

Meditation Skill 08: Cultivate Skill in Allowing

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Summary

Purpose: Decondition habitual breath control

Breathing has a wonderful characteristic that makes it the perfect tool for deconditioning habitual tendencies towards control from the mind:

1. Breathing can happen autonomously (naturally), diaphragm engaged, controlled by the brain as it regulates oxygen/carbon dioxide levels.
2. Autonomous breathing can be over-ridden by taking an intentional breath in and out. The softening breaths you took earlier are an example of this.
3. Autonomous breathing can be over-ridden by the stress response when the mind perceives danger. This is the type of breathing that you experience during stressful situations and involves a tightening or disengaging of the diaphragm.

The tendency towards habitual control is conditioned by the stress response. In this way when you observe your breathing any habitual tendency towards control will convert your breathing from autonomous breathing controlled by your brain, to stress breathing as a reflection of perceived danger. This is experienced as tightness, tension, strain, uniformity in each breath.

Intentional softening breathing turns stress breathing into autonomous breathing.

Your Meditation So Far

Experiential Markers:

- Create your meditation posture
- MARKER 1: Remember the Touch of Your Thumbs.
- MARKER 2: Tuning Into the Experience of the Room.
- MARKER 3: Your Body as it Sits in Meditation.
- MARKER 4: Awareness Grounded Within Body.
- MARKER 5: Natural Flow of Your Breathing.

You now join Marker 1, Marker 2, Marker 3, Marker 4 and Marker 5 sequentially together to create a foundation from which to decondition any habitual tendencies within your mind towards control.

What You Are Learning this Lesson

1. To decondition any tendency towards habitual control of your breathing.
2. To develop the skill of resetting breathing during mindfulness of breathing.

Detailed Instructions

- Begin meditation by sitting comfortably on a chair or the floor.
- Structure your meditation the same as Meditation Skill 07.

Experience the Natural Flow of Your Breathing

EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 5

As you soften into your body, the natural flow of breathing will appear to you as a subtle movement in the abdomen, chest and upper back.

Breathe Out Relax and Wait

Now bring awareness to the tip of your nose and gently breathe out. Relax and wait for the breath to draw back in by itself. Observe and soften any fear that the breath will not come in again. If you relax your brain will signal breathing all by itself.

Allow the Breath to draw Back in Naturally

When the breath draws in, by itself, experience the natural breath free from control. Its beauty, its sense-of-ease.

Observe any tightness or tension that gradually arises within the breath as a reflection of habitual control. When observed breathe out, relax and wait for the breath to draw in again by itself.

If Your Attention Wanders or You Control your Breath

In mindfulness of breathing, we change the way that we deal with distraction.

When you notice that your attention has wandered:

1. Soften awareness back into your body to ground it.
2. Experience what it feels like to be present.
3. Reflect on what it felt like to be distracted.
4. Let a slow breath out through your nose, relax, and wait for the breath to draw back in by itself. Thereby resetting the natural breath.

If you notice that you are controlling your breathing:

1. Let a slow breath out through your nose, relax, and wait for the breath to draw back in by itself. Thereby resetting the natural breath.

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