



Hi friends! I hope that as August draws to a close and summer 2021 reaches its end, you're taking care of yourself and your mental health. This was certainly a summer like no other in history. Whether you were still quarantining or starting to adjust back to interactive life this was a strange and difficult time. There is a growing anxiety in the air as we head back to school and workplaces around the country and things are still very uncertain. In addition to wearing masks and washing your hands, it's more important than ever to make sure you're checking in with yourself. Think of it as sanitizer for your mental health.

One of the biggest challenges we are facing right now is a world that seems to be imploding before our eyes in real time. I have never felt so overwhelmed turning on the news. Between the pandemic crisis seeming to trend in a negative direction, environmental disasters, hurricanes and earthquakes, and human rights crises, the world all feels a bit devastating right now. It's hard to stay informed and stay present in a landscape that feels like it's crumbling apart. When things feel overwhelming or look bleak, remember to come back to the here and the now. Focus on your breathing. Focus on the sensation of your feet on the ground. Pay attention to the things you can see, hear, feel and smell around you.

It is easy to fall into a bleak and hopeless mental space. It is also common to feel guilty for finding joy in a world with so much suffering and sickness. However, we cannot wait for conditions in the world to be perfect before cultivating joy. It has to be an active choice that we make not because things are joyful, but in spite of the fact that they are not. It is only through the bitterness and hurt of life that we can also taste the sweetness. Let's focus on the things that we are grateful for. I like to make a gratitude list every morning as I start my day, to draw my mental energy to the things that I appreciate and am thankful for in my life. It is easy to focus on the things that are wrong but we can rewire our minds to focus on the positive. This attitude is also contagious, which means that the people around you will benefit and learn from your example.



James Clementi, MHC-LP is a graduate from Teacher's College at Columbia University. He is a licensed Mental Health provider in New York State.

"I am excited to bring my perspective as a mental health counselor to address different ways that we can all practice continuing to improve our mental health."

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Many of you are looking ahead to going back to school or work in a few short weeks, and that might feel like a bit of a mixed bag, especially if you're as tired of staring at a screen as I am. It's a difficult challenge though, if that environment is not a safe and inclusive space. If you are experiencing bullying and harassment, I know from personal experience that it is a scary, exhausting, and depressing place to be in. That's why it is more important than ever to tell your story! Tell someone you trust, tell an authority figure you can help, reach out in the real world or in a safe online space to let someone know what you're going through. Let yourself be supported. You do not have to be alone through this moment, and you are not alone. Please reach out and know that you are empowered to shape your life the way you want it to be.

Being kind to yourself is not always easy, especially when so many voices are yelling at you not to do that. It's also really unclear advice because it's not like anyone ever sits you down and explains what that means. I like to think of it as trying to have some distance with yourself and seeing how that changes things. Try to imagine someone else in your situation, and think of the kindness you would give them in your thoughts and words and actions. Now offer that to yourself, because you deserve it! We all have a lot of things to unlearn as well as learn in the new school year.



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The Tyler Clementi Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to end online and offline bullying in schools, workplaces, and faith communities.



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