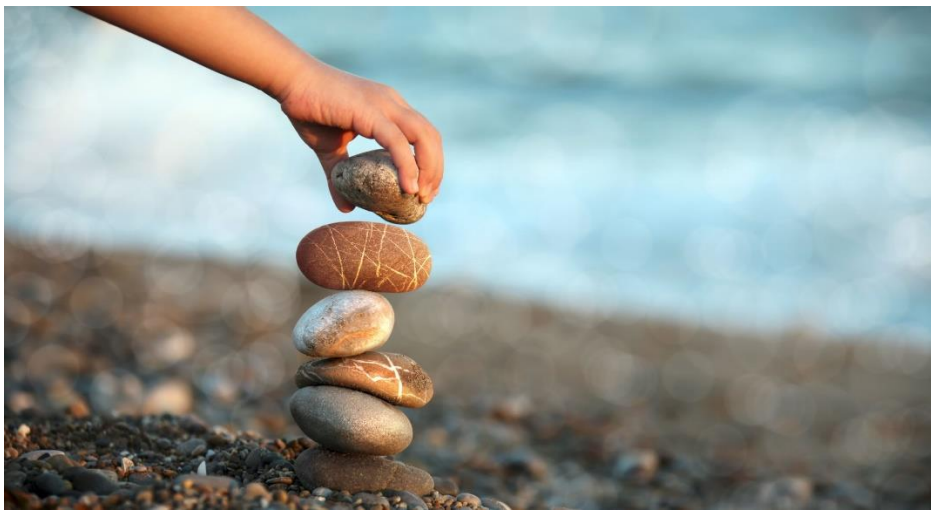


A book of meditation and relaxation



Compiled by Kate Dunn from items shared
through online events

March – July 2020



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These meditations, poems and stories have been shared during the coronavirus crisis in 2020 during the sessions entitled: "Coronavirus: Considering our Responses and Responsibilities". They have opened and closed the discussions and helped those attending to ground themselves and to feel a sense of togetherness and belonging with a group of practitioners who have offered support to each other and who have set out to share and reflect on their dilemmas and challenges with compassion and care.

An opening poem:

Forget about enlightenment

Sit down wherever you are
And listen to the wind singing in your veins.
Feel the love, the longing, the fear in your bones.
Open your heart to who you are, right now,
Not who you would like to be,
Not the saint you are striving to become,
But the being right here before you, inside you, around you.
All of you is holy.
You are already more and less
Than whatever you can know.
Breathe out,
Touch in,
Let go.

By: John Welwood

The Three Minute Breathing Space

This three minute breathing space meditation provides a way in the here and now to step out of automatic pilot mode when dealing with difficulties to reconnect with the present moment.

1. AWARENESS

The meditation starts by bringing yourself into the present moment through deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, it is helpful to close your eyes. These questions are valuable in helping to focus on the experience:

"What is my experience right now ... in thoughts ... in feelings... and in bodily sensations?"

It is useful to acknowledge and register the experience, even if it is unwanted. Sometimes putting your experience into words can help, for example saying to yourself, "There are self-critical thoughts here" or, "I can feel tension in my neck and shoulders".

2. GATHERING

The next stage is a gentle re-direction of the full attention to breathing, to each in breath and to each out breath as they follow, one after the other. It is sometimes helpful to count the breaths from 1 to 10 and back down again, or just to say to yourself, "Breathing in. Breathing out".

The breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and to help tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

3. EXPANDING

The final part of the meditation is expanding the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression, and finally a sense of the space around you. It is useful in this meditation to take the breath to any feeling of discomfort, tension or resistance, breathing in to those sensations and, while breathing out, and then to allow a sense of letting go, of softening. You can also say to yourself, "It's okay to feel whatever I am feeling".

If possible it is valuable to keep this sense of awareness throughout the day so that, whenever you encounter a difficulty, you are able to hold it in the wider awareness rather than letting the mind battle with it.

A meditation for Gathering



So, just where we are sitting, we're going to pause for a moment. If you can, sit comfortably on your chair, perhaps holding your body erect and in a dignified posture, and feeling the feet on the floor, holding your hands loosely in your lap.

Take a few long deep breaths.
Just feel the movement of the breath collecting your attention.
And letting the breath resume in a natural rhythm.

Let your senses be awake so you're listening outwardly to the sounds around you.
Next, listening inwardly, so that you're listening to and feeling the body.
As you do, you may notice some places within your body that might want to let go a little bit right now.

Maybe there can be some loosening and softening in your shoulders? Just try a couple of shoulder rolls as you're sitting attending to this part of your body.

Maybe you can soften your hands?

And now relaxing down through the stomach?

You can feel the breath deep in the torso.

Become aware of sensations throughout your body.

Listening to and feeling the whole moment.

Gently bringing your attention to the area around the heart.

So you can feel the heart, whatever mood is here,

And also listening inwardly for whatever longing is here too...

Sensing your intention for being here this evening... for coming together in this group... to explore your experience and that of others, with compassion and curiosity.

And sensing now the quality of presence that's right here, right now.

Noticing the difference between right now and when you first arrived...

Maybe you notice a little more of that quality of hereness – you feel more awake to yourself and to the presence of our shared community.

Take a few more deep long breaths

And when you feel ready, open your eyes and gently allow yourself back into the room, ready to share your sense of yourself with others.

A MINDFUL BREATHING SCRIPT

Start by settling into a comfortable position and allow your eyes to close or keep them open with a softened gaze. Begin by taking several long slow deep breaths breathing in fully and exhaling fully. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Allow your breath to find its own natural rhythm. Bring your full attention to noticing each in-breath as it enters your nostrils, travels down to your lungs and causes your tummy to expand. And notice each out-breath as your tummy contracts and air moves up through the lungs back up through the nostrils or mouth. Invite your full attention to flow with your breath.

Notice how the in-breath is different from the out-breath. You may experience the air as cool as it enters your nose and warm as you exhale. As you turn more deeply inward, begin to let go of noises around you. If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice them and then bring your intention back to your breath. Simply breathe as you breathe, not striving to change anything about your breath. Don't try to control your breath in any way. Observe and accept your experience in this moment without judgment, paying attention to each inhale and exhale.

If your mind wanders to thoughts, plans or problems, simply notice your mind wandering. Watch the thought as it enters your awareness as neutrally as possible. Then practice letting go of the thought as if it were a leaf floating down a stream. In your mind, place each thought that arises on a leaf and watch as it floats out of sight down the stream. Then bring your attention back to your breath. Your breath is an anchor you can return to over and over again when you become distracted by thoughts.

Breathe in and breathe out. Follow the air all the way in and all the way out. Mindfully be present moment by moment with your breath. If your mind wanders away from your breath, just notice without judging it – whatever hooks your attention let it go and gently guide your awareness back to your breathing. Gently place each thought on a leaf and watching it float on down the stream.

And as this short meditation comes to an end, slowly allow your attention to expand and notice your entire body and then beyond your body to the room you are in. When you're ready, open your eyes and come back fully alert and awake.



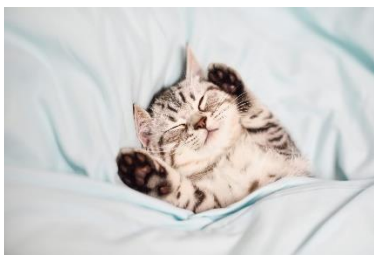
Meditation of Self Care

Give yourself permission to take this time out for yourself.

Let's begin by coming into a comfortable upright sitting position. Gently close your eyes and sit with your spine nicely aligned and perhaps shake or wriggle your shoulders a little bit to release any tension you may be holding and make yourself comfortable.

Position your hands gently in your lap. Feet flat on the floor. Feel the weight of your body sitting. As we begin this meditation of self-care, commit yourself to this present moment.

Now let's take a few deep restorative breaths breathing in through your nose, and as you breathe out, you may like to release a big, comforting sigh. Take a deep restorative breath in, big comforting sigh out. And again, deep restorative breath in, big comforting sigh out.



Now just breath naturally. Don't force it or judge it, just relax into it. If your thoughts begin to wonder, simply bring your mind back to the breath. As you breathe in, bring a sense of kindness, self-compassion and care to how you feel, and as you breathe out, allow any judgement or self-criticism or desires to rush into the next part of your day to leave with your breath. Breathing in kindness, self-compassion and care, breathing out judgement, self-criticism or desires to rush into the next part of your day.

As a therapist or someone who always cares for others, it is important to take time to rejuvenate and replenish your reserves. We are often so busy taking care of others we neglect to take care of ourselves. Feel warmth towards yourself for being a caring person, for having the capacity to care for others. For having the privilege to make a difference to people's lives.

Imagine a dear friend, a family member or someone that you love or care deeply for. Imagine the warm compassionate feelings you hold for this person and try to project these feelings towards yourself. Breathing in kindness, self-compassion and care, breathing out judgement and any desire to rush on to the next part of your day. Sit with this for a moment longer as you continue to focus on your breath.

Now bring your attention back to the outside world. To the space or room that you are in. Wiggle your toes and fingers, maybe wriggle your shoulders a little. Listen to the noise present in the space you're in. Become aware of your surroundings. When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes. Take another deep breath in and out and feel replenished and able to care firstly for yourself and then for others.

Cleansing the Body with Breath

Take your attention to the breath and focus on the part where you feel it most strongly – perhaps in your tummy, or in the chest, or around the lips and nostrils. Just stay with your experience of the breath... breathing in and breathing out... feeling the sensations of breathing... allowing the breath to breathe itself.

Letting go of any need to direct or manipulate the breath in any way... breathing in and breathing out... supported by the chair you are sitting on and the ground where your feet are resting... resting with the breath... breathing in and breathing out...

Now taking your attention with your breath and feeling it sweep through your whole body... breathing in through the crown of your head.... Filling the body with a deep, cleansing breath.... Pausing for a moment then breathing out through the soles of the feet.



And on the next breath, breathing in through the soles of the feet... allowing the body to fill with breath... with life... with energy... and breathing out through the crown of the head...

Taking a couple more deep cleansing breaths in this way, sweeping the whole body with breath, breathing in and breathing out from top to bottom.

And sitting up tall and erect – stretching the hands high above the head and as you replace them slowly by your side, just opening your eyes in your own time, and hopefully feeling refreshed, cleansed and ready to engage in whatever you are moving onto next in your life.

The Candle Visualisation



To begin the candle visualization relaxation, find a comfortable position. Notice how your body feels. Take a deep breath in, and as you breathe out, notice if you have any tension in your body and where it is.

Focus on these areas as you take another breath, allowing the tension to gradually flow away as you slowly breathe out.

Inhale as you raise your shoulders... then relax as you exhale and lower your shoulders into a comfortable position.

Continue breathing smoothly and gently and as you rest peacefully, begin to form an image in your mind. Imagine that you are in a safe, comfortable room. The room is pleasantly dark.

Imagine the glow of a candle beside you. Keep your attention facing forward as you notice the gentle flickers of warm light on the wall in front of you. See the dancing light from the candle.

Feel yourself relaxing as you watch the beautiful patterns made by the light of the candle.

Picture the candle in front of you and see the soft light it creates. Notice the flame gently moving as the candle burns.

Now imagine what the candle itself looks like. What shape is it? What colour? What size? Create a picture of the candle in your mind.

Imagine that the candle gently melts away the stresses and tension you have been holding in your body and as the candle burns, feel the tension easing, and relaxation flowing through your body.

Notice the wax becoming softer and as you do this, feel your body becoming softer too.

Notice again the soft flame at the top of the candle. See how it flickers slightly in response to your breath as you breathe out. Watch how the flame responds each time you breathe.

Now turn your attention back to the wax of the candle. The softening wax is melting, turning to liquid. Warm and flowing.... free from tension.....

See the wax of the candle melting melting the way your tension is melting away.

As the melted wax builds, see it slowly overflow, and pour down the side of the candle, drop by drop. Any stresses you were holding on to are dripping away too with each drop of wax from the candle. The soft flame of relaxation warms you from the inside, melting away all stress.

Watch the wax melting.... feeling the same effects on the tension in your body. Melting.... relaxing.

Continue to observe the burning candle, enjoying the relaxation you are experiencing.

When you are ready to finish your relaxation session, take a deep breath.... and exhale through your mouth, blowing out the candle. Slowly bring your awareness back to the present.

Become more aware of the time and place you are in today.

Slowly stretch your muscles.... and open your eyes... enjoying the feeling of calm and peace that remains with you.

A meditation for renewal and refreshment

Sitting comfortably with eyes closed, let's begin by becoming aware of our breathing.....

Feeling the breath as it enters our bodies with a cool feeling and then warming as it gently travels down into the lungs.....

Filling the lungs with a deep inbreath, breathing in energy and vitality.....

And as you breathe out, feeling the body releasing toxins, stress and any negativity that may have accumulated there during the day.....

Stay with this breath for a few moments, focusing on a feeling of deepening peace within you as you take a few more deep in-breaths and out-breaths....

PAUSE

Now really feel the energy that that you have invited into your body....

Perhaps becoming aware of the warmth and tingling of every cell.....

Feel the energy that has come to you from the world around you, in every part of nature and in every living thing.....

Bring all those energies together and feel them as one.....

Visualize all of that energy shining brightly, like the sun.....and bring that shining glow of bright energy over the top of your head.....

Feel it starting to travel down into your body from the top of your head, slowly going down into your face and neck, travelling down into the shoulders, all the way down into the arms, down to the fingers.....

Feel the healing energy and light going down into your chest, all the way down to your hips.....

Feel it continue traveling down your legs all the way down to your toes.....

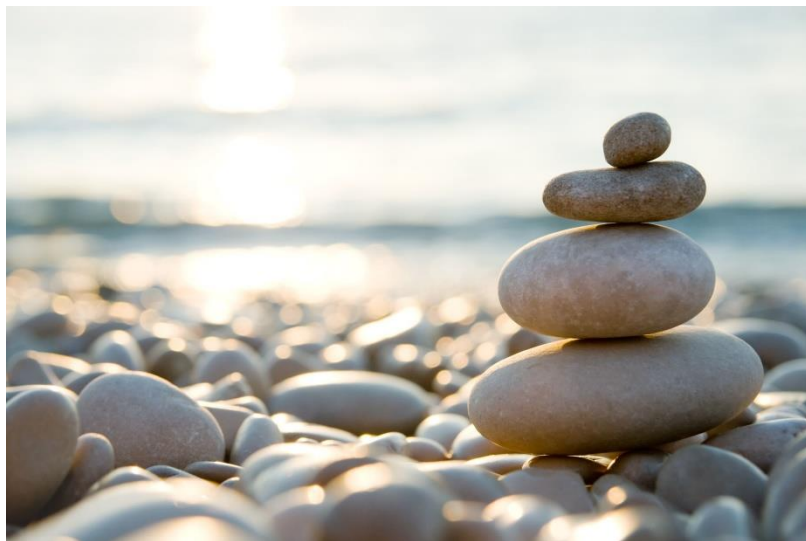
Your whole body is now filled with a healing light and energy.....

Allow that healing energy to completely warm and heal any part of you that needs healing or is seeking peace, whether that is somewhere in your body...in your mind... or in your intentions or your strivings.

Stay for a few moments with a deep, relaxing, peaceful feeling of healing, warmth and quietness.

PAUSE

And now, in your own time, when you're ready, take a couple of slightly deeper breaths in and out, as you do this begin to stretch and move your fingers and toes, lift your shoulders and relax them, gently move your head from side to side and then open your eyes ready to move into the next part of your day.



Sun Meditation for Healing



Please close your eyes and take a little time to focus within yourself to settle your body, mind, and heart. Feel free to use whatever method works best for you. For example, it may be focusing on your breath, meditating, stretching your body mindfully, or using a sound, word, image, or a phrase as a mantra to become centred...Take your time...allowing yourself to become more and more at ease with yourself.

Pause

Allow yourself to become as relaxed and comfortable as you can...Let your body feel supported by the ground underneath you.

Slowly begin to see or feel yourself lying in a grassy meadow with the sun shining its golden

rays gently upon you...Let yourself soak in these warm rays ...taking in the healing power and life-giving energy of the sunshine.

This magnificent ball of light has been a sustaining source of energy for millions of years and will be an energy source for millions of years to come...This ancient sun is the same sun which shined down upon the dinosaurs...upon the Egyptians while they built the pyramids... and it now shines upon the earth and all the other planets in our solar system and will continued to do so.

As the sun's rays gently touch your skin, allow yourself to feel the warmth and energy flow slowly through your body...pulsing through your bones...sending healing light to your organs ...flowing to your tissues...recharging every system...and now settling into your innermost being...your heart centre.

Sense your heart centre glowing with this radiant energy. If you wish, give it a colour...Take a few moments to allow this warm and healing energy to reach your innermost being... physically...emotionally...mentally...and spiritually.

Pause

As this healing energy grows and expands, allow yourself to see, feel, and sense this energy surrounding your being...growing and growing...Allow this energy to further fill this room... this building...surrounding this town...spreading throughout our state...to our country...and out into the worlds...and finally throughout the universe...reaching and touching and blessing all.

Pause

You may choose to share this healing energy and power with anyone you're aware of right now... Within your own mind and heart, ask them quietly if they are willing to receive this healing energy...If they are...send this source of healing energy to them...giving them the time they need to take in this energy and make it theirs in their own heart centre.

Pause

Now take your attention back to your own heart centre...Find a safe place within you to keep this healing and powerful energy...a place to keep it protected and within your reach...Give yourself permission to get in touch with this energy whenever you wish.

With the warmth of this energy in your being, begin stretching, wiggling, and moving...Slowly open your eyes, feeling alive, refreshed, keenly alert, and completely healthy.

Holding Hands Meditation



Start by sitting in an erect but relaxed position, with your feet both firmly on the floor and your hands in your lap. Gently close your eyes.

Relax all the muscles in your face. Gradually allow your face to soften and let go of any tension that may be there around your eyes, your mouth, your jaw. Relax your neck, your chest and your abdomen. See if you are holding extra tension there and if you are, simply let go of it each time you breathe out. Relax your arms and your hands, your knees and your feet.

Now bring the attention back more closely to the breath itself. There is no need to change it in any way; simply notice as your rib cage and abdomen stretch and fall and enjoy the natural rhythm of your breath. Pause here, focusing on the breath and allowing tension to melt away. You feel heavy and relaxed, allowing your body to sink into the floor.

Begin to imagine you are floating in the middle of a great ocean. Your body stays afloat with no effort at all, and the water is just the right temperature. It rocks you gently.

Overhead is a great blue sky. See the sky in detail. Does it have clouds in it? Are there birds flying overhead or is it empty? What time of day is it? Morning? Afternoon?

As the water rocks you, you feel more and more relaxed, unconcerned about anything in the past or the future. You notice you are not alone. Floating on either side of you are two people you recognise; people who care for you and support you.

You feel these two people reach to hold your hands, one on the right and one on the left. You are floating together easily and silently, enjoying the sensation of ease and connection.

Without lifting your head, notice that the people on either side of you have people on either side of them, holding their hands and gently floating just as you are. You realize that there is an endless chain of people, holding hands and floating in the ocean; the chain is so long it reaches from one side of the ocean to the other. There is an overall feeling of peace as you gaze up at the sky overhead. Pause here for a few moments.

When you are ready, carefully release your hands from the people on either side of you. Feel all the people in the chain releasing hands, but still floating peacefully near one another. Slowly, the other people drift a little way away, but you know that if you just reach out, you can find them again. Pause here as long as you like and enjoy the feeling of being alone, while knowing that at any moment you choose, you can grasp the hand of a friend. Feel the water beneath you and see the sky overhead.

Pause

When you are ready, start to bring your attention back to the breath. Notice your inbreath and your outbreath, in time with the waves on the water. Wiggle your fingers and your toes and when you are ready, gently open your eyes and return to the room and to the rest of your day or whatever is happening for you now.

Soft Centre Meditation

'Soft centre' is a deeply relaxing and restorative practice. Since this type of breathwork lessens the stress response, it brings about feelings of peace, calm, and contentment.

So, to reduce anxiety,
start by taking a moment to relax your body..
soften any unnecessary tension in your tummy or abdomen; in your shoulders; in your neck,
and find a posture that feels both relaxed and alert.

Now close your eyes
or look downwards
and rest your hands
in an easy effortless way.

Take a few moments
to scan your awareness
through the sensations of your body,
and wherever possible,
soften and release
obvious areas of physical tension.

Relax your breath,
and breathe in through your nose
and out through your mouth.

This may feel a little unusual,
but when done is a natural, easy going way,
it can be a very relaxing way to breathe.

In through your nose
and out through your mouth.

In through your nose
and out through your mouth.

Now let your tummy be soft.

If the tummy is soft,
more oxygen goes to the bottom of the lungs.

There's better oxygen exchange.

Oxygen moves more easily into the blood,
and it goes to all the cells in the body,
including the cells in the brain,
supplying your brain with the nourishment it needs.

If the tummy is soft,
it helps to activate the vagus nerve.

Vagus means wandering,
and this nerve wanders up
through the abdomen and chest,
back to the central nervous system in the brain,
and it promotes relaxation.

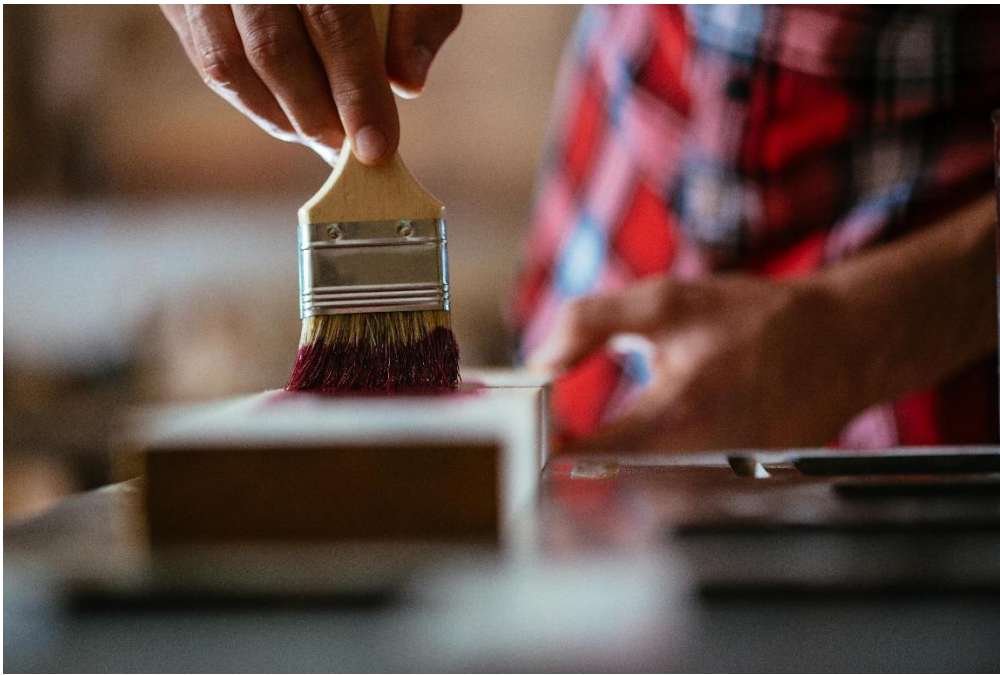
It is an antidote
to the fight or flight stress response.

Breathing deeply,
activating the vagus nerve
helps relaxation to come,
and as the tummy is soft,

and you breathe deeply,
all the other muscles in the body
begin to relax as well,
and you can feel that now.
Some people like thinking of the word “Soft,”
as they breathe in,
and “centre” as they breathe out.
See what that feels like for you:
“Soft” as you breathe in,
and “centre” as you breathe out.
If thoughts come,
let them go
and gently bring your mind
back to “Soft” on the inhale, and “centre” on the exhale
“Soft,”
as you breathe in,
and “centre,”
as you breathe out.
“Soft,”
as you breathe in,
and “centre,”
as you breathe out.
Now slowly open your eyes
and bring your attention
back into the room,
and notice how you feel...
and notice what’s changed
from before you began to do this practice
to now
You may feel a little bit calmer.
Your heart rate may feel like it’s a little bit slower.
You may be seeing the room around you
with a little bit more clarity.
Maybe your shoulders are more relaxed.
See if you can bring this same quality of kind awareness,
of soft relaxation in the core of your body and being,
with you throughout the rest of this evening.



Mindful breathing and paintbrush visualisation



Start by settling into a comfortable position and allow your eyes to close or keep them open with a softened gaze. Begin by taking several long slow deep breaths breathing in fully and exhaling fully.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Allow your breath to find its

own natural rhythm. Bring your full attention to noticing each in-breath as it enters your nostrils,

travels down to your lungs and causes your tummy to expand. And notice each out-breath as your

tummy contracts and air moves up through the lungs back up through the nostrils or mouth. Invite

your full attention to flow with your breath.

Notice how the in-breath is different from the out-breath. You may experience the air as cool as it enters your nose and warm as you exhale. As you turn more deeply inward, begin to let go of noises

around you. If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice them and then bring your

intention back to your breath. Simply breathe as you usually breathe, not striving to change anything

about the breath. Don't try to control your breath in any way. Observe and accept your

experience in this moment without judgment, paying attention to each inhale and exhale.

Now imagine you have a large, soft paintbrush. Exhale deeply, then, starting at your feet, imagine you are sweeping the brush up your legs and the front of your body as far as your shoulders ... then down your arms to your fingertips ... then a long sweep up the full length of the back ... continuing into the neck and scalp ... over your brow ... and down to your face and jaw.

And now thinking about a single wave of relaxation beginning at your head and rolling down to your feet. Taking a long slow breath in, then as you breathe out, starting at the top of your head, feel the relaxation rolling down your body in one continuous wave. Feel it releasing tension as it descends, relaxing each part of your body in turn until it reaches the tips of your toes.

Just noticing how your body feels now as you begin to breathe normally and easily again, not trying to control your breath, letting it breathe itself for a few moments.

And on the next in-breath, just coming back to yourself, sitting in the chair and beginning to open up to the room and to your presence here. Taking a couple of breaths as you feel the air around you and the sounds in the room, and gradually opening your eyes, and re-engaging with life around you.

After Work Meditation

This is a meditation to help you de-stress, let go of your busy day, and ease into the evening.

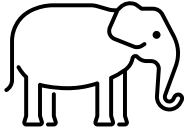
- Begin by taking up an upright and relaxed position, getting comfortable, and closing your eyes.
- First take 3 cleansing breaths: breathing in slowly through your nose and breathing out through your mouth.
- Now bring your left hand to your heart and right hand to your stomach. Inhale through your nose in 3 parts—first to expand the stomach, then the ribcage, then the chest. Hold at the top for a count of 3, then open your mouth and let it out with a sigh. Repeat 3 to 5 times. You will feel your hands rise and fall as you breathe.
- Relax your hands into your lap, palms facing down, and breathe in through your nose for a count of 3, then breathe out through your nose for a count of 6. Pause briefly at the bottom of your outbreath before starting a new breath. There's no need to rush to the next breath, let it come to you. Continue breathing in this way for a few moments.
- With each long outbreath, focus on leaving something from your day behind to clear space for your evening. If there are specific thoughts or worries that are around for you at the end of your day, bring them into focus for a moment in your mind and then on an outbreath, imagine them sinking down into the chair or earth beneath you, leaving your body and leaving the space around you.
- Continue with this pattern for a few moments, focusing on breathing out and feeling sense of release with every outbreath.
- Now imagine there is a large door in front of you. As you take a deep breath, you open the door. Notice the solid feel of the door, and the weight of it. Hold it open and as you breathe out, walk through the door and close it behind you. With this, leave the stress from the day behind you — any difficult conversations, communication breakdowns, technology glitches or other challenges. All of the worries from the day remain behind the closed door as you continue walking forward and away, allowing yourself to disconnect from the busyness of work for the time being.

- Finish your meditation with a more few deep, cleansing breaths, before gently opening your eyes and returning to the room or space where you are, ready to engage with the next part of your day.



A selection of poems and stories:

The Blind Men and the Elephant



It was six men of Indostan, to learning much inclined,
who went to see the elephant (Though all of them were blind),
that each by observation, might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant, and, happening to fall,
against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl:
'God bless me! but the elephant, is nothing but a wall!'

The second feeling of the tusk, cried: 'Ho! what have we here,
so very round and smooth and sharp? To me tis mighty clear,
this wonder of an elephant, is very like a spear!'

The third approached the animal, and, happening to take,
the squirming trunk within his hands, 'I see,' quoth he,
the elephant is very like a snake!'

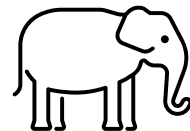
The fourth reached out his eager hand, and felt about the knee:
'What most this wondrous beast is like, is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree.'

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, Said; 'E'en the blindest man
can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant, is very like a fan!'

The sixth no sooner had begun, about the beast to grope,
than, seizing on the swinging tail, that fell within his scope,
'I see,' quoth he, 'the elephant is very like a rope!'

And so these men of Indostan, disputed loud and long,
each in his own opinion, exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong!

So, oft in theologic wars, the disputants, I ween,
tread on in utter ignorance, of what each other mean,
and prate about the elephant, not one of them has seen!



John Godfrey Saxe

The Mayonnaise Jar and Coffee

When things in your life are almost too much to handle, when 24 hours is just not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar, and the coffee.....

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the Jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once More if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "YES".

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things – your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favourite passions – things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your House, and your car.

The sand is everything else – the small stuff. “If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls.

The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important.

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children! Take time to get medical check-ups. Take your wife/husband/lover/friend out to dinner. Maybe even play another 18 holes. There is always time to clean the house and fix the waste disposal.

Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.”

One of the students raised her hand and enquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there is always room for a couple cups of coffee with a friend.”

(Anon)



It Couldn't be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it!

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one ever has done it;"
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

By Edgar Albert Guest

Welcome to Holland

*I have adapted this piece of writing from a piece that I met many years back, whilst working with people experiencing a specific kind of loss and unique set of challenges. Some of you will have met this before and may recognise it. I have altered a few of the words so that it fits our current situation as we grapple with all the challenges of coronavirus and hope that the writer, **Emily Perl Kingsley**, will forgive for making some small adaptations to her inspirational words:*

Welcome to Holland!

You are planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. After you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

If you spend your time mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

The Mad Hatter's Tea Party. From 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' by Lewis Carroll

CHAPTER VII

A Mad Tea-Party

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. 'Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,' thought Alice; 'only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.'

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. 'There's *plenty* of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.



Mad Tea Party

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.

'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.

'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare.

'I didn't know it was *your* table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.'

'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; 'it's very rude.'

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.--I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.

'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know.'

'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!''



Hatter engaging in rhetoric

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!''

'You might just as well say,' added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, 'that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!''

'It *is* the same thing with you,' said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence. 'What day of the month is it?' he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and then said 'The fourth.'

'Two days wrong!' sighed the Hatter. 'I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!' he added looking angrily at the March Hare.

'It was the *best* butter,' the March Hare meekly replied.

'Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well,' the Hatter grumbled: 'you shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.'

The March Hare took the watch and looked at it gloomily: then he dipped it into his cup of tea, and looked at it again: but he could think of nothing better to say than his first remark, 'It was the *best* butter, you know.'

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. 'What a funny watch!' she remarked. 'It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!'

'Why should it?' muttered the Hatter. 'Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?'

'Of course not,' Alice replied very readily: 'but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.'

'Which is just the case with *mine*,' said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could.

‘The Dormouse is asleep again,’ said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose.

The Dormouse shook its head impatiently, and said, without opening its eyes, ‘Of course, of course; just what I was going to remark myself.’

‘Have you guessed the riddle yet?’ the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

‘No, I give it up,’ Alice replied: ‘what’s the answer?’

‘I haven’t the slightest idea,’ said the Hatter.

‘Nor I,’ said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. ‘I think you might do something better with the time,’ she said, ‘than waste it in asking riddles that have no answers.’

‘If you knew Time as well as I do,’ said the Hatter, ‘you wouldn’t talk about wasting *it*. It’s *him*.’

‘I don’t know what you mean,’ said Alice.

‘Of course you don’t!’ the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. ‘I dare say you never even spoke to Time!’

‘Perhaps not,’ Alice cautiously replied: ‘but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.’

‘Ah! that accounts for it,’ said the Hatter. ‘He won’t stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he’d do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it were nine o’clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you’d only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!’

(‘I only wish it was,’ the March Hare said to itself in a whisper.)

‘That would be grand, certainly,’ said Alice thoughtfully: ‘but then--I shouldn’t be hungry for it, you know.’

‘Not at first, perhaps,’ said the Hatter: ‘but you could keep it to half-past one as long as you liked.’

‘Is that the way *you* manage?’ Alice asked.

The Hatter shook his head mournfully. ‘Not I!’ he replied. ‘We quarrelled last March--just before *he* went mad, you know--’ (pointing with his tea spoon at the March Hare,) ‘--it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing

“Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!

How I wonder what you’re at!”

You know the song, perhaps?’

‘I’ve heard something like it,’ said Alice.

‘It goes on, you know,’ the Hatter continued, ‘in this way:--

“Up above the world you fly,

Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle--”

Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep 'Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle--' and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

'Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse,' said the Hatter, 'when the Queen jumped up and bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"'

'How dreadfully savage!' exclaimed Alice.

'And ever since that,' the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, 'he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.'

A bright idea came into Alice's head. 'Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?' she asked.

'Yes, that's it,' said the Hatter with a sigh: 'it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles.'

'Then you keep moving round, I suppose?' said Alice.

'Exactly so,' said the Hatter: 'as the things get used up.'

'But what happens when you come to the beginning again?' Alice ventured to ask.

'Suppose we change the subject,' the March Hare interrupted, yawning. 'I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story.'

'I'm afraid I don't know one,' said Alice, rather alarmed at the proposal.

'Then the Dormouse shall!' they both cried. 'Wake up, Dormouse!' And they pinched it on both sides at once.

The Dormouse slowly opened his eyes. 'I wasn't asleep,' he said in a hoarse, feeble voice: 'I heard every word you fellows were saying.'

'Tell us a story!' said the March Hare.

'Yes, please do!' pleaded Alice.

'And be quick about it,' added the Hatter, 'or you'll be asleep again before it's done.'

'Once upon a time there were three little sisters,' the Dormouse began in a great hurry; 'and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well--'

'What did they live on?' said Alice, who always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking.

'They lived on treacle,' said the Dormouse, after thinking a minute or two.

'They couldn't have done that, you know,' Alice gently remarked; 'they'd have been ill.'

'So they were,' said the Dormouse; 'very ill.'

Alice tried to fancy to herself what such an extraordinary ways of living would be like, but it puzzled her too much, so she went on: 'But why did they live at the bottom of a well?'

'Take some more tea,' the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

'I've had nothing yet,' Alice replied in an offended tone, 'so I can't take more.'

‘You mean you can't take *less*,’ said the Hatter: ‘it's very easy to take *more* than nothing.’

‘Nobody asked *your* opinion,’ said Alice.

‘Who's making personal remarks now?’ the Hatter asked triumphantly.

Alice did not quite know what to say to this: so she helped herself to some tea and bread-and-butter, and then turned to the Dormouse, and repeated her question. ‘Why did they live at the bottom of a well?’

The Dormouse again took a minute or two to think about it, and then said, ‘It was a treacle-well.’

‘There's no such thing!’ Alice was beginning very angrily, but the Hatter and the March Hare went ‘Sh! sh!’ and the Dormouse sulkily remarked, ‘If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself.’

‘No, please go on!’ Alice said very humbly; ‘I won't interrupt again. I dare say there may be *one*.’

‘One, indeed!’ said the Dormouse indignantly. However, he consented to go on. ‘And so these three little sisters--they were learning to draw, you know--’

‘What did they draw?’ said Alice, quite forgetting her promise.

‘Treacle,’ said the Dormouse, without considering at all this time.

‘I want a clean cup,’ interrupted the Hatter: ‘let's all move one place on.’

He moved on as he spoke, and the Dormouse followed him: the March Hare moved into the Dormouse's place, and Alice rather unwillingly took the place of the March Hare. The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change: and Alice was a good deal worse off than before, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug into his plate.

Alice did not wish to offend the Dormouse again, so she began very cautiously: ‘But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?’

‘You can draw water out of a water-well,’ said the Hatter; ‘so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well--eh, stupid?’

‘But they were *in* the well,’ Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark.

‘Of course they were,’ said the Dormouse; ‘--well in.’

This answer so confused poor Alice, that she let the Dormouse go on for some time without interrupting it.

‘They were learning to draw,’ the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very sleepy; ‘and they drew all manner of things--everything that begins with an M--’

‘Why with an M?’ said Alice.

‘Why not?’ said the March Hare.

Alice was silent.

The Dormouse had closed its eyes by this time, and was going off into a doze; but, on being pinched by the Hatter, it woke up again with a little shriek, and went on: ‘--that begins with an M, such as

mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness-- you know you say things are "much of a muchness"--did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?"

'Really, now you ask me,' said Alice, very much confused, 'I don't think--'

'Then you shouldn't talk,' said the Hatter.

This piece of rudeness was more than Alice could bear: she got up in great disgust, and walked off; the Dormouse fell asleep instantly, and neither of the others took the least notice of her going, though she looked back once or twice, half hoping that they would call after her: the last time she saw them, they were trying to put the Dormouse into the teapot.



Hatter and Hare dunking Dormouse

'At any rate I'll never go *there* again!' said Alice as she picked her way through the wood. 'It's the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!'

Just as she said this, she noticed that one of the trees had a door leading right into it. 'That's very curious!' she thought. 'But everything's curious today. I think I may as well go in at once.' And in she went.

Once more she found herself in the long hall, and close to the little glass table. 'Now, I'll manage better this time,' she said to herself, and began by taking the little golden key, and unlocking the door that led into the garden. Then she went to work nibbling at the mushroom (she had kept a piece of it in her pocket) till she was about a foot high: then she walked down the little passage: and *then*--she found herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flower-beds and the cool fountains.

She Let Go
by Safire Rose

She let go.
She let go. Without a thought or a word, she let go.
She let go of the fear.
She let go of the judgments.
She let go of the confluence of opinions swarming around her head.
She let go of the committee of indecision within her.
She let go of all the 'right' reasons.
Wholly and completely, without hesitation or worry, she just let go.
She didn't ask anyone for advice.
She didn't read a book on how to let go.
She didn't search the scriptures.
She just let go.
She let go of all of the memories that held her back.
She let go of all of the anxiety that kept her from moving forward.
She let go of the planning and all of the calculations about how to do it just right.
She didn't promise to let go.
She didn't journal about it.
She didn't write the projected date in her Day-Timer.
She made no public announcement and put no ad in the paper.
She didn't check the weather report or read her daily horoscope.
She just let go.
She didn't analyze whether she should let go.
She didn't call her friends to discuss the matter.
She didn't do a five-step Spiritual Mind Treatment.
She didn't call the prayer line.
She didn't utter one word.
She just let go.
No one was around when it happened.
There was no applause or congratulations.
No one thanked her or praised her.
No one noticed a thing.
Like a leaf falling from a tree, she just let go.
There was no effort.
There was no struggle.
It wasn't good and it wasn't bad.
It was what it was, and it is just that.
In the space of letting go, she let it all be.
A small smile came over her face.
A light breeze blew through her.
And the sun and the moon shone forevermore...

A poem to close:



Breath of Life

I breathe in All That Is-
Awareness expanding
to take everything in,
as if my heart beats
the world into being.

From the unnamed vastness beneath the
mind, I breathe my way to wholeness and healing.

Inhalation. Exhalation.

Each Breath a "yes,"
and a letting go, a journey, and a coming home.

Dana Faulds