

■ Sample Guided Mindfulness of Breathing Meditation

MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING is the foundation for other mindfulness practices. This practice is classically done in a sitting position and can last anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes or more. In this practice, we train ourselves to use the breath as an anchor, returning our awareness to the present moment, again and again, with kindness and without judgment.

- ▶ *Optional introduction:* Sometimes the body is one place and the mind is somewhere else. The mind and the body are going different directions, and we are not fully present in the here and now. In-between the body and the mind is the breath. You breathe thousands of times a day, but most of the time you may not be fully aware of your breath. The breath can bring our body and mind together and help us to be fully present in the here and now. Your breath is always available to you, anytime you need it, to help you return to the present moment.
- ▶ One way to practice mindfulness is to practice mindfulness of the breath. I invite you to give this a try with me now. Sit up comfortably in your chair with your feet flat on the ground; close your eyes if you would like. Bring your upper body upright. Your back should be straight but not stiff. Bring your head and neck upright as well. If you prefer not to shut your eyes, you can keep your eyes open; let your gaze fall softly on the floor a few feet in front of you.
- ▶ There is nowhere to go, there is nothing to do. Please allow yourself to just be fully present right here and now. You can let go of the past, let go of the future. If you are having thoughts about the past, thoughts about the future, or judgments about the present, that is OK too; just notice that and gently bring your awareness back to the present moment, back to the here and now.
- ▶ Bring your awareness to your breath going in and out of your body. Just notice the breath doing what it does naturally, without trying to change it.
- ▶ Breathe in. Follow your in-breath from the beginning, to the middle, to the end.
- ▶ Breathe out. Follow your out-breath from the beginning, to the middle, to the end.
- ▶ There is no need to judge the breath, like too long or too short. You don't need to control your breath. Just watch it, be present with it.
- ▶ You may wish to say silently to yourself, "Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out. In. Out."
- ▶ If you find your mind wandering or becoming distracted [*or hear sounds, etc*], just gently bring your attention back to your breath. Breathing in and breathing out. If thoughts are entering your mind, simply notice them as thoughts, simply observe that thoughts are present, without getting caught up in the thoughts. You don't need to judge yourself or feel that you are doing it wrong. In fact, as soon as you notice that your mind has wandered, that is already a moment of mindfulness; that is the practice. Allow yourself to simply observe any thoughts or feelings you experience, staying deeply connected to the present moment. Just observe what is happening for you right here and now and then kindly and gently bring your attention back to your breath.
- ▶ Congratulations, and thank you for taking the time to take good care of your body and mind with kindness and mindfulness.
- ▶ Now open your eyes if they were closed, and let's take a moment to reflect about what this was like for you.

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