

## Mindfulness and Resilience in Uncertain Times

These are indeed uncertain times. Most of us have had our lives turned upside down. Some are faced with financial insecurity. Many are struggling with kids at home. Many who are older or living alone are struggling with loneliness. And the uncertainty of when it will end can often feel overwhelming. More than ever this is an important time to practice mindfulness and other tools that develop resilience.

### **Developing Resilience**

Resilience is often described as the ability to recover quickly from difficult situations, and resilience helps keep our immune system strong.

Two critical points to keep in mind:

First, resilience is not an innate quality. Rather, like mindfulness, it is a strength that can be developed.

Second, each person will use different tools and strategies.

### **Practice mindfulness regularly**

Mindfulness is bringing curiosity and non-judgment to the current state of your body, mind, and heart. Practicing mindfulness regularly can bring yourself back into balance.

### **3 examples of mindful practices** (for more go to [tombassarear.com](http://tombassarear.com))

One practice is as simple as pausing and bringing a gentle attention to your breath and staying there until the breath settles. I often do this when I am feeling overwhelmed or anxious.

We have been advised not to touch our nose, eyes, mouth, etc. during this time. When you feel an itch and the desire to scratch it on one of these places, bring mindful attention to the actual sensations. How does the itch actually feel? With a little practice, and the knowledge that itches generally don't last long, you can get better at not touching your face when you have an itch there.

You can practice mindfulness many times during the day. For example, I think "bringing in light" each morning when I open the shades in our home, I move slowly while disinfecting the house each morning, and sing while washing my hands for 20 seconds.

Below are several commonly recommended practices to increase resilience. When we bring mindful attention (curious and nonjudgmental) while doing these, they become stronger.

### **Foster wellness**

Get adequate rest, exercise, and nutrition (and don't beat yourself up when you don't! That's self-compassion which is another practice.)

All three of these are basic to good health and often neglected during times of crisis.

### **Build your connections: to your self, to others, to animals, to the natural world.**

Making phone calls to others, connecting on social media (I have gone back to Facebook).

Walking outside each day (keeping 6 feet from others) is so healthy!

### **Generosity**

Calling people you know who live alone or whom you know may be struggling.  
Offering to grocery shop for elderly people.

### **Embrace healthy thoughts**

Keep things in perspective:

"This too shall pass....It might pass like a kidney stone, but it will pass!"

"Your grandparents were called to war. You're being called to stay at home. You can do this."

### **Not going down the rabbit hole**

Many people are becoming addicted to media coverage of the virus. It is helpful to ask oneself: might I check news only once a day, or every other day?

- Can I give more attention to what I *can* control: my attitude, turning off the news, finding fun things to do at home, being generous, praying or meditating....
- Can I give less attention on what I *can't* control: the actions of others, predicting what will happen, how long this will last, the amount of toilet paper at the store...

### **Humor**

There is research showing that smiling and laughing cause the brain to secrete hormones that relax us. Seriously!

In addition to your own resources, try Google searches, for example, "humor covid-19" or "toilet paper humor covid-19." On YouTube, type "funny videos," "funny videos for kids," "funny cat videos," etc.

### **Stories of kindness and compassion**

If you Google "inspiration during covid-19," you'll find many stories. Here are just a few.

- Carter's Clothes announced that all their employees will receive full pay and benefits during the temporary closure of their stores.
- Many companies are offering free services and entertainment for the homebound and others are offering free food for children.
- Many NBA players are donating large sums of money to pay arena workers while games are cancelled.
- karunavirus.org is a website that has stories of kindness and compassion around the world. Karuna is the word the Buddha used for compassion, so the website name is an interesting play on words.