An illustration of a woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a yellow turtleneck sweater and blue jeans. She is shown in profile, reaching her arms out towards several floating puzzle pieces. The puzzle pieces are in various colors: dark blue, orange, purple, and light yellow. The background is white.

Practice the PAUSE

Manage your emotions.

Ages 13-18



What is a pause?

When we pause a game, music, or a video—everything stops.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could pause or stop things happening around us just long enough to take a big, deep breath?

When we feel sad, worried, or afraid, we can think things, do things, or become people we don't want to be, and that can make us feel worse. We might be convinced people are mad at us, make nasty comments on a friend's post, or hang out alone in our room instead of spending time with family.

But when we do these things, it often means we're feeling something deep inside.

If we stop and think about what we're feeling and understand why we feel that way, we can choose to change what we think, what we do, and who we want to be. And that can change how we feel.

It's not pretending to feel something we don't. It's taking time to choose a thought, an action, or a way of being that changes a negative to a positive.

Practicing pause-itivity.

Buddhists call it the "Sacred Pause" – exploring the moment between a feeling and a reaction and choosing what comes next.

It takes practice. It's hard to stop when our feelings are so strong, but if we can learn to pause and think about what we're feeling, we can change how we think, act, or want to be.

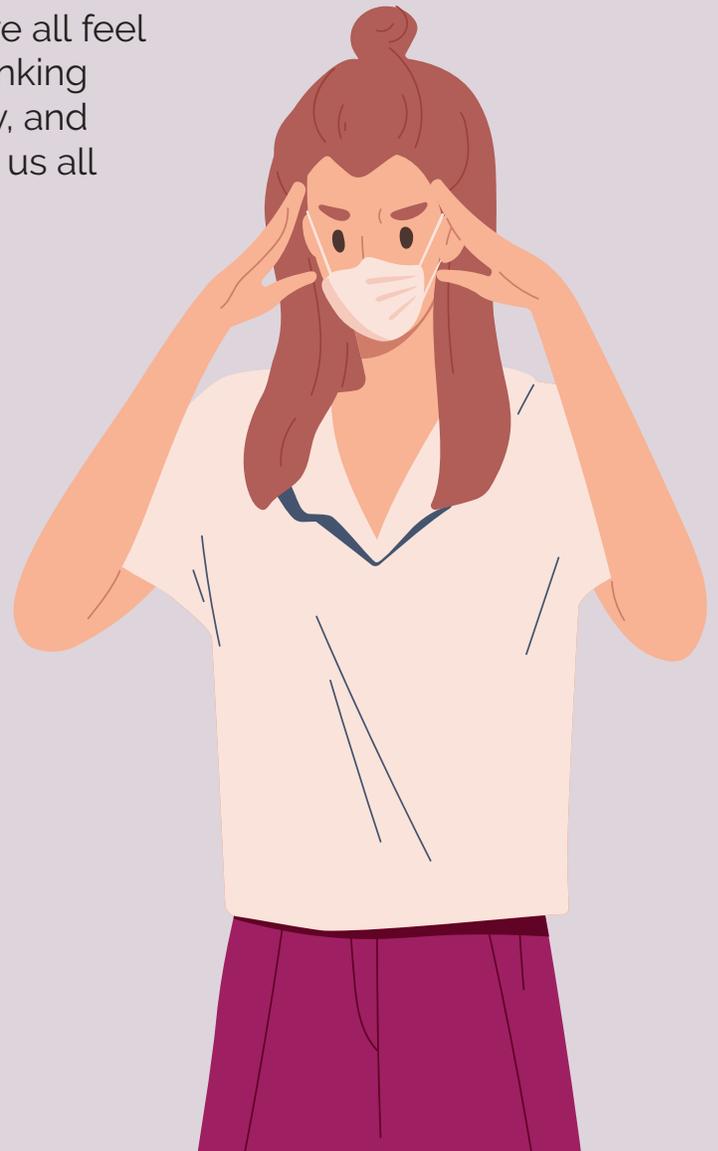
And that can make us feel better.

Why we may feel different now.

During COVID-19, we lost some very important things. We didn't see our family or friends as much. We missed time at school. Some of us lost people we love.

Our bodies and our brains had to make all kinds of changes. Change is hard and can make us very uncomfortable. When we feel uncomfortable, we may also feel sad, angry, or confused.

These feelings are normal, and we all feel this way. Practicing the pause, thinking about what we're feeling and why, and choosing to feel better can make us all stronger and happier.



How do we practice the pause?

Practicing pause-itivity isn't just forcing ourselves to change a negative thought ("I don't like this") into the opposite, positive thought ("I do like this"). That type of positive thinking doesn't work because the "positive" thought is false and you don't really believe it. Practicing Pause-itivity is choosing to think, act, or be different—in a way that's true for you, so you believe it.



Scenario 1: Changing a thought

You feel tired and don't want to get out of bed. You sleep through online classes and can't seem to concentrate. You feel like something is wrong with you and that is making you feel sad and withdrawn.



Pause.

Pause and ask yourself why you're so tired. You realize that you're not just tired but feeling sad.



Think.

Recognize you're sad because of the pandemic and not because of anything wrong with you.



Act.

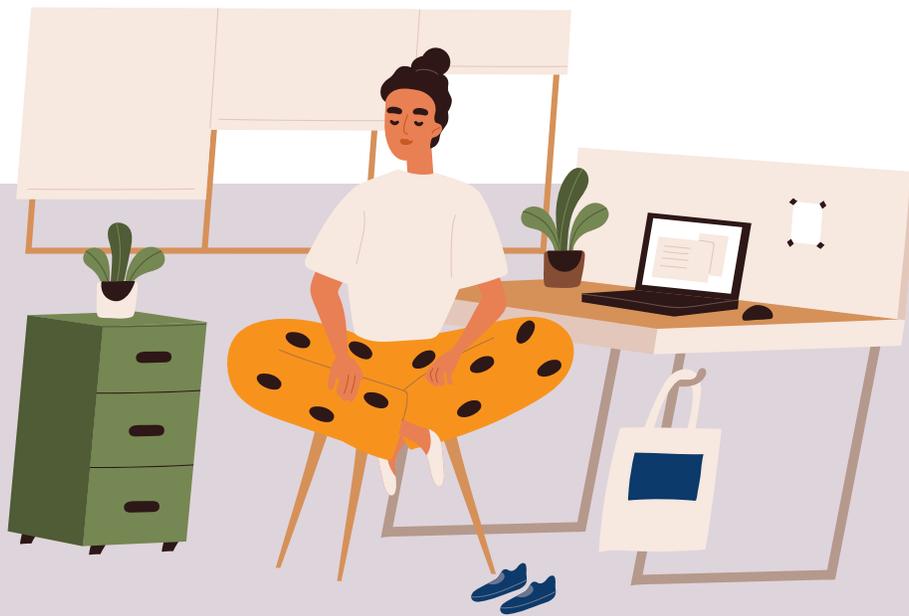
Choose to change your negative thoughts about yourself to positive thoughts about what you're going to do with your friends when the pandemic is over.



Be.

Changing your thoughts helps you get excited about the future and your energy returns.

Pausing and thinking about what you're feeling—even when you're feeling good—makes it easier to check in and see what you're feeling when things feel uncomfortable. Once you understand what you're feeling, you can change your feeling and help yourself feel better.



Scenario 2: Changing an action

A friend posts something on social media that makes you angry. Your gut reaction is to use the angry face emoji and then reply with an angry comment that leads to a long and bitter argument with your friend.



Pause.

After you see the upsetting post, pause for a few moments and think about what you're feeling.



Think.

Realize you're not mad at your friend but frustrated you haven't gotten to spend time with your friends in a long time.



Act.

Choose to send your friend a text message and ask if they want to get together virtually.



Be.

Meeting with your friend makes you feel better and you no longer feel as frustrated.

Just changing one thought, action, or way of being can make all the difference.



How do we change our feelings?

There are three ways we can change our feelings—we can change:



What we think - COPE

Check for your reaction (thought)

Observe the emotions and behavior behind that reaction

Plan a different thought, reaction, or response

Execute positive changes and practice over and over



How we act - CALM

Control your breathing

Attend by paying attention to the present moment

Listen to your thoughts and feelings

Make yourself relax and be aware of how your body feels



How we want to be - CARE

Connect with people

Accept what's happening around you

Reason and use thoughts to make your choices instead of emotion

Engage in living in the moment

Emotional Writing

Once you find a way to take a pause, the next hardest thing to do is identify what you are feeling.

To get you started, try an emotional writing exercise.

Emotional writing is writing everything that comes into your mind for a set period of time. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking.

Set a timer for 10 minutes and just release everything in your mind onto paper. When the timer goes off - stop. Go back and read what you've written and answer two questions.

1. What were you feeling as you were writing?
2. What thought, action, or way of being could change the way you were feeling?

Repeat this activity four days in a row and then put the journal away until the next week. Then write for four more days in a row. Do this for two weeks.

At the end of two weeks, throw your journal away. Rip the pages out and keep going, but free yourself of the feelings you released. Once you get used to recognizing what you are feeling and how it expresses itself in your thoughts, it will be easier to recognize your feelings and identify ways to make positive change.

Studies have shown that emotional writing or timed, free-form writing can help you release feelings you may not even know you have.



Emotional Writing

Week 1 - Day 1

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 1 - Day 2

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 1 - Day 3

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 1 - Day 4

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 2 - Day 1

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 2 - Day 2

Set a timer for 10 minutes...

Use the next page to write everything that comes into your mind. No one will read this but you, so you can say anything. It doesn't need to make sense. Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. Draw pictures to emphasize what you are thinking. Just release everything in your mind onto paper.

When the timer goes off - stop.

Go back and read what you've written and answer these two questions:

What were you feeling as you were writing?

What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Week 2 - Day 3

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What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

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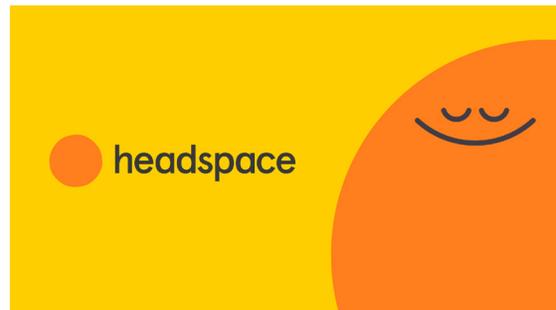
What is a thought, action, or way of being that could change the way you felt?

Emotional Writing

Did you find this exercise helpful? Emotional writing can be done at any time. Another helpful tool is journaling. Keep a paper journal and track your emotions and how you're feeling or check out these free apps.



remente.com



headspace.com



healthjourneys.com



wayoflifeapp.com

Practice the PAUSE



Practice the PAUSE

Want to learn more about how to manage
your emotions and stress at any age?

Find additional resources and
downloadable tools at:

[practicethepause.org](https://www.practicethepause.org)

These activities are based on the COPE, CALM, and CARE skills models developed by Kira Mauseth, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Snohomish Psychology Associates Senior Instructor, Psychology, Seattle University. They have been adapted for public use by Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health.

