

We all experience stress during our daily lives. Stress can come in many different forms and can come about for many different reasons. During moments of stress, it helps to pause and really check-in with ourselves. That way we can really understand how we are feeling, and from there we can take steps to take care of ourselves or respond to the situation.

Key Learning Point # 1 → *Pausing*

Pausing is the most important step. We are often in autopilot mode, doing things automatically and not being fully aware of what's going on inside of us or around us. At any time, we can "press pause" and create an opportunity to check in. A good way to pause is to focus on the breath.

- From your perspective, what does it mean to check-in with yourself?
- What could be the benefits, for you personally, of taking more "check-in breaks" during your day?

Key Learning Point # 2 → *Labeling*

Labeling or describing our inner experience can make it less mysterious and overwhelming. We can say to ourselves things like: *"Okay, let me pause and check-in for a second here. I notice I'm feeling anxious. I also feel tired and hungry."* By mentally labeling and describing our experience in this way, we can get a sense of what's actually going on inside, rather than our inner experience seeming like one "big scary blob" or something unknown.

- From your perspective, why do you think labeling or describing your inner experience can make it less overwhelming or scary?

Key Learning Point # 3 → *Thinking through your needs*

Feelings give us clues about our needs. Our feelings can help us figure out what we need and how to take care of ourselves. For example, if we are feeling lonely or sad, we might reach out to others. If we are feeling anxious, stressed, or angry, we might go for a walk or spend some time alone to decompress. Or if we find we are feeling tired and hungry, we may need to take a break and have a snack. At any time, we can pause, check in our feelings, and then ask ourselves: *"What do I need right now?"* or *"How can I take care of myself?"*

- What do you think is the difference between ignoring your feeling versus "listening" to your feelings?

Daily Practice

Your brain is like a muscle. DAILY PRACTICE makes it strong.

Research studies show that daily practice...

- Makes your brain healthier and stronger
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Increases positive emotions

Recommendations for Daily Practice

- Set aside a little time every day to do ONE lesson or exercise. The lessons focus on *learning* key concepts. Exercises focus on *strengthening* your skills.
- The key is to CHOOSE what works for you. Develop a personalized practice of your own. If you miss a day, no worries. You can always get back on track the next day
- An exercise that goes well with this lesson is the **BOAT Exercise**, which is available in the Exercises section at *MindfulCoping.com*

Plan Your Daily Practice for the Next Week

| | What date/day of week will this be for me? | What Lesson or Exercise will I plan to do on this day? <i>(Tips: Consider repeating the "Checking in with Yourself" lesson or trying the BOAT Exercise)</i> | When and where will I practice? |
|-------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Day 1 | | | |
| Day 2 | | | |
| Day 3 | | | |
| Day 4 | | | |
| Day 5 | | | |
| Day 6 | | | |
| Day 7 | | | |

Keep in mind, the Mindful Coping Program is designed to be FLEXIBLE. Don't worry about doing the lessons or exercises in a particular order. You can go through the lessons and exercises in any order you prefer.
