

# Mindfulness of Breathing – Sitting

## SETTLING

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor with your bottom supported by cushions or on a low stool or meditation bench. If you use a chair, sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting if you sit on the floor, it is helpful if your knees can actually touch the floor, although that may not happen at the beginning, experiment with the height of the cushions or stool until you feel comfortably and firmly supported.
2. Allow the back to adopt an erect, dignified, and comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, have the feet flat on the floor with legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable. If not, let your gaze fall unfocussed on the floor four or five feet in front of you.

## BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE BODY

3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch, contact, and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and with whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations.

## FOCUSING ON THE SENSATIONS OF BREATHING

4. How bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the belly as the breath moves in and out of the body, just as you did lying down.
5. Focus your awareness on the mild sensations of stretching as the abdominal wall gently expands with each in-breath and on the sensations of gentle release as the abdominal wall deflates with each out-breath. As best you can, stay in touch with the changing physical sensations in your abdomen for the full duration of the in-breath and the full duration of the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between an in-breath and the following out-breath and between an out-breath and the following in-breath. As an alternative, if you prefer, focus on a place in the body where you find the sensations of the breath most vivid and distinct (such as the nostrils).

6. There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way – simply let your body breathe by itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of *allowing* to the rest of your experience – there is nothing that needs to be fixed, and no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply surrender to your experience as it is without requiring that it be any different.

## WORKING WITH THE MIND WHEN IT WANDERS

7. Sooner or later (usually sooner), the mind will wander away from the focus on the breath sensations in the belly, getting caught up in thoughts, planning, or daydreams, or just aimlessly shifting about. Whatever comes up, whatever the mind is pulled to or absorbed by, is perfectly okay. This wandering and getting absorbed in things is simply what minds do; it is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer focused on the breath, you might want to actually congratulate yourself because you've already come back enough to know it. You are, once more, aware of your experience. You might like to briefly acknowledge where the mind has been (noting what is on your mind and perhaps making a light mental note: “thinking, thinking” or “planning, planning” or “worrying, worrying”). Then, gently escorting your attention back to the breath sensations in the belly, as you bring awareness to the feeling of *this* in-breath or *this* out-breath, whichever is here as you return.
8. However often you notice that the mind has wandered (and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again), each time take note of where the mind has been, then gently escort your attention back to the breath and simply resume attending to the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in-breath and with each out-breath.
9. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to cultivate gentler patience and acceptance within yourself and some compassion toward your experience.
10. Continue with the practice for ten minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience moment by moment, as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time that you notice that the mind has wandered off and is no longer in touch with the abdomen, in touch with this very breath to this very moment.

