



Overview

This relaxation technique allows us time to slow down, to focus our attention and to calm our body and mind. It's adapted from an ancient Indian practice known as **anapanasati** (literally 'mindfulness of breathing'). In essence it's very simple – we watch the flow of the breath as it enters and leaves the body. However, our concentration has a strong tendency to wander and it's not as easy as it first seems, especially when we are new to the exercise. But, with gentle practice, we can improve.

As with all voice therapy, the key word is **gentleness**. Remember: **nothing is as strong as gentleness!**

How to do it

Find a quiet place away from the distractions of everyday life, somewhere you will not be interrupted. Sit in a comfortable position with your spine erect and your hands resting gently on your lap.

Sit for a few moments while you collect yourself. Allow your face to relax, erasing any tensions from the muscles. Let your gaze fall a meter or so ahead of you and then gently close your eyes. Allow all unnecessary thoughts to fade and move your attention away from planning and analyzing the activities of the day.

Part 1

Bring your attention to focus on your breathing – just the natural flow of the breath through your nose. Gentle, unforced. Breathing naturally. Mentally count each breath after the exhalation:

breathe in, breathe out, count 1

breathe in, breathe out, count 2

breathe in, breathe out, count 3

breathe in, breathe out, count 4

... and continue until you reach 10, before beginning again

Anytime a thought or distraction comes into your mind, let it gently fade away and return to the breath. Don't worry about where you were up to ... just begin again...

breathe in, breathe out, count 1

breathe in, breathe out, count 2

breathe in, breathe out, count 3 ...

It's important to focus on the breathing. The counting is just a tool to aid concentration on the breath. Don't become irritated by the inevitable distractions as they occur. Simply return to the breath and begin again. Gradually, your concentration will improve but it takes time and practice.

After about 5 minutes move on to Part 2.



Mindfulness of Breathing

Part 2

This is similar to the previous part but with a subtle change in emphasis. This time you count before the in-breath:

count 1, breath in, breathe out

count 2, breath in, breathe out

count 3, breath in, breathe out

count 4, breath in, breathe out

... continue with this sequence until count 10, then begin again at count 1

After about 5 minutes move on to Part 3.

Part 3

In this part you stop counting and simply stay with the breath as it moves into and out of the body. Ensure that you breathe in a regular, unforced way through the nose:

breathe in ... breathe out ... breathe in ... breathe out ...

After about 5 minutes move on to Part 4.

Part 4

You now allow your attention to focus on the precise point the breath touches when it first enters and leaves your body. Most people feel this either at the entrance to the nostrils or in the area immediately above the upper lip. It's a fixed spot that remains constant.

In this part your attention continues to focus on the in-breath and out-breath, but you only focus on the breathing at the precise point you've identified. Don't be tempted to follow the passage of the breath through the body. Stay focused on the inhalation and exhalation of your gentle, ordinary breathing at the point of contact:

breathing in the breath touches ...

breathing out the breath touches ...

breathing in the breath touches ...

breathing out the breath touches ...

After 5 minutes, gently open your eyes and sit quietly for a few moments.

The rest of the day

Try to maintain the calm and concentration from this practice through the rest of the day.

It may help to periodically be aware of the breath during your daily activities.