

BREATH COUNTING MEDITATION

1.

Sit in a comfortable position.

See options on the following page. If you begin meditating regularly, it will be helpful at some point to work with someone on the subtleties of posture which do significantly influence meditation.

2.

Keep your eyes slightly open,
your gaze resting on the ground several feet in front of you.

3.

Become aware of your breathing. Breathe through your nose, easily and naturally.

4.

Beginning at the top of your head and progressing down to your feet, check in with your body.

Register areas of tightness, pressure or discomfort.

Take a moment to breathe into each area with particular focus on the exhale.

Following the exhale, rest with a gentle pause before allowing the breath to naturally fill the diaphragm and belly like the tide come back into shore

5.

As you become familiar and comfortable with the rhythm of your own breath, after completing the exhale, mentally begin counting. "One", Inhale, exhale, "Two",
When you arrive at 10, return to 1.

6.

When you lose count, you become distracted, you find yourself counting 17, 18, or mentally sitting beside a lake or on a nice beach simply return to "One".

As you draw your attention back to one, bring particular attention to exhaling completely to the bottom of the breath and even gently contract the muscles of the pelvic floor.

By sustaining this breath counting practice, you will actively cultivate focus and conscious awareness.

Meditate for at least 5 minutes daily.

As you are comfortable, lengthen your meditation time.

Over time, explore how it feels to sit for 20 or 30 minutes, even up to 1 hour.

Set aside any idea of measuring the *success* of your meditation.

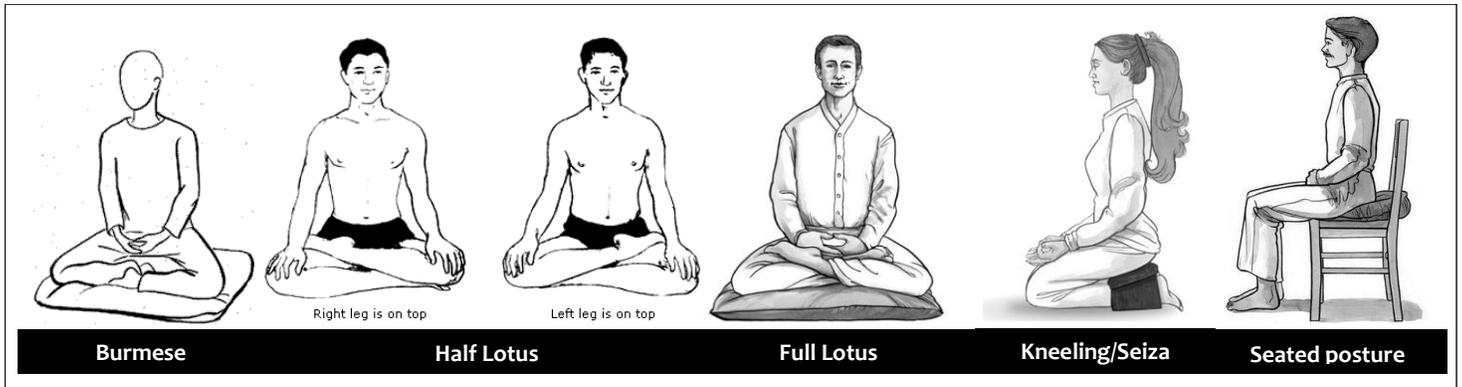
When distracting thoughts occur, which they will, simply begin with a new breath and return to one.

For additional information about the physical and mental health benefits of meditation, read the series of articles "Why Meditate" on my website.

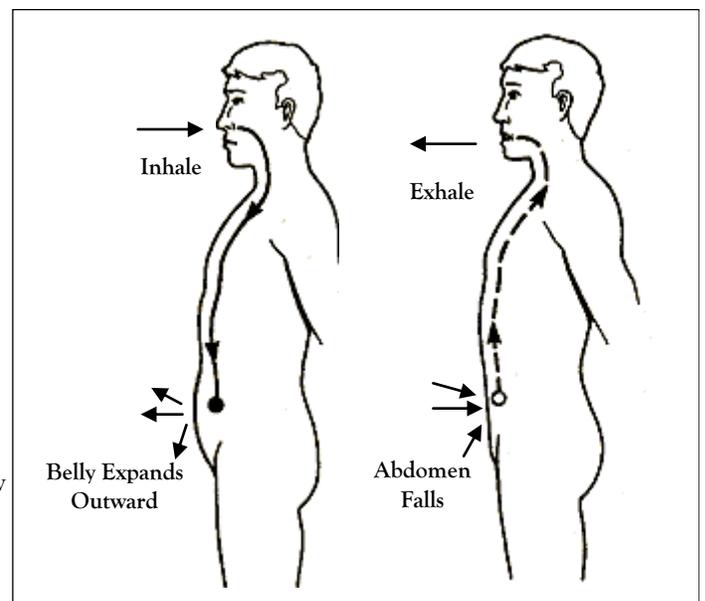
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- Experiment with different meditation postures as illustrated above.
- In all positions, aspire to a sense of stability in the lower body and lightness in the upper body.
- You will experience less fatigue in the back muscles and be able to breathe more easily if the lower back is naturally and yet firmly curving forward. This allows the spine to extend upward with strong support.
- Allow your hands to rest in a comfortable position in your lap or on your knees.
- If you are seated on the floor, you can sit with your legs crossed in Burmese, half or full lotus position. Optimally your knees will be firmly rooted on the ground, your hips elevated slightly higher than your knees.
- If seated in a chair, sit forward on the edge of the chair with a sense of length in your spine.
- As you inhale, the diaphragm draws downward. Allow the belly to expand and soften outward as illustrated here.
- As you exhale, the diaphragm contracts upward and the belly draws naturally back toward the spine.
- If you tend to breathe in your upper chest or hold your breath without noticing, it may be helpful to rest your hands on your lower abdomen and feel as the breath expands to fill them and then soften back toward the spine.



Simply give it a try. You don't need any special clothes or props or beliefs to pause and follow your breath with focused attention. If you decide to incorporate meditation as a regular part of your life, it is very supportive to share meditation with a group. The "Seattle Area Mindfulness Resources" on my website is by no means an exhaustive list, but lists opportunities in a variety of faith traditions. I welcome your inquiries and wish you well as you explore meditation.

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