




**WHOLE  
SOUL**  
AN EVENING  
OF REFLECTION



**PATHS  
TOWARD  
SOLACE**

*Empathy & Connection* **250**  
A Vision for America at



created in partnership with Dr. Justin S. Hopkins

## **Feel your feelings.**

It's important to grant yourself permission to feel whatever you feel. No emotion is inherently bad or wrong. We cannot choose what we feel, only how we express it. Our emotions are natural responses that can guide us toward what we truly need to find comfort and peace. When you feel a strong emotion, pause to consider what that emotion could reveal about your needs. The more we understand our emotions, the better positioned we are to care for ourselves.

## **Keep a routine with healthy activities.**

A steady self-care routine can have a big impact during stressful times. Consider your output-to-input ratio: how much you work, give to others, and produce versus how much you care for yourself, take breaks, or rest. In times of stress, it can be helpful to reduce our commitments or decrease our output, and enhance our self-care or boost our input. Each person is unique. Take into account that your ratio and routine may look different from others. Prioritize what feels nurturing for you.

## **Recognize what's controllable or uncontrollable.**

We can identify the most helpful coping strategies by distinguishing between our influence and factors outside our control. For factors within our control, we can affect the changes we desire by adopting an action-focused approach. This includes activism, organizing, donating to various causes, voting, and many other tasks. For aspects outside our influence, we should adopt a more introspective approach to alter our internal world. Such practices include meditation, yoga, journaling, and therapy. Knowing where our influence begins and ends can mitigate undue guilt, helplessness, or overwhelm.

## **Limit news consumption.**

We live in the age of information, with seemingly endless news and current events available at our fingertips. It is both addictive and overwhelming. Take frequent breaks from social media and news outlets. Strike a balance between prolonged detachment and constant preoccupation and overconsumption.

## **Know your triggers and recognize your limits.**

Given our sociopolitical climate, there is no shortage of distressing information. We all have triggers—experiences that evoke anguish or overwhelming feelings. Understand which interactions and information cause you the most distress and minimize your involvement with them.

## **Seek community.**

We need spaces where we can be heard, accepted, safe, and belong. Find people you trust to have open, non-judgmental dialogue about your experiences. Spend more time with family or friends, participate in your spiritual communities, join groups that feel supportive and understanding. We need each other the most in challenging times.

## **Align your actions with your values.**

When our lives align with our fundamental ideals, we can experience less stress, live with a sense of purpose, and maintain integrity. Such clarity and alignment can also help us focus on what we can control and accept what we cannot.

## **Prepare for waves of stress and uncertainty and have grace for yourself.**

In all likelihood, we will be wrestling with political and societal unrest for some time. No matter how well we cope or master our routines, there will be times when the uncertainty and stress are simply too much. Remember that you will experience moments like this, and treat yourself with compassion rather than criticism or guilt.

## **Our resilience comes from joy and gratitude.**

Joy is our greatest source of resilience and flourishes when we embrace gratitude. This is not an endorsement of empty positivity. Those who are in touch with themselves, the good and the bad, tend to fare better during challenging times. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize our challenges and difficulties while also remembering the things we are grateful for, whether they are small acts of kindness or major life events. A practice of gratitude can bring more joy into our lives, and joy can fuel us through the challenges ahead.

# WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE

## 1) Gratitude journal

Take 5 minutes each day (or as often as you can) to write down what you appreciate. List at least 3-5 things, and be as specific as possible.

## 2) Gratitude walk

Go outside for a walk at a comfortable pace for at least 15-20 minutes. There are two ways you can go about a gratitude walk. First, say out loud to yourself what you are grateful for. It may feel awkward at first, but allow the gratitude to wash over you as you list as many things as you can. Second, you can intentionally focus on your surroundings – the air, streets, foliage, and sounds. Notice how things move, function, or exist and find gratitude in the seemingly mundane.

## 3) Volunteer or give back

Investing our time and energy in supporting others is a wonderful way to express gratitude. We can find joy in knowing that we are spreading kindness and goodwill in the world around us.

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***“Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word “love” here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being or a state of grace - not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.”***      ***-James Baldwin***

## **Why us? America 250 and President Lincoln’s Cottage**

At President Lincoln’s Cottage, we believe in an America that reflects our common humanity, cultivates belonging, and honors the complexity in our nation’s history. We are committed to telling more complete stories that capture the full breadth of the American experience and leading our peers and community in doing the same. We’re building a 250th commemoration that meets audiences where they are and makes room for both grief and joy at once.