

BREATH COUNTING MEDITATION

1.

Sit in a comfortable position. *See options on page 2.*

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.

Take a quick sweep from the top of your head down to your feet. Check in with your body.
Notice areas of tightness, pressure or discomfort.
Take a moment to breathe into each area. Focus on the exhale.
After you breathe all the way out, wait a lil' minute, just a few seconds 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 a full 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".

Bring particular attention to exhaling completely,
even gently contract the muscles of the pelvic floor, gently pushing the last bit of air out.

7.

Try Breath Counting 5 minutes daily.
As you are comfortable, lengthen how long you sit. Explore how it feels to sit for 20 or 30 minutes, even up to 1 hour,
or gently pepper the practice throughout your day.
In doing this breath counting, you are actively cultivating focus and conscious awareness.

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

When distracting thoughts happen, trust me they will, simply begin with a new breath and return to "One."
For more information about the physical and mental health benefits of meditation, have a look at my website, the
"Why Meditate" series. If you begin to do more regular meditation, at some point, it will help to work with someone
on posture. It can influence your experiences and help you not work too hard.

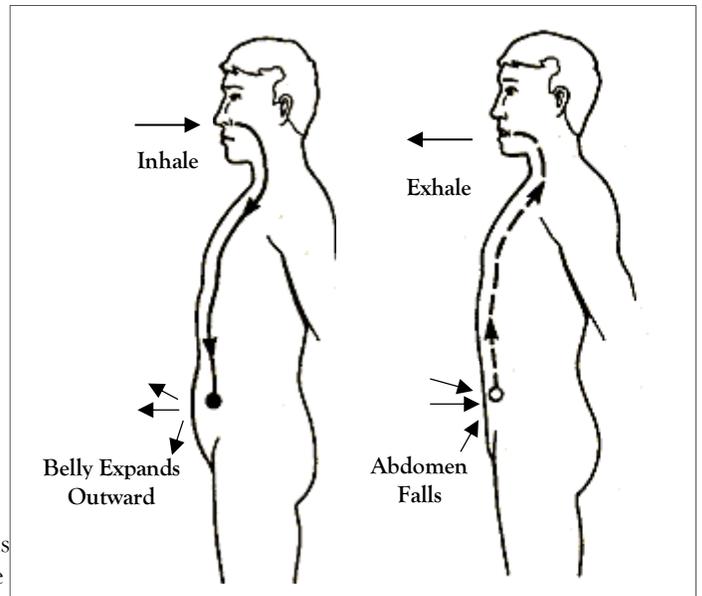
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- Experiment with different meditation postures.
- In all positions, aspire to a sense of stability in the lower body and lightness in the upper body.
- You'll experience less fatigue in the back muscles and be able to breathe more easily if the lower 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, knees will be firmly rooted on the ground, your hips supported slightly higher than your knees.
- If seated in a chair, sit forward on the edge with a sense of length in your spine, a sense of nobility.
- As you inhale, the diaphragm moves downward. Allow the belly to expand 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, try resting your hands on your lower abdomen and feel as the breath expands to fill them and then the belly softens back toward the spine. Don't force the breath. We won't win an arm-wrestling match with our own body. We do better to slowly invite the breath into the belly just by noticing.



Simply give it a try. You don't need any special clothes or props or beliefs to pause and follow your breath with some attention. If you decide to incorporate meditation as a regular part of your life, it can be really helpful and enjoyable to share meditation with a group. The "Seattle Area Mindfulness Resources" on my website is by no means an exhaustive list (or always up to date). It does list opportunities in a variety of faith traditions. Contact me with questions and curiosities about this practice and other meditation.

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