



This document is an extract from the full chapter which is available for download in the table via this [link](#) and is intended for use by participants of meetings.

Mindfulness of Breathing – The anchor in the present moment

The Island of Grounding Mindfulness

Gathering awareness: The first material for our raft

“Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.” - Thich Nhat Hanh

This practice forms a core aspect of mindfulness training, helping us explore the nature of our direct experience, including its impermanence, and begin to sit with the discomfort that is part of life, without immediately needing to escape it. It forms a cornerstone of mindfulness training and is an essential skill, a sound anchor, we collect as we continue constructing our RAFT to Freedom.

Tuning into the ever-present breath

The breath is unique. It's an automatic bodily function, yet we can also control it consciously. It's constantly changing, yet always present from birth until death. It sits at the threshold between the voluntary and involuntary, the conscious and unconscious. Because it's always with us, the breath serves as a perfect anchor, a reliable home base to return to whenever our minds get lost in the past, carried away by future worries, or caught in the turbulent currents of craving or difficult emotions.

“You shouldn’t chase after the past or place expectations on the future. What is past is left behind. The future is as yet unreached. Whatever quality is present you clearly see right there, right there.” said Gotama
~The Buddha.

We simply bring our attention to the natural flow of the breath, feeling the physical sensations as it enters and leaves the body. We don't try to control it or change it (unless we are specifically doing a different type of breath exercise), but rather we observe its natural rhythm.

Self-reflections on breath meditation.

Find a quiet moment to sit and gently bring awareness to your breath for just a minute or two, then reflect:

- ★ What physical sensations of breathing did I notice most clearly (for example, at nostrils, chest, tummy)?
 - ★ Did my mind wander? If so, what was my reaction to noticing the wandering?
 - ★ Did I find myself trying to control my breath, or was I able to observe its natural rhythm?
 - ★ How did my body feel before, during, and after this brief period of breath awareness?
 - ★ Did focusing on my breathing feel pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?
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Journaling prompts

Use your journal to explore your experience with breath awareness practice:

- ★ **Starting small:** Commit to practising 3-5 minutes of mindful breathing once or twice a day for the next few days. Journal briefly after each session about what you noticed – ease, difficulty, quality of attention,

thoughts/feelings that arose.

- ★ **Breath throughout the day:** Set an intention to consciously check in with your breath a few times during your daily activities (for example, while waiting, walking, working). What do you notice about your breath, and your state of mind, in these different situations?
- ★ **Mind wandering:** During your practice, pay attention to *where* your mind tends to go when it wanders. Are there common themes? For example, are you planning, worrying, remembering, or fantasising? Practise gently acknowledging your thoughts and gently guide your attention back to your breathing. Write about this process of noticing and returning.
- ★ **Breath and emotion:** Try to notice the connection between your breath and your emotional state. When you feel stressed or anxious, what happens to your breath? When you feel calm, how does it change? Write about your observations.

Remember to remember

‘Mindfulness of Breathing’ is far more than a simple relaxation technique; it is a foundational practice for cultivating the calm, clarity, and self-awareness essential for recovery. It is one of the primary skills we cultivate to stabilise our raft, providing a reliable anchor in the often-turbulent waters of early recovery and beyond. By consistently returning our attention to the simple, tangible reality of the breath, we ground ourselves in the present moment, develop crucial skills in emotional regulation and focus, and begin to directly recognise the nature of our own minds and bodies.

Practise patiently, practise kindly. There is no perfect way to breathe or to be mindful of it. Simply showing up and gently bringing your attention back, again and again, is the practice itself.

As we become more grounded through breath awareness, we are better prepared to explore other aspects of body mindfulness, starting with our physical postures in the next chapter.

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