stop what you're doing, whether it is typing or rushing out the door. Give yourself a moment to come to rest, pause, and collect yourself.

T

The "T" stands for **take** a conscious breath. Now that you've paused, take a deeper breath, or two, allowing yourself to feel the expansion of the belly as you breathe deeply. Notice the sensations of being here, now. As you do so, it may help to bring your attention to the sensations of your feet meeting the floor. Feel the support of the ground and of your own relaxing breath as you do so.

O

The “O,” stands for **observe** what’s arising in you, including any thoughts, emotions, or bodily sensations (such as tension, butterflies, tightness in the jawline). Broaden your awareness to take in the circumstances. Notice how you can be in this situation without being ruled by it. For added support, offer self-compassion as you release tension and stressful thoughts. As you calm down, open to the choices you have in terms of how best to move forward from here.

P

Finally, the “P” reminds you to simply **proceed** with intentionality, taking the next step in your day from this place of strength, wisdom, and presence.

Equanimity Practice: Steadying Yourself (mindful.org)

Take a few moments to steady your attention on your breath, anchoring and stabilizing your attention. Take up a posture that communicates a sense of wakefulness and dignity.

Once your attention is stable, bring to mind a mountain you know well, its base, its flanks, the way it rises up from its solid base.

Have a sense of yourself as a mountain, with a solid base where you’re in contact with the ground, your body stable, and your head supported on the top of your body. Like a mountain through each day, through each of the seasons, through the years, having a sense of yourself sitting with dignity and wakefulness, your breath as your anchor, as experiences come and go, the mountain steady through it all.

As weather patterns move through, so your body and mind are steady, like a mountain as thoughts, images, bodily sensations, impulses, and emotions come and go. Open to the sense of the steadiness and enduring nature of the mountain.

During the day, bring awareness to moments of the day, as best you can, meeting everything with a recognition and allowing that is poised and balanced. Bring this same attitude, as best you can, to experiences, whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Recognize, allow, and embrace caring for each moment of your waking day.