



## **Focused Attention Meditation**

I invite you to settle into a mindful posture. One that allows for relaxation by easing any tension that might be present, bringing softness to your experience; and a posture that cultivates attentiveness, with your shoulders slightly widened, spine straight but not rigid, raising your head so that the bottom of your chin is parallel with the floor. Gently closing your eyes if that feels comfortable for you. If not, just hold a soft focus at a non-distracting spot in front of you. Take a few moments to settle into stillness.

In this practice we will cultivate a focused attention as we hone in on the experience of the breath where it appears in the body. From time to time throughout the practice you will notice the normal trajectory of the mind to wander away from the breath. Maybe to daydreaming, fantasizing, memories, images, or rumination. Each time you notice this, gently acknowledge what arises, let them come and go as they please, and redirect your attention to the breath.

Take a few slow, deep breaths. Full breaths in and long slow breaths out. Follow the air as it flows through the nostrils, down to the lungs, and expands the abdomen. And then allow your breath to settle into a natural rhythm so that you're not altering it in any way. Just be with the breath as it naturally flows. I invite you to bring your full awareness to the sensations of breathing at the nostrils. Notice the coolness of the air on each in breath. Notice the warmth of the air on each out breath. Letting go of the focus on the nostrils, and shifting the attention to the rise and fall of the chest with each breath. Releasing the focus on the chest, and seeing if you can detect the breath in the lower abdomen, as it expands on the in breath and deflates on the out breath.

And now choosing to focus on one of these three areas where the breath is present in the body. Perhaps where you feel the sensations are most noticeable. Gently placing the attention at the nostrils, the chest, or the lower abdomen. Moment by moment, arriving at the breath. Observe with full awareness each phase of a complete breath - the in breath, the pause, the outbreath, and another pause before the cycle begins once again. Kindly guiding the attention to the breath each time your mind diverges to thoughts, feelings, or sensations.

Where is your attention in this very moment?... Where is it in this moment?... And what about in this moment? With repeated practice of noticing the distraction, nonjudgmentally acknowledging it, and refocusing on the breath, you are strengthening your inherent capacity for present moment awareness and sustained attention. Each time we notice wandering, this is an opportunity for mindfulness practice.

Focusing on this very breath... On this breath... And on this breath.

We carry our breath everywhere we go. We breathe in every moment of the day without even being aware of it. No matter where we are, what's happening in front of us, or who we're with, the breath is always right here for us to arrive at, to gather clarity, focus, and calmness.

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