



## MINDFUL BREATHING FOR ADULTS

*"Sometimes the most important thing in the whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths."*

*—Etty Hillesum*

### OVERVIEW

Practice quietly and calmly redirecting your attention to your breath each time your mind wanders.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- Before class begins, during prep time, during lunch, at the end of a school day
- When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- Before or during a staff meeting

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 5 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Adult
- College

#### MATERIALS

- A quiet space to practice

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will:

- Practice anchoring your attention on a part of your body (e.g., your nostrils, chest, or belly) as your breath naturally moves through you

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- How does it feel to slow down for this simple exercise? Are you ready to anchor your attention on one thing, your breath?
- When your mind wanders, can you gently redirect your attention back to your breath?
- If you are leading this mindfulness practice with a group, consider how the participants might respond. How can you prepare yourself to slow down, focus, and treat yourself with kindness and curiosity?

### INSTRUCTIONS

If leading a group, remind participants that they are encouraged but not required to participate. (Students or staff are welcome to sit quietly if they choose not to participate.)

[\[Link to MP3\]](#)

1. Find a relaxed, comfortable position. You could be seated on a chair or on the floor, on a cushion. Keep your back upright, but not too tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it's comfortable.
2. Notice and relax your body. Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight. Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here—the sensations it experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair. Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.
3. Tune into your breath. Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out. You don't need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural. Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your abdomen. It may be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.

4. Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind may start to wander. You may start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It's very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say "thinking" or "wandering" in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.
5. Stay here for a few minutes--just a short time. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you'll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.
6. After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How did you feel during the practice? How do you feel now?
- Were you able to redirect your focus calmly and gently? Can you accept the fact that your mind wanders? (Remember, that mind wandering is a perfectly normal part of the process.)

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Mindful breathing, a key practice featured in Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, is a widely used method for cultivating mindfulness that supports [emotion regulation](#), [nonreactivity](#), and [decentering](#) (viewing your experiences with increased objectivity) while alleviating symptoms of [depression](#).

MBSR, which has been adapted and studied over the last several decades, includes other practices like the [body scan](#), [mindful walking](#), and mindful yoga. Research tells us that these practices help people to manage chronic [pain](#), [stress](#), [anxiety](#), and [symptoms of distress](#).

In fact, teachers who practice mindfulness for just a few weeks report a range of [positive outcomes](#), including a decrease in [burnout](#), [stress](#), [anxiety](#), and [depression](#). They also experience a range of physical [health](#) benefits, including better [sleep quality](#).

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Mindful breathing helps us to simply notice (without judgment) our thoughts and feelings while gently redirecting our attention back to our breath. If we practice this regularly, we learn to become less reactive to mental events as well as real-life events.

With time, we can then learn to respond more constructively to stressful experiences and interpersonal conflicts at school and at home. Teachers who practice mindfulness report [reduced interpersonal problems](#) and more [emotionally supportive](#) relationships with the students in their classrooms.

## SOURCE

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