

# Mindful Breathing: the Heart of Self-Care

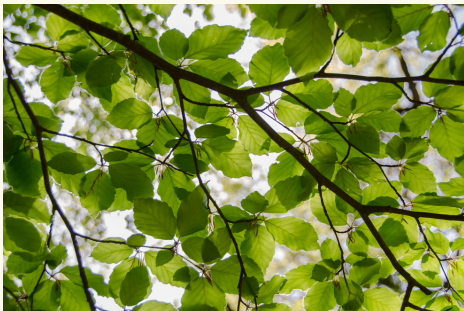
*Free Mindfulness eBook*



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*Written by justBe*

# Welcome



Mindful breathing is a self-care tool that helps us connect the body, mind, spirit, and soul. While there are many variations of breath work, we are introducing five techniques that can be added to any self-care practice.

Here are a few tips for practicing mindful breathing:

- Try observing the breath throughout the day.
- Notice how the breath feels.
- Observe how the body gently expands on the inhale, and then softens on the exhale.
- It's natural to be distracted by thoughts. In fact, being aware of this is mindfulness.
- Always return to the breath and the technique you're practicing.
- Should you feel dizzy using one of the breathing techniques, return to your natural breath pattern.
- Be gentle with yourself.

*justBe*

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## INTRODUCTION

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Inspiring Self-Care With Mindful Breathing Techniques.



# HOW TO USE THIS E BOOK

These mindful breathing techniques are integrative self-care tools designed to support self-compassion and well-being. The general information in this ebook is for educational purposes only. All content is not implied as or intended for healthcare advice or treatment.

*“Let the breath lead the way.” Sharon Salzberg*

QUESTIONS?

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# CHAPTER ONE

*“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take  
between two deep breaths.” Etty Hillesum*

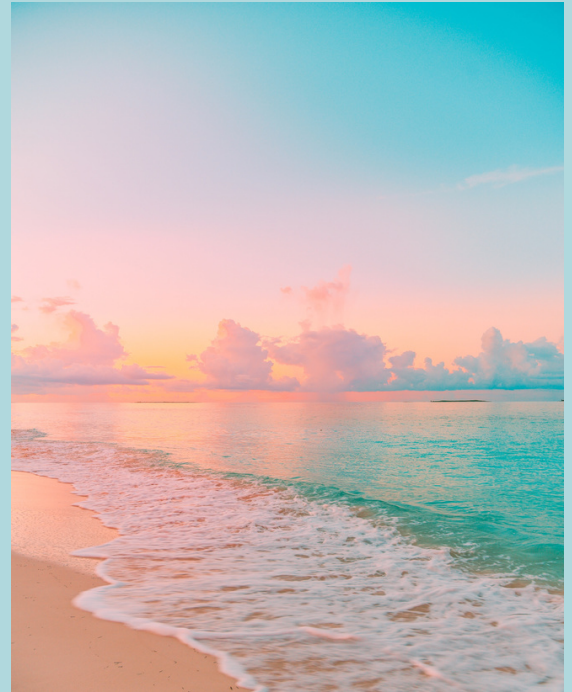


The belief that the world began with breath is recognized in many cultures and religions. Chi, prana, qi, and ruach are just a few of the words used to equate breath with life force and vitality. Air sustains life, and we survive with the power of breath.

For thousands of years, cultures around the world have practiced different breathing exercises for both physical and spiritual health. Mindfulness breathing appears in all forms of meditation including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Sufi traditions. Now modern medicine and science have explored and demonstrated how the breath interacts with the nervous system to help the body maintain balance and overall well-being.

How we breathe can reflect the pace of our daily interactions and experiences. When feeling stressed or frightened, our breath tends to be rapid and shallow. When feeling peaceful and relaxed, our breath is steady and calm. Our breath is always available to us, and we can affect how the body responds to different situations by controlling our breathing pattern.

Breathing techniques are evidence-informed practices used to reduce stress, regulate the nervous system, and to gain all the benefits of what medicine calls “the relaxation response.”



*“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.” Thich Nhat Hanh*

# Samma Vritti

Samma Vritti, also known as even breathing, can be used in times of stress to maintain balance by inhaling and exhaling in equal measured breaths. This rhythmic self-care tool can restore a sense of inner peace and grounding.

Benefits include increasing oxygen to the body, lowering heart rate and blood pressure, enhancing mental focus.

Find a comfortable position. Choose a number to measure equal inhaling and exhaling. Breathing should be gentle. If you choose the number 5, this will be your number count.

1. Slowly inhale, counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
2. Then slowly exhale, counting 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
3. Gently inhale and exhale again for the count of 5.
4. Begin this technique for 2 minutes, and then add another minute each week until establishing a 10-minute mindfulness practice.



*“Just a single  
thought is capable  
of changing the  
breathing pattern.”*

*Isle Middendorf*



# FOLLOWING THE BREATH

One of the easiest breathing techniques, according to Dr. Andrew Weil, is Following the Breath. Simply maintain a present awareness of every inhale and exhale without changing your natural breathing rhythm. The breath knows what to do, so just follow it mindfully.

Benefits include reduced stress and anxiety, improved emotional regulation and resilience, increased attention and compassion.

Practice observing the breath for a few minutes each day.

1. Observe where you feel the breath in the body.
2. Notice the temperature of the breath moving through the nose, mouth, throat.
3. When your attention wanders, return to following the breath.





# 4 - 7- 8 BREATHING

Dr. Andrew Weil has popularized 4-7-8 Breathing. Based on yoga breathing, 4-7-8 calms anxiety and promotes sleep.

Benefits include reducing both asthma and migraine symptoms, reducing hypertension, decreasing cravings.

Below are the instructions for the cycle of one breath. Only practice 2-3 breath cycles at a time. Rest the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth right behind your front teeth.

1. Part your lips. Make a whooshing sound as you exhale completely through your mouth.
2. Close your lips and inhale silently through your nose as you count to 4 seconds in your head.
3. Then hold your breath for the count of 7 seconds.
4. Finally, make a whooshing sound as you exhale completely through your mouth for 8 seconds.



# ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

Alternate Nostril Breathing, or Nadi Shodhana, is a yoga breathing technique with a history in Ayurvedic medicine. Alternate Nostril Breathing involves inhaling and exhaling through one nostril at a time.

Benefits include lowering heart rate, supporting blood circulation, and improving brain function.

1. With your right hand, close your right nostril with your right thumb.
2. Inhale through your left nostril, and then close it with your pinky.
3. Exhale through your right nostril, then inhale through the same.
4. Close your right nostril, open your left nostril, and slowly exhale through your left. This is round 1.
5. Repeat starting at #2. Only begin with 2 rounds at a time and increase to 4 rounds.

\*\*\*Do not practice Alternate Nostril Breathing if you have a severe headache, a seizure disorder, or are running a fever.\*\*\*



# DAILY PRACTICE

TRY BRINGING AWARENESS TO YOUR BREATH THROUGHOUT THE DAY. OBSERVE HOW YOUR BREATHING PATTERN CHANGES WITH YOUR ACTIVITY, THOUGHTS, OR MOOD.

THEN GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO PAUSE AND PRACTICE A MINDFUL BREATHING TECHNIQUE IN THE MOMENT THAT OFFERS YOU A SENSE OF LOVE, SAFETY, AND CALM.

IT TAKES LESS THAN TWO MINUTES OF MINDFUL BREATHING TO BALANCE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM FROM 'FLIGHT, FIGHT, FREEZE' (SYMPATHETIC) TO 'REST, DIGEST, RESTORE' (PARASYMPATHETIC). THE MORE WE PRACTICE MINDFUL BREATHING, THE STRONGER OUR SELF-CARE GROWS.



## GOALS

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## TO DO

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# COMPASSIONATE BREATHING



Compassionate Breathing is a mindful self-compassion technique based on the work of Drs. Christopher Germer and Kristen Neff.

Compassionate Breathing promotes self-love and self-acceptance.

Benefits include reducing stress, while strengthening coping skills, resilience, self-worth, and empowerment.

1. Gently inhale, silently saying, “I breathe in loving kindness and compassion for myself.”
2. Gently exhale, silently saying, “I breath out loving kindness and compassion for others (my family, friends, community).”



# YOUR DAILY CHECK OF SELF-CARE

Say "I am love" In Front of The Mirror	Sing In The Shower	Dance to Your Favorite Music
Enjoy a Cup of Tea	Take a Moment for a Few Gentle Stretches	Smell Your Favorite Aromas
Give Yourself a Hug	Savor a Piece of Your Favorite Chocolate	Gaze At Nature

## CONCLUSION

## *Mindful Breathing: the Heart of Self-Care*

Breathing is an involuntary action. In fact, we're often not even aware that we're breathing. But becoming aware of the breath's rhythm can be a window into the health of our body, mind, spirit, and soul. Think about how the body's breathing changes when reflecting laughter and joy, tears and pain, calm and safety.

Breath is always available. Becoming aware of the breath and practicing simple breathing techniques can promote a sense of self-compassion, resilience, balance, and well-being. Mindful breathing is the heart of self-care.



*Thank you*

*"By changing patterns of breathing we can change  
our emotional states, how we think, and how we  
interact with the world." Patricia Gerbarg, MD*



# ABOUT JUSTBE

justBe was created with the intention of encouraging clients to actualize a healing space within themselves. Our mission is to provide clients with a variety of mindfulness techniques through educational programs, trainings, and community outreach to assist with self-care. By focusing on their senses, clients and program participants can build a personal tool box of integrative wellness techniques to empower the healing of mind, body, spirit, and soul.



*[www.justbe-selfcare.com](http://www.justbe-selfcare.com)*