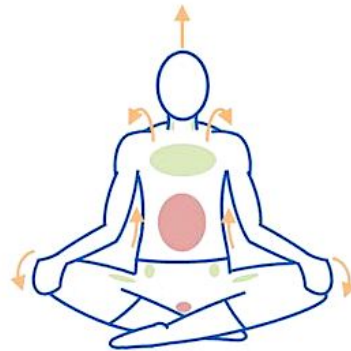


Mindfulness Breathing Practice

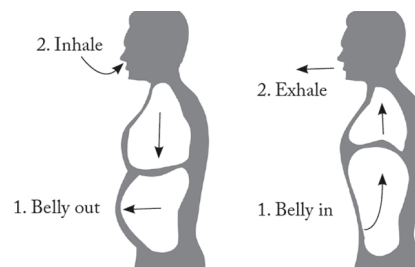
This breathing practice can serve you in calming your nerves to support an open heart and mind in the process of engaging mindfully with life's events.

To Begin: Find a place where you can **sit** in a comfortable way. **Reflect** on the situation you would like to process. Then, let this reflection and your mind rest. To **still your mind**, you can use a visualization of letting your thoughts float by on a reservoir while you sit at the shore of its calm waters.



- **Align your spine** by lightly tucking your **tailbone**, gently pressing your **shoulders** back with the bottom tips of your shoulder blades lightly lifting your heart center and the **crown of your head** rising up so your chin can move slightly inward to center the top of your head over your spinal column. This allows for more **flow of breath**, thoughts and fluids in your body from your brain stem through the vagus nerve, heart and gut. Feel the full broadened soles of your feet, and notice your sitting bones grounding you in your seated posture. Rest your hands on your knees or lap so the tips of your shoulder blades can **lift your heart**.

- As you **inhale**, **fill your belly** up with air like a balloon. As you **exhale**, **bring your navel in toward your spine**. This form of breathing relaxes and centers your nervous system in the present moment. **During the exhale, relax your mouth** into a gentle smile **and your eyes** into a calm state. This engages your para-sympathetic nerves which will bring more ease to your being. See if you can shift from thinking in your mind, to sensing through your heart. Your heart is also a thinking-sensing organ. It can bring broader insights into situations and conversations.



- See if you can **sit and breathe mindfully for 3 - 10 minutes**. Set a timer so you don't need to keep checking the clock. If your mind wanders, bring your attention back to the qualities of your breath. See if you can extend the duration of your breath; i.e. inhale 1, 2, 3, 4 then exhale 1, 2, 3, 4... You can also imagine the sound "so" on inhale and "hum" on exhale. If you would like to incorporate mindfulness meditation phrases, this example of a lovingkindness gesture can be thought or spoken aloud.

"May I be filled with lovingkindness. May I be safe from inner and outer dangers. May I be well in body and mind. May I be truly at ease and happy. May all beings be filled with loving kindness. May we be safe from inner and outer dangers. May we be well in body and in mind. May we be truly at ease and happy."
(Adapted from, *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace* by Jack Kornfield)

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