

MINDFULNESS OF THE BREATH

Therapist: I invite you to sit with your feet flat on the floor and your back straight, and either fix your eyes on a spot or close your eyes. Bring your attention to your breathing, and observe it as if you're a curious scientist who has never encountered breathing before. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* Notice the air as it comes in through your nostrils ... and goes down to the bottom of your lungs. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* And notice it as it flows back out again. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* Notice the air moving in and out of your nostrils ... how it's slightly warmer as it comes out ... and slightly cooler as it goes in. Notice the subtle rise and fall of your shoulders ... *(Pause 5 seconds.)* and the gentle rise and fall of your rib cage ... *(Pause 5 seconds.)* and the soothing rise and fall of your abdomen. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* Fix your attention on one of these areas, whichever you prefer: on the breath moving in and out of the nostrils, on the rising and falling of the rib cage, or the abdomen. *(Pause 5 seconds.)*

Keep your attention on this spot, noticing the movement—in and out—of the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* Whatever feelings, urges, or sensations arise, whether pleasant or unpleasant, gently acknowledge them, as if nodding your head at people passing by

160

you on the street. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* Gently acknowledge their presence and let them be. *(Pause 5 seconds.)* Allow them to come and go as they please, and keep your attention on the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* Whatever thoughts, images, or memories arise, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, simply acknowledge them and allow them to be ... Let them come and go as they please, and keep your attention on the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* From time to time, your attention will wander as you get caught up in your thoughts. Each time this happens, notice what distracted you, then bring your attention back to the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* No matter how often you drift off, whether a hundred times or a thousand—your aim is simply to note what distracted you and to refocus on your breath. *(Pause 10 seconds.)* Again and again and again, you'll drift off into your thoughts. This is normal and natural and happens to everyone. Our minds naturally distract us from what we're doing. So each time you realize your attention has wandered, gently acknowledge it, notice what distracted you, and return your attention to the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* If frustration, boredom, anxiety, impatience, or other feelings arise, simply acknowledge them, and maintain your focus on the breath. *(Pause 20 seconds.)* No matter how often your attention wanders, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and then refocus on your breath. *(Pause 10 seconds.)* And when you are ready, bring yourself back to the room and open your eyes.