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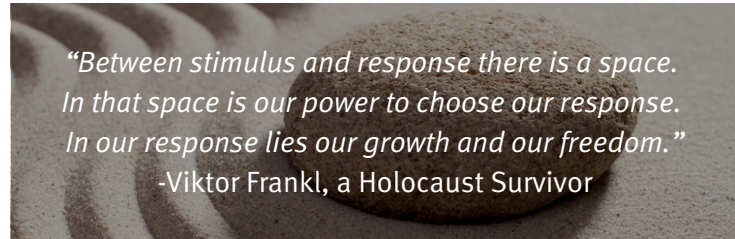
# EMBRACING THE PAUSE

October 6, 2022

## Weekly Practices for Self-Care & Well-Being

Embracing the Pause is a weekly resource that cultivates insights and practices to support communal well-being and self-care amid the toll we have accumulated over the past few years.

Curated by Laura Thelander, VOA's Director of Racial Justice and Spiritual Care, and colleagues, this series encourages finding a moment of pause to ground ourselves and reflect.



*"Between stimulus and response there is a space.  
In that space is our power to choose our response.  
In our response lies our growth and our freedom."  
-Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust Survivor*



This week's Embracing the Pause is a short reflection from Kiely Todd Roska, a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) Chaplain who has worked with VOA's ministry of spiritual care, offering community well-being and grief support groups at a few of VOA's program sites.



## Learning to Pay Attention

Instructions for living a life:

*Pay attention.*

*Be astonished.*

*Tell about it.*

- from Mary Oliver's Poem, Sometimes

"MOM LOOK!" I must hear this at least 50 times a day. My six-year-old is constantly asking/demanding that I take in whatever she has discovered or created. Even if I am not really doing anything important, these calls to look – at a caterpillar, a flower, or her latest drawing--usually land like an interruption. More often than I would like to admit, my response involves a half-hearted, "mmm, hmmm" while I keep doing whatever I am doing.

When I ignore these calls to pay attention to the small miracles I miss out on opportunities for wonder and connection. In order to be attentive with those I love, I am looking for ways to practice Mary Oliver's instructions for living a life (which my six-year-old does better than I do).

One of the ways I practice paying attention is doing meditative writing, which can be done anywhere—with a pen and notebook outside or at your desk on your computer. If you also want to practice reclaiming your inner six-year-old with a writing practice, here are a few options:

·[Internal focus]: Close your eyes close for a minute and focus on your body. Notice one body part that seems to need a little more consideration. Spend a few minutes writing from the perspective of that body part. Or write a love letter to that body part.

·[External focus]: Quietly observe the area around you. Let your eyes land on something specific—a window, a wall, a tree. Write for a few minutes about what seems unusual or peculiar about wherever your eyes landed.

Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.