

Observing-Your-Breath Exercises For Parents

OBSERVING YOUR BREATH: Focus your attention on your breath, coming in and out. Observe your breathing as a way to center yourself. Observe your breathing as a way to take hold of your mind, dropping off nonacceptance and fighting reality.

1. Deep Breathing

Lie on your back. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you begin to breathe in, allow your stomach to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs. As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Don't tire yourself. Continue for 10 breaths. The exhalation will be longer than the inhalation.

2. Measuring Your Breath By Your Footsteps

Walk slowly in a yard, along a sidewalk, or on a path. Breathe normally. Determine the length of your breath, the exhalation and the inhalation, by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes. Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural. Watch your inhalation carefully to see whether there is a desire to lengthen it. Continue for 10 breaths.



Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep. Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not. Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will give you delight. After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal. About 5 minutes later, you can begin the practice of lengthened breaths again. When you feel the least bit tired, return to normal. After several sessions of the practice of lengthened breath, your exhalation and inhalation will grow equal in length. Do not practice long, equal breaths for more than 10 to 20 breaths before returning to normal.

*Resource: Skills Training Manual for Treating B.P. Disorder
Adapted From: Hanh, T. (1987). The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual of Meditation. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
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3. Counting Your Breath

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in the half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor; or take a walk. As you inhale, be aware that, “I am inhaling, 1.” When you exhale, be aware that, “I am exhaling, 1.” Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be aware that, “I am inhaling, 2.” And slowly exhaling, be aware that, “I am exhaling, 2.” Continue on up to 10. After you have reached 10, return to 1. Whenever you lose count, return to 1.



4. Following Your Breath While Listening to Music

Listen to a piece of music. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath; be master of it while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music. Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.

5. Following Your Breath While Carrying on a Conversation

Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath while listening to a friend’s words and to your own replies. Continue as with the music.

