

New School Year, New Stresses: Meditation Tips for Families

Written by Kyley Warren

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Photo courtesy of Milan Popovic.

A new school year inevitably means new stresses for families and children. Whether it's battling busy schedules, staying on track with school work or preparing for all of the upcoming holidays, this season of life is no doubt, a busy one.

So how do we manage our stresses? How do we find the time to clear our minds? How can we better learn to live in the present moment, rather than to constantly be worrying about the unknown of the future? Marlise Karlin, CEO and founder of the SOS Method, believes that she has the answers to these questions.



Photo of Marlise Karlin, courtesy of the SOS Method.

The SOS Method is a collection of programs, tools and meditations that elevate people's power to be happier, healthier, more mindful and more productive. The meditation formula, developed by Karlin, infuses different elements of music, tones, words and white space. The app's Daily Meditations help to develop a stress-free environment within the body and mind. The best part of the SOS Method is that it helps solve the issue of "no time." The app features quick meditation practices and relaxing techniques, so that users can reach a place of peace within no more than five minutes.

Aside from being the creator of the SOS Method, Karlin is also a mental health expert, an author, a network commentator and a humanitarian activist. Her own childhood trauma was what inspired her to turn to meditation. She has used her own story to help motivate others to harness their own inner strength and to cultivate peace within their own lives.

"I grew up with an alcoholic and abusive father, and I ran away from home at sixteen. I began developing some pretty unhealthy habits to try to release the stress, and all of the angst and depression that you can imagine a sixteen-year-old would have," Karlin says. "I started getting chronically ill, so I turned to traditional medicine and I went to doctors. That's when I heard about meditation."

From there, that's where Karlin's journey began. She has studied with meditation masters for more than 25 years, constantly searching for a variety of techniques that she believes will appeal to people of all ages and walks of life.

While there is a lot of scientific data that supports the health benefits of meditation, it's still reported that less than 8 percent of people in the U.S. actually practice meditation methods and techniques. Many people attribute their disinclination to meditate as a result of, "limited free time."

Karlin had this idea in mind when she developed the SOS Method.

"What I've found as the main challenge is that people say, 'No time, busy mind, it's too difficult or it's boring,'" Karlin says. "The good news with SOS Method is that your mind doesn't have to be still. And now that we have it in an app, you can do it anywhere and anytime."

Meditation doesn't have to be a lengthy or even relaxing process. As long as you're connecting to a healthy state of mind, in whatever capacity that may be, you can begin to shift some of the habits that you're not happy with.

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Photo courtesy of Ksenia Makagonova.

Going into the new school year, Karlin advises families and children to adopt this mentality. Finding unique ways to put peace at the center of your life is a critical component in maintaining healthy relationships with the people around you, as well as with yourself.

The first step is identifying the things in your life that you struggle with controlling when life gets busy. **Stress** and **mental health** are the two things that families need to focus on managing in the upcoming season. And meditation programs, like the SOS Method, can help make the process easier.

- **Stress:** Children and families are prone to stress during the school year. Kids encounter stress with school work, pressures for college, after-school programs, sports teams and even social media. The prominence of online bullying has caused major mental health issues for children, and has led many of them to develop unhealthy ideals and routines in response to this negative external behavior. Parents will often encounter stress while trying to find the balance between work and family life.
- **Mental Health:** Mental health is one of the biggest challenges today. The issue often goes beyond just families and children, but it has become a prominent problem within that specific demographic. People are often found asking themselves: How do I stay feeling confident? How do I have compassion for others when I don't feel it for myself? How can I begin to build positive habits? When you find yourself internalizing negativity and unhealthy thoughts, you'll automatically do things that are unhealthy in response.

Mental health and stress are often directly related to each other. If you can't manage your stress, it will affect your ability to think clearly. And if you fail to prioritize your own mental health, the negative energy that you are feeling from stress, will later translate into the way that you love and care for yourself.

"Creating new and healthy habits such as meditation, will be extremely healthy for the family as a whole. With SOS Method, as you begin to listen to the five minute meditations, they anchor you in a calm state of mind," Karlin says. "What that means is: you're at school; you're taking a test; you feel anxiety rising; you just start breathing deep and suddenly; you're anchored back to that state of peace you've got when doing the SOS Meditation."

The second step is figuring out what meditation practices work best for you and your family. Everyone's needs are individual, and therefore, their techniques also have to be individual.

Because our schedules tend to become a bit more hectic during the school year, it's important to take advantage of tools that are easy to access. Apps like the SOS Method offer unique exercises that help to stimulate your mind through music and a variety of different tones.

But if this isn't your style, there are also more traditional meditation apps like Calm, that offer relaxing lessons and new exercises every day.

The third step is putting these practices into effect. Meditating is an activity that you can do with the whole family, or one that you can do by yourself. As long as you set a precedent in your home to dedicate time to "be still," you'll be able to practice consistency in your meditation techniques.

Adults and parents are encouraged to take the first step and to be leaders within their homes. Children often mirror the behaviors of their parents. So, if you prioritize meditation and the maintenance of your mental health, your kids are likely to follow.

Thanks to programs like the SOS Method, Karlin has seen positive responses in children as young as 7-years-old and all the way through to college-aged students. The meditations help to cultivate a positive response within your soul.

"The more you do it, then you don't go into automatic response mode: fear, anxiety, etc. Now, you see that you can handle this. It opens up those channels of creativity that we all have," Karlin concluded.

No matter what stresses you're battling in this upcoming season, meditation can help to alleviate the day-to-day pressures and anxieties that you're encountering. So, make an effort to invite more meaningful things into your life. Practice peaceful techniques intently. Prioritize the people and things that matter. And most importantly, just *breathe*.