

The "Mindful Breather"

Set-up: as best as you can, 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 where you can 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.

Checklist: 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 #1:** 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 #2:** 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 #3:** 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 #4:** once more into your chest; with this out-breath, imagine pushing your attention back and **just be the watcher**, watching. Notice whatever is there in body, heart, head, and the space around all that — the field of your current experience. You've filled yourself with awareness, and are observing it all.

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 aspects 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 —you can breathe that out . Open your awareness back out, re-orient yourself, and return to your day's activities.