

Introduction to Meditation Guided Meditation on Mindfulness of Emotions

Create your posture of awareness and gently close your eyes. Take a few moments to notice how you are, how you're feeling, what's your emotional state, your mood. There is always an emotional state or mood present, even if you don't recognize it. So how are you? And how are you about how you are? How are you relating to that? What are your judgments, thoughts, ideas or reactions, if any?

Then, if you do recognize how you're feeling, reflect a little bit about how your feelings, your emotional state, might influence how you relate, interpret, react to this period of meditation. If you're sitting here and you're kind of grumpy, are you likely to interpret your experience through the lens of grumpiness? If you're discouraged, are you likely to carry a little burden of discouragement through the meditation? Is there some way in which your mood or emotional state could have an effect on this experience as we go forward?

Now, take a few long slow deep breaths as a way of beginning here, right now. As you breathe in deeply here, expand your belly, your rib cage, front, sides and back. Feel the breath stretching you like a massage. Then release a slow long exhale in which you relax and let go. Taking slow deep breaths in and relaxing as you release breath out. And then let your breathing return to normal. Scan through your body; sense any obvious places where you can relax tension. It might be possible to soften the muscles of the forehead, around the eyes and the jaws, cheeks, especially as you exhale, send a softening wave through your body.

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Perhaps you can soften the muscles of your upper back and shoulders . . . your chest and ribcage area . . . letting go of any holding . . .

Becoming aware of how your body experiences breathing . . . so intimately . . . not having to change it in any way. Beginning to compose yourself, your attention, your presence, around the experience of breathing centering around the place in where you feel the breathing most. Settle into this area . . . abide in this area . . . attuning to the movement of breathing in . . . breathing out . . . inflating . . . deflating . . .

If you notice your mind wandering away in thought, relax, relax the thinking mind and begin again with your breathing. Let go of what you're thinking about. If you can stay with your breathing and thoughts are in the background, let them stay there in the background quietly. You don't have to take care of them or attend to them. . . you can stay with your breath, breathing in, breathing out.

Notice when you shift from a simple awareness of what's happening to getting involved in commentary or getting involved in reactions. Let commentary . . . involvement fade into the background and again returning to the simplicity of your breathing.

If you find yourself reacting to what's going on, it might be helpful to very calmly and quietly name the reaction in your mind: "reaction...reacting." Naming might help to free yourself from being caught in reaction. And then after a few moments of recognition come back again to your breathing. Trust that for now its enough just to be aware of breathing.

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So now, let go of the focus on your breathing. Notice your present emotional state, your mood . . . Perhaps there is a kind of reactive state that's present, very simply, see if you can recognize that reactive state. Offer a very simple awareness, offering time and awareness to feel what's happening, what you're feeling . . .

And then, see if you can find where in your body that emotional state or mood is most expressing, where it is manifesting. What sensations or feelings in your body let you know that you're having this emotional state. You could be calm or agitated . . . impatient or content . . . peaceful . . . happy . . . sad . . . irritated . . . delighted . . . confused . . . eager. . . See if you can notice how the emotional state is expressed as sensations in your body.

If your mood or emotional state changes or goes away, notice what is it now? As you notice, you can also very quietly name it, letting the naming of it help you be simple with it, independent of it, but still feeling it.

So then for the last minute of the sitting, come back again to your breathing, and abide with your breathing, as if it's the most important place to be. Everything else can recede to the background.