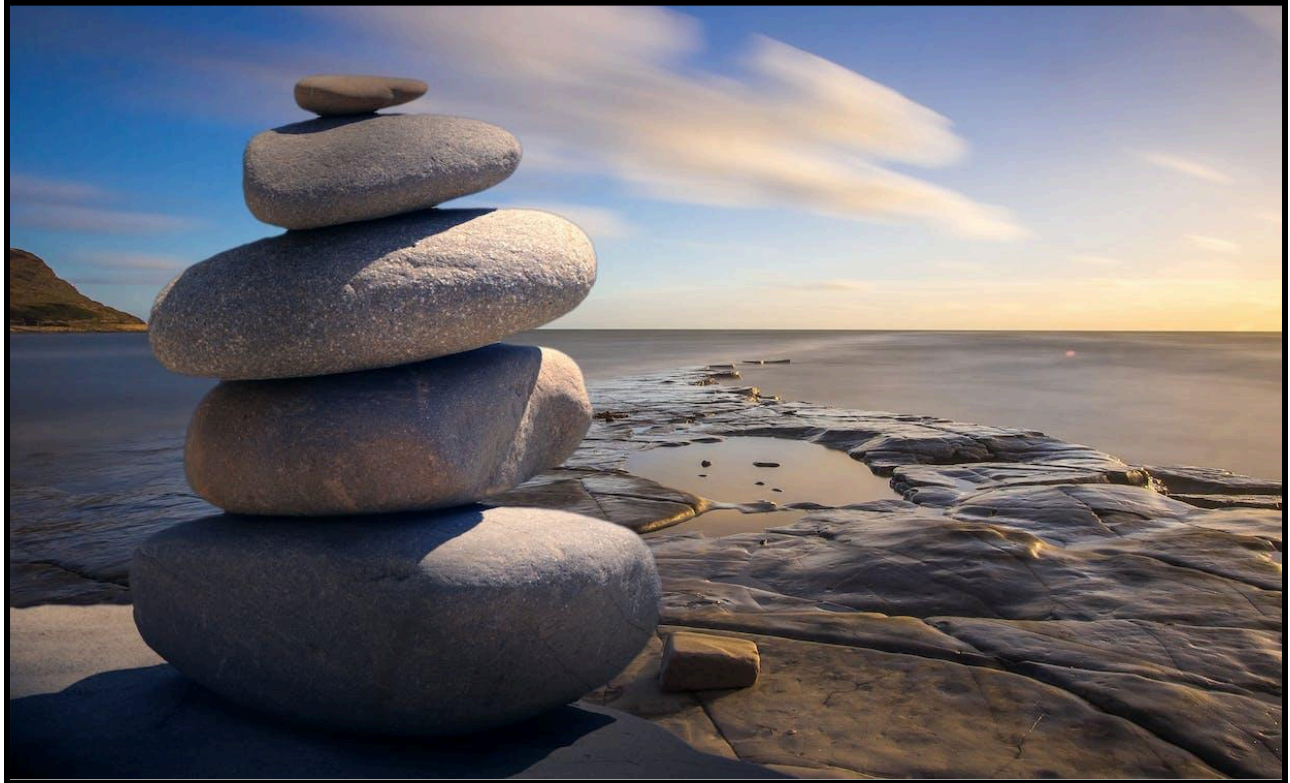




Power of the Pause



Slow down and take some time to reflect. One of the greatest tools that we have for our mental health is the power of the pause. We've crowded our free time by scrolling through social media, watching the news, and worrying about what the future holds. **We think around 60,000 thoughts a day.** It's no surprise that we live in a world where more people are anxious and depressed than ever. We need to unplug from the chaos in our lives and we need to embrace the quiet times.

Here's a few simple things that you can do to reset your mind.

- 1) **Focus on the breath.** When we're stressed out, we hold onto our breath for much longer than we should. The longer we hold our breath the faster our heart beats. That's sending fight or flight signals to our brain. When we can

control our breath, it gives us a great advantage when life presents unwelcomed stress. Box breathing is a great way to control stress. Here's the box breathing technique:

- Breathe in for 5 seconds
- Hold your breath for 5 seconds
- Breathe out for 5 seconds
- Pause for 5 seconds before your next breath

- 2) **More time spent in nature.** A lot of us have lost touch with the beauty of nature. We live in concrete jungles. We're surrounded by four walls and artificial lighting. If you don't already do this, set aside time on a weekend to go for a walk at a park. If you can visit a national park that's even better. Go with a group of friends or find a quiet place for yourself.
- 3) **Incorporate a mindfulness practice.** This can include meditation or any activity that requires your full, relaxed attention. Mindfulness doesn't mean sitting cross legged on a cushion while humming a mantra. When we are practicing mindfulness, we're making an intentional effort to focus on a particular object, thought, or vision. This can be as simple as watching the flames on a campfire. Set aside some time to expand your awareness of the feelings and sensations around you.
- 4) **Journal your thoughts.** Find a quiet place and write some of your thoughts down. What's on your mind? It might not seem very relaxing to write down your thoughts (especially if they're negative). But journaling allows us to describe how we're feeling at the moment. Putting your emotions and ideas to paper is powerful. If you need an outlet to express your mind, journaling is a great way to do it.