

Breath Awareness Practice
Learning to tune into the breath
(from J. Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, 1990)

To begin, assume a comfortable sitting posture, keep spine straight and let shoulders drop and follow these instructions:

1. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable to do so, or if not, let them close partially as if looking at the tip of your nose..
2. Simply focus your attention on your breathing, only on your breath ... see what happens as you attempt to keep your attention on your breath ...
3. Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the inbreath and fall or recede on the outbreath. There is no need to try to control the breathing, just pay attention to it ... be aware of it completely ... observe its effects ... be aware of and feel the sensations accompanying it ... pay attention to their changing qualities.
4. Keep your focus on your breathing, "being with" each inhalation for its duration and with each exhalation for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.
5. As you do this practice, you will notice that your mind will tend to get bored and impatient with this and wander ... Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath notice what it was that took you away ... and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of your breath coming in and out. **Be a witness** to your breath and your thoughts, avoid analyzing or judging them. ... If your mind wanders away from your breath a thousand times, then your "job" is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.
6. Continue just watching your breath, keeping your attention on your breath for as long as you can. Notice that **your breath functions as an anchor for your attention** ... tuning into your breath allows you to drop below the "surface agitation of your mind" into a state of relaxation ... calmness ... and stability ...take note and remember ... that any moment during the day that you bring attention to your breath in this way ... you can reach this state of relaxation and calmness ... dwell there now for a few minutes ...savour the this feeling of calm ... deep relaxation and comfort.

To end your breath meditation, over the next several breaths become more aware of your surroundings and then slowly open your eyes. Sit quietly for a period of time.

*Be sure that you won't be disturbed or interrupted during your practice. You may want to **start with 35 minutes** but it is important to progress with your duration and **aim for 20 – 40 minutes.** Do this **at least once every day** and more often if you can. Like everything else, the more you practice the better you will get. Once you are quite comfortable and reasonably proficient with this beginning breath awareness meditation, you may begin deepening your awareness practice:*

7. Now, pay attention to where you can feel, experience and observe your breath in your body. ... nostrils ... chest ... belly ... back ... shoulders ... thighs ... fingers and toes.
8. Choose one of these areas and observe carefully ... be aware of the sensations that accompany your breath at that particular place ... hold these sensations in the forefront of your awareness moment to moment.
9. Notice that your breath functions as an anchor for your attention ... tuning into your breath anywhere you feel it in your body allows you to drop below the surface agitation of your mind into a state of relaxation ... calmness ... and stability ...take note and remember ... that any moment during the day that you bring attention to your breath in this way ... you can reach this state of relaxation and calmness ... dwell there now for a few minutes ...savour the this feeling of calm ... deep relaxation and comfort.

The 3-Minute Breathing Space—Basic Instruction

1. AWARENESS or **[ARRIVING]**

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask:

"What is my experience right now ... in thoughts ... in feelings and in bodily sensations?"

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is unwanted.

2. GATHERING or **[ANCHORING]**

Then, gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each inbreath and to each outbreath as they follow, one after the other:

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

3. EXPANDING or **[ALLOWING]**

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression.

The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment

The key skill in using MBCT is to maintain awareness in the moment Nothing else.

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