

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

As always, begin by sitting with your back straight, head balanced comfortably, hands resting in your lap and your feet placed evenly on the ground.

And now, with your eyes closed, take a few deep, cleansing breaths, as you begin to turn your attention inward. As you do this, remember to use the out-breath as an opportunity for letting go and relaxing. Pure awareness on the in-breath . . . letting go on the out-breath.

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As you continue to be aware of your breathing, let your primary focus move to any sensations that may be

present in your body. Be mindful of how you are sitting, and feel the places where your body touches and is supported by the chair. See if you can let go to the pull of gravity and feel your body become heavier and a little more relaxed. Be mindful of any subtle shifts that you notice in the body.

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Now be open to the sensations in your hands, as they rest in your lap or touch each other. Focussing on the hands can be very quieting, very relaxing.

Begin also to relax the muscles of the face, let your eyes become soft, let go of any tension in the facial muscles as you breathe out and let

go in a wave during each out-breath. Let the sense of relaxation begin to move deeper into your body.

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If you are experiencing any discomfort or pain, instead of resisting or tightening around it, can you simply allow it to be there? See if you can begin to open-up to these sensations and observe them with mindfulness, with full attention from one moment to the next. These sensations are continuously changing — just notice this with a quiet acceptance of what is happening . . .

Now imagine the breath moving into that area of tension, and imagine the breath softening, and helping the tension to release. Breathe into the

discomfort . . . and breathe out of it . . .
. using the breath as a tool for
awareness, for softening, for letting
go.

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Now we'll move the focus of attention from sensations in the body to thoughts in the mind. Thoughts are continuously arising, perhaps in the form of worries, anxieties, fears and hopes, endless thoughts about everything. All this is very natural in the process of the mind. So, as you sit in stillness, the body in a state of quiet and relaxation, watch each thought as it comes and goes. Be mindful toward the process of thinking. Notice how thoughts are always subtly shifting, moving, dissolving.

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The breath is the most natural way to centre ourselves and be fully in the present moment. If thoughts arise, come back to your breath. Our thoughts are like waves, that rise and fall on the surface of the mind. Occasionally we will experience moments when the waves of the mind subside a little and the mind becomes clear and quiet, like a mountain lake on a still day. In these moments of stillness we may experience the ground of our own being; a sense of wholeness; a sense of returning-to-one.¹

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¹ *Kiitsu* 歸一

Now shift the focus of awareness to any sounds that come to your attention. Simply be open and receptive to the sounds that arise in the environment. There is no need to judge these sounds as pleasant, unpleasant, or distracting; simply accept whatever sounds come, whatever sounds go.

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Whenever you become aware that the mind is wandering, come back to the breath. Pure awareness on the in-breath . . . letting go on the out-breath. Use the breath to let go of distraction, impatience, boredom, restlessness, or whatever else you notice.

And for the remaining time, simply keep the breath in the foreground of your awareness and, in the background, whatever else that may arise, whether sensations in the body, thoughts in the mind, sounds in the environment, or anything else.

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As we come to the end of this meditation, appreciate that you've given yourself this time to become quiet, and to nourish the state of being as a balance to the state of doing. In a moment I'll ring our bell three times then, gently and at your own pace, begin to bring your awareness back to this room.

RING BELL THREE TIMES