

## **One Approach to Mindfulness Meditation**

Find a comfortable sitting position and take a moment to settle in. Do what needs to be done so that the posture is stable, comfortable and relatively straight. Find a posture that promotes both wakefulness and ease in the body and mind.

Take several slow and smooth breaths, filling and emptying the lungs completely without straining. Just notice all the sensations that come and go during each of these deep breaths.

Now, let the breath return to normal and rest in the experience of the body. Begin by noticing the obvious touch points, for example the buttocks against the chair or cushion, the hands touching and resting on the lap, or the lips touching each other. As you begin to connect with the experience of the body, practice opening and receiving body sensations without any expectations or agenda. Become interested in the ordinary flow of experience in the body.

After a few minutes, direct the attention more specifically to the movement of the breath in the body. Without looking for it in a particular place, notice where this movement is most obvious. Choose one particular place to watch the breath (for example: the abdomen, chest, or tip of the nose). This place will remain your anchor for the duration of this meditation session.

Over and over again return the attention to the place chosen connecting with the unfolding experience of the breath. Let the attention connect with the sensations here just as they are in each moment. Our effort is to remember to connect and sustain attention with the chosen anchor. Let the body initiate each inhalation and exhalation. Let go of any conscious control of the breath.

As you settle in more and more to this experience of breathing, at times a natural interest arises. What would it be like to become completely absorbed with the sensations of the breath? This interest will naturally deepen concentration and increase energy in the mind.

While sitting, attention will naturally be drawn from time to time to other aspects of experience; for example: sounds, body sensations, thoughts, visual images or some combination of these senses. As soon as you notice that the attention is no longer with the breath, gently bring it back to the breath connecting with the sensations in the place chosen. No matter how many times the attention is drawn away, there is no need for judgment or tension. Just keep coming back to the breath.

Some meditators find it helpful to mentally note "in" with the inhalation and "out" with the exhalation as a way to help sustain a more continuous contact with the sensations of the breath. Use this mental noting whenever it is helpful. Let it be just a quiet mental whisper at the back of the mind, keeping most of the attention on the actual sensations of the breath.

When the mind and heart feel steady and calm, the following adjustment can be made. Whenever the attention is pulled to some other aspect of experience, whether pleasant or unpleasant, let the attention turn completely to meet this distraction. Practice being intimate with the experience without getting lost in it. Simply acknowledge these distracting experiences without judging them as good or bad. Some people find it helpful to give a quiet metal note to the predominate experience in order to prevent getting lost in or reacting to the experience. For example one might label distractions in the following ways: "thinking" "wanting" "judging" "planning" "sleepiness" "boredom" "restlessness" "doubt" "confusion" "itching" "aching" "throbbing" "tingling" or whatever label best connects the attention with the unfolding experience. This labeling is done if it helps deepen contact with the actual experience in the moment. Be careful not to let the labeling become a distraction itself.

Whenever one encounters difficult mind states or painful physical sensations, it is important to practice seeing the experience as it is. As awareness and acceptance deepen pay particular attention to how the experience is changing. Remember, it is possible to meet every experience with a clear, open and spacious heart - it just takes practice. Return the attention to the breath whenever you feel overwhelmed or when the distraction is no longer predominate.

The intention of mindfulness practice is to rest in a clear, non-reactive and continuous knowing of present moment experience. The effort involved is in remembering this intention and being willing to begin again.

**Mark Nunberg**  
**Common Ground Meditation Center**  
**2700 East 26th Street**  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406**  
**612-722-8260 email: [info@commongroundmeditation.org](mailto:info@commongroundmeditation.org)**