

# Mindfulness of the Breath Meditation

Become comfortable on your chair or cushion, perhaps loosening any tight clothing...removing your glasses and watch, if that is appropriate. Settling in with a relaxed but erect, posture; straight, but relaxed....Shoulders relaxed...noticing your sit bones on the chair or cushion (if that's possible). Finding a balance between your sit bones...equal pressure. Centered...and balanced. Settling in here now...Relaxing... Perhaps moving your upper body slightly forward then slightly back to find that balanced place in the middle...With no stress on your lower back from being too far forward...and no tension in your abdomen from leaning too far back. Finding that centered...balanced...natural... posture.

And, allowing your arms and hands to rest comfortably in your lap. Gently closing your eyes now, or if you prefer, casting your gaze downward to the floor a bit ahead of you...not really looking at anything..., rather, partially closing your eyelids and looking gently with a soft gaze...neutral...relaxed.

Allowing your body to become still now, as you focus your attention inward. Your shoulders, chest, and stomach all relaxing. Bringing your awareness now to the breath. Not controlling or manipulating the breath in any way, but noticing your breath as it enters through your nose and moves all the way down to your belly...and back out again. One breath following the other...the in breath...and the outbreath following.

Noticing how each breath follows one after the other, in a never ending cycle and flow. Letting everything else move into the background...allowing the breath be the focus of your awareness. No need to think about how the air moves in and out...just being with the breath...allowing the breath to breathe itself.

Now, allowing your awareness to rest on the path of the breath that is most natural and comfortable for you. It might be at the tip of the nose...noticing that the air is cooler on the in breath and warmer on the outbreath.

It might be in the throat area, as you feel the breath move through this channel to support your entire body. Or it might be at the belly, where you notice the wave-like movements of the belly as it rises on the in breath and relaxes on the outbreath. Allowing your attention to rest on the path of the breath that is most comfortable for you now...and resting here...in this moment of silence. (Long Pause)

You may notice that the mind wanders away from the breath...perhaps into thoughts...emotions...sounds...body sensations. No problem...this is to be expected. This is what minds do. Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered off...gently, but intentionally bring your attention back to the breath. Moving up close to your breathing...and keeping your attention here. It is this, paying attention to the breath, noticing how the mind tends to wander, coming back to the breath and noticing that the mind wanders again and again, and once again coming back to the breath and the moment at hand...This is the practice. (Pause)

And every time you find that the mind has wandered off the breath...being aware of it as soon as you can be, and gently bringing your focus back to the breath...back to the present...and the moment to moment observing of the flow of your breathing. (Pause)

In this practice of meditation you're using the breath as an anchor. A way of refocusing your attention to bring you back to the present from wherever your mind has drifted. Any time you notice you've become preoccupied or distracted or reactive...seeing how the breath can function as an anchor to keep you in the present. To keep you in this state of awareness and stillness. (Long Pause)

And again, as you notice your mind wandering off, no problem. Just understanding that your mind is doing what minds do...thinking. And, when you notice this has happened...gently but intentionally bring your attention back to the breath (Long Pause)

You may find yourself experiencing an emotion--a sense of anxiety...sadness...impatience...peace. Just allowing your emotional experience to be what it is...simply observing with curiosity. Notice how the feeling may shift and change, and when you are ready, returning your awareness to the breath...and this present moment. (Long Pause)

You may notice physical sensations. An itch or tickle...a sense of numbness...tingling...perhaps restlessness. Simply notice this, and maybe becoming aware that sensations change from moment to moment...coming and going...appearing and disappearing as we observe them in this way. And, once again, returning your attention to the breath (Long Pause)

Simply be patient with yourself and with your body. Noticing the experience of the busy mind, of emotional ups and downs...of boredom...of sounds or physical sensations. Then letting go of whatever tries to capture your attention...again...and...again. Just bring your attention back to the breath, and rest here...in this moment...fully awake and alive... (Long Pause)