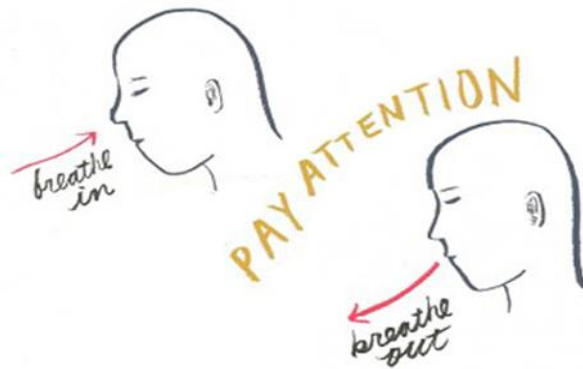


Breath Meditation- Focus on the Breath

What could happen if we took a few minutes a day to stop and listen or watch our breath, the rhythm it takes and the air passing by our nostrils? At first, it may be hard to keep attention on the breath. A persistent one-pointed focus is what strengthens your brain to stay in the present moment. Recent studies with MRI images are showing the brain continues to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. By practicing meditation, we can play an active role to increase our well-being and quality of life.



<http://www.mallikachopra.com/blog/>

Focused or Concentrative Meditation to develop a single-pointed attention is the type we will practice. However there are many different types of meditation, Focused, Mantra, Transcendental, Movement, Mindfulness (a combination of focused concentration and open awareness) Guided and Spiritual for example. Focusing on the breath is different than *controlling* it. Focus and attention is brought to the sensations around breathing. For instance, the rise and fall of the belly or air passing by the nostrils can be observed. The ebb and flow, the rhythm of the breath acts as an anchor for attention. With practice, it can become soothing just like the ocean waves.

When the mind wanders to thoughts of the past or future you bring the mind back to the focus gently, with a non-judgmental attitude to the present breath and moment. Over time it becomes easier to recognize when the mind wanders, so the time it takes to refocus becomes shorter. Many people have recognized a strengthened ability to concentrate and a sense of calm their formal meditation practice produces. These benefits make it much easier to make time to meditate on a regular basis. Meditation does not mean you are in a cone of silence. Everything you hear, sensations you feel, thoughts you think are all part of the meditation. Staying in the present moment and exploring self-acceptance is threaded throughout all Mindfulness practices. Meditation of any type allows one to get in touch with *who* is experiencing this present precious moment.

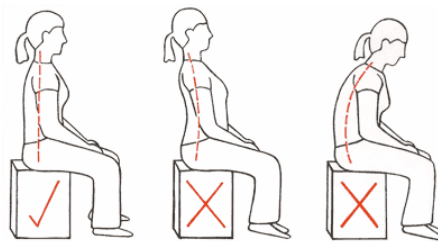
Breath Meditation Technique

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, Ph.D. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York, NY: Pub. by Dell Pub., a Division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Pub. Group, 1991. Print.

Designate a couple of areas in your home that allow you to sit undisturbed. Often having both an inside and outside practice is beneficial to help develop present moment awareness. Experiment to find the best time of day you can consistently practice. Early morning is often a time for most people to be able to meditate undisturbed. When distracted, simply return your focus back to the breath.

Find a position where your spine, neck and head are vertically aligned. This can be in a chair with feet flat on the floor, sitting cross-legged on the floor, or kneeling with a cushion. Any position which allows you to reflect an inner attitude of self-reliance, self-acceptance, dignity and alert attention is acceptable. *The dignified posture you choose is less important for strengthening the mind than the constant gentle return of the focus back to the breath.* The main point is once you have found a noble comfortable position try to remain still, stillness of the body helps with creating stillness of the mind.

http://www.jennifergreentherapies.co.uk/health/correct_posture



Allow your hands to rest comfortable on the lap or the knees. Relax your face and your shoulders then begin your focus on breathing. Take a few deep breaths into the nose and out the mouth. Observe as it comes in and flows out how the breathing affects your belly, your posture and your thoughts. Generally, body movement follows the mind. So if your mind is uncomfortable- soon the body will be moving. If this occurs, re-anchor your thoughts on your breath and on the air that is surrounding you. Breathe at your own natural pace.

There are several methods to help keep your focus on the breath:

1. Awareness: determine where you feel the sensation of the breath most strongly and maintain your focus there, it may be the nostrils, the throat, the chest, or the abdomen
2. Labeling: with each flow of the breath say in your mind “inhale” and “exhale”
3. Counting: count the breaths up to 5 or 10, one inhale/exhale equals one count, if you find you have lost count or are up higher than planned, with a non-judgmental attitude return to one and resume counting
4. Combination: many people use a combination of any of the above to maintain focus