

## Mindfulness of breathing meditation

The Mindfulness of Breathing is one of the central Buddhist meditation practices that leads to the experience of a calm, recollected state of mind.

In this practice the breath is the object of attention. You make an effort to let your attention stay with the breath rather than just wander about. The effort does not have to be overly willful. Forcing your attention on the breath does not allow the mind to be relaxed and more naturally concentrated. The idea is to keep steady awareness of the breath as it comes and goes with a relaxed, open mind.

Of course, your mind will wander. No need to beat yourself up about it (in fact, this is unhelpful). Simply come back to the breath each time you realise you've wandered.

If your mind is particularly busy it can help to try counting the breath. This gives the mind something else to do and can help settle things down.

### FOUR STAGES

#### Mindfulness of breathing meditation

##### STAGE ONE

##### Particular attention to the out breath (calming)

If you want to try counting the breath, place the count at the end of each out breath.

Breathe in, breathe out — saying 1 silently to yourself;

Breathe in, breathe out — saying 2 silently to yourself;

And so on up to 10, then start again at 1.

If you lose count or go beyond 10, do not worry, just go back to 1.

##### STAGE TWO

##### Particular attention to the in breath (energizing)

If you want to try counting the breath, place the count at the beginning of each in breath.

Saying 1 — breathe in, breathe out;

Saying 2 — breathe in, breathe out;

And so on up to 10, then start again at 1.

If you lose count or go beyond 10, just go back to 1.

##### STAGE THREE

##### Being with the whole breathing process

If you've been using the counting, drop it at this point.

Feel the breath coming in and out of the body.

If you get distracted, gently and patiently come back to the experience of breathing.

##### STAGE FOUR

##### Being with where the breath first enters and last leaves the body

This is usually just inside the nostrils or on the top lip. No longer follow the whole breath, just watch this particular subtle sensation. Again, if you get distracted just come back to the breath at this point in the body.