

## **Finding Calm in the Midst of the Season**

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Once again the season changes, the holidays are here, and seemingly, in a flash, gone again. For many of us, it's a time of excitement and anticipation, for others, a time tinged with nostalgia and memories from the past. For most of us it a time of increased demands on our energy adding more stress to our already stressed filled lives.

With all of the preparation, planning, expectation, worry and reverie, we often miss the entire moment, only to realize too late that, once again, the season has passed and it is, now too, just a memory. When we rush to the future or fret about the past we miss the present, which is really the only time there is.

With a little practice and awareness, we can learn to slow things down, catch our breath and find a place of calm in the midst of all of it. Learning to be mindful is learning to pay attention to our life experiences in a new way. Scientific research has shown how beneficial practicing mindful awareness can be on our health and wellbeing. It can start as easily as paying attention to our breathing, by just noticing that, in fact we are actually breathing. By taking a moment to become aware of our breath and to focus on the process of breathing for a few cycles, we can create a break in the action and become more aware of the present moment.

You can do this anytime of the day, anyplace you happen to be:

1. Just stop for a moment and notice where you are (usually we are on autopilot, unaware of where we are and how we are doing).
2. Then, focus on the in-breath as it enters the body, fills the lungs, and expanding the chest area.
3. Then as you exhale, pay attention to the out-breath as it leaves the body.
4. And slowly, once again, follow the in-breath as it enters the body and then follow the out-breath as it leaves the body.

Repeat this process for a few cycles of the breath.

Simply by learning to become more aware of every moment, we can begin to more fully experience the present with all of the richness it holds.

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