Mindfulness of the breath

Breathing exercises are helpful for reducing stress and feeling grounded. It's especially good for people who often smoke, chew, or vape when they feel stress, and then find they feel better after taking several deep breathes. We often attribute this to the product, when it's often due to both the action of taking a breath and nicotine.

Try this exercise:

1. Bring your attention to your breathing.
2. Follow the air as it comes in through your nostrils and goes down to the bottom of your lungs. Then follow it as it goes back out again.
3. Follow the air, as if you're riding the waves of your breathing.
4. Notice the air moving in and out of your nostrils – how it's slightly warmer as it comes out, and cooler as it goes in.
5. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your rib cage.
6. Notice the gentle rise and fall or your abdomen.
7. 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 ribcage, or the rising and falling of the abdomen.
8. Keep your attention on this spot, noticing the movement – in and out – of the breath.
9. Whatever feelings, urges, or sensations arise, whether pleasant or unpleasant, gently acknowledge them – as if nodding your head at people passing by you on the street. Gently acknowledge their presence and let them be. Allow them to come and go as they please and keep your attention on the breath.
10. 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.
11. From time to time, your attention will become distracted by thoughts or feelings. Each time this happens, notice what distracted you, then bring your attention back to the breath. No matter how often your attention "wanders off" – whether a hundred times or a thousand – your aim is simply to note what distracted you and bring your attention back to the breath.
12. There is no need to be frustrated or impatient or disappointed when you get carried off by your thoughts. It is the same for everyone. Our minds naturally distract us from what we are doing. So, each time you realize your attention has wandered, gently acknowledge it, notice what distracted you, and return your attention to the breath.
13. If frustration, boredom, anxiety, impatience, or other feelings arise, simply acknowledge them and maintain your focus on the breath.
14. No matter how often your attention wanders, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and gently bring your attention back to your breath.
15. When you are ready, bring yourself back to the room and open your eyes.

KAISER PERMANENTE®

229850_1-21

All plans offered and underwritten by Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest.
500 NE Multnomah St., Suite 100, Portland, OR 97232. ©2021 Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest