

The Yoga and Mindfulness Teacher Preparation Program (YMTP²)

Mindfulness Techniques

The Complete Breath

Overview:

The Complete Breath (also known as the Three-Part Breath) is a helpful practice for embodying calm and cultivating stress resilience. This full, deep breathe engages the parasympathetic (rest/digest) component of the nervous system, triggering the relaxation response. When used in the moment, the Complete Breath reduces symptoms of stress. Over time, repeated use of the Complete Breath can help to build stress resilience.

Instructions:

1. Sit in a relaxed and alert position.
2. Place one palm on your abdomen and the other on the center of your chest. Breathe comfortably for a few moments, noticing the quality of your breathe without any judgement, noting where movement comes easily, as well as places that may feel restricted or held.
3. Gradually begin to make your breathing as relaxed and as smooth as possible.
4. Once the breath feels relaxed and comfortable, notice its movement in the body. As you inhale, notice the abdomen naturally expand, the rib cage flare open, and the chest rise; as you exhale feel the chest fall, the ribs relax, and the abdomen slightly contract.
5. In a gentle way, actively expand the abdomen, rib cage, and chest on the inhalation; then relax the chest and the ribs and gently contract the abdomen on the exhalation, to support the natural movement of the diaphragm. Repeat for 6-12 breathes.
6. Finish your practice with 6 – 8 natural, relaxed breathes as you notice the effects of this practice.

Helpful Hints:

- Never overdo any breathing exercise or force your breath into a pattern that is uncomfortable. If you begin to feel anxious or lightheaded, stop practicing and breathe normally.
- Practice with self-compassion, and know that, the more often you practice the Complete Breath, the better you will become at doing it.
- Complete Breath can be done from a seated, standing, or reclining position.

- Content from NYCDOE YMTP² curricular materials