

Mindful Breathing - A 10-minute guide

Start by settling into a comfortable position and allow your eyes to close or keep them open with a softened gaze. Begin by taking several long, slow deep breaths, breathing in fully and exhaling fully.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Allow your breath to find its own natural rhythm. Bring your full attention to noticing each in-breath as it enters your nostrils, travels down to your lungs and causes your belly to expand. And notice each out-breath as your belly contracts and air moves up through the lungs back up through the nostrils or mouth. Invite your full attention to flow with your breath. Notice how the inhale is different from the exhale.

You may notice that the air is cool as it enters your nose and warm as you exhale. As you turn more deeply inward, begin to let go of noises around you.

If you are distracted by sounds in the room, simply notice them and then bring your attention back to your breath. Simply breathe as you breathe, not striving to change anything about your breath. Don't try to control your breath in any way. Observe and accept your experience in this moment without judgement, paying attention to each inhalation and exhalation. If your mind wanders to thoughts, plans or problems, simply notice your mind wandering. Watch the thought as it enters your awareness as neutrally as possible. Then practice letting go of the thought as if it is a leaf floating down a stream. In your mind, place each thought that arises on a leaf and watch as it floats out of sight down the stream. Then bring your attention back to your breath.

Your breath is an anchor you can return to over and over again when you become distracted by thoughts. Notice when your mind has wandered. Observe the types of thoughts that hook or distract you. Noticing is the richest part of learning. With this knowledge you can strengthen your ability to detach from thoughts and mindfully focus your awareness back on the qualities of your breath. Practice coming home to the breath with your full attention. Watching the gentle rise of your stomach on the in-breath and the relaxing, letting go on the out-breath. Allow yourself to be completely with your breath as it flows in and out. You might become distracted by pain or discomfort in the body or twitching or itching sensations that draw your attention away from the breath.

You may also notice feelings arising, perhaps sadness or happiness, frustration or contentment. Acknowledge whatever comes up including thoughts or stories about your experience. Simply notice where your mind went without judging it, pushing it away, clinging to it or wishing it was different and simply refocus your mind and guide your attention back to your breath.

Breathe in and breathe out. Follow the air all the way in and all the way out. Mindfully be present, moment by moment with your breath.

As this practice comes to an end, slowly allow your attention to expand and notice your entire body and then beyond your body to the room you are in. When you're ready, open your eyes, come back fully alert and awake. The breath is always with you as a refocusing tool to bring you back to the present moment.

Use this practice throughout your day to help cultivate and strengthen attention.

Have a wonderful day.