

With the onset of the pandemic, I was laid off from work in a corporate setting and like many, my life slowed significantly. While overwhelming, slowing down has presented the opportunity to reflect. I have reflected on my dreams, values and what matters to me. With many obligations on hold this gave me the space to focus my attention on taking steps to fulfill my dreams and interests. One of these steps has been to enroll in classes to obtain my Health Coaching certification. Early on I had to remind myself that my dignity and worth is not determined by how much or how well I was able to perform and it was okay to grieve the separation from much of what I had been putting my time into. This became more real when I was in a place where I couldn't perform, and at a very point time in history, we are all met with this truth. Many times during this public health crisis, I have had to evaluate my emotions, how I am feeling and share or process with a trusted source. These reminders to myself allowed me to learn to just be and move from a must do attitude to a place of self-compassion and gratitude. Giving thanks and showing gratitude has been a game changer for me.

Practices that have helped me to maintain health and wellness during this time and move towards self-compassion and gratitude are; journaling, caring for a new kitten, taking time to disconnect from social media and being kind to my body with intentional, meditative movements. Most of the time this looks like nature walks, soft movement exercises that incorporate prayer and spiritual elements, and trying to be mindful. I have enjoyed hosting virtual game nights with friends and family, writing cards and catching up with people over the phone. Several months ago I was reconnected with Volunteers of America and started working as the Rural Outreach Specialist in the SSVF program. Now that I am back to work, I am discovering new ways to practice self-care and balance my health and wellness. It has been important for me to learn that health and wellness is not a perfect formulation or even linear. It is a process, and combination of lifestyle practices that work for you and your needs.

Melissa Hennessy 11/5/2020