Article Series Mental Health

5 Easy Ways to Build a Meditation Practice

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A cancer diagnosis—and the uncertainty that may come with it—can be overwhelming. Stress stimulates the release of hormones that trigger our “fight or flight” response, and when stress becomes chronic, it can contribute to anxiety, fatigue, stress and physical symptoms.

You may have heard that meditation can help, but between doctor’s appointments, treatments, and daily responsibilities, you may not feel like there’s time to pause.

During especially stressful times, a moment of meditation can help you reset. By intentionally focusing on your breath, you can shift out of fight-or-flight mode and activate the parts of the nervous system responsible for rest and relaxation.

Studies found that meditation can alter the brain, decreasing activity in the areas correlated with stress.

If you need some help getting started, here are five Microsteps to carve out time for meditation:

Setting a reminder to meditate.
A reminder on your phone or calendar will help you build a daily meditation practice. You can try setting the reminder for before bed, to remind yourself to take a few minutes to breathe deeply to help you unwind before going to sleep. This can help calm your mind, release the stress of the day, and improve your sleep quality.

Focusing on your breathing as you brew your morning coffee or tea.
Instead of watching T.V. or looking at your phone, this helps you center yourself for the day ahead. This moment of mindfulness may help you begin each day from a place of calmness.

Setting aside five minutes a day for a mindful activity, like deep breathing or journaling.
Activities that focus on mindfulness can help your brain manage stress and anxiety.

Listening to a guided meditation the next time you're on a walk.
There are so many quick meditations you can download on your phone and listen to when you're on the go. Instead of listening to music or a podcast, try a meditation on your next walk and feel yourself relax and become more mindful as you walk.

Taking a minute for mindfulness after an appointment or treatment session.
Medical visits can bring a range of emotions, from hope to anxiety. Taking a moment afterward to focus on deep breathing, reflect on a positive thought, or listen to a short mindfulness exercise may help you reset and recharge.

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