

THE MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

Preparing: Sit being aware of your surroundings and your body. Notice how you are feeling, and where your thoughts want to go. Eventually, bring your focus to your breath, noticing its texture, the way it moves your body, its temperature, and any other qualities that you are aware of.

*In being mindful of the breath, It's important that you feel the breath in the body, and that you're not just trying to watch the breath from the head down, so to speak.

Stage One: Use counting to support your concentration on the breath. After each exhalation, place a number – breathe in, breathe out, count one; breathe in, breath out, count two; and so on up to ten. When you get to ten, or if you lose count, just begin again at one.

Stage Two: Continuing to use counting as a support, now count before the inhalation – count one, breathe in, breathe out; count two breathe in, breath out; and so on up to ten. When you get to ten, or if you lose count, just begin again at one.

Stage Three: Let go of the counting. Continue to enjoy the breath, bringing yourself back to the breath whenever you wander off.

Stage Four: Find the point on your face where you first feel the breath enter the body. This is a very fine sensation somewhere on the top of the lip or tip of the nose. Stay with that sensation and let it take you deeper into the practice.

Ending: When you are finished, allow yourself some time to sit and absorb the effects of the practice. Bring the mindfulness you have cultivated into your next activity and attempt to keep it with you throughout the day.

Week One – Mind Reactive and Creative

“...the creative mind, above all else, is the aware mind, the mind that is not asleep, the mind which is awake, the mind which is in fact awareness itself. And because it is aware it is really and truly alive. Reactive mind is very dead. It's like a machine, but the creative mind, because it is not reactive, because it's spontaneous, because it's free and non-conditioned, is the really alive, the living mind.” Sangharakshita

Mind the Gap!

Mindfulness practice takes place in the gap between the experience of feeling, and craving, or our response to feeling. Craving can be a desire to consume/acquire, or a desire to push away (aversion). If left unexamined, our response to feeling becomes habitual, and we cycle through the same patterns of behavior, again and again. Mindfulness allows us the space to consider our response to feeling and act creatively, breaking the cycle of habit.

Week One Home-practice –

Meditation – Whether it's five minutes, ten or thirty, make some space every day to meditate.

Mindfulness – Choose one activity that you do several times per day (brushing your teeth, eating, walking up a particular stairway etc) and remember to be mindful when you engage in that activity. Notice the feeling of your body, your general feeling tone, the nature of your thoughts and anything else that comes into your awareness.

Awareness of Reactive Mind – Begin to notice the gap between feeling and craving. Notice when you react to things, and notice when you're able to be creative. If appropriate to your circumstances in that moment, pause in the gap, aware of feeling, and breathe in that space. You can do this while meditating, during your mindful activity, or whenever you remember.