



TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Breathing.

Duration	10 minutes
Material	None or guided meditation on breathing
General workshop objectives	Use breathing as an anchor to stay in the moment; Observe the sensations associated with breathing.

Explanation to teachers

Breathing is cyclical, constant and observable. For many people, it's an excellent anchor in their mindfulness practice, since it's always happening in the present moment. Meaning it's always possible to refocus the attention on the next inhale. Breathing also creates an important link between the body, the thoughts and the emotions, through its influence on the heart rate. Through this mechanism, focusing attention on breathing reduces negative emotions and ruminations (Arch and Craske, 2006).

Your students may have doubts or reservations about using breathing as a stress management tool. Reassure them. Breathing is invisible and discreet, meaning we can pause for a moment and focus on it without anyone noticing. That makes it an excellent tool in any mindfulness practice, without drawing attention to itself.

The following breathing exercise uses the movements and sensations of breathing in and out to refocus on the present moment. You can't be good or bad at this. The point is to observe and notice what your body is saying in that moment.

Why breathe?

- To improve your concentration;
- To anchor yourself in the moment;
- To stay alive!

Tip for facilitators


Lying down is often the most comfortable position for practising breathing exercises. However, they can also be done sitting or even standing.

Good to know...

Some students may feel uncomfortable with conscious breathing. Suggest that they focus their attention instead on their heartbeat or their physical sensations, to

INSTRUCTIONS

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1. Suggest the students get into a comfortable position, which will help them to take deep breaths. They don't have to be seated or stiff, but it's important they keep their back straight to open up their rib cage. Remind them that they can change positions at any time. Ask them to close their eyes to help them create their bubble.
 2. Ask them to pause and settle into the here and now for a moment. Tell them to shift their attention to their breathing, without forcing it or trying to change it. Give them time to observe a few inhales and exhales and the pauses in between.
 3. Suggest that they try to feel the air as it passes through their body, watch their stomach and rib cage rise as they inhale and fall as they exhale. Focus their attention on the air entering through their nose or mouth, filling their lungs, and travelling back out through their nose or mouth. Remind them that they may not feel anything in particular, and that's fine.
 4. If their mind wanders, suggest that they refocus on their next breath. Give them a moment to observe their physical sensations and natural rhythm.
 5. End the activity by letting them slowly open their eyes, stretch, yawn, and reconnect with their surroundings. Remind them that they can refocus their attention on their breathing whenever they feel like it. Finish by asking the students where in their body they most felt their breathing (stomach, nose, rib cage, collarbones, etc.). Encourage them to tune into the feeling of the air entering and exiting their body.

DIGGING DEEPER

Suggest that students experiment with cardiac coherence, which is a method of synchronizing their breathing with a specific rhythm (inhales, pauses, exhales). You can use the videos at [La Respirothèque](https://www.coherenceinfo.com/respirotheque/) (<https://www.coherenceinfo.com/respirotheque/>) to explore different rhythms.