
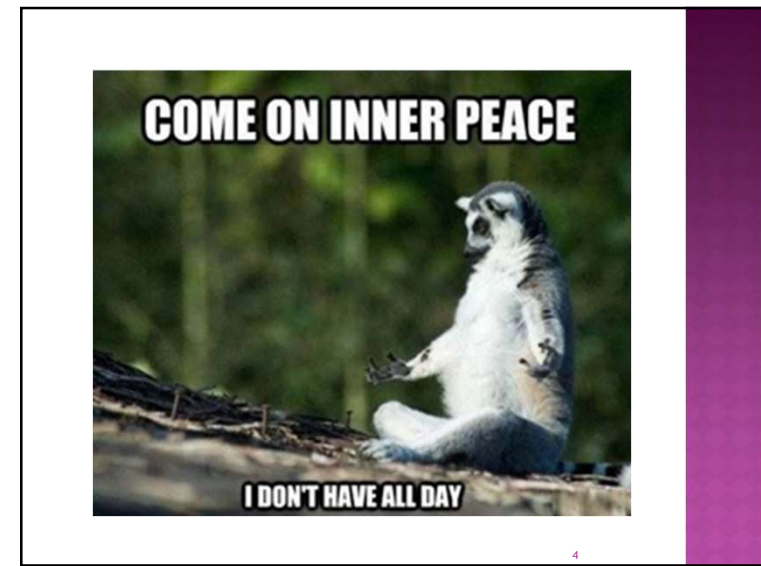
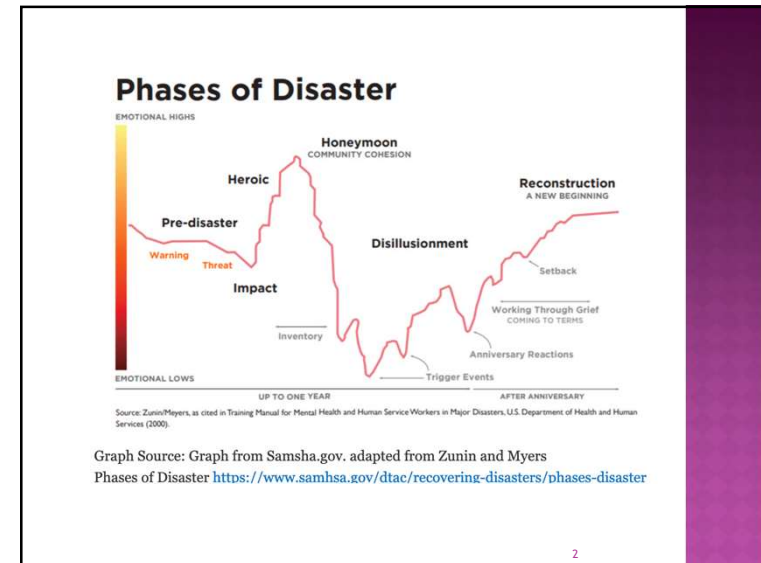


# FINDING THE BALANCE:

## HOW TO THRIVE IN THE FACE OF LIFE'S STRESSES

Steve Wengel, MD  
Assistant vice chancellor for  
UNMC/UNO campus wellness

## HOW IS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTING US?

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## SOME COMMON REACTIONS TO STRESS

- ◉ Vague sense of unease
- ◉ Irritability, impatience
- ◉ Insomnia
- ◉ Physical symptoms

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## LET'S TAKE A BREATH TOGETHER

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## TAKE THE 12-SECOND BREATH TO RESET YOUR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

- ◉ Count slowly to six as you breathe in
- ◉ Pause briefly
- ◉ Count slowly to six as you breathe out
- ◉ Repeat 3 more times

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## ROUTINES

- ◉ Getting outdoors
  - Being in nature reduces stress
  - Can combine with exercise
- ◉ Healthy diet
  - Improves self esteem
  - May reduce depressive symptoms

## ROUTINES

- ◉ Faith/spirituality
- ◉ Hygiene
- ◉ Make your bed every day

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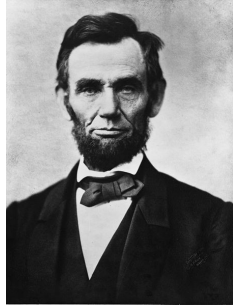
## RELAXATION/REFLECTION

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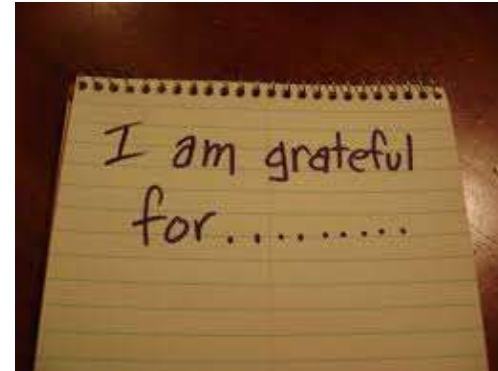


- ◉ We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.

■ Abraham Lincoln



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## ELICITING THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

- ◉ The following is the generic technique taught at the Benson-Henry Institute:
- ◉ Use the word "one" as a focus word
- ◉ Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- ◉ Close your eyes.
- ◉ Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, say your focus word silently to yourself as you exhale.

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- ◉ Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. Do not set a timer.
- ◉ Practice the technique once or twice daily. Good times to do so are before breakfast and before dinner.
- ◉ Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh well," and gently return to your repetition.

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## TAMING ANXIETY AND WORRY

- ◉ Just be aware of it - “non-judgmental awareness”
  - Noticing a feeling lets your prefrontal cortex have a say
  - This helps calm the amygdala
- ◉ Put a name to it - “I guess I’m feeling anxious”
  - Also engages the prefrontal cortex
- ◉ Focus on the current moment (not the past or future)
  - This is the essence of mindfulness

## ”WORRY TIME”

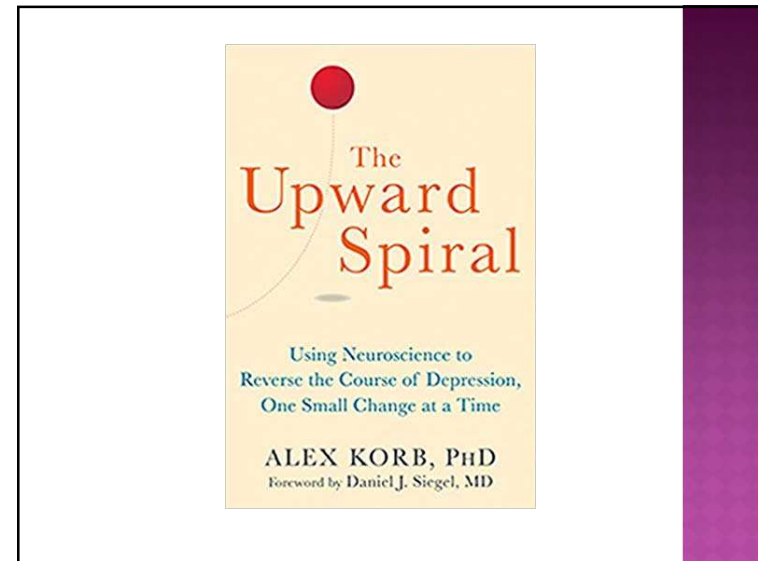
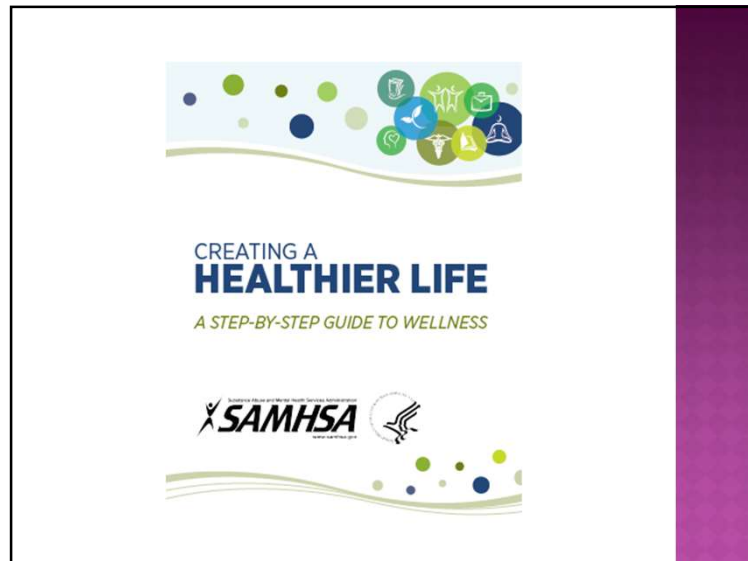
- ◉ Set aside 20-30 minutes per day
- ◉ Save up all your fretting and stewing until your designated worry time
- ◉ Set a timer, do your best worrying, and when the timer goes off, get up and get on with your day

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## SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

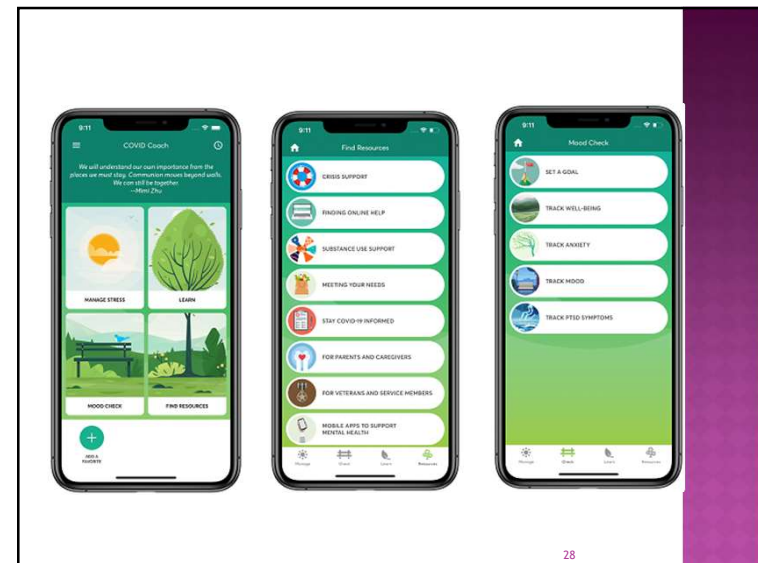
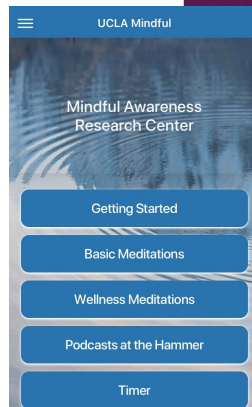
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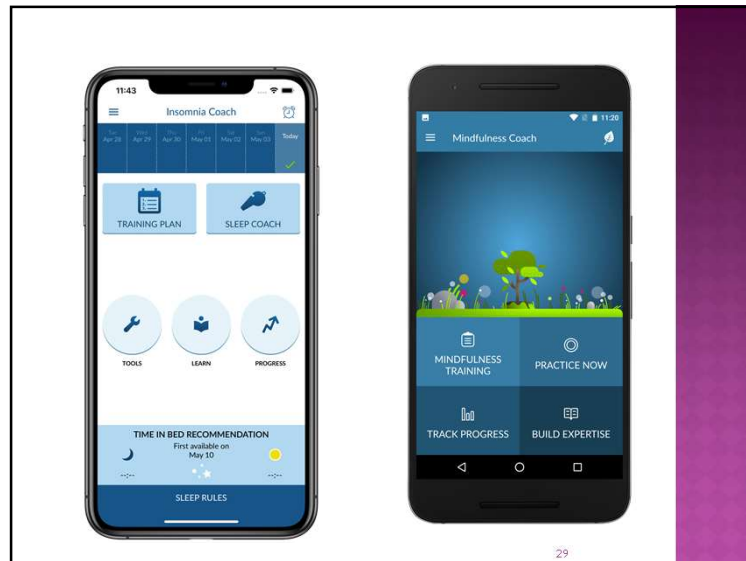




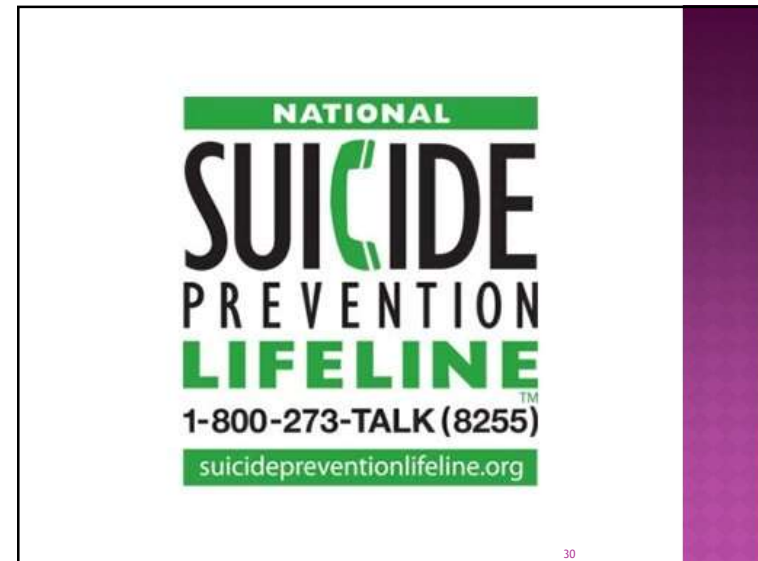
## FREE GUIDED MEDITATIONS

- <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations>
- From UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center
- Audio and written meditations
  - General health
  - Sleep
  - Dealing with difficult emotions or sensations





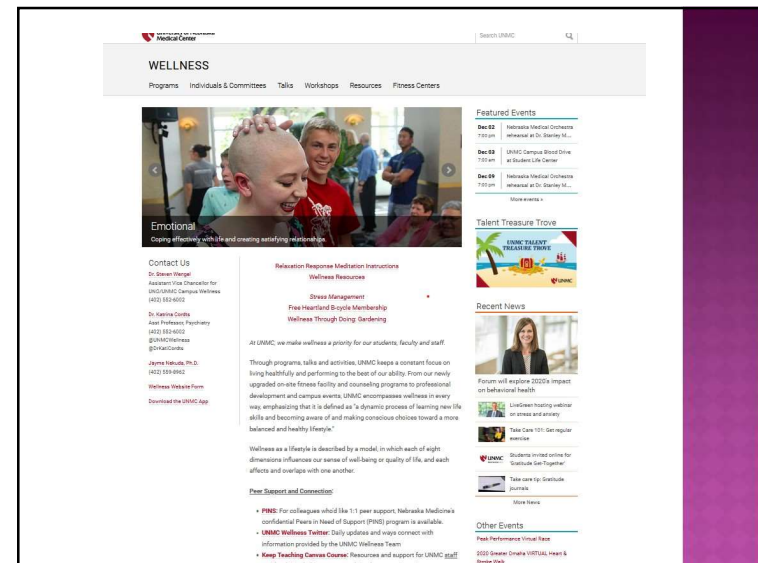
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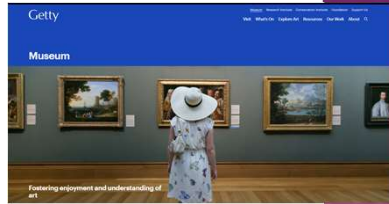
## WHEN TO SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP

- Prolonged feelings of depression
- Hopelessness
- Feeling like your life is out of control
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Difficulty getting along with friends and family
- Intense fears
- Persistent difficulty sleeping
- Avoiding work or school activities
- Inability to abstain from destructive behaviors (e.g., drinking, bingeing, etc.)



## THE GETTY MUSEUM CHALLENGE

- Grab 3 things in your house and recreate a famous work of art



QUESTIONS?

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