

MINDFUL BREATHING

WHAT IS MINDFUL BREATHING?

Mindful breathing is the process of directing your attention to your breath, noticing your normal breathing pattern and how it feels in your body and then working on lengthening your breath in a focused and controlled way. (Winston, n.d.)

WHY IT WORKS

Mindful breathing is an important part of mindfulness, as it gives people an anchor on which to focus when they find their mind is wandering, or caught up in a stressful thought. Mindful, controlled, breathing can activate a parasympathetic response in the brain, which serves to lower heart rate and promote feelings of calm (Alderman, 2016). Deep diaphragmatic breathing also serves to maximize the oxygen exchange, which helps the body release tension, reduce muscle stress, and increase emotional control (Baltzell & Summers, 2017)

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BREATHING LADDER

This meditation is a breathing and concentration exercise that is a great introduction to mindful breathing.

Find a quiet place to try this. For this exercise you will focus on your breathing and count each time you exhale.

You should breathe at a pace and depth that is comfortable for you and continue until you finish your count, or until you feel relaxed. Some find it beneficial to set a timer as well.

For the breathing ladder, you will count silently in your head each time you breathe out. It goes something like this:

- 1) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say one.
- 2) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say two.
- 3) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say three.
- 4) You continue in this pattern until you reach ten.
- 5) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say ten.
- 6) Once you reach the count of ten, you then count backwards to 1.
- 7) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say ten.
- 8) Breathe in, breathe out, and silently say nine.
- 9) You continue in this pattern until you get back down to one or until you feel relaxed.

References:

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