Sitting Meditation

Bells

INTRODUCTION

Settling into a comfortable seated position in a straight backed chair or on a cushion on the floor if you wish .
You may also practice this meditation lying down if that is what is best for your body today . . .
When seated in a chair, placing your feet flat on the floor with your knees lined up over the ankles about hip-width apart .
Aligning your shoulders over the hips
Resting your hands in your lap or on your knees .
Shifting your torso forward slightly so that your spine is supporting itself rather than leaning against the back of the chair.
Then lengthening through the spine perhaps by imagining the crown of your your head being pulled up, ever so slightly toward the ceiling.
Allowing the chin to tuck a bit toward the neck
Alert but not stiff – dignified – in a sitting mountain pose
Aware and at ease

MEDITATION

Allowing your eyes to gently close .
Or, if you prefer, leaving your eyes open, with a fuzzy, soft gaze falling on the floor a few feet in front of you . . .

Briefly scanning and feeling into the body . . . noticing any tension that is being held and letting it go without forcing anything (10 sec)
Perhaps allowing your shoulders and jaw to drop slightly . your face to soften . .
Committing yourself to simply be awake to your experience as you find it . . fully present in each moment .

Now bringing the awareness to explore the sensations of touch and pressure wherever the body is making contact with whatever is supporting it .
Noticing how the body is being held (1 minute)

Shifting the awareness to tune into the feeling of the breath moving in and out of the belly .
If you wish, placing the hands on the belly and experiencing the changing physical sensations associated with the breath (5 sec)
The muscles in the belly stretching and tightening as you breathe . .

The feeling of your belly rising with each in breath .
and falling with each out breath .
like a balloon slowly inflating and deflating (1 minute)
Now shifting the awareness to the nostrils, noticing the air entering your nostrils on the in-breath . . . . .
and perhaps somewhat warmer air leaving your nostrils on the out-breath (5 sec)
Observing the qualities of the breath, allowing whatever you find to be as it is .
There's no need to control the breathing in any way, simply letting the breath breathe on its own as it has done so well since the day you were born (5 sec)
Is it smooth or choppy? . . .
Is it continuous? Noticing if there are any pauses between one in-breath and the next out-breath (3 sec)
and between one out-breath and the next in-breath (3 sec)
Is the length of the in-breath and the out-breath the same (5 sec)
Is there any sound associated with the breath? (3 sec)
Is the breath deep and full or shallow and constricted? (5 sec)

Allowing yourself to just stay present in each moment .
following the breath as it enters and exits the body .
each breath flowing into the next .

1 minute silence

Sooner or later, if it hasn't already happened, the awareness will drift away from the breath .
perhaps to thoughts – time travelling to the past or future - making plans or rehashing something that has already happened .
or daydreaming . half asleep/half awake .
or to physical sensations somewhere else in the body .
or an emotion .
this is not uncommon and it is not a mistake or a failure . . .
It may be helpful to consider this training of the awareness like training a puppy .
it is important to treat the puppy with kind and gentle encouragement .
harshness will only frighten the puppy .
So when you notice that your mind is no longer on the breath, praise yourself like you would praise a puppy. you have noticed that the awareness has wandered and you are now back, once again aware of your breath in the present moment .

3 minutes silence ("just this breath" after one minute; “where is the awareness now/” after 2 minutes)

Whenever the attention drifts, it may be helpful to note in a word or two where the awareness has gone: “thinking” or “feeling” .
Then gently guiding the awareness back to the changing pattern of physical sensations that are linked to the breath .
aiming once again to pay attention to the continuing cycle of in-breath and out-breath .
noticing that the attention has wandered and bringing it back over and over again, that is the meditation, the practice of mindfulness

3 minute silence

Even if the attention wanders off a thousand times .
you simply bring it back a thousand times .
with compassion toward yourself .
As best you can letting go of the natural human tendency to react to or judge any of your thoughts or feelings, impulses or perceptions .
And that includes judging yourself for judging . .
Reminding yourself instead, that in this work of mindfulness absolutely anything that you become aware of is ok . . .
We simply sit with it, breath with it, and observe it with curiosity and openness .
Not pushing anything away . not chasing after anything .

5 minute silences ("just this breath" every couple minutes)

Soon the bells will signal that this meditation is coming to an end .
Noticing where your attention is drawn as I say that, and encouraging your attention to “stay”, again like training a puppy,
“stay” in stillness and in calmness as the breath moves in and out . . .
remembering that you can touch base with your breath in this way in any moment of your day .
bringing this attitude of gentle curiosity that you are developing towards your breathing to all of your moments . . . . .

Bells