

Brief Mindfulness Practices for Caregivers and Other Busy People

from Rebecca Stanwyck, LCSW and Mindfulness East Bay

If you have 1 minute, try one of these practices . . .

1. Stop, take a breath (or 2), and observe what's happening, within you and around you
2. Mindful seeing: turn your head slowly from side to side, noting what you see with "fresh eyes," as if you are seeing these familiar objects and your environment for the first time
3. Mindful hearing: close your eyes, allowing them rest, as you bring your awareness to the sounds that are present in your environment, just noticing whatever is there
4. Ask yourself, "where are my feet?" Bring your awareness to your feet as you stand or sit, noticing any sensations there, and allowing yourself to feel grounded

If you have 2 minutes . . .

1. Bring mindful awareness to a routine daily activity: brushing your teeth or hair, washing your hands or face, showering, making the bed, getting dressed, making coffee, fixing something to eat, etc. Engage your senses to see, hear, smell, touch, or taste as you do the activity, with a "beginner's mind" (as if you're doing it for the first time)
2. Connect with the breath: pay attention to how you are breathing right now (fast or slow? labored or easy? shallow or deep?) without needing to change anything, seeing if you can just *follow the breath* as it moves in and out of the body
3. Pinkie-to-pinkie breathing: with your hands palm down on your thighs, lift and lower each finger in turn as you breathe in and out (lifting on the inhalation, lowering on the exhalation), starting with the left little finger and ending with the right one

If you have 3 minutes . . .

1. The Three Minute Breathing Space – you can find my guided version [here](#)*
2. When you're really stressed, do the 3MBS, adding this phrase at the end: "*Whatever it is, it's already here, let me feel it*"

If you have 4 minutes . . .

1. The Mindful Self-compassion Break – my guided version [here](#)*
2. Relaxing the breath: as you breathe, first becoming aware of the four parts (inhalation, pause, exhalation, pause), then seeing if you can *lengthen the exhalation* to be twice as long as the inhalation for several breaths, and then lengthening the pause at the end of the exhalation before you inhale again, allowing yourself to *rest in the pause*

If you have 5 minutes . . .

1. Body Scan (you'll need to take 20 minutes for [my guided version](#)* the first time, but once you've done it, you'll get the idea, and you can do a scan in 1 – 5 minutes)
2. Stretch! Gently extend and twist arms, legs, back, etc. to release accumulated tension
3. Mindful movement: if you know yoga, Tai Chi or Qi Gong, do some of that; otherwise just move your body in gentle, rhythmic ways, swaying back and forth, and side to side, imagining you are kelp in the ocean or a willow tree bending in the breeze

*Audio files of these and other practices are here: <https://rebeccastanwyck.com/guided-meditations/>
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