



Breathing Space

This is an exercise you can do almost anywhere. It is a brief and simple way to calm the mind and body as we face difficult and challenging situations in our daily life. It is especially useful to practice when in stressful situations.

I find it best to practice regularly in more neutral situations as a way of strengthening its effectiveness. You are more apt to remember to use it more effectively in challenging situations. Often when we are feeling stressed by thoughts and feelings that we are experiencing within ourselves or triggers from our environment we have a tendency to go into 'automatic pilot', which may result in reacting and behaving in ways that are not in our best interest. This is a practice that can be used to help us step out of that automatic, habitual mode of reactivity and become more mindful. It can assist us in making more skillful choices and taking more effective actions.

The Steps Are:

1. **Stop right here.** Make the choice to step out of automatic pilot by bringing awareness to the moment.
2. **Observe** what is happening right now, in this moment. What thoughts, feelings, sensations, and emotions do you notice? Just acknowledge that this is your experience right now.
3. **Bring your attention to your breath,** and spend a little time simply observing the natural flow of your breathing. The inhalation and exhalation, moment to moment and as a best you can.
4. **Expand your awareness to include a sense of the body as a whole.** Holding your entire body in this soft, spacious, kind awareness.
5. **Reflect that this is a place from which you can respond more skillfully to this or any situation.**

Adapted from Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression by Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002)

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