

## Beginning Again Meditation

Have a seat, or stand, or lie down. Make yourself comfortable. Take a deep breath in and a long slow breath out. Settle in. Make any adjustments, relaxing any place you feel tension. You are relaxed and safe in this space. You may choose to close your eyes ... or find something simple to focus on and then soften your gaze.

Begin to notice the sounds around you. Birds or the wind in the trees, people talking or moving about, traffic, construction, music, my voice. Whatever sounds there are, near or far, just be aware of them without judgement, and sit quietly in this array of sounds.

Next notice your body and where you are supported. If standing, notice how your feet are supported by the ground, if sitting your sitting bones supported by the chair, cushion, or floor. If lying down, allow your whole body to sink into the surface it is resting on.

Now let your awareness find your breath. Just notice when you are breathing in, and know when you are breathing out. Be aware of your whole body breathing. Take the next few breaths to notice where you feel the breath most, (is it in the nostrils, the chest, the abdomen, the back?) and wherever that is, rest your awareness there.

Breathing in: know that you are breathing in. Breathing out: know that you are breathing out. When you notice a thought, feeling, sensation, sound or other distraction, delight in that awareness. Softly note any itch, ache, noise, tingle, or thought without judgement or intent to push it away. What happens when you let it be? Does it stay? Does it intensify? Does it disappear?

Then simply reconnect with the feeling of the breath and begin again. Upon every awareness of a distraction, you can always begin again to notice your breath, to re-center. Joseph Goldstein suggests that for some people a soft mental note, like a whisper in the mind, is helpful, for example noting "in-out" as you notice the breath going in and out of your nostrils, or "rise-fall" as your chest rises and falls. For others, simple awareness of the breath without mental noting works just as well.

As we come to the end of this meditation, if your mind has wandered, once again bring your awareness back to your breath -- Breathing in: know that you are breathing in. Breathing out: know that you are breathing out --- and then bring your awareness back to the body, letting your senses begin to reconnect with the world around you, not only to sounds but to any smells or other sensations, such as temperature on your skin.

When you are ready, blink your eyes open slowly and take in the colors and dimensions of the space you are in. Remember you can return to this quiet moment and to your breath at any time, and, when your awareness wanders, simply Begin Again.