

Three-Minute Breathing Meditation

Brendan Lloyd PhD, February 2020. r: 01

To make good use of this article it will help if you have read the article titled [Anxiety as the Felt Experience](#).

Do this three minute meditation to practise the mind skills of noticing and focusing. The noticing and focusing is at least the first step in the process of letting-go the head-chatter.

Take three minutes to sit and breathe. Find the space where you will be uninterrupted for the three minutes. You could be at your desk, waiting in your car or at a bus stop, sitting at your kitchen table or sitting on a Yoga mat.

Close your eyes and draw your attention to your breath. Become aware of your breath entering and leaving your body. By focusing on your breath you have your attention in real-time.

To help you to focus on your breath make a mental note of your breathing. Do this by saying to yourself “in” on the in-breath and “out” on the out-breath.

Make the connection between the meaning of the words “in” and “out” to the coming and going of your breath. Notice on the in-breath how your tummy expands out. Notice on the out-breath how effortless it is to let the breath go.

Allow your breathing to settle into a gentle rhythm of “in” then “out”, “in” then “out”, etc. Maintain your focus on the breath, in - out.

Notice how your mind is prone to wander elsewhere. Bring yourself back; focus back to your breath; say the words as you breathe, “in”, “out”. Bring yourself back to real-time in this way.

Bring your focus back to your breath. How long were you away for? It doesn't matter, it's not a contest; but did you notice, that's the point.

It could be that your mind will wander elsewhere up to 20 or so times in the three minutes. **It's not a contest to see if you can get it down to zero.** That would be missing the point of the

meditation.

The point of the three minute breathing meditation is to practise the noticing and focusing. It's the conscious act of bringing your attention back to real-time; that is the mind skill.

So if you find your mind wondering elsewhere 20 times during the three minutes, then you had 20 opportunities to practise returning your attention to real-time. That is a job well done.

In the three minute meditation we are not trying to focus on the head-chatter. We certainly would not benefit from developing the themes or content of the head-chatter in the three minute meditation. The breath is the focus. The return to real-time is the mind skill.

Nor are we trying to rid ourselves of the head-chatter by meditating. That idea will eventually prove too frustrating and dissatisfying. What we need, to maintain the process of stress-reduction generally, is to notice the head-chatter. In some cases we may wish to learn from the head-chatter.

In some case it might be as simple as noticing the head-chatter to get you off the emergency button. On other occasion that head-chatter will be more persistent. No matter how persistent or seductive the head-chatter, the first step is to notice it and return your focus to real-time. You would do this if you wanted to learn from your head-chatter. But now we're off the track on the meditation discussion.

There is also another benefit from this meditation practise. You will also be practising diaphragmatic breathing. As the breath returns to your body notice how your tummy goes out. As your breath leaves your body your tummy goes back in. You can practise this breathing whilst watching TV.

Shallow breathing that occurs up in your chest is more associated with anxiety and panic. Diaphragmatic breathing is less strain on our body

and is more associated with relaxation. A case in point is that to breathe out, all you need to do is relax.

You don't really need to breathe out. If you relax, your breath will simply escape from your body. When you relax, your diaphragm returns to its original position which is in the up position. As your diaphragm relaxes it simple pushes the air out of your lungs.

In this three minute meditation you have the opportunity to practise relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing and bringing your attention back to real-time. This is a nice compact meditation and very much worth the time each day.

This meditation is described by Kabat-Zinn (1990).

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, Pain, and illness*. Delta Trade Paperbacks: New York.