



How to Stay Sane in Difficult Times

This morning I woke up at about four o'clock and couldn't go back to sleep and I was feeling a low level of anxiety or stress. I was just thinking about all that is going on in the world, and there is quite a lot going on. And I realized that we're experiencing a collective stress right now in addition to whatever you have going on individually.

I think it's important to recognize the collective stress and that we need a little extra special tender care right now. We need a little more gentleness with ourselves and with those around us. We need a little more compassion because these truly are trying times. And I want you to know that that's okay. It's okay, that you might need a little extra rest and relaxation. I want to encourage you to take the time to do that.

I know that part of what I'm feeling right now with these videos is that sometimes, in light of everything that's going on in the world feel, I worry that these videos are a tad shallow. And it's like, shouldn't I be talking about racism, shouldn't I talking about the pandemic, shouldn't I be talking about economic collapse? And yes, yes, but I don't have to talk about that all the time. We have to find ways to create a balance for ourselves in the midst of these trying times.

So, today, I want to offer you a few tips on how you can take better care of yourself during this time and recognize that it is a really challenging time for everyone.

I have several tips for you to experiment with. And these are tips that I use, so, I know that they can be really, really helpful.

The first tip is to limit your news consumption whether on Facebook, television, or wherever you consume it. You may want to limit how much you consume. I'm not suggesting that you turn away from it all together. I'm just suggesting that you limit the amount of time and the number of articles that you consume. I have a couple of news sources that I like to look at every morning. And then I just basically stay away from it. So that's the first step. Limit your news consumption.

Secondly, you probably need a little more sleep right now. And I know that for some of us sleep is hard to come by when there's so much going on, but we can rest. If you can't sleep well, you can rest. You can lie there and rest. You could perhaps build in some nap times for yourself.

Third, you might consider beginning a meditation or gratitude practice. Research shows how incredibly helpful that can be for our brains to learn to look for the good, the true, and the beautiful as I've talked about many times on these videos.



Fourth, you could intentionally connect with loved ones. I know that that's a little bit difficult right now with pandemic. The way that we normally do that has been hindered so it may be that you look for ways that you can connect with loved ones through writing letters, through zoom calls, FaceTime, or other out of the box ways, but make that a part of your regular consistent life.

Fifth, get out in nature. It's safe to be out in nature, and it's wonderfully healing. I cannot recommend it. Nature is incredibly healing. When I'm really stressed at work, I will literally just step outside beneath my ancient live oaks and just breathe them in for 90 seconds and then go sit back down to my computer. It truly does help.

Sixth, read some fiction. I read a lot of nonfiction for my work and for some of the things that are going on in our world right now. And that's great, but my brain needs a break sometimes. Right now, I'm reading a book called *The Water Dancer* that is fictional book set in the pre-Civil War South about slavery. It's amazing. It's so good and it just sort of relaxes my brain.

Seventh, you can listen to music. I love exploring new music, and it's so easy to do these days with our access to YouTube and all the different music apps. It's super easy to do and I've actually created an inspirational motivational playlist. If I'm feeling a little low or lacking some energy I put that on and it really does raise my energy. It really is helpful so I recommend music.

Eighth, Stand up from your desk throughout the day, and do some stretches, literally, 90 seconds can make a big difference. I will often stand up from my desk and do chest opening exercises and stretches because when we're sitting at our computers, we tend to kind of be collapse our shoulders, and it's not good for us. So just stand up from your desk for 90 seconds at a time and do a few stretches. It can really make a difference.

And, finally, you could do some breathing exercises. You can do these when you stand up or when you step outside or even just sitting at your desk. I've taught you the box breathing technique where you breathe in to the count of four, hold for the count of four, breathe out for the count of four, hold for the count four, and repeat that for about 90 seconds.

I believe that you'll find that as you intentionally do these caretaking activities for yourself that you're going to feel a little bit more relaxed, a little bit clearer, and it's going to be easier to find your way through this very challenging time. I hope you'll put in practice some of these things that I've given you today and just experiment for yourself and create your own practices that can help you have a more relaxed and flowing day.