

*You might like to practice this meditation for 5 minutes at first, and then later sit for longer as feels right for you.*

Sit in a way that feels comfortable. This might be sitting comfortably on a chair, or sitting cross-legged on the floor. Sit in a way that feels alert and awake. This probably means that your back is straight, your head is resting without effort on top of your spine, and your hands are resting in your lap. If sitting on a chair, check that your knees are above your ankles, and your pelvis is well into the back of the chair. If sitting cross-legged, check that your knees are resting down towards the floor. Use some blankets or cushions under your knees to support them if this helps you feel more comfortable. If you want to sit on the floor but find it too tiring for your back, try sitting against a wall.

Now you are sitting comfortably, sitting in a way that feels alert and awake, gently close your eyes. Feel the support of the earth beneath you as you sit. Allow the weight of the body to be fully supported by mother earth. Let go of tension in the body as you continue to rest your weight into the earth, and check that you are still sitting in a way that feels alert and awake. Feel the body come up from the earth towards father sky – the great, wide sky.

Now turn your awareness to the breath – the in-breath and the out-breath. Feel the journey of each breath. Follow the in-breath from its beginning to its end. The death of the in-breath becomes the birth of the out-breath. Follow the out-breath's journey from its birth to the end of the out-breath. And then an in-breath is born from the death of the out-breath. To help the mind anchor onto the breath, name the in-breath silently as IN and the out-breath as OUT. Keep doing this for as long as feels right.

Now, while still keeping your awareness on the breath, and naming each breath as IN and OUT, bring your awareness to a point a couple of fingers' width below the navel. Feel this point expand and contract with each breath. Keep doing this for as long as feels right.

Now, while still naming the in-breath as IN and the out-breath as OUT, still with awareness at the point below the navel, become aware of the whole of your body, as you sit and breathe. Sense your body as you sit. All that exists right now is your awareness of your breath, and awareness of your body. As you do this, you may start to feel pleasure in simply sitting and breathing. You have nothing else to do right now, other than sit and breathe, keeping your awareness in your breath and body. In acknowledgement of the feeling of calm and peace that this can bring, allow a suggestion of a smile to come to your lips. Enjoy the simplicity of this moment. There is nowhere to go, and nothing to do. Just be with the breath and the body. Keep doing this for as long as feels right.

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During this meditation, if you find your mind wanders, you can simply label the wandering and then return to the breath. If you start thinking, label it as thinking, and then return to the breath. If an emotion arises, label the emotion (for example, sadness), and then return to the breath. Notice the mind has wandered, label what the mind is doing, and then return to the breath. The returning to the breath is the meditation. Keep returning home.

If helpful, you might also like to count the breaths, as well as name them as IN and OUT. Thus, as you breathe in, name it as IN 1, as you breathe out, name it as OUT 1. Then IN 2, OUT 2. And so on up to 10, and then back down to 1 again. And repeat. If you lose what number you are on, simply return to 1, and continue.

This guided meditation has been inspired by the meditations of Thich Nhat Hanh, as found in *Blooming of a Lotus* (Beacon Press, 1997).