

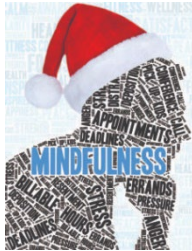


FLORIDA BAR NEWS

MINDFULNESS AN HOLIDAY HURRICANES

By Scott Rogers ▶ Special to the News ▶ Columns

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Even though hurricane season is over, we can still expect a few holiday hurricanes.

Things like rooms filled with the debris of hastily opened gifts — wrapping paper, ribbons, glitter, bubble wrap, and boxes strewn across the floor. And you know what it's like after the holiday meal — the empty glasses, dirty plates and silverware, bottles, containers, and leftovers that need to be tossed, saved, cleaned up, and put

away. It's like a hurricane hit. Fortunately, it's the hurricanes we plan for and can leave to the next morning.

In addition to the above hurricanes, there are the internal ones — the painful conversation over dinner that leaves us feeling agitated, sad, or angry and the frustrating holiday guest who is messy, a little too invasive, or stays longer than planned. There are also the disappointments of plans that go awry — the holiday trip that has to be cancelled, the visitor you've been excited to see who decides not to come, and there are the plans to relax that get disrupted with unexpected news or work.

It may seem at first blush that these are also external hurricanes — the things people say, the plans that change, the news of the world. But unlike the gift wrapping and dirty plates — which are truly external and simply need to be cleaned up — much of the unpleasantness of these experiences — the anger, frustration, and disappointments — arise inside us. So too, there is the melancholy that often surfaces at this time of year as we reflect on times gone by.

The mindfulness approach for finding ease and equanimity amid the various holiday hurricanes is poignantly expressed in the 13th century poet, Rumi's, "The Guesthouse," excerpted below:

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Rumi's guests are not those sleeping in the spare bedroom or yelling across the dinner table. They are the wide-ranging human emotions that arise, change and inevitably pass away as we journey through the days of our lives. Rumi offers us the insight that one way to work with these emotions is to "welcome and entertain them all."

This is, of course, easier said than done, and there are those internal disturbances that due to their intensity and ability to overwhelm us call for additional forms of self-care. But many of the unexpected and unpleasant experiences we have this holiday season can be met with greater resilience through the power of mindfulness which can help transform your holiday hurricane into a passing rain shower.

THE MINDFUL WAY THROUGH A HURRICANE

A mindfulness practice that you may find helpful in anticipation of holiday hurricanes or shortly after they hit is known as the "Mindful Hurricane Practice." Below are practice instructions and at the end is a link to listen to a 12-minute guided practice from [Mindful Magazine](#), a mindfulness resource you may enjoy exploring over the holidays.

Mindful Hurricane Practice

1. Begin this mindfulness practice

Let us begin by bringing ourselves into a posture that's upright and stable. We lower or close our eyes and bring our attention to our body sitting in the chair.

2. As we breathe, we are aware

We are aware of where our bottom meets the seat of the chair and of where our back meets the back of the chair. We are aware of our feet and where they make contact with the ground, our shoes, or our socks.

3. At times, things can become intense.

Things can become intense and quickly turn, much like a hurricane, so this practice will draw upon the metaphor of a hurricane to help us understand our own true nature. It can help us understand the ways that mindfulness practice can be helpful in observing our nature moment by moment.

4. We take three slow, deep breaths.

A little slower and a little deeper than we might otherwise take. Inhale and exhale.

5. The hurricane arises when the conditions are sufficient for it to come together.

In time, it dissipates, much like our own emotional conditions.

6. There are times when we experience agitation and frustration.

Much like the strong, gusty winds and heavy rains that feed into the hurricane. We might reflect for a moment on times when we have felt that intensity in the body.

7. Thoughts arise from time to time that can be judgmental.

We might take note of thoughts that arise in our mind now, or thoughts that have arisen today, that carry that judgmental, harsh, reactive quality. Just notice these thoughts as we breathe.

8. There are moments we experience intense emotions.

Emotions like anger and fear are akin to the eye wall, the extreme conditions that form around the eye of the hurricane. You may notice these arising now, perhaps because of the circumstances of the day, or that they arise on a fairly regular basis.

9. And so, too, there are times we experience inner calm.

Much as is found within the eye of the storm. This is a reminder that we don't have to have the intense and agitated thoughts, feelings, and sensations go away to find that inner calm, that inner tranquility. By shifting to an observing state, we find freedom from the intensity of those thoughts, feelings, and sensations.

10. Let us settle into the body.

Becoming aware of thoughts, aware of feelings that will come and go, aware of the sensations in the body, aware of preserving and allowing the breath to anchor us a little bit more fully, to steady us a little bit more comfortably into the moments of this practice.

11. Breathe in and out.

Allowing this moment to be as it is. When, from time to time, the mind wanders, gently return to the sensations of the breath flowing through the body. When you're ready in the next moment or two, with awareness, lift the gaze, open the eyes.

One of the important takeaways of this practice is the insight that we are essentially all of the different parts of the hurricane at the same time — from its still points to areas of greatest intensity. This recognition, and the power of mindful observation — allows us to more fully embrace the totality of our experience with wisdom and self-compassion as opposed to needing to try to escape it (ourselves) to find relief. Here is [a link to listen to the practice](#). You can also listen to it on [Apple](#) and [Spotify](#).

You may also find meaning in reading some articles from holiday seasons past:

[“Mindfulness, Solitude, and The New Year”](#) (December 2019)

[“We Were Made for These Times”](#) (December 2020)

Wishing everyone a joyful, relaxing, and replenishing holiday season and new year — open to the richness and complexity of all that comes your way.



*Scott Rogers, M.S., J.D., is a nationally recognized leader in the area of mindfulness in law and founded and directs the University of Miami School of Law's Mindfulness in Law Program where he teaches mindful ethics, mindful leadership, mindfulness and negotiation, and mindfulness in law. He is the creator of Jurisight, one of the first CLE programs in the country to integrate mindfulness and neuroscience and conducts workshops and presentations on the role of mindfulness in legal education and across the legal profession. He is author of the recently released, **“The Mindful Law Student: A Mindfulness in Law Practice Guide,”** written for all audiences.*