

A Zen Master's tips for staying sane in challenging times

Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism

1. Guard the morning (and start it gently). Train yourself to begin the day with a few gentle breaths and a smile, *before* even getting out of bed (or checking the phone). Make the vow to live every hour of the day deeply, with compassion.

2. Savor your tea or coffee, slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the earth revolves. Follow your breathing, relax the body, look out the window, listen to your heartbeat (this is nothing less than meditation).

3. Enjoy every step of breakfast-making. Life is made of small moments. There is nowhere to hurry to, nothing to get done. This is it! Enjoy the presence of your loved ones, and the wonder of having enough to eat.

4. When you're ready to work, work. Free yourself from distractions, and cultivate one-pointed mind. But don't forget to take care of your body while at the computer! Set a bell to sound so you can stretch every 30 minutes or so.

5. Take time to [walk in mindfulness](#). If you can go outside and get in touch with nature, wonderful. If you're indoors, no problem: you can practice slow walking meditation, a powerful way to release tension and anxiety.

6. Take a nap after lunch for 20 minutes, or practice [deep relaxation](#) (body scan) while lying down. Even just 10 or 15 minutes of releasing tension can set you free and refresh you before you keep working.

7. Nourish yourself. Nothing can survive without food. Fear, anxiety and despair may be "fed" by what we read, see and hear. Likewise, our compassion, trust and gratitude can be fed by choosing inspiring books, music, audio & conversations.

8. Sweat every day. In our practice centers the monastics do physical exercise or sport every day. It's essential to circulate our energy, stay healthy, and release tension and feelings that are stored in every cell of our body.

9. Reach out to loved ones. Let them know you are there for them. Ask what their deepest hopes and fears are. Write them a love letter. Forgive those who need forgiving. Do not miss this stark opportunity to heal wounded relationships.

10. Listen to audio tracks of Thay and his monastics guiding these practices on the [Plum Village Meditation App](#) (free).