

# Mindfulness of the Breath

## Information for patients

1. Settle into a comfortable sitting position, either on a straight-backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor, with your buttocks and knees supported as required. If you use a chair, it is helpful to sit away from the back of the chair, so that your spine is self-supporting.
2. Allow your back to adopt a comfortable posture. If sitting on a chair, place your feet flat on the floor with your legs uncrossed. Close your eyes. It may help to imagine a thread attached to the top of your scalp pulling your head gently upwards and allowing your spine to lengthen.
3. Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch and pressure on your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations.
4. Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in your lower abdomen as you breathe in and out. When you first try this, it may be helpful to place your hand on your lower abdomen and become aware of the changing pattern of sensations where your hand makes contact with your abdomen. Having 'tuned in' to the physical sensations you can remove your hand and continue to focus on the sensations of the area.
5. Focus your awareness on the sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each in-breath, and a gentle deflation as it falls with each out-breath. As best you can, be aware of the changing physical sensations in your lower abdomen. Follow your breath as it enters your body on the in-breath and all the way through as the breath leaves your body on the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between each breath.
6. There is no need to try to control the breathing in any way, simply breathe normally. There is nothing to be fixed; no particular state to be achieved. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing to be other than it is.

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

Reviewed by Readers' Panel February 2019.