

Mindfulness of Breathing meditation to develop calm & focus

Sit quietly for some minutes, until you have 'arrived' & settled into your seat. Take some deep breaths, become present & alert. Check your posture & energy, notice any emotions & mental activity – acknowledging these as your starting point; perhaps set an intention for this meditation.

1

Turn your attention inward. Become aware of your breath in the body. It may help to start with a hand on your abdomen. In the first stage count at the end of the out-breath. Looking for the tiny gap between the end of one breath and the rise of the next; silently marking that gap with a number (starting at 1, going up to 10). Feel the sensations of the breath as it flows naturally in & out. Let it come to you easily, relax, don't grab at it.

2

Shift to counting each breath at the start, just as it arises. Lightly tagging every rise & fall with a number (1 to 10, as before). Now slightly anticipating the breath, perhaps making you a little more alert, more present & 'on the ball'. When you get distracted, just gently return to the breath & count 1.

3

Drop the counting and experience the breath wherever you encounter it in the body. Simply follow with your mind the whole flow & experience of your breathing. Notice any feelings or thoughts; acknowledge these & then return to the breath. Be curious, take as much interest in it as possible: what do you observe? what's the breath like? what feels alive/ satisfying?

4

Finally direct your attention to the area around the nostrils – wherever you most clearly feel the air entering & leaving the body. Focus on the subtle sensations made by the breath, perhaps of temperature, texture, energy, feelings ... Stay as focused as possible without forcing yourself.

To end the practice, relax your efforts to concentrate and spend some minutes sitting quietly absorbing the effects of the meditation. Gradually let your attention expand out again into your surroundings. It's important to transition gently; try not to jar yourself by getting up hurriedly to continue your life. Take time to reflect on how the meditation went – anything you noticed or learnt.