



The Three-Minute Breathing Space Meditation

This meditation has 2 main benefits.

First, it helps to defuse negative states of mind before they can gather unstoppable momentum. (If left to themselves, these may spiral out of control and enhance your suffering.)

Second, it's an emergency meditation that you can carry out in times of acute crisis or pain to soothe your suffering. The meditation is composed of three stages of roughly one minute each. It condenses the main elements of the whole mindfulness program into three minutes. A good way of viewing it is to imagine your awareness moving through an hourglass shape as the meditation progresses.

At first, we ask you to become fully aware of the thoughts flowing through your mind and the sensations in your body in a broad sense. We then ask you to gather up and focus your awareness on the sensations of the breath as it flows into and out of your body.

Finally, we ask you to expand your attention outward again, to encompass your whole body and to imbue what you find with warmth and compassion. You then expand your awareness even further to reengage with the world.

The beauty of the Breathing Space meditation is that it can be performed virtually anywhere. It works equally well at work, at home, in lines, or on trains, the subway, or buses. Whenever you feel overwhelmed, the Breathing Space is waiting.

Step 1: Arriving

Become still wherever you are—either lying, sitting, or standing, choose a posture to be as comfortable as possible, then lightly close your eyes.

Bring your awareness to whatever is going on for you right now.

Give the weight of your body up to gravity.

Allow your weight to sink into the points of contact between your body and the floor, chair, or bed, whether that's your feet, your buttocks, or your back.



- What sensations are there, right now? If you notice any tension or resistance to painful or unpleasant sensations, gently turn toward them. Accept them as best you can. If you begin to tense around the breath, then let go a little bit with each out-breath. Soften into gravity.
- Notice any thoughts as they arise and pass away in the mind. See if you can let them come and go without becoming too identified with their content. Look at your thoughts, not from them. Observe them as if they were clouds in the sky. Relate to them as a flow of mental events. Remember, thoughts are not facts.
- Notice any feelings and emotions as they arise. Can you let these come and go without pushing away those that you don't like, or jumping onto those that you do like? Include everything within your awareness with a kindly perspective.

Step 2: Gathering.

Allow your awareness to gather around the experience of the breath in the body. Drop your awareness inside the breath and feel the different sensations in the front, back, and sides of the torso, inside the torso, and on the surface of the torso. Feel all of the different sensations of the breath as it flows into and out of the body.

Can you rest within the flow of the breath? Let everything change, moment by moment. Use the breath to anchor your awareness in the present moment and the body. Each time you notice your mind has wandered, remember that you are having a magic moment of awareness. You have woken up. Then gently bring the mind back to the breath deep in the body.

Step 3: Expanding.

Gently broaden and expand your awareness to include the whole body. Feel the weight and shape of the body as it sits, stands, or lies. Feel the breath in the whole body. Imagine you are breathing in and out in all directions: 360-degree breathing.

If you have any pain or discomfort, make sure your awareness stays open to include this with a sense of compassion. Soften tension and resistance with each breath. Cultivate acceptance for all of your experience. Befriend it.



Now broaden your awareness even further to become aware of sounds both inside and outside the room. Be aware of other people around you.

Then imagine expanding all of your awareness outward to include all humanity. Imagine the whole world breathing.

Now gently open your eyes and move the body.

As you reengage with the activities of your day, see if you can carry the awareness that you've cultivated with you.