



## Finding Meaning During Liminal Times

By Rev. Kristen Rohm

These are interesting times. For many of us, the life we were all living in early March has changed so much we could say it's gone. What we're moving toward and when we might get there is unclear. We are caught between what was and what is yet to come. In spiritual work, we know this as liminal time, a threshold of sorts between the old and the new.

Liminal times bring several things, one is tremendous uncertainty. That's not fun or easy. It's made harder because we don't know how long we'll be here, so it can feel like we're stuck *in between*. I have been helped to not feel as stuck, overwhelmed or powerless by recognizing this time as liminal. Because threshold times also hold possibility and a certain power for change. Like when you stand in a doorway, having left one space but not yet stepped into the new one. There is a sense of possibility about what might be found in this next room.

So as we all live here *in between* our old life and whatever is next, let us support ourselves and each other as we look for possibilities and meaning. It's important to first acknowledge that this liminal time is stressful. We have very deep health, economic, systemic racism, and political concerns. The future is unknown and our brains prefer predictability. So if you've felt anxiety, disconnection, grief, loneliness, boredom, sadness, anger, weariness, fear of the future these last months you are not alone.

At Hospice of Santa Barbara, we accompany folks with life threatening illness, which is also a liminal time of uncertainty. We know that it can help to notice and name what we are experiencing. So be honest with yourself and with others about how you are feeling and coping. Talk about it with a trusted person. And breathe. Slow deep breaths settle the nervous system and bring us into the present moment where we are safe rather than being caught up in fearful thoughts about the future. Breathing in, pause, breathing out.

It also helps to look for meaning and to prioritize what matters most to us. One way to find meaning is to ask ourselves, "What has surprised me in a good way during these months?" What has been unexpectedly fun, calming, or connecting? It could be as simple as driving less or enjoying the beauty of nature, getting outside to garden, walk and appreciate the peace and the abundance of wildlife. And maybe there is something else, unique to your experience.

I have had the unexpected surprise of getting to do yoga again with my favorite Cleveland yoga teacher. I lived there for 5 years and took her class every week so I've missed her and was

thrilled to find her class online now because of Covid! It's been so comforting; my brain loves the return of this predictable routine. More importantly, this good surprise has shown me that staying connected with those I love who live far away is important. It matters to me, so I've been reaching out to other dear ones I let fall through the cracks of my old busy life. This is one way I have found meaning in these in between times that I intend to take with me and prioritize in the new life that is on its way. How about you?

We encourage everyone to breathe, to notice and name whatever you are feeling and to explore what is meaningful in the uncertainty of this liminal time. May we all explore possibility and find meaning here on the threshold.

Reach out to us at [hospiceofsb.org](http://hospiceofsb.org) for information and support.