



For Intense Moments: the "Mindful Breather"

Set-up: as best as you can in the moment, set up some conditions to take a "breather". If in a public setting, excuse yourself to a quiet spot with a minimum of other stimuli— step outside the office/building/room, or head to a restroom. If available, find a place to sit down. If you have to, stand, or even find a place to take an easy walk without being interrupted. Take a deep breath, in and out, to settle yourself.

Next, breathe through a four-step survey. With each slow, deep in-breath, imagine gathering energy and attention in the chest; with each out-breath, "breathe attention into" each of these four targets to fill out a good sense of what you are experiencing.

- Breath one: into your chest; then breathe out, imagining your directing it into your experience of your body. Notice tension, restlessness, pain, calming... whatever is there.
- Breath two: again into your chest; with the out-breath, imagine directing it into your heart, your emotional state. Notice what state is - anxious, angry, sad, content....whatever is there.
- Breath three: once again into your chest; with this out-breath, imagine directing it up into your head, how your thoughts are. Lots of them? Kind of quiet? One of them crowding out any others? Try not to run away with the thoughts; just observe whatever is there.
- Breath four: once more into your chest; with this out-breath, imagine pulling your attention back and just be the watcher, watching. Notice whatever is there in body, heart, and head. You've filled yourself with awareness.
- Wrap-up: Now's the time for a decision. If it seems like a good idea to repeat the checklist or some part of it, that's your call. Breathe into those parts a little bit more, until you feel in good control. When you feel in more control, take a final, deep breath to conclude this "breather." Notice the difference in how you feel. You may have some comfort and gratitude for taking this break and managing a difficult moment.
- Open back out, re-orient yourself to your surroundings, and return to your day's activities.