

Mindfulness of Breathing

Find a comfortable way to sit. Adjust your posture so that your spine is erect without being rigid or stiff. Allow the rest of your body to be relaxed around the upright spine. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs. Allow your eyes to gently close. Bring full attention to the physical sensations of sitting still.

Pause

Allow your breathing to be natural. Bringing attention to your head, release any tension in the face, soften the eyes, and relax the jaw. Scanning the body slowly downward, relax the neck and shoulders. Feeling the rise and fall of the chest and abdomen with the breath, soften the belly with each exhalation.

Pause

Bringing the attention all the way down through the body to the places of contact with the chair or cushion, allow your body to be supported by the seat you're on. Feel the pressure and density of the relaxed upright body sitting.

Pause

Bringing your full attention to the present-time experience, acknowledge the full range of phenomena that are happening in the moment. Thinking is happening; hearing is happening; seeing (even with the eyes closed), tasting, smelling, and physical and emotional sensations are all present.

Pause

Allowing all the experiences to be as they are, redirect your attention to the sensations of the breath. Let the other sense experiences fall to the background as you bring the awareness of breathing to the foreground.

Pause

Take a few moments to investigate where you feel the breath most easily

(usually either at the base of the nostrils or in the rising and falling of the abdomen). Find the place where you feel the breath coming and going, and use that as the point of focus. (It's best to choose one place and stick with it; don't jump back and forth between nose and belly. It is not necessary to follow the breath in and out.)

Two minutes of silence

Breathing in, know that you are breathing in. Breathing out, know that you are breathing out.

Pause

A simple way to stay focused is by quietly acknowledging in your mind, "in" on the inhalation and "out" on the exhalation (if you are paying attention at the nostrils), or "rising" and "falling" (if you are paying attention at the abdomen).

Pause

Of course, you will quickly realize that your attention will not stay with the breath; the attention will be drawn back into thinking over and over. In the beginning, the practice of meditation is often just the practice of training the attention to return to the breath.

Pause

Each time the attention wanders back to the thinking aspect of the mind, gently redirect it back to the breath. (This natural process of training the mind is the essence of meditation.) It is important to understand that this will happen over and over. It doesn't mean that you are doing anything wrong or that you can't meditate. It just means that you, like all people, are so used to thinking about things rather than feeling them that the attention is naturally drawn into thinking again and again.

Two minutes of silence

Bring the attention back to the simple experience of the breath over and over. Breathing in, know that the breath is coming into the body.

Breathing out, know that the breath is leaving the body.

Pause

Each time the attention wanders into thinking or to another sense experience, acknowledge that that has happened, noting the thinking or hearing or seeing, and then again return the attention to the awareness of the breath.

Pause

While you are training the mind in present-time awareness of the breath, with the mind's almost constant wandering and returning, it is important to bring a quality of kindness and understanding to the practice.

Pause

Try to be friendly toward your experience. Of course the attention wanders. Try not to take it personally; it's not your fault. That's just what the untrained mind does. It will take some time and perseverance to train the attention to stay with the chosen object of awareness.

Pause

It is necessary to be patient and kind to yourself in the process.

Pause

Easier said than done, I know. But when you get caught (judging yourself, being too critical, or doubting the process), attempt to bring friendliness to your relationship to the thoughts.

Pause

And then simply redirect the attention back to the breath.

Three minutes of silence

(Ring Bell)