Using your breath as a starting place

    An easy way to get started with meditation and mindfulness is to set a timer and focus on your breath. You are always breathing but rarely ever thinking about it. So just use what you have as a starting place. Set a timer like one on your smart phone for five minutes, get into a relaxed position, close your eyes, and start taking slow relaxed deep breaths in and out. It’s a little more challenging than you think.

    You will most likely find that your mind starts to wander to your to-do list or something else. Just mindfully bring your focus back to your breath. Start with a goal of five minutes per day and work your way up from there.

    The optimal way to breath when you do a breath meditation is to belly breathe. This is also called diaphragmatic breathing because you are really engaging your diaphragm to pull in a deep breath to bottom of your lungs. This may help improve oxygen flow to the rest of your body. You will know you are engaging your diaphragm when you notice your abdomen extends outward when you take a deep breath in.

    This breath technique is something we all used to be good at when we were babies. It is a healthier way to breathe because belly breathing helps trigger a relaxation response in your body. Chest breathing is something we learned to do as part of reacting to stress. Notice next time you are feeling stressed that you are shallow breathing with your chest and not moving your abdomen when you breathe.

    So optimally you want to practice diaphragmatic breathing when you do your breath meditation practice. You'll start to see it is not that difficult to begin a meditation practice by simply focusing on your breath, and it results in numerous health benefits.

    To view an instructional video on diaphragmatic or belly breathing, click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdsipKCACac&feature=youtu.be). A company that designed an app for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder created this video.

    To download the free app, click on the following link for the [App Store Breathe2Relax](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe2relax/id425720246) and the [Google Play Store Breathe2Relax](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.t2health.breathe2relax&hl=en_US)