



## Smart Methods for Staying Safe in Emergency Situations- Healthcare Professionals and Covid-19

You are responsible for your own actions in all respects.  
Always follow the protocols and rules of your government health departments, hospital, clinic or practice.

Advice by an experienced psychologist and trauma counsellor.

Dear Healer

Throughout uncertain waiting and vital focus during emergencies, you may at times vaguely become aware that you feel vulnerable, unsettled, scared and groundless. However the groundedness you need is not in the space around you, but in the space within you. Start just there. That is where love, wisdom, grace, and compassion reside. What will keep you going throughout is to lean in often with open honesty about your difficult experience, but lightly...and to acknowledge your experience with grace and kindness for yourself.

Breathe in... lean in... and go...

### 1. Short & Easy Deep Breathing

- Do this exercise as it comes to you (maybe every now and then when you wash your hands). It is a more oxygen per breath exercise.
- If you can, sit or stand up straight, but body posture does not matter.
- Take a slow and deep in-breath until you feel the air in your neck.
- Hold for a moment, and exhale deeply and slowly through your nostrils.
- Do this for a few times. Notice the flow of breath and how your upper-body feels when you breathe deeply.
- After the last exhalation, swallow the saliva in your mouth.

### 2. A Healer's Mindful Walk

- You are walking to wash your hands, or to attend to the next patient.
- For one or two seconds, pause and try to shift your focus from your mind's overthinking, to your body posture.
- Take a deep breath in, and when breathing out, relax your jaw, your neck and shoulders and your stomach.

- Just for the first few steps, become aware how you lift your foot and put it down in front of you – first your heel and then your toes.
- If you want to, do this short mindful walk for your previous patient. **Every time you breathe out, let go of everything that is not yours to carry.**

### 3. Putting On or Taking Off Healers' Protective Gear

- Just before you put on or take off your protective gear, pretend that you have a pause button on the palm of your hand.
- As you “press” this button, remind yourself: “I am here for me now”. Try to be just in this moment.
- Breathe slowly in through your nose, and out through your mouth.
- While putting your gear on or off, try to do this a little slower than usual. **Become fully aware of each bodily movement, each action.**
- Do this knowingly loving kindness towards yourself.

### 4. A Short Grounding Exercise during Chaos or Trauma

- When it is safe and possible, withdraw from the situation for one or two minutes.
- When you breathe in, think of the number “one”. When breathing out, relax your forehead. When you breathe in, think of the number “two”. When breathing out, relax your neck and shoulders. When you breathe in, think of the number “three”. When you breathe out, relax your stomach. Repeat if possible.
- Become aware of your surroundings, as if for the first time.
- Remind yourself: “I can be anxious/tired/upset and still deal with this situation.”
- Repeat your chosen mantra such as: ever day in every way I am becoming better and better .

### 5. Taking a Break while Handwashing

- Just before you start washing your hands, take a few seconds to give yourself acknowledgement for the reason why it is necessary: You tried to help, or heal. If there is a mirror in front of the sink, make sure to give yourself a smile.
- While you focus on washing your hands, become aware of each part of your hands. Try to become aware of thankfulness – that these hands can make a difference.
- Before you go again to help with these hands, hold your left hand for a moment with your right hand while reminding yourself: “With these hands I am doing the best I can, and that is more than good enough.”

### 6. Being Able to Take a Mindful Rest during COVID-19

- Do a quick Breathing Howzit Exercise: Lean in lightly, and become aware of your thoughts, pleasant and unpleasant feelings, as well as your bodily sensations. Do this without trying to change them or judging them. These difficult feelings may just remind you that what you are trying to do is important to you.
- On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being the most difficult moment ever and 10 being the best moment ever), where are you now? Try to accept wherever you are with no judgment or expectations. You are doing the best you can.
- Then, return to mindful breathing. Breathe in through your nose for 3 counts, pause, and breathe out through your mouth for 4 counts. Do this for 3 to 5 minutes if possible.
- Become aware of your surroundings: what sounds can you become aware of... without having an opinion about them or judging them.
- Do the Breathing Mindfully free session on 360Smartly.com if possible.

## 7. Dealing with Difficult People during COVID-19

- Colleagues, clients or family of clients may act unfairly in these difficult times. Try not to make it about yourself. They are just desperate, worried or tired.
- Do the Mindfulness BOLD-exercise:
- B- Breathe consciously (three times in and out)
- O- Observe your difficult thoughts and feelings (“This is unfair. I did my best.” “I am so disappointed that they can’t see that I did everything I could.”)
- L – Listen to your values and needs. (I am usually professional and caring. I need some support or breathing space.)
- D – Do what you need (not want) most! (Forgive. Focus on the task at hand. Give reassurance. Take a break. Seek support.)

## 8. Dealing with sleep deprivation during COVID-19

- Take a power nap wherever you are- a few minutes of sleep will heal. Do one of these exercises before you take the nap- Be the Mentalist.
- If this is not possible, when you can’t go forward, remind yourself: “I just need to give one more step.”
- Be aware that sleep deprivation can interfere with your mood and thoughts. Don’t take yourself too seriously. Remind yourself: “I am just tired because I am helping and making a difference. This is temporarily.”
- Any form of conscious resting will help: Three conscious breaths in- and out; relaxation exercise; prayer; being creative by means of drawing, journaling, etc.

## 9. When Isolated from Loved Ones and their Support during COVID-19

- It helps to remember during your struggling in the midst of necessary isolation, that your brain will keep on reminding you that connection with others helps you dealing with stress. Longing for loved ones is a good thing. Thank your brain every now and then for this reminder, even if it is uncomfortable.
- Every time you feel alone, breathe in reminding yourself: “I am not alone”. While breathing out, remind yourself: “We all are doing this...”
- When you feel isolated and alone, make sure to make some notes on what you would like to share if you connect with loved ones again. Make voice notes, write down high lights and challenges. Keep photos of loved ones on your phone or in your purse. Keep a journal if possible.
- During your every day, show yourself gestures of kindness: hold your own hand, or give yourself a hug.
- At the end of every day, write down three things you appreciate about yourself in doing this for yourself and the human race.

Take good, mindful self-care. As many times as you may need it, make the choice to stop, breathe, be, walk slowly, and keep on deciding to show up. You are in the thoughts and prayers of millions of people. Trust your journey.

**April 2020**

**Mariki Smith (MA PhD Psychology)**

**Dirk Joubert (Attorney and Mediator)**

**Free State Institute for Mindfulness**

**[fsmindfulness.co.za](http://fsmindfulness.co.za) / [360smartly.com](http://360smartly.com)**