

10

HeartMath® Practices

For Reducing the Stress in
Pressured Decisions, Choices
and Interactions



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Pressured Decisions, Choices
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HeartMath Institute
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HeartMath Institute (HMI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization. HMI aspires to always conduct its operations with passion, compassion, and a heartfelt desire to transform lives.

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Acknowledgement

We are delighted to present to our members this second “little book” of inspiring messages and practices authored by Doc Childre, HeartMath Institute’s Founder.

It contains valuable and effective information for helping us navigate these changing times with more discernment, clarity and better choices.

Also, we would like to offer special thanks to our editor, Del Walker, Membership Manager, for the many hours he spent working on the manuscript. And, we appreciate Sandy Royall, Production Manager, for the art selection and book design.

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Introduction

This small booklet is our second simple practice guide with heart-based exercises and short articles of inspiration to help you move through these challenging times with much less stress, more self-security, and clearer thinking, especially for hard-to-make choices. The first one, *12 HeartMath Tools for Reducing Stress and Staying Balanced*, printed in 2020, is available from our website. It's helpful for the times and an easy read.

This second book, *10 HeartMath Practices for Reducing the Stress in Pressured Decisions, Choices and Interactions*, is also a friendly read and encourages self-initiative to make effective steps forward. Most of us are experiencing heightened reactions to stress triggers along with understandable anxiety from uncertainty. Feeling unable to control the circumstances happening around us has left many of us feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and exhausted.

Genuinely practicing the exercises in this book makes it easier to reduce stress, anxiety and clouded thinking. The articles and exercises can be helpful in encouraging us to increase our care, kindness, compassion, and cooperation with each other. The lack of this causes a large portion of our stress.

We all have the potential to access the mental, emotional and physical benefits of integrating more of our heart qualities in our interactions. This can do much to bring about the changes we wish to see in our personal life and in the world.

Activating heart qualities can be especially effective in creating the flexibility needed for this collective consciousness reset we are presently experiencing.

Some of the content discusses information that's familiar to many. Yet, a refresher on these subjects is often beneficial for re-boosting our commitments to replace our old energy patterns that cloud our discernment and deplete our resilience. Subjects include Making Better Choices, Creating Hope for the Future, Worry and Projections, Prep for Desirable Outcomes, Getting Along With Each Other, and more. When faced with tough decisions, choices and interactions, try going to a chapter that could possibly help.

Meaningfulness (heart sincere intention) is the action word in all of these practices if you want to experience the deeper benefits. Doing any of the practices a few days in a row with meaningfulness starts to create a cumulative effect that encourages our true natural desire to live from the heart and get along with each other.

The tools and suggestions are for helping us get more peeks at who we really are and connect with the intelligence of our heart's inner guidance.

We sincerely hope that some of this information will help to make your journey easier.

With care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doc Childre". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Doc" and "Childre" being capitalized and prominent.

Doc Childre

Creating Hope for the Future

Love generates hope, and hope is the window of future possibilities that serve the highest good for the whole.

Often, the light in our hope dims and is obscured by chaos and our own mental and emotional blocks, such as fear, judgment, prejudice, and separation. As we practice heart qualities like love, care, compassion, kindness, and cooperation, along with becoming more responsible for our personal energy expenditures, we can become architects of a new sense of hope and live according to our deeper values and higher quality choices.

As more people connect with their own heart's intelligent guidance and practice the qualities of the heart, we can individually and collectively experience more peace, happiness, and satisfaction in our lives. This makes a valuable contribution to the whole and creates more hope for each other and planet earth.

The world will start to look better as we begin to upgrade the patterns and habits of how we treat each other. As we become more compassionate, more forgiving, and more eager to put the past behind us, this will draw more hopeful solutions for the seemingly insurmountable challenges we are experiencing. And, as we learn to get along with each other, my bet is that planet earth will join in and become more accommodating.

Building trust in our heart's intuitive guidance leads to uplifting possibilities and the increased capacity to manifest them, along with many other upturns we've long hoped for. Opening our hearts to each other creates a constant renewal of our sense of hope and optimism for the future. Hope from our genuine heart is a most powerful magnetic draw for manifestation; it's a gift from our spirit, and it's well worth keeping the flame rekindled.

To increase hope for a better future, we can learn to connect with our available heart's guidance that's within us all. This connection, born from love and care, can unfold the higher quality of life we are looking for, and above all – increased joy and fulfillment.

When we genuinely commit to increasing our love and kindness for each other, new hope comes with the package. Hope is important, but it's time to start *creating* along with it – not just *waiting* for hope to put solutions on our doorstep. A good first start is to begin expressing more care and compassion and bringing it to the street in our day-to-day interactions, then the rest will unfold. Doing this can get easier than not doing it once we break through the inertia accumulated from our old predictable patterns and reactions. We were born to love, respect and cooperate with each other, and collective humanity is starting to move in that direction (although it doesn't seem like it at this time).

I feel that we are in a transitional period, and this won't last forever. It obviously will go on for a good while – until more of us decide to open our hearts to compassionate care and create a different world from what we've created thus far. Eventually, our hearts will have had enough of the old and want to pioneer these new changes. We will do this.



The Importance of the First Few Minutes of Your Day

Genuine heart feelings like appreciation or gratitude can help create a supporting energy field of calm and resilience as you begin your day. It is a valuable practice to check your inner weather in the morning. How are you feeling? Are you feeling sunny, cloudy, stormy or misty? It is helpful and effective to establish a positive internal emotional environment during the first part of your morning. This helps you flow more easily through your interactions and decisions.

Heart feelings, such as gratitude, appreciation, kindness, care and compassion create an internal energy environment that boosts creativity and positive emotional flow. Any of these quality attitudes that involve our heart feelings can help calm our system for more clear thinking and effective decision-making, which many of us are challenged with through these times.

Additionally, the practice of intentionally replacing unwanted thoughts and feelings with any heart-quality attitude sets an energetic tone for positive and effective energy to flow through our system and out into our environment.

When we generate feelings of appreciation or gratitude during the first few minutes of our day, it gives us a chance to choose to respond – rather than react to what happens in our interactions throughout the day.

Practice:

Feel the Advantage of Activating Heart Feelings In the Morning

(Being **genuine** makes the difference in the effectiveness of these exercises.)

- Choose a heart quality that makes you feel better. (Love, Appreciation, Care, Compassion, Kindness, Ease)
- Breathe in that heart quality for a few minutes as you begin your day.
- Practice replacing negative thoughts or feelings with a heart quality that adds lift to your energy.
- Reboot this process throughout your day.
- Also, create your own ideas for becoming more effective.



Making Better Choices

More people increasingly are having to make pressured choices about health, finances, relationships, survival, and more. We are all making many decisions concerning how to reshape our lives and be better prepared for whatever new, unexpected challenges may come. Our choices are important, especially through these times, because our choices constantly create our peace and self-security or disrupt it. Breathing ease can help.

The practice of *breathing ease* helps to slow down the mind and emotions. Making assessments in rushed energy blocks the needed sensitivity to our heart's intuitive choice – while increasing our predictability for making non-effective choices.

Learn to practice breathing ease, especially before making important decisions. This practice slows down the vibratory rate of the mind and emotions, which leads to clearer thinking and unclouded discernment. More effective outcomes result from this. Breathing ease is simple and can be done anywhere, anytime.

How to Breathe in the State of Ease:

As you breathe, imagine you are drawing the feeling of ease into your mental and emotional nature. While doing this, feel yourself slowing down and feeling calm on the inside. Practice maintaining this calm while you are discerning your choices. You will soon start to experience the benefits of this practice. Most of us know about the effectiveness of calm, but we have to ask ourselves how much we practice calm when we really need it.

Take life a segment at a time and practice discerning your choices and actions from the place of inner calm and pause. This will translate into more effective discernment and especially can help to relieve strained thinking and unwanted outcomes from inefficient choices.

Prep for Desirable Outcomes

By Prep, we mean pre-prepare to be emotionally and mentally poised and self-secure before an upcoming situation, interaction or life event. This can help you experience more confidence and balance in your mental and emotional system, resulting in increased performance and more desirable outcomes.

Here is a sample list of situations that bring tremendous energy savings and better outcomes from using the tool, Prep:

Practice Prepping Before:

- Working with someone who makes you feel uncomfortable
- Leaving home in the morning to start your day with a positive outlook
- Having a sensitive conversation
- Reading and answering emails and texts
- Before important meetings or presentations
- Having a conversation with your kids
- Tackling your to-do list

These are only a few examples, but many will come to you once you start to experience the benefits of the Prep exercise.



Prep Exercise

(Being genuine is what connects us with the power of our heart's intentions.)

- 1. Identify** an upcoming event, situation, or interaction where the Prep exercise would be effective.
- 2. Heart-Focused Breathing™ . Focus** your attention in the area of the heart. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out of your heart or chest area, breathing a little slower and deeper than usual. Find an easy rhythm that's comfortable.
- 3. As you continue heart-focused breathing, see or imagine** yourself in the upcoming event, situation or interaction.

Now, **radiate love and positive energy into your upcoming event**; this creates a positive energy field that can increase clear thinking, inner poise, and more flow in interactions.

Being genuine in your Prep increases your capacity to remain calm, poised and in charge of your emotional actions and reactions if challenges come up. This especially reduces stress and energy drains.

Note: It's especially effective to pause and radiate genuine care at different times during a meeting or interactions to help prevent or restore harmony in touchy situations.

Making Good Use Of “In-Between Time”

The term *In-Between* in this writing refers to the practice of radiating heart qualities, such as love, appreciation, kindness or compassion in-between projects, while driving to work, waiting in line at the grocery store or enjoying a refreshing walk. These are effective times for sending compassionate care or feelings of gratitude to people you care about. The important point is to understand that radiating heart energy has uplifting and healing benefits for others as well as ourselves.

We can use our in-between times to help reduce overwhelm and anxiety by replacing looping worry patterns or self-depleting thoughts. Radiating heart thoughts and feelings through our system helps to clear our thinking and decision-making as well as benefitting our overall wellbeing. It's especially good for lifting our spirit when our mood is low, and the lift happens quickly when our practice is genuine.

Expanding your creativity with *In-Between* practices will reduce much of your stress and deepen your sensitivity to your heart's intuitive inner guidance.



Spot Check – A Quick Conscious Self-Assessment

Spot Check is taking a few times during the day and just stopping everything to look inside and truthfully identify where you're really at in your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. It's a place where you take an objective, neutral look at whether your energies or attitudes are serving your needs or draining your energy. Once you get this objective view, it gets easier to identify and replace non-effective feelings and attitudes.

Many of us feel like it's normal to work through a day with stress-brewing mind processors such as frustration, irritation, impatience or other energy-draining attitudes running underneath. Making a habit of Spot Checking a few times a day gives us a **conscious** chance to reset our feelings and intentions and reduce the cumulative stress load that blocks clear thinking, flow, and peace of mind.

Once you Spot Check and take a clear assessment of your inner feelings:

As you breathe, see yourself calming the vibrations of your mind and emotions. Then you can practice breathing in replacement attitudes, such as replacing impatience with patience, frustration and irritable reactions with ease. Select a positive attitude to breathe for a few minutes to help reduce the energy in unwanted stress-producing feelings.

Of course, some feelings are harder to shift, but a little practice will soon increase the power of your heart's intention.

Being genuine from the heart is where most of the power comes from to reset the direction of our thoughts and feelings. Listening

to our heart and learning to manage our thoughts and feelings is more important now than ever based on the stepped-up stress quota at this time. Deeper listening to our heart will become a most effective facilitator for dealing with this issue.

You can Spot Check anytime and anywhere. Spot Check a few times a day, especially when you start to feel out of sorts. The key is remembering to do it. You may want to set reminders. Anytime you are eliminating stressors from your mental and emotional operating system, this is one of your highest forms of self-care.



Worry and Negative Projections Impair Important Decision-Making

Many people experience excessive worry and negative projections – even when there’s nothing to be over-concerned about. Even when something goes well for us, we often tell ourselves that’s a sign things are going to get worse now. This is downer-thinking and is more likely to draw downer outcomes.

A big concern regarding constant worry and negative projections is their cumulative stress effect. Often people don’t recognize their anxiety-loaded projections as problems—yet drop by drop, they leach our resilience and dull our capacity to create effective solutions and better choices. It has been scientifically proven that worry and negative projections—whether they seem justified or not—take a toll on our heart, our mental and emotional nature, and eventually our physical health. We know this deep inside but feel incapable at times of resisting the urge to keep looping our worries.

I realize how hard it can be to break this persistent stress syndrome because I was drafted deeply into this habit years ago and finally realized that I was seriously overloaded, and something had to change! I had told myself this before, yet this time it felt different – I realized it was a firm nudge from my heart’s guidance. I had already learned the hard way not to override that intuitive tone. I sensed that I needed to try something different and experiment with this challenge a little bit at a time, without rushing.

Rather than straining my mind as I did in the past – trying to stop worrying, stop anxiety and self-loathing – I tried a softer approach. I made a genuine commitment to do the following heart-opening exercises and increased my day-to-day baseline of positive feelings and attitudes. The stress patterns started to fade because these positive heart-opening practices raised my awareness level and resilience above the stress-looping perceptions and choices.

Heart Opening Exercises

- Sit in a quiet place for a while and as you breathe, imagine yourself slowing down your mind and emotions with your breath until you become calmer. Then radiate appreciation to a friend, family, a pet, or anything you really care about. *Simply feeling genuine appreciation strengthens our intentions to take charge of our energy and create change for the better.*
- Take a time-out to radiate love and compassion to people experiencing hardships through these times. Feel this from your heart which makes it real – which makes it effective. *Positive feeling from our heart lifts our spirit and makes it much easier to calm anxiety and reduce our worry for clear assessment.*
- The practice of sincerely being kinder to others or giving them latitude due to the emotional pressures they are experiencing can lift our spirit. I call this compassionate latitude.
- Forgiving people and releasing old stuff especially lifts our spirit and increases our health and our capacity to deal with life's issues with more clarity and increased confidence.
- Repeat these exercises to anchor in the habit of consciously lifting your spirit, especially when you are challenged.

I understand that some things are so challenging that it's hard not to worry and be anxious. However, starting with these heart opening exercises can make things easier and help us make better choices, even if they are tough choices like many are experiencing. Many of us have pressing situations without clear direction or solutions, along with deep pain. But often, it makes things worse if we just do nothing.

With compassion, the most helpful suggestion that I care to share is this—from your heart you *can* learn to create your own energy lift. This helps you to rise above your energy-draining patterns – which gives you more of a wholeness consideration while making decisions. The lack of this is what causes the glitches in many of our choices.

For a week or so try a few of these heart-opening practices. This will start to lift your perception and strengthen your self-security which can help to reduce worry, anxiety, and negative projections. You will find it easier to sense your most effective next steps with more clarity in handling issues.

Radiating love, care and kindness to others increases our mental and emotional flexibility and clears our thinking for more coherent choices. As we practice opening our hearts more, we start to realize this is the straightest line to becoming who we really are. We are here to love and care for each other as this magnetizes the puzzle pieces and solutions that are missing in the search for personal and collective peace.

Getting Along With Each Other

*“Together, we can take back our world, but we’ll
have to add the heart this time.”*

– Doc Childre

Love is the core heart frequency that unifies and lifts us above separation.

The speed of increasing stress and chaos is awakening more people to the understanding that it’s *highly intelligent* to start getting along with each other through cooperation and compassion. This requires opening our hearts along with commitments to treat each other as we want to be treated.

As more genuine care for each other streams through our interactions, this dissipates clouds of density and repressed energies from separation, which is what sustains the bottleneck situations we are enduring. Together we can diminish the stress-accruing snowball, but it has to start with self-honesty rather than blaming others for not doing something.

Any biases that cause separation are old energies struggling to maintain their hold on us in the light of rapidly changing consciousness. Through these times, most all of us are experiencing the dynamics of stress from judgmental biases, which have caused many unfavorable outcomes for the whole. As we open our hearts to each other, we can offset and change these patterns, but it starts with our individual, personal commitments.

As more people increase their heart’s awareness – equality, cooperation and compassionate understanding will begin to replace

the old energies of prejudice and bias. These energies repress our innate capacity to create the elusive peace we've searched for forever.

We can each make a conscious practice to release the habits and attitudes that divide us. It's beneficial to ask our heart if we're being too judgmental with people or keeping them at arm's length with separation or bias. This could be an individual, group, religion, race, etc.

Part of being human means that from time to time, we will feel frustrated, angry, judgmental, or vindictive. But if we let these darker feelings run our life, they eventually become our life. They finally dampen our mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

We can lift our perceptions and attitudes with feelings such as love, care, compassion, kindness, gratitude, and forgiveness. As more people practice these heart qualities, it inspires others to do the same. These higher vibrational heart qualities are especially contagious once we integrate them as a way of life.

As individuals and countries step forward into intentional care and cooperation, humanity will open up to the power of collective heart intention – drawing to us better outcomes for present and future situations. We all know somewhere in our heart this would be a major step for increasing collective harmony and eventually more peace.

It's time for stress not to be our wake-up call for learning to get along. Waking up to who we really are will automatically happen as we increase our love, care, kindness and compassion for each other.

Comments on Pursuing Our Purpose

Learning to listen to our heart's intuitive guidance is a most important step in manifesting our purpose, regardless of how our vocational choices and life play out. Establishing more trust in our heart's wisdom creates a baseline that makes it easier for our internal and external purpose to align with each other naturally through time.

Some people grow up connected with their sense of purpose. Others have searched far and wide for teachers or signs to point them toward their purpose. Our sense of purpose can bounce around and shape-shift at times, such as wanting to be a musician, the next year an actor, or maybe a world-class tennis player, etc. But, as our heart's intuitive wisdom increases, our awareness raises, often changing the course of our direction towards our true purpose. After years of purpose chasing, I discovered that my personal highest purpose was to connect with my heart's intuitive day-to-day guidance for increased fulfillment. The pursuit of purpose is a personal quest, but I suggest that listening to your heart's intuition along the way can quicken your confirmation that you are on the right track.

As we learn to follow our heart's guidance, we draw more synchronicities and clearer choices for sensing our alignment with purpose and what would bring us fulfillment.

Together, We Can Change the World

The ball is in our court, as we are all players in the outcome. For now, we can view the chaos and unrest on the planet as neon signs that indicate it's time to open our hearts, grab our toolbox and make some genuine changes for the better.

We know that compassionate care, kindness and cooperation have been sparsely represented in our collective social consciousness for far too long. Let's place these intelligent heart qualities of love on the top of our commitment list as we pitch in to co-create the highest best future for the whole and the next generations. We have an opportunity to help usher in long-awaited solutions for getting along with each other, which is the missing piece in solving the ongoing challenges that most of humanity is experiencing.

We've tried everything to keep life propped up and functional except increasing our compassion, kindness, and cooperation. More and more people are sensing from within that working together in cooperation is the only alternative left if we want to change the course of this aggressive social erosion we are experiencing.

Upside potentials

Being kinder along with creating more compassionate care in our interactions are among the best-kept secrets for revealing new collective solutions needed for these chaotic changing times.

Know that life-changing positive movements are growing in the midst of the escalating chaos the planet is going through. People are progressively waking up and recognizing that we can change

things for the better when we open our heart and strive to reduce and eliminate separation and bitterness due to biases and differences. At the core of our heart, most of us desire this even if we are not in contact with the feeling at times.

It's a time for opening our heart and being more understanding of each other's feelings and mistakes, realizing that people are being stretched past their reasoning capacity which makes them short-fused and hyper-reactive. Generally speaking, people are doing the best they can, depending on the pressures of their personal challenges and situations. Making a conscious effort to have more compassionate latitude and forgiveness can release and prevent significant amounts of stress and unwanted outcomes that have become the new norm. We can consciously create a shift in this trajectory as collective awareness realizes that getting along with each other is one of two options – and the other option is the one that we're presently experiencing. I feel that most of us want to make the shift.

*One of the best-kept secrets to help change the world
is to get the love and care within us busy. – Doc*



Additional Free Resources

Explore HeartMath Institute's collection of free resources, offering practical solutions for expanding your heart connections, personal growth, health and fulfillment.

This includes e-books, webinars, blog articles, videos, Add Heart Podcasts, a Personal Well-Being Survey and *Science of the Heart: Exploring the Role of the Heart in Human Performance* e-book. Also available are Free Mini-Courses, such as Trauma Education for Humanitarian and Emergency Responders, HeartMath Education and Resilience Training (H.E.A.R.T.) for Veterans and Service Members, HMI Coherence course, and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) Basics.

Go to <https://www.heartmath.org/resources/>

Global Coherence Initiative is a science-based, co-creative project to unite people in heart-focused love and intention, to facilitate the shift in global consciousness from instability and discord to compassionate care, cooperation, and increasing peace.

Become a Global Coherence Emissary and join others on the Global Coherence App that connects people from all around the world.

Learn more at <https://www.heartmath.org/gci/>

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