

President's Insight July 2026

World Humanitarian Day is August 19

VOSH/International is a Humanitarian organization and we believe that quality eye health should not be a privilege but a right. In 2024 VOSH/International produced our statement for Humanitarian Values in a world of war. I will enclose this important statement below.

It is **stressful** wherever you are in the world right now. There is turmoil, war, poverty, displacement, loneliness and we help with the vision aspects that affect people.

I am going to include some ways to help ourselves and our patients with our day to day struggles in our offices and clinics.

VOSH/INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT FOR HUMANITARIAN VALUES IN A WORLD OF WAR

We work towards a vision of peace for all.

Every year, VOSH/International and its chapters provide the gift of vision and eye health to thousands of people worldwide, independent of their race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or the work they do. Our mission is to improve everyone's vision and eye health everywhere. We believe that quality eye health should not be a privilege but a right.

In 2020, when we developed our statement on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, we expressed deep concern about the challenges and impact that discrimination and racism have on people's health. In that statement, we made a clear stand against racism everywhere. We committed ourselves to strengthening the implementation of our vision so that we could contribute to a more just and equitable society for the benefit of all. In our eyes, every life has equal value.

As a global organization, VOSH/International represents a diversity of views and experiences from a perspective of common humanity. This humanity that is easily practiced when we serve patients in our humanitarian vision clinics or support the education of future optometrists cannot shield us from recognizing the devastating impact of war and conflict on patients and health providers.

Conflict and war have devastating consequences on access to healthcare, health infrastructure, the sustainability of healthcare systems, and the availability of healthcare professionals. Decades of hard work and investment in building, equipping, training, and educating local health professionals to serve a population can easily be destroyed during war and conflict. Rebuilding it can be immensely difficult.

War not only causes death but also widespread trauma and suffering for the civilian population. VOSH/International is concerned with the extreme degree of violence and genocide in current wars, which has seen thousands of innocent civilians lose their lives, families, homes, and livelihoods and hundreds of health, education, and humanitarian workers displaced, killed, or injured.

VOSH/International stands in solidarity with all people, especially fellow optometrists and students of optometry, who have been severely affected by current wars and conflict and supports the calls for peace and respect for international humanitarian law made by other international aid organizations and humanitarian agencies.

Approved by the VOSH/International Board of Directors on July 2nd, 2024

En Español: <https://vosh.org/vosh-international-statement-for-humanitarian-values-in-a-world-of-war/>

Strategies for Stress Reduction

1. Meditation- Headspace is a great place for beginners to start. There are shorter meditations and a Learn the Basics of Meditation course as well as different instructors and voices on the app. It is easily accessible on your phone. They also have topics you may find helpful.

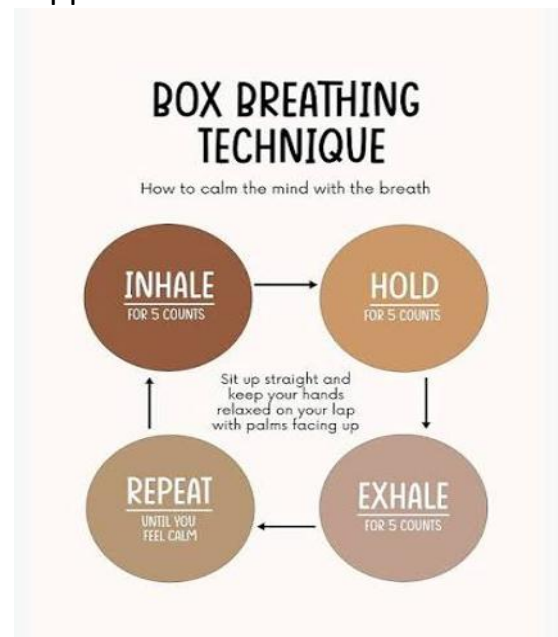
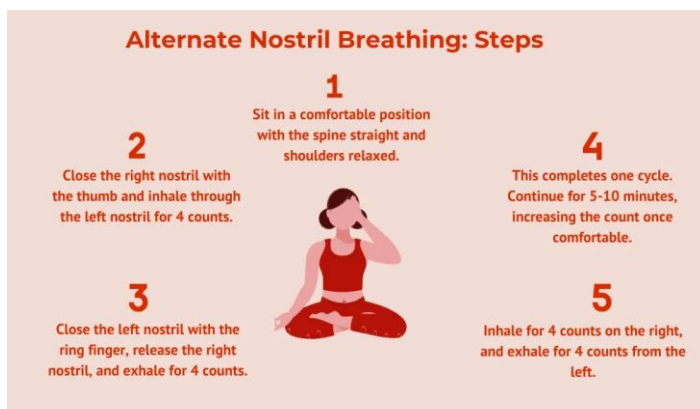
<https://get.headspace.com/regional-event-free-trial>

Insight Timer is another phone app that is free for a lot of their content.

Pema Chodron, Adyashanti and Mukti, Cheri Huber and Sharon Salzberg also have resources for Meditation.

2. Breathing and Pause- Breath practices can help you pause and rest. Box or 4 stop breathing is one of my favorites to utilize on the go. Alternate nostril

breathing can be grounding and supportive.



3. Exercise – Pick something that you like and then you will be more likely to stick to it. Variety also helps in my opinion. Yoga, Pilates, tennis, swimming, running, walking, run/walk combo, skiing, soccer, basketball to name a few ideas. I was never really able to run but a colleague suggested walking for a minute and then running for a minute might work and it did. You can also set a certain distance to walk and then run and continue that pattern for a certain distance. I now participate in 5K's to keep me training. Don't be surprised if you see a **VOSH/International 5K Fundraiser** on the calendar soon!

4. **Nature-** Hiking or walking in the mountains, on the beach or in the city without looking at your phone. Take a peak at the flowers, birds and listen to the music or children laughing if you are in the city. Sunshine can help as well.

5. **Hobbies to relax** – Knitting, sewing, photography, reading, painting, gardening and music are examples of things that can help us enjoy some time to take a break. Attending sporting events or concerts or the theater is stimulating and enjoyable.

6. **Pets-** Having a dog or cat as your friend can also bring joy and support and comfort to your life. Or if you prefer a bearded dragon or fish that can be enjoyable as well. You may have seen my fluffy dog on one of our VOSH/International Zoom calls.



Taking time to take care of ourselves helps us to better care for others.

President VOSH/International
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