

The Three Minute Breathing Space

The three minute breathing space is a brief practice and can be used when we find our thoughts or mood spiralling in a negative direction. The first thing we do with this practice because we want to come into the present moment quickly is to take a very definite posture. The back is erect, but not stiff, letting the body express a sense of being present and awake.

Now, closing your eyes, if this feels comfortable, take the first step of becoming aware of what is going on with you right now. Becoming conscious of what is going through your mind: what thoughts are around? Here again, as best you can, just noting thoughts as mental events...so we note them, and then we note the feelings that are around at the moment...in particular, turning toward any sense of discomfort or unpleasant feelings. So, rather than try to push them away or shut them out, just notice them, perhaps saying, "Ah there you are; that's how it is right now." Similarly, with sensations in the body... are there sensations of tensions, of holding, of letting go? And again, becoming aware of them, simply noting whatever is arising in this moment.

Silence (15 seconds)

So, you have a sense of what is going on right now, having stepped out of automatic pilot. The second step is to collect your awareness by focusing on a single act—the movement of the breath. So now really gather yourself, focusing your attention down in the movements of the abdomen, the rise and fall of the belly as the breath moves in and out...spending a minute or so to focus on the motion of the abdominal wall, moment by moment, breath by breath, as best you can right here, right now. Noticing when the breath is moving in, and when the breath is moving out, being with the breath as it moves into your body and out, binding your awareness to this process, to be present right now.

Silence (25)

And now, the third step, is allowing your awareness to expand to the entire body, bringing a more spacious awareness to your experience, letting the breath be present but in the background. Bringing attention to the entire length of the body from head to toe, including any tightness or sensations related to holding or bracing. In this moment holding your awareness in this spaciousness place, breathing in and breathing out. (Silence) And when you are ready, opening your eyes, letting go of this brief practice.

Silence (20)