

The Mindful Breath

This is a longer relaxation, focusing on your breath and what you are experiencing in this moment. This is sometimes known as mindfulness and with practice, can help you feel more centred and at ease. Begin by practicing in a seated position. Finding a comfortable posture, with your feet on the floor, sitting upright with your back supported and your hands resting in your lap. If you want to lie down, find a restful position on your back, with your legs stretched out and arms by your sides. Use pillows or cushions to keep yourself comfortable. Take a moment to wriggle and get really comfy. And now, turn your attention to what you are experiencing here and now.

Starting with your eyes open, notice what you can see around you. Observing shapes, outlines, colours and textures. Looking at the contrast of light and shadow. Now close your eyes, or keep them open, resting your gaze on a neutral space.

Turning your attention to your ears, sensing what you can hear. You may hear sounds further away, sounds closer to you, or the sounds of your body as you breathe. All these sounds are welcome, and part of the world around you. If at any time you hear any noises, simply notice them and let them go.

Letting your attention travel down to your nose, sensing anything you can smell. Breathing in, noticing scents flowing with the air.

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Moving down to your mouth, sensing what you can taste. Taking your time, observing what you are noticing in this moment.

Now paying attention to the feeling of sitting on the chair or lying on the floor. Noticing all the points where your body meets the chair or ground. Sensing how supported you are. Letting all your weight soften into the surface you are on. You are safe and held. Noticing your feet on the floor. Sensing how your shoes or socks feel on your feet. Feeling your clothes on your body, in some places fitting you closely, in other places more soft and loose.

Now observing any thoughts flowing through your mind. Your mind will naturally bring thoughts as you relax. You can notice the thought and let it drift by, like a passing cloud in a clear blue sky.

Turning your attention to feelings or emotions within you. You can notice any feeling, describe it with a word if you want to in your mind, and then come back to my voice and this moment.

Now spending some time focusing on the breath. Start by noticing when you are breathing in, and when you are breathing out. If you want to, you can say the words to yourself in your mind. Breathing in, breathing out. Or simply in and out. Allowing the breath to flow in its own rhythm. Taking time to notice your breath just as it is.

Noticing sensations in your nose or your mouth as you breathe, air flowing in and out. The air may feel cool in your nostrils or mouth as you breathe in, and a little warmer as you breathe out. Moving your attention through the rest of your face, your head, and your neck, allowing muscles to soften and relax. With every out breath, soften and relax the muscles in your face, your head and your neck.

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Feeling the movement of your body breathing. Shoulders rising a little as you breathe in, and falling as you breathe out. Noticing sensations in your arms, and your hands. You may feel your chest lifting and opening as you breathe in, softening down as you breathe out. Moving your attention further down in your body, feeling your ribcage expanding as you breathe in, and easing back as you breathe out. Sensing this movement at the front of your body, at the sides of your body, at the back of your body. Feeling your back pressing into the chair or floor a little as you breathe in. Moving again to the front of your body, softening the muscles in your belly as you breathe in the light air. Noticing sensations in your hips, and your legs, and your feet, as you continue breathing in, and breathing out.

And now observing your whole body. Your whole body breathing in, breathing out. You may notice that as you breathe in, it feels as though your body is lifted up a little. And as you breathe out, your body sinks down into the seat. As you breathe in, your body lifts up, light as a feather. As you breathe out, your body softens down. Breathing in, I am lifted up, connecting me to the sky above. Breathing out, I am rooting down, connecting me deep to the earth below. And in the centre, between earth and sky, is your place of stillness. And as you breathe, between your in breath and out breath, you may sense a brief pause. Enjoying the stillness of each pause. Noticing any peaceful feelings that might arise.

Spending a few more moments noticing your breath as you breathe in, and breathe out. Sending yourself a little thank you for taking time to look after yourself. Knowing that you can make space again to come home to the stillness of your breath.

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Now it's time to slowly come back to being here, in this room. Keeping your eyes closed, notice the seat of your chair or the surface you're lying on. Feel how solid it is, how supported you are. Hear the sounds around you. And when you are ready, open your eyes and start making small movements, as this relaxation comes to a close. Perhaps wiggling your fingers and toes and stretching your body in any way that feels good. Coming back into your fully conscious state relaxed and refreshed.

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