

A User Guide to - Mindfulness of Breathing

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Mindfulness of Breathing

This practice uses the breath as an object of concentration, to help you focus on, and to keep coming back to the present moment.

When practising mindfulness of breathing, remember that you are not trying to change your breathing (e.g., to breathe more deeply or slowly). You are using your breath as a focus point, and just noticing all of the sensations associated with breathing. You may find that your breathing deepens and your body relaxes as you practice – that is a bonus. At other times, you may become more aware of tension, pain or uncomfortable emotions in your body. When this happens it is helpful to remember that this practice is about increasing your awareness of the present moment, with acceptance and without judgement. And sometimes this means becoming more aware of painful experiences and internal states.

You may like to start practising mindfulness of breathing for five minutes once or twice each day, and to extend the time by 2-3 minutes every few days. It is also helpful to include it as part of your daily routine; e.g.; taking few minutes to focus on your breathing during your morning or evening routine, or as part of your lunch break. The more you practice, the more benefits you will gain and the easier you will find it to bring your attention to the present moment.

Practising Mindfulness of Breathing

Getting ready

Find a way to sit that is comfortable for you, making sure that you are sitting upright and your back is supported. Place both feet on the floor, and slightly tuck in your chin. Shift your body around slightly to make sure that you're in a position that feels balanced and stable for you.

Close your eyes or soften your gaze.

The Practice:

- Bring your attention to your breathing. Observe all the sensations associated with breathing: the movement of the air as you breathe in through your nose or mouth. You may notice here that the air you breathe out is a little warmer than the air you breathe in.
- Notice the sensations of the air hitting the back of your throat, and moving down to your lungs as you breathe in, and up as you breathe out.
- Follow the air all the way down to your lungs, noticing the sensations associated with the movement of your chest, belly and diaphragm – expanding outwards as you breathe in and down as you breathe out.
- Notice the little gap between the in-breath and the out-breath, and again between the out-breath and the in-breath.
- Follow the air and notice all the sensations associated with breathing, as if you are riding the waves of your breath.
- If you like, you can focus on one point in the flow of your breathe, perhaps the sensations associated with the movement of the air in and out of your nostrils or mouth, or the sensations associated with the movement of your chest, belly and diaphragm.
- Remember that the goal here is to notice and observe with acceptance, and to let go of any judgements that may arise.
- Allow each in-breath to be a new beginning, and each out-breath letting go.

Ending the Practice

- When you are ready to finish your practice, open your eyes and shift your attention to your surroundings.
- Feel your body as a whole as it sits breathing, feeling the breath moment by moment, inviting yourself over and over again to be fully awake, fully here, right now in this moment with this breath.

Hints when Practising:

Whatever feelings, urges or sensations arise during your practice, pleasant or unpleasant, gently acknowledge their presence and let them be. Allow feelings, urges and sensations that arise to come and go as they please. You may like to breathe into areas of discomfort, whether they are

uncomfortable sensations or feelings. And with each in-breath, allow a little more space for the sensations or feelings to just be there. And then when you are ready, take your attention back to your breath and the sensations associated with breathing.

From time to time, your attention will become distracted by thoughts or other distractions around you. You may find that you become caught up in worrying about the future or ruminating about the past. Each time this happens, notice what has distracted you and gently lead your attention back to your breath. No matter how often your attention 'wanders off' - whether a hundred times, or a thousand - simply note what distracted you and bring your attention back to your breathing.

There is no need to be frustrated or disappointed when you get carried off by your thoughts. Our minds naturally distract us from what we are doing – this is what minds do. Each time you realise your attention has wandered, gently acknowledge it, notice what distracted you, and return your attention to the sensations associated with breathing.