

## Create Space

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It can be challenging to find time to be still and connect with ourselves away from work, school, relationships, and other responsibilities. We are human beings; however, life often calls upon us to “do” and not to “be.” When this happens, we may use what we accomplish as a measure of who we are without really considering our thoughts, feelings, or other needs. Even when we do have some awareness of our needs, we may wish to avoid thoughts and feelings we are not prepared to manage, especially when we feel nervous, frustrated, or powerless.

While avoidance may seem like a good solution initially, we often find that it is not sustainable. Our needs, thoughts, and emotions, when pushed away, often return in larger and louder quantities until we are certain that we must face what we are feeling.

Fortunately, we can create some space for ourselves by regularly giving ourselves room to just “be.” This can be done a couple of times per week or daily as time allows.

### **This is a mindful practice to create space**

Get comfortable in a chair or sitting on your bed or on the floor. Allow yourself a few seconds to adjust your neck, unclench your jaw, straighten your spine, and gently push your shoulders away from your ears.

Choose to put your hand on your chest or belly and breathe deeply, in through your nose and out gently through your mouth. You may count the breaths or say, “In” and “Out.” Pay attention to how your breath feels. Is it shallow or full? Warm or cool? Adjust your breathing if needed so that it slows. Feel your breath moving throughout your body. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Envision a balloon that expands and deflates with your breath. As the balloon gets bigger, you breathe in. As it gets smaller, you breathe out. Feel free to keep your hand on your chest or belly and watch the balloon shrink and grow in your mind.

Notice your bodily sensations as if you are feeling these feelings for the first time. Be curious as you scan your head and your neck, noticing any tension or discomfort. Breathe into any feelings that are there and say, “I am feeling.” Return to your breath. Repeat this process with your shoulders, chest, arms, hands, torso, hips, legs, and finally to your feet. Each time take a few moments to notice what feelings are present and say, “I am feeling” before returning to your breath.

Now take a minute to observe. Ask yourself “What can I notice?” and respond with any thoughts or bodily sensations that are present. Acknowledge them and remember that having thoughts and sensations are part of the human experience. They come and go often. Remind yourself that you are able to make space for anything you are feeling. Return to your breath for 6 counts, bringing back the image of the expanding and contracting balloon. It is helpful to note “I am thinking” or “I am feeling” as thoughts or sensations come up while returning to your breath.

Now ask yourself, “What do I need right now?” Take a moment to consider this.

Some options might be to reach out to a friend and ask how they are doing, write your feelings and thoughts in a journal, make a short list of a few things you could get done, take a walk or move your body in a way that feels good to you, or listen to a favorite song. Pick one and try it. Remember—you deserve your best energy every day. Mindful check-ins will help you tune in to your needs. You can learn to create space for your thoughts and emotions, even when they are loud.

Smile and thank yourself for this practice.