



Awareness of Breath Exercise

The following is a short breath awareness experience with Linda Smith from Duke Integrative Medicine.

Begin by taking a comfortable position wherever you are. You could sit or lie down or you might even be standing. Allow the muscles to relax and feel the support of the chair, the floor, or whatever is holding you.

If you like, allow your eyes to close. This helps to quiet and calm the mind. If you choose, you can keep your eyes open, or partially closed, with a soft unfocused gaze on the surface in front of you or on the floor.

Exhale completely to relax the body and empty the lungs of air. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Inhale noticing how deeply and naturally you inhale following a complete exhalation.

As you continue to breathe in and out, let your body become more symmetrical and aligned. If sitting or standing, position your feet flat on the floor and your back in an upright position. To help align yourself, you might lean a little forward, then back, to one side, and then the other. You will sense where the center of gravity is in your body and settle into that alignment.

Simply focus on the breath and notice the movement of the breath in and out without forcing or pushing it. Inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the nose or mouth.

Bring attention to the rise and expansion of the belly and the chest as you breathe in and the fall or contraction as you exhale. Allowing the rhythmic movement to bring inner calmness, balance, and grounding.

Give this breathing your full attention. There is no need to do anything, just sense your breath. You will notice your breath becoming slower, deeper, quieter, and more regular.

Allow your attention to become present in the moment. If thoughts, sounds, or other distractions arise, acknowledge them and then let them go be refocusing on the breath. Choosing where you focus your attention, rather than being at the whim of the mind. Gently with kindness, returning to the breath.



Continue practicing for as long as you like. Let attention on the breath sensations steady and hold you in this moment. Practice kindness and patience for all of the movements of your mind and for the flow of changing experience through this moment.

Recognizing, sensing that you are already whole and present; that there is nothing more that you have to do, and nowhere else to go. Allowing life itself to come to you through the breath.

End your practice when you are ready by shifting your focus back to your surroundings. Noticing the sounds, the sensations of the body, opening your eyes, and moving gently.