

Using mini-meditations



The breathing space meditation

This meditation should last about three minutes, but you can shorten or lengthen it depending on how our feeling and how much time you have available. For this meditation sit upright on a chair or on the floor. Don't sit stiffly but try to keep your back relatively straight, and away from the back of the chair.

The breathing space mediation is made up of three stages: awareness; breathing; consciously expanding.

Awareness inwards. This stage is to allow you to become aware of the three aspects of yourself: your physical sensations; your emotions and your thoughts. You should take a minute or two to complete this stage.

- Physical sensations. Get a sense of the sensations in your body- you may notice some areas of your body feeling tense or uncomfortable, other parts of your body may feel warm or relaxed. Noticing all the sensations you can will bring you back to the present moment.
- Emotions. Ask yourself, 'How am I feeling right now?' Notice your current emotional state. If you can identify any particular emotions label them gently in your mind ('Anger, this is anger'). If you're not sure what the emotion is that's OK, just experience it. Try to locate where you are feeling this emotion in your body.
- Thoughts. Now turn your attention to your thoughts. Observe these thoughts as objectively as possible without making judgements about them or getting too drawn in by them ('I'm having the thought that I want to scream and shout at this person').

Breathe. Now bring you focus on to your breathing. Feel the whole cycle of your in-out breath for about one minute. If you can, focus on the movement of your belly as you breathe. Gather your attention on your breath and use it as a stable place to rest your focus.

Consciously expanding. Open up your awareness from your breathing to your whole body. Step B was a focussed attention, in this stage widen your focus feeling all the sensations in your complete body, bringing an attitude of kindness and curiosity if you can. Allow space for all sensations to just *be there*, including the sensation of your breathing. Do this for about a minute too.

SOBER Breathing Space

This is an exercise that you can do almost anywhere, anytime because it is very brief and quite simple. It can be used in the midst of a high-risk or stressful situation, if you are upset about something, or when you are experiencing urges and cravings to use. It can help you step out of “automatic pilot”, becoming less reactive, and more aware and mindful in your response. A way to help remember these steps is the acronym SOBER.

Stop what you are doing. If you are in a risky or stressful situation back away. If you can't physically 'escape' detach yourself from the situation for a few moments by purposefully taking some deep relaxing breaths (see below).

Observe. Observe the sensations that are happening in your body. Also observe any emotions, moods or thoughts you are having. Just notice as much as you can about your experience at this moment.

Breath. Allow your attention to settle on your breath.

Expand. Expand your awareness to include the rest of your body, to your experience, and to the external situation, seeing if you can gently hold it all in awareness.

Respond. Respond (versus react) mindfully, with awareness of what is truly needed in the situation and how you can best take care of yourself.

If you're feeling too overwhelmed for this try...

...mini breath meditation

1. Sit on a chair in a comfortable but upright position, away from the back of the chair so you're self-supporting your body if you can.
2. Become aware of your breath around the area of your belly. If you can't feel it there just feel your breathing wherever you can. Focus on your breath.
3. When your mind wanders off to other thoughts, notice what you were thinking about and gently guide your attention back on your breath.
4. After a few minutes gently open your eyes and be mindful in whatever you do next.

Or...

...mini grounding meditation

1. Sit on a chair in a comfortable but upright position, away from the back of the chair so you're self-supporting your body if you can.
2. Feel the physical sensation of your feet on the floor and the weight of your body on the chair
3. Each time you breathe out allow your body to sink a little deeper into the chair and let your feet feel more rooted to the earth.
4. If you like visualising imagine your body rooted to the earth, flexible but unshaken by the changing thoughts and emotions that you are experiencing.
5. After a few minutes gently open your eyes and be mindful in whatever you do next.

...and if you're feeling too overwhelmed to do any of the above try this...

Breathing slowly and deeply: in through the nose and as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, pause for a couple of seconds, and out through the mouth, holding on for a couple of seconds before you breathe in again. Repeat for 1-3 minutes.

...then this...

Sitting down or standing up straight, closing your eyes and concentrate on being as still as possible. See if you can keep your eyes beneath the eyelids still as well. Combine this with the deep breathing exercise.

...then this:

Progressive muscle relaxation requires you to focus on tensing and relaxing muscle groups in your body. Combine this with deep breathing, tensing the muscles as you inhale, relaxing the muscles as you exhale. Start at the bottom on your body and work up, concentrating on isolating each muscle group as you tense them and keeping the rest of your body relaxed.

1. Foot (curl your toes downward)
2. Lower leg and foot (tighten your calf muscle by pulling toes towards you)
3. Entire leg (squeeze thigh muscles while doing above)
4. Repeat on other side of body
5. Hand (clench your fist)
6. Entire arm (tighten your biceps by drawing your forearm up towards your shoulder and “make a muscle”, while clenching fist)
7. Repeat on other side of body
8. Buttocks (tighten by pulling your buttocks together)
9. Stomach (as though you are preparing to receive a punch in the stomach)
10. Chest (tighten by taking a deep breath)
11. Neck and shoulders (raise your shoulders up to touch your ears)
12. Mouth (open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw)
13. Eyes (clench your eyelids tightly shut)
14. Forehead (raise your eyebrows as far as you can)

As you relax each muscle group concentrate on that feeling of tension release. It may help to imagine the tension *flowing* down through your body and out from your feet and hands.

Useful apps: *Smiling Mind* (free to download, no additional subscriptions)

Or try: *Calm*, *Headspace* or *Stop, Breathe and Think* (free to download, with optional subscriptions for additional content).