

THUNDERBIRD PERFORMANCE

NFLPA - MVP Introduction to Mindfulness & Meditation Class
Meditation Exercise – 2 “Counting Breaths”

MEDITATION EXERCISE – 2 “Counting Breaths”: This is a type of “neutral mind” exercise where we try to focus completely on our breath, while noticing if/when we get pulled into focusing on our thoughts or emotions instead. The aim is to: (1) Practice breathing with intention, (2) Practice focusing on the breath while meditating, and (3) Train ourselves to NOTICE if/when our focus has moved from the breath to our thoughts or emotions. Remember, we are simply “*paying attention to our object of awareness with as little judgment as possible and always with love and self-care.*” As always, have fun and be kind with yourself!!

1. Get Comfortable - Find a comfortable position, standing, sitting, laying down.
2. Note Pad - Have something available that you can take notes with (e.g., notepad, your phone).
3. Breath In - When ready, inhale and as you do begin to focus on your breath, taking slightly longer, deeper, and fuller breaths. You do not have to exaggerate, just a little fuller and deeper than normal.
4. Notice The Pause - Once your breath is fully inhaled, take a moment to notice the pause at the end of the inhale before you start to exhale. You don't have to hold your breath or strain, just in a relaxed way before you let out your breath, notice the transition between inhale and exhale.
5. Breathe Out – With ease, and at a slightly controlled and slower pace, exhale your breath completely. Do not force or strain, just let the air flow out slightly slower than normal.
6. Count Breaths – After 1 inhale and 1 exhale count that as “1” breath. Then repeat, just keeping track of your breaths as you go.
7. Notice Thoughts and Emotions - Set a goal that you feel comfortable with. It could be 2, 5, or 10 breaths. Then see if you can make it to that set goal of breaths without shifting focus on the breath and finding yourself caught up in a thought or emotion. Again, be gentle, it is not a competition.
8. Record Breaths – If you get to your goal (of say 5 breaths) without getting caught up in a thought, congrats. If not, no problem, as the main thing here is that you are focusing on breathing with intention and focus, while noticing (without judgment) if/when thoughts or feelings arise. If you find yourself caught up in a thought (and not focusing on your breath), just note at what point (how many breaths) in your breathing that you discovered you were focusing on a thought or emotion.
9. Notice and Repeat – Write down how far you made it, and then as time allows repeat.

Remember, there is no prize for how many breaths you can take. There is no win or loss, no right or wrong. The exercise is an effort to help us practice and learn to breathe with intention and to be able to focus on the breath; AND then to notice when we have shifted that focus and become entangled in our thoughts or feelings. **ALL OF US DO THIS! ALL THE TIME. IT IS NORMAL. EVERYONE DOES IT.**

This exercise will help you not only learn to breathe with intention (so you can do that when under stress or need it in other parts of your life), but also to focus on the breath while you meditate. This helps train the mind to notice when we focus on things other than the breath.

Be gentle. Be easy. Make it fun. Have fun. No right or wrong, it is ALL just practice.