**Mindfulness of Breathing Practice Guidelines**

*‘Quiet friend who has come so far, feel how your breathing makes more space around you.’ By Rilke*

1. Sit in a comfortable posture, with your spine erect; let your shoulders relax and drop. Your chin should be slightly forward so that the crown of your head is the highest position. You can sit on a straight backed chair, but if you can, sit in a self-supporting position with your back slightly away from the back of the chair. Keep your feet flat on the floor and legs uncrossed. If you are sitting on a cushion on the floor cross legged ensure that your hips are higher than your knees and if possible have your knees touching the floor. Experiment with the height of the cushion or cushions. If you are sitting on a meditation stool you may want to put extra padding under your knees.

2. Once you have ensured you are comfortable, if it feels okay for you, gently close your eyes.

3. Bring your awareness to the body sensations, by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch, contact and pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and whatever you are sitting on. Spend a few minutes exploring these sensations, just as in the body scan. As best you can, consider the parts of the body that have contact with the chair, cushion or floor as providing you with a sense of grounding or anchoring.

4. Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath. When you first try this practice, 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 in this area , you can remove your hand.

5. Keep focus on your breathing, ‘being with’ each in-breath for its full duration and with each out- breath for its full duration, as if you were riding on the waves of your own breathing. Perhaps notice the slight pauses between one in-breath and the following out-breath and between one out-breath and the following in-breath. Perhaps aware of the slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each in-breath and of gentle deflation as it falls with each out breath or of the journey from the nostrils to the belly.

6. Every time that you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, softly note what it was that took you away and then gently escort your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.

7. If your mind wanders from the breath a thousand times, then your ‘job’ is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with. It is just as valuable to become aware that your mind has wandered and to bring it back to the breath as it is to remain aware of the breath. Acknowledge briefly where it has been (planning/ thinking / dreaming). Then without judgement or analysis bring your attention back to the breath and the sensations it is producing.

8. However often you notice the mind wandering, as best you can, congratulate yourself for having noticed the departure of your attention and view these wanderings as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.

9. There is no need to try to control the breathing in any way. Simply let the breath be itself. As best you can, bring an attitude of allowing to your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than it is.

10. Continue with the practice for 10-15 minutes or longer if you wish.