

Take Deep Breaths

& Stay Calm Despite the Chaos of COVID-19

Burn
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I know it may seem like everything is out of your control during this chaotic time of COVID-19, but I do have a practice to share with you that I believe can and will help. Now, it might feel too simple or maybe hard to believe, but for me, developing a daily practice of taking deep breaths keeps me present, focused, and ready for whatever life brings me including coronavirus.

Here are 5 times throughout the day where I believe taking deep breaths will bring you closer to calm no matter the chaos surrounding you:

1. Upon waking

- First thing in the morning (or in the evening perhaps for my night shift friends), you have the perfect time to pause and take 5 deep cleansing breaths - all before getting out of bed.
- I want you to count to 5 slowly on the inhale with a goal of getting the air down into your belly and then exhaling slowly on a count of 5 as well. You do this 5 times total.

2. Every time you eat / drink

- Whenever you stop and take a moment to eat food or drink water (coffee, whatever), first take a deep breath (better 5)

- Added perk for this one - You may find this practice helpful in determining whether or not you're really hungry at all (perhaps you're just bored on in need of comfort)
- Reminder - I know you already know this, but also WASH YOUR HANDS!

3. Times of Overwhelm and High Stress

- Whenever you find yourself in a feeling of overwhelm, anxiety, or panic (like a Code but not necessarily) - pause, take a deep breath (better yet 5), and if you believe in a higher power, pray, THEN act.
- Believe it or not - even in a life and death situation like a Code Blue on a COVID positive patient, there is time for a quick moment to take a deep breath (even 5), breathing here can help you to feel grounded, connect purposefully into the encounter, clear your thoughts, and refocus.
- Now, I do NOT recommend standing right up in your COVID patient's air space while you're taking these deep breaths, but what about right before you go in there while you're putting on your PPE

4. Transition from work time to mama or significant other time

- If you're an essential employee and you drive a car - before getting out and walking inside, take a deep breath (better 5) and prepare to enter your home

- Release whatever has happened throughout your time away from home before walking in - Even if you live alone, it's still beneficial to release negative emotions outside
- I also highly encourage you to fully decontaminate at this point
- If you're working from home or serving as homeschool teacher, how about taking deep breaths when you shift focus between your work work and your mama work?

5. Before Bed

- Just as we begin our day, I suggest we end our day - we take 5 deep breaths, counting slowly to 5, moving the air down into the belly and then releasing on another count to 5. Repeating for all 5 breaths
- Try to let go of any remaining pervasive thoughts from the day and enter into rest and recovery time (sleep)



Additional Tips:

- ▶ If you have an Apple Watch or likely any other wearable tech, you can set reminders for taking deep breaths. I certainly can't and won't pretend that all tech is amazing or even close to a good idea, but deep breathing reminders - that's one tech integration I am behind.
- ▶ Consider adding loved ones to these practices - my daughter and I have a phrase that we use when we do our breathing together - Inhale, Inhale, Good; Exhale, Exhale, Yucky.

Meet Dr. Erica

Hello there! I am Dr. Erica Martinez - Passionate, Proud Registered Nurse with a Doctorate, and my main passion is to help fellow nurses maintain their fire and passion for nursing. I will not pretend that our healthcare system isn't horribly broken especially given the pandemic of COVID-19, but I want to help us find some control in a world full of chaos.

I have been a Registered Nurse for almost 20 years and have practiced from the patient's bedside as a CNA to serving as Dean of Nursing for a large undergraduate Nursing Program. Currently, I split my time between directing and teaching in a Vocational Nursing program and working at the bedside as a rapid response nurse.

I am licensed to practice in California and Illinois, and I most recently earned my Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago; however, I started my RN journey as an Associate Degree grad at Rock Valley College in Illinois.

I am originally from Rockford, Illinois (near Chicago), but now live in Southern California (near Disney) with my husband, our two amazing children, and dog.

Sending you Loads of Gratitude, Love and Light

~ Dr. Erica 💖✨

