



Stay in the Present

Across the world, we are experiencing uncertainty.

When faced with uncertainty, our brains are designed to protect us from danger by increasing our attention to risk and threat. However, this worry can spiral, as we seek certainty where it does not exist. When you find yourself overwhelmed by strong emotions, try to refocus your attention on what's going on in and around you in the current moment. Notice and attend to where you are and what you are feeling, without judgement.

How can I stay in the moment when I'm having so many thoughts about the future?

- Emotions are like waves. They come on, peak, and slowly roll out. **Practice riding the waves of emotion and learning to tolerate them instead of fighting them** or letting them overwhelm (or drown) you.
- Notice and name your feelings, and remind yourself that **each feeling is temporary**, even if the circumstances remain unchanged. Focus on accepting your feelings and your strength to tolerate them.
- Do not try to plan for the next week or month or indefinite future; take on **one moment at a time**.
- When all else fails, simply **focus on your 5 senses to ground you** in the present. Listen carefully for very subtle sounds, look for all the colors in the rainbow, notice how your feet or fingertips feel, attend to a subtle taste in your mouth or scent you can find.

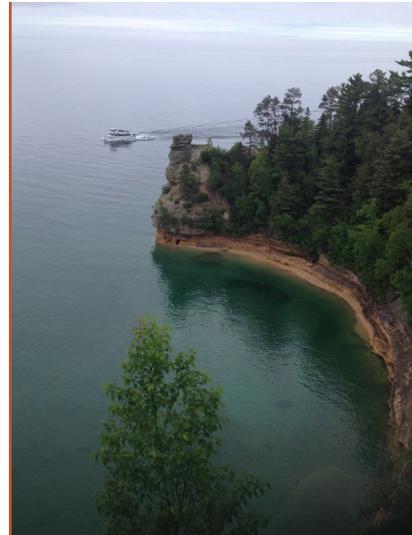
Resources

To practice a guided 5-senses meditation:

- [Engaging Your Senses](#)

More resources for using mindfulness to stay present:

- [Getting started with mindfulness and mindful meditation](#)
- [Free online 8-week mindfulness course](#)
- [Hope in Uncertain Times](#), Oprah and Deepak Chopra's free 21 day meditation program
- [Power Up](#), a set of audio tracks to guide you through various mindfulness practices



“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

- John Kabat-Zinn



Separate Out What You Can and Cannot Control

The human mind seeks certainty and control, yet these may be impossible in the current environment. Practice acceptance of your circumstances as well as the emotions you experience. Making peace with what is out of your control can create mental energy for you to plan more productively for what is within your power.

What kinds of things can I control during this uncertain time?

- Steps you take to stay healthy
- How you cope
- How you treat others
- What you eat and drink
- How much help/support you seek
- Time you spend worrying
- How you support your community
- Amount of news you consume

Finding peace with what you can and cannot control

Worry often focuses our attention on the future: an unknown outcome, or danger or distress that we anticipate. One way to manage these worries is to focus on one worry at a time, and identify whether it is about something you can control or not. Once a worry is categorized, you can approach it more effectively:

1. Worries about things you can control can help motivate you to make a plan or take action.
2. Worries about things you cannot control are depleting. Use a coping skill to manage these worries instead.

Is this worry about **something I can control**?

Yes	No
What resources are available to help me stay informed about risks, safety measures in place, and important updates?	What am I feeling right now?
Who can I contact for logistical or practical help?	On a 1-10 scale, how intense is my emotion?
Who can I contact for emotional support?	Which coping skills will I use to help me relieve or tolerate my distress?
What steps can I take right now, to help me prepare for this situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>relaxation, deep breathing</i> • <i>meditation, mindfulness</i> • <i>physical activity, getting outside</i> • <i>distress tolerance, riding waves of emotion</i> • <i>music, hobbies, creative arts</i> • <i>social support and connection</i> • <i>distraction: books, movies, TV</i>
	What can I do after this coping skill, to help me feel safe, supported, connected to others, or productive today?



“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

- Martin Luther King



Pay Attention to Joy

It can be hard to notice good experiences when we are in the midst of significant stress. It is also common to feel guilty about things that are going well, when we know that others may be suffering more severe hardship. However, by focusing on joyful experiences and practicing gratitude, you can significantly elevate your mood and strengthen your ability to be emotionally available for others.

How can I practice paying attention to positive experiences?

- **Recognize the things in your life that are going well**, no matter how small they might be. Start by listing 3 things that you are grateful for in this moment.
- Give yourself permission to see the silver lining and focus on the good. If you are feeling guilty for something that is going well for you, or some way in which you feel more fortunate than others, **try to shift your guilt into gratitude.**
- Take time to savor the things that you do enjoy. **Using all five of your senses, take time to relish activities that soothe you or bring you joy**, even if they are as simple as breathing in fresh air, taking a warm shower, or lying still for two minutes.
- **Establish a regular gratitude practice.** For example, every night before bed, write 3 unique things that you are grateful for or 3 parts of the day that went well, even if they were small moments.

Resources

To practice a guided gratitude exercise:

- [Gratitude Meditation \(Strengthen Happiness\)](#)

More resources for paying attention to positive experiences:

- [Private Gratitude Journal](#)
- [The Gratitude Experiment](#)
- [The Science of Gratitude](#)



“It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.”

- Aristotle