

## Guided Meditation: Breathing

**Gil Fronsdal**

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And a certain kind of maybe seriousness, maybe a certain kind of sincerity, a certain kind of apprehension even, that is beginning to bring your attention into the room here, into what's happening here. And so to gently close your eyes... and assume a meditation posture. And mindfulness doesn't have to be complicated. It's offering to yourself a little heightened attention to your experience here and now. And even if you just now take a few moments to familiarize yourself with how you are, how you are in your body, how you are in your mind, and how you are in your heart.

So it's with no need to change anything or make a project. Simply become familiar with how it is, but perhaps to do that in a calm way, a quiet way. And then within the body, as part of your bodily experience, become aware of how the body experiences breathing. Ever so gently... take a few moments to breathe more fully. A deeper inhale, a longer exhale. And as you exhale, a longer exhale. Are there parts of your body that you can relax? Soften in letting your breathing return to normal.

And continue a little longer, seeing if there's parts of your body you can soften as you exhale. Okay. And maybe also then, as you breathe in, to feel a little bit your thinking mind, the thinking muscle, wherever there's some energy or activation of the body involved in thinking. What you're thinking about is not so relevant right now, but just the sensations of thinking. And as you exhale, invite your mind to soften. Invite your mind to relax and settle.

And then to return to experiencing breathing by itself. Experience the way that your body feels the movements of the chest and belly as you breathe. Maybe the sensation of air going in and out through your nostrils. Feeling it on the inhale. And is there some way of softening, relaxing around the breathing as you exhale. Noticing how the experience of breathing in is a different experience than breathing out.

There's a kind of rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, alternating in sensations. And spending time close to your breathing is an alternative to staying close to your thinking. It allows a thinking mind to not be fed and encouraged onward so the thinking mind can relax. Stay close to your breathing, but do so just for one breath and one exhale, one inhale and one exhale at a time. Just for that long, stay with your breathing, and then do it again and again.

Noticing when the mind wanders off in thought, noticing the degree of interest or the pull or the fascination. And see if you can redirect all that towards discovering how to settle into the breathing, how to invite the calming of the mind as you center yourself on breathing. And then in the last part of this meditation, to end with how we began, take a few moments to familiarize yourself with how you are. Doing so in a way that it's okay to be whatever way you are. Just look around, feel around. How are you in your body?

How are you in the different parts of your body? How are you in your mind? How are you in your heart with your feelings? Breathing in and feeling some part of the whole. And on the exhale, invite that part to soften, to relax. And then as you breathe in and breathing out, maybe there's some way of relaxing and settling into the end of the exhale, as if you're steadying and stabilizing yourself here in your body.

And then to end the meditation, taking some fuller breaths, feeling your body more fully, feeling your body against your chair or the floor. And when you're ready, you can open your eyes.