

Overview

Breath-focused awareness can help you calm down and return your attention to the present moment. It increases your ability to be intentional about where you place your attention. This helps you be more skillful in your daily life.

Getting Started

- **Take your seat.**
 - To begin, find a comfortable place to sit and take a meditation posture. Try to find a place where your spine can be straight but not rigid.
 - Place your feet about hip-width apart. Place your hands on your legs or in your lap. Close your eyes, or if you keep them open, cast your gaze gently down toward the floor.
 - You should be able to relax in this position and also find a sense of strength, openness, and stability.
- **Three cleansing breaths.**
 - Deeply inhale through your nose, bringing the air all the way down into your belly. Then push it out through your mouth and imagine pushing out the stress of your day.
 - When you finish your third exhalation, let your breathing go back to its natural rhythm.

Three ways to focus on your breath:

1. **Labeling our inhalations and exhalations.** We simply say to ourselves '*inhale*' at the end of our inhale, and '*exhale*' at the end of our exhale. Try this for 20 seconds or so.
 - If your attention wanders, just bringing it back to labeling each breath '*inhale, exhale*'.
2. **Counting our exhalations.** Inhale and then exhale, and toward of the exhale say 'one'. Inhale, exhale, and say 'two'. Try to count to seven exhales, then start over. Experiment with this and see how it feels for you.
 - If your attention wanders, then simply start over back at one.
3. **Attention to sensations in and around our nostrils.** No talking or counting in this one. Instead, we rest our attention just below our nostrils, maybe the upper part of the lip. Focus on the sensations of the air going in and going out. Try experimenting with this way of focusing your breath.
 - If your attention wanders, then simply bring your attention back to those sensations.

Practice

- **Pick the one you are most drawn to** from the above three options.
- Set a timer for 3 minutes and do that breath-focused practice.
- If your attention wanders, just bring your attention gently back to your chosen method.

One of the most powerful aspects of this practice is the act of bringing our attention back to our breath-focused awareness when it gets pulled away by another thought.

When ending your practice, try to feel some appreciation toward yourself for taking the time to attend to yourself in this way.