

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

Objective

To increase and sustain feelings of calm and peacefulness when you are distressed by what is happening in the world.

What to Know

Watching the news or reading the headlines might cause you to become upset or feel a general sense of dread. You might even live in an area plagued by war, political unrest, ethnic violence, or terrorism. Maybe you experience crime, harassment, abuse, or quarrels with co-workers or neighbors. Your home might feel like a war zone rather than a peaceful haven.

Daily exposure to upheaval and tragedy significantly impacts physical and mental health. In addition, chronic stress related to this exposure contributes to relationship problems, illness, addictions, mistakes at work, inefficiency, anxiety, reduced productivity, lack of fulfillment, and unhappiness. Reducing stress is essential for finding peace and cultivating a sense of inner calm.

Perhaps you yearn for inner peace, and you have searched for it in nature, religion, or mindfulness activities. Even if you found inner peace, maybe it was fleeting. What can you do to increase and sustain feelings of calm and peacefulness when you are distressed by what is happening in the world? Here are some suggestions.

- 1. Focus on the good in life.** The world is full of kind and caring people. Notice them and be one of them to diminish feelings of despair.
- 2. Stay positive.** This means being self-aware and in touch with your feelings. Avoid allowing fear to take over, convincing you things will not work out for the best. Accept criticism that comes your way and know that most things in life are not personal.
- 3. Be thankful for what you have.** Being genuinely thankful for what matters in life reduces gloomy feelings.
- 4. Share with others.** Give to those in need or offer resources for other peoples' well-being. You might do a random act of kindness (RAOK) or share your experience and expertise.
- 5. Be a light in someone's life.** If you worry about the terrible things that are happening in the world, fill your life with good deeds. Volunteer, visit a nursing home, or check in on a homebound neighbor.
- 6. Avoid listening to doomsday proclaimers.** That might mean turning off the news. Be selective about what you watch, listen to, and read.
- 7. Have fun.** Fill your life with good times. It takes a conscious effort to plan pleasurable activities. Perhaps you can enjoy a concert, have lunch with a friend, take your family on an outing, or go for a hike and enjoy nature's beauty.

8. Be prepared. Emergencies happen—job loss, illness, accidents, and more. They are part of life, but rarely worthy of panic if you plan ahead. Reduce your anxiety and prepare with a few life-sustaining items. Store some extra food and other necessities in the pantry and set money aside for inevitable emergencies.

9. Have faith. Faith is the decision to love and trust—no matter what happens. It is easy to lose faith, feel hopeless, and live in fear if you constantly observe poverty, war, tragedy, and pain. Love and trust might even seem pointless. Here are ways to keep the faith when it seems impossible:

- pray
- be generous and kind
- get inspired by art, nature, or a role model
- surround yourself with people you admire

10. Talk to your loved ones. Discuss what is going on in the world. Ask them about a time when they felt afraid. Reassure them that you are doing everything you can to ensure their safety.

11. Focus on the big picture. It is challenging to feel at peace when you are focused on short-term worries. But if you focus on the big picture, you can find peace in knowing that what is happening now will not last forever.

12. Let go of what you cannot control. When something outside your control affects your peace, you might feel hopeless or angry. But focusing on things you cannot change is counterproductive and increases stress. Make a list with two columns—what you can control, and what you cannot control. Choose to release the things you cannot control.

13. Forgive others. Sometimes the hardest thing to release is the negativity you feel when someone wrongs you. You can choose to move on.

14. Be a peacemaker. Help your loved ones resolve conflicts and solve problems. Assist others in finding peace in the small things.

15. Be a good listener. You do not have to solve others' problems for them, but you can listen to their concerns and provide support and understanding.

16. Schedule time each day to manage stress. Everyday do something to reduce your stress, whether it is practicing yoga, going on a run, or spending 20 minutes alone in a quiet room.

This worksheet will help you increase and sustain feelings of calm and peacefulness when you are distressed by what is happening in the world.

What to Do

Using the list above or your own ideas, you will use the following chart for the next 30 days to help you track activities that cultivate calm, increase peacefulness, and reduce stress. Do one thing each day and add activities when you feel comfortable doing so. Write down the date, describe the activity, and note whether you scheduled a specific activity to manage stress. Rank

how you feel after you do an activity on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = you did not feel calm or peaceful at all, and 10 = blissful calm and total peace.

Date	Activity	Did you schedule time to reduce stress? Y / N	Rating 0-10

Date	Activity	Did you schedule time to reduce stress? Y / N	Rating 0-10

Did this activity help you feel calmer and at peace? Why or why not?

What else can you do cultivate and sustain peace?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this activity?
