

Week Two: Breath as Anchor (12 minutes)

00:01: The breath as an anchor of awareness meditation. As we begin this meditation, settling into a comfortable posture, either sitting or lying down. Selecting a meditation posture that feels right for you in this moment, one that reflects both a sense of comfort and a wakeful attentiveness. If you feel comfortable doing so, allow your eyes to close or, if you'd prefer, to fall softly on the floor. Allowing your hands to rest comfortably. Feeling your feet in contact with the floor. Perhaps becoming aware of the weight of the body being held and supported by the chair. And maybe noticing now a sense of coolness or warmth in the room you're in. Settling in.

01:25: And now, when you're ready, if you'd like, take in a few deeper fuller breaths. As you breathe in and find ease and as you breathe out, allowing the breath to fully release. With each breath, letting go of what's already been and is yet to come and allowing your attention to be here now. There is no other place to go, no other place to be, just right here, right now.

[20 second pause]

02:18: Letting go of the deeper, fuller breath now and becoming aware of the natural rhythmic quality of the breath. With a kind curiosity, observing the feel of the breath as it enters the body on an in breath and leaves the body on the out breath. Becoming aware of the actual sensations of the breath in the body. Not so much thinking about the breath, but rather really sensing into the feel of the body breathing. The body knows just how to breathe, so there's no need to control the breath or to manipulate it in any way. Being with the breath just as it is, moment by moment.

03:24: Now, exploring where in the body you experience the feel of the breath most vividly. Perhaps for you, you experience the subtle rising and falling of the breath in the abdominal region. Or you access the feel of your breath most easily at the center of the chest or as the upper ribs expand and contract with each breath. Or perhaps you experience the sensations of the breath, most vividly as it passes through the nostrils or over the upper lip. Simply noticing what's present for you. Maybe you experience the feel of the breath more broadly as the whole body breathing.

04:31: Now, whenever you're ready, choose to focus and anchor your attention. And to maintain your attention on this anchor of the breath, wherever it feels most accessible to you, allowing this place, this anchor to serve as your home base for your mindfulness practice, to assist you in gently anchoring your awareness on the breath.

05:10: And when you notice your attention has wandered away from the anchor of your breath and the body. Remember that just as the heart pumps blood, the mind thinks and wanders. So as best you can, when you notice your attention is no longer with the anchor of the breath, with a compassionate, non-judgmental attitude, simply escort your attention back to the anchor of your breath and begin fresh and new again.

06:03: Just this breath, just this moment.

[30 second pause]

06:43: At times, you may find it helpful to maintain awareness of the breath by using a one-word label or a gentle mental note. Softly, like a whisper in the mind, you may wish to label the inhalations and exhalations as in and out or rising and falling, or perhaps noting a word like ease with the in-breath and peace with the out-breath. Staying with a clear-felt sense of the anchor of your breath as you gently and lightly use your label or mental note. Experimenting with this now, if you'd like.

[1:32 minute pause]

09:18: And now, when you're ready, allow your awareness to shift from a focus on the breath, to expanding to the body as a whole. Gently allowing your awareness to move through the body, noticing sensations. Whatever is present for you now, perhaps a gentle warmth or tenderness, or the weight or density of the body, as it rests now, and its meditation posture, allowing your awareness to gently be with the felt sense of the body, here now, simply being, simply breathing.

10:33: As we bring this guided meditation to a conclusion now, take a moment to notice the overall quality and condition of the body, mind, and heart. Honoring your practice, your innate wisdom, and your good self-care.

11:10: When you're ready, slowly move your fingers and toes, and if your eyes have been closed, gently open them now. Looking around the room you're sitting in, and when you're ready, slowly resuming your daily activities. And remember, at any time throughout the day, you can mindfully return to the anchor of the breath in your body to refresh or renew your mindful attention. The breath is always present to us as a mindful companion.