

Mindfulness of Breathing

Week 2 · Yoga Wise Meditation Course

Introduction

Mindfulness of breathing is one of the most widely practised and accessible forms of meditation. It has been taught for thousands of years across Buddhist and yogic traditions and remains one of the most effective ways to cultivate presence, stability, and awareness.

This practice is simple, but not simplistic. Rather than trying to change the breath, we learn to observe it just as it is, allowing awareness to rest on the natural rhythm of breathing.

Mindfulness of breathing lays a strong foundation for all other meditation practices. It trains attention, steadies the mind, and gently reconnects us with the body.

The Breath as an Anchor

The breath is always with us. It reflects our physical state, emotional landscape, and mental activity, yet it also has the capacity to soothe and stabilise the nervous system.

In mindfulness of breathing, the breath becomes an anchor for awareness. Each time the mind wanders, we gently return attention to the breath, without judgement and without force.

This simple act of returning again and again is the practice.

How to Practise

Begin by settling into a comfortable, upright seated position. Allow the body to feel stable and at ease.

Bring your awareness to the natural flow of your breath. There is no need to control or regulate it. Simply observe.

You may choose one primary point of awareness, such as:

- The sensation of the breath at the nostrils
- The rise and fall of the chest
- The movement of the abdomen

Allow the breath to move freely. Notice the inhale as it begins, unfolds, and ends. Notice the exhale as it releases and softens away.

When the mind wanders, gently acknowledge where it has gone and then return attention to the breath. This is not a mistake. Each return strengthens mindfulness.

Working with Distraction

It is completely natural for thoughts, sensations, sounds, or emotions to arise during meditation. The aim is not to stop them.

When distraction occurs, simply notice it and return to the breath. Over time, this cultivates a more spacious and less reactive relationship with the mind.

Rather than becoming frustrated, see each distraction as an opportunity to practise kindness and patience.

The Quality of Attention

Mindfulness of breathing is not about concentrating intensely or forcing focus. Instead, the quality of attention is gentle, steady, and receptive.

Allow awareness to rest with the breath, like a hand resting lightly on water. Present, but not tense.

As this quality develops, the breath may naturally become smoother and more subtle, and the mind more settled.

Benefits of the Practice

With regular practice, mindfulness of breathing can:

- Improve concentration and mental clarity
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Support emotional regulation
- Cultivate greater self-awareness
- Develop a calm and steady presence

Even short daily practices can have a cumulative and meaningful effect.

Bringing the Practice into Daily Life

Mindfulness of breathing is a practice you can return to at any time. A few conscious breaths during the day can help you pause, reset, and reconnect.

This simplicity is one of its greatest strengths.

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