

# A gentle reminder to take a pause

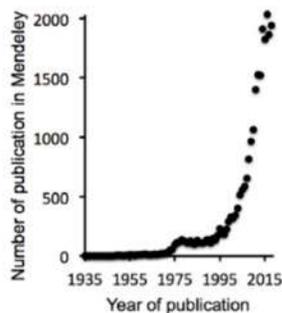
A default answer to ‘How are you?’ is often currently ‘Busy!’ In addition to forces beyond our control, we take on so much right now and sometimes feel overwhelmed as a result. This year has been unsettling for most of us on some level and many of our workloads have expanded and evolved in unforeseen ways. As we head into the winter months, it might be a good time to take a moment for a self-check on how we are dealing with things. It might also be a great time to remember to make time to pause from all the things we are doing, for the sake of our own wellbeing.

There are many strategies and apps out there for helping us feel more in control of our time and a plethora of apps exist to help us manage multitasking, stay organized, track screen use, improve sleep hygiene, etc. But what about simply allowing yourself an occasional mindful break during the workday to take a breath – resisting the temptation to fill that ‘break’ with digital connectivity (e.g. scrolling through the news or social media)? This could be the first step for re-focusing our time in a meaningful and restorative way.

Transformative and interdisciplinary (public health, neuroscience, psychology) biomedical research of meditation and human wellbeing, including studies of university students, are rapidly increasing nationally and internationally (Fig. 1). Many of these studies conclude meditation promotes wellbeing and can decrease anxiety and depression.

## FOLLOWING THE RESEARCH

Fig. 1. Citations involving meditation research vs year of publication (source Mendeley — Compiled by Wooller, 2019).



## FINDING SPACE FOR PAUSE – WITHOUT A DEVICE

‘the Well’ – is a newly created space in 334 Duckering promoting the Science and Practice of Happiness and Wellbeing, which includes free, 30 minute, group meditation sessions Monday-Friday starting at 1:10 pm. The [meditation sessions at ‘the Well’](#) welcome beginners, drop-ins, as well as those that already have a meditation practice. This

group meditation practice provides an opportunity to hone meditation skills that can be transferred to anywhere and anytime. For example, in moments *sitting quietly at your desk*, *walking up from a parking spot*, or before you are about to make a presentation or take an exam.

**Student Art Gallery & UA Museum of the North** – Looking at art can be therapeutic!

If there isn’t an exhibit open in the Student Art Gallery in the [Fine Arts Complex](#), the *Regents Great Hall* is a great place to sit and clear your mind. If there is a recital or symphony practice in *Davis Concert Hall*, you may be able to sit in the auditorium and unwind to music.

The walkway between the [Elvey & Akasofu Buildings](#) is full of plants, windows, maps, and posters. A few chairs are available for quiet contemplation – take a moment to focus your attention on your breath there.

We are surrounded by amazing trails and parks at UAF, open year-round. Take a stroll on the [UAF trails](#), visit [Troth Yeddhah’ Park](#) by the UA Museum of the North, or bundle up and find a place to get out in nature wherever you are.

When was the last time you went to the library and simply wandered the stacks without looking for something specific? Let spontaneity take over for a bit. Moves are afoot to create a ‘wellbeing’ space in the [Rasmusson Library](#) too. Watch this space!

Take a *5-minute create break*. Making art can also be therapeutic. Don’t worry about quality, spend the whole time on it, embellishing as much as time allows and then put it away. Repeat 1-2 times a day.

- Write – Write about the first thing that comes to you or [use a word prompt](#).
- Draw – I like to use sticky notes. Draw the first thing that comes into your mind or [use a sentence or phrase prompt](#).
- Play – if you play an instrument, find a space and noodle.

My personal goal, starting now, is to answer the question ‘How are you?’ with ‘Wonderful – I just... [took a walk in the woods; drew a picture of a silly face; listened to some birds chirping; etc]’ instead of saying ‘Busy!’ I hope you join me!