

Being in Breath:

Relax your jaw: Drop the mouth open till 2 fingertips can be placed, one on top of the other, between the front teeth.

Allow a silent, quick breath in through your mouth – wait – allow it out – wait

Repeat several times, noticing how easy it is, how you don't need a lot of air to go in each time, and how the air goes in and comes out silently through an open throat (If your throat gets dry, swallow and refresh it any time you like!)

This exercise is designed to help you recreate the circumstances of your natural, autonomous (unconscious) breathing process, but in a state of awareness (mindfulness) so that you can build on it.

It will feel artificial at first, because it is different to the way we breathe in when we are conscious (aware) of breathing in.

Normal breathing happens because the body allows air to drop into the lungs, and to flow out again, silently, easily, quickly. It also works this way when we pant. When we "take" a breath - i.e. consciously - we suck the air in forcefully, and often noisily, using muscular effort that makes us feel we are doing something, but which doesn't actually add to the effectiveness of the breathing process. By learning how to ALLOW the breath to DROP into the bottom of the lungs, we learn how to recreate the circumstances of normal breathing, but with awareness. Then we can work with the appropriate muscles to build their power and flexibility so that we can utilize a more powerful, consistent supply of air pressure when we need it for powerful moments of expression.

These exercises will also help you to become aware of how your breath creates sound in a number of different ways. One way is by creating the sound of friction (a hissing sound) as the air is squeezed through a narrow space in your mouth. For example, the F sound is created when the air has to get through and around your teeth, because your top teeth are in contact with your bottom lip, leaving very little space for air to pass through. Another way sound is created is when your vocal folds are drawn parallel, and the air pressure building up beneath them makes them puff apart, causing sound waves – i.e. voice. Your challenge is to allow the breath to do its own work, while you place your lips, tongue, teeth, jaw and palates into the appropriate positions, with minimum effort and maximum clarity.

AUDIO FILE: bibintro.mp3