5 Minutes of Mindful Breathing and Meditation

By ALICE NUTTALL

We are all carrying around more and different kinds of stress lately. Holding on to stress and negative emotions creates a harmful and cumulative mental and physical drain. It diminishes our ability to relax, rest and recharge. We are better off if we can find healthy ways to release this extra stress.

If you can find just five minutes to do some deep breathing and meditation, it will provide true mental health benefits. It is a wonderful way to ensure you start your day in a positive frame of mind. And if you find yourself in a stressful situation, it will help you stay calm and make better decisions as you do some deep breathing.

I suggest starting with 10 breaths, but you can always do more if it feels comfortable to you. You can close your eyes and count to 10 as you breathe or picture something that brings you peace. Start by taking an exaggerated breath: a deep inhale through your nostrils (3 seconds), hold your breath (2 seconds), and then a long exhale through your mouth (4 seconds). Repeat this 9 more times and then open your eyes. I love to imagine inhaling peace and exhaling my stress, fear or anger.

Starting with this quick form of deep breathing and meditation, you may soon find that you want to explore more ways to practice mindfulness and meditation. There are multiple free resources and apps, such as Headspace or Calm, that offer quick, guided tools to relieve stress and promote mental wellness. If you have a Fitbit, for example, there are already exercises "at hand."

I frequently reflect on what my Grandma has told me my entire life: "Don't borrow worry from the future." I hope this exercise will help you clear your head and stay in the present. Take care of yourself.