

# Experimenting with Mindfulness Practice

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## A Few Mindfulness Practices to try on . . .

### 1. Experience the Moments on Waking and Lying Down to Rest

You may explore the few minutes arriving and passing as you wake and as you lie down to sleep. If you choose, you could pay attention to the breath. You may rest your hands on your belly – feeling them lifting and lowering. You might, also or instead, send your attention to listening to the ordinary sounds arising in the room and outside.

### 2. Breath Meditation Practice

You may sit quietly for a few minutes (3 or so) to more than a few minutes (20 or so) to gather your attention to the movement of your breath.

First, find a comfortable seat. Sitting with a tall (and not tense) spine, you may choose to close the eyes or to lower the gaze. Once settled, begin to turn your attention to focusing on the experience of your breath.

When you notice that you've become distracted, without judgment or self-criticism, gently return your attention to your breath. You may have to do that - return gently to your breath - many times in the course of a few minutes. It is fine and completely natural to "begin again" many times in a sit.

Setting a timer can help as well. Otherwise, you may spend your meditation time fighting the urge to watch the clock! You may want to try the Insight Meditation Application. It has a timer with chimes.

You could use one of the techniques below to help you concentrate. Your attention will naturally wander. That's what attention does. That's perfectly normal and natural!

## Technique — Breath Counting

Counting the breath can be helpful. Count One inhale, One exhale. Count Two inhale, Two exhale. . . . Count up to Five or to Ten and begin again at One! This can help to steady our concentration.

## Technique — Ratio/Coherent Breathing

Here's a variation on breath counting. Count from one to four/five as you inhale slowly. Exhale to a count of four/five. You may take the breath in and out through the nostrils or experiment with breathing in through the nose and blowing a cool breath out through pursed lips.

Simple gentle arm movements could also be used to further harness the attention.

## Technique — Qigong Breathing 4-4-6-2

Count from one to four as you inhale slowly (4). Pause at the top of your inhale for four counts (4), and then exhale to a count of six(6). Pause for 2 (2). Then begin again.

You may experiment with taking the breath in and out through the nostrils or with breathing in through the nose and blowing a cool breath out through pursed lips. Notice if you feel any sensation or the absence of sensation through your torso, throat, head, belly.

As above, easy movements can compliment this breath work.

## Technique - Labelling Inhale + Exhale

Labelling the breath can be helpful. Labelling "inhale" and "exhale" as you experience those movements. This can help to steady our concentration. After a while, the labels might slip away. If (and when) you become distracted, you may wish to return to labelling to gently strengthen your focus again.

## Technique - Breathing In Calm, Breathing Out Happiness

*“Breathing in, I calm body and mind. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment I know this is the only moment.”*

— Thich Nhat Hanh, Being Peace

You may also use a phrase to focus on the experience of your breath. You can find and repeat a phrase that resonates with you. It might be simple: “Breathing in calm; Breathing out ease (or peace or happiness)” . . . or something of the like.

### 3. Stand + Walk

Once or twice a day (as often as feels supportive to you), find a moment to stand. Feel your feet connecting with the floor or ground. Feel and sense into your feet.

Taking a few cleansing breaths, you could unhurriedly experience a few slow, slow steps. You may choose to attend to just one part of the experience of walking. For example, you may focus on the soles of your feet as they carry your weight. Or, you may choose to feel your knees, or hips or hands.

You may take a number of steps (any number you like is fine), stand for a moment, then turn and walk mindfully back to the place you started. Stand a while; turn and walk back. Repeat as you like.

The chance to practice a few mindful steps is very close. We have only to choose to bring attention to the steps we are already taking.

Balancing on one foot, with or without support, can also be an interesting way to gather the attention in the body.

This opportunity is very close.

### 4. Mindfulness Bells - Noticing the “Routine” With Curiosity

You may select a “**Mindfulness Bell**” during the day - washing your hands, standing up or sitting down or touching doorknobs or anything that you do with some regularity.

When you encounter your mindfulness bell (when you remember!), take a few deep cleansing breaths and gather your full attention into the moment.

Notice what can you hear or see or feel or smell? How does your body feel? Do you notice any particular sensations? What sensations you feel in your body as you notice?

Notice, sense or experience what the moment holds.

You might write these “mindful noticings” down at the end of the day to encourage your sense of curiosity and freshness! As you “Notice” open the question of what sensations in your body accompany this “Noticing.”

## 5. Practicing Outside

Notice.

Notice what can you hear or see or feel or smell?

Perhaps, experience the movement of air or temperature on your skin.

Or, see the sky, the ground. Simply see what is around you.

What sensations you feel in your body as you notice?

Watch movements.

Hear sounds.

See colors.

Feel textures.

Experiment with picking one layer of your sensory experience to focus the attention. Relax the body and receive / notice / observe / feel that one layer of your experience fully.

Notice, sense or experience what the moment holds.

Notice the relationships. Breeze to movement. Sunshine to heat. Shadow to cool. Color to contrast.

